



Enhancing Data Collection and Monitoring

To address existing gaps, Thailand must prioritize the establishment of robust data collection and monitoring systems. Accurate and comprehensive data on reproductive health, adolescent pregnancies, and gender-based violence is crucial for informed policy-making. Implementing a national abortion tracking system, for instance, can provide valuable insights into reproductive health trends.

Conclusion

As Thailand navigates its demographic transition, the commitment to the ICPD's goals as reiterated at the Nairobi Summit remains critical. While progress has been made in various domains, significant challenges persist that require targeted policies and collaborative efforts. By focusing on data inclusiveness, economic empowerment, community engagement, gender equality, and leveraging technology, Thailand can build a resilient and equitable society that ensures the rights and well-being of all its citizens. The way forward is not only about fulfilling commitments but also about fostering a sustainable future for generations to come.

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POLICY BRIEF:

THE WAY FORWARD FOR ICPD 30+ IN THAILAND

Introduction

As Thailand reflects on its demographic journey since the 2019 Nairobi Summit, significant strides have been made in population development, particularly in fulfilling the commitments outlined during the 25th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD25). Thailand has made great strides in addressing population and development challenges, especially those concerning aged society, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. However, gaps remain in terms of socioeconomic disparities, underemployment, and cultural barriers and stigmas in healthcare access. This policy brief encapsulates key insights from the report "Thailand's Path to Sustainable Population and Development: a 30-Year Progress since ICPD". It includes Thailand's progress, identifies gaps, and proposes strategic recommendations for sustained advancement in line with global commitments.

Overview of Thailand's Progress

Commitment to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

Thailand has made considerable progress in ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. The integration of SRH into the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) scheme has been pivotal, aiming to eliminate unmet needs for family planning and prevent maternal deaths. Targets have been set to reduce maternal mortality to 15 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030, showcasing the country's commitment to improving health outcomes.

Addressing Gender-Based Violence

In response to the ICPD's emphasis on combating sexual and gender-based violence, Thailand has established comprehensive support systems within its healthcare framework. Initiatives have been launched to prevent and address gender-based violence, ensuring that women and girls have access to necessary services. Community engagement has played a crucial role, with local task forces and civil society organizations complementing state efforts.



Commitment to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

The commitment to youth empowerment is evident through legislation aimed at reducing adolescent pregnancies and enhancing SRH education. The 2016 Prevention and Solution of the Adolescent Pregnancy Problem Act promotes youth involvement in policy implementation, aiming to lower the teenage pregnancy rate to no more than 15 per 1,000 live births among 15-19-year-olds by 2027. However, discrepancies in data highlight the need for improved tracking and monitoring systems.

Challenges and Gaps

Socioeconomic Disparities

While notable progress has been made, socioeconomic disparities persist. Access to education and healthcare remains uneven, particularly for marginalized communities and those in rural areas. The rising costs of child-rearing and persistent gender inequalities further exacerbate these challenges, leading to delayed family formation and increased singlehood among women of reproductive age.

Underemployment and Economic Pressures

Thailand's demographic shift has resulted in a declining fertility rate and an aging population, leading to a shrinking working-age demographic. Underemployment is a pressing issue, with over 55% of the workforce experiencing a mismatch between their skills and job requirements. This not only hinders individual economic stability but also stifles national growth.

Cultural Stigmas and Health Access

Cultural stigmas continue to pose barriers to accessing SRH services, particularly regarding safe pregnancy choices including abortion rights, and LGBTQIA+ rights. Despite legal advancements, social stigma persists, affecting both healthcare providers and users. Additionally, vulnerable populations, including migrant women and young people living with disabilities, often lack adequate access to tailored health services.



Strategic Recommendations

Promoting Inclusive Economic Policies

The government should continue to develop inclusive economic policies that focus on improving employment opportunities and addressing underemployment. Initiatives aimed at empowering individuals with skills relevant to the labour market can help bridge the gap between education and employment, fostering economic resilience. Such policies can offset many of the challenges brought to the labour market by a low fertility rate and ageing population.

Strengthening Community Engagement

Community involvement is essential for effective population development. By empowering local organizations and grassroots initiatives, Thailand can enhance health outcomes and reduce adolescent pregnancy rates. Collaborative approaches that involve various stakeholders, including civil society and local governments, will ensure that diverse community needs are met.

Fostering Gender Equality

To achieve gender-responsive actions, Thailand must continue to address gender inequalities in political, economic, and social spheres. Enhancing women's representation in decision-making processes is vital for shaping policies that impact their rights and opportunities. Comprehensive strategies to combat gender-based violence must also be prioritized, ensuring safety and support for women and girls.



Leveraging Technology for Health Access

Digital technology can play a transformative role in enhancing access to SRH information and services. Developing online platforms that provide reliable, youth-friendly health information can bridge gaps in accessibility. Additionally, training healthcare providers to utilize digital tools can improve service delivery, particularly for marginalized populations.