



# POLICY BRIEF ON THAILAND'S POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

## Background:

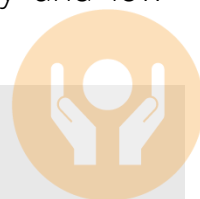
Thailand has achieved notable success in economic growth, marked by having the status of an upper-middle-income country in 2011. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Thailand was valued at 495.34 billion US dollars, in 2022, according to official data from the World Bank. The country also shows a significant increase in the human development index (HDI), from 0.78 in 2014 to 0.8 in 2021, that makes Thailand categorized as a country with a very high human development. However, Thailand is experiencing a rapid demographic transition, with a steadily declining fertility rate to 1.3 in 2023, accompanied by a high dependency ratio. The Government has shown a strong commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA). The country has made commitments at the Nairobi Summit and substantial progress in the implementation of the 2030 agenda as well as achieved most of its SDG targets. Through the widespread Universal Health Coverage, sexual and reproductive health services have been widely covered at sub-national levels.

The 2023 Voluntary National Survey (VNS) was conducted with contributions from all line Ministries to prepare the updated information on status of Thailand on population and development for the 2023 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development (2023 APPC) and reflects the progress towards the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)-Plan of Action. Overall, the report addresses the challenges Thailand has faced with the transitional process of an aged society and low fertility and policy implementation gaps.



**Key Challenges of the Eleven Elements of the Population and Development for Thailand: The 2023 Voluntary Survey highlights key challenges of the eleven elements of the Population and Development for Thailand, which include:**

- 1. Decentralization of policy planning and implementation through full and equal engagement of stakeholders of all levels in the whole policy process, implementation, and resource mobilization.**
- 2. Harmonization of data and strategic information of all line ministries with disaggregated data readily accessible and enhanced stakeholder capacity for management and analysis.**
- 3. Coordination among responsible line ministries on the population and development-related activities.**





# THAILAND ELEVEN ELEMENTS OF THE POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT, 2023 VNS.

**01 Poverty eradication and employment:** Thailand's progress in poverty eradication, despite COVID-19 setbacks, involves support for vulnerable populations. Challenges include economic slowdowns. The country requires a national comprehensive approach with full participation and equal multi-stakeholder to address issues related to funding, data scarcity, and political variability. Strategies for improvement also include strengthen governmental coordination, updating social protection schemes, expanding local initiatives, and employing data-centric, inclusive methods for sustained growth.

**02 Health:** Thailand, acclaimed for universal health coverage, faces challenges in reproductive health and health literacy, under the COVID-19 situation. Ensuring the health coverage, enhancing accessibility to quality healthcare by vulnerable people through robust national health systems, and increasing the health workforce is the high priority.


**03 Sexual and reproductive health and rights:** With Thailand's high success with the enactment of the 2016 Prevention and Solution of the Adolescent Pregnancy Problem Act, the rights of sexual and reproductive health for adolescents and youths have been highlighted. The challenge remains on right-based quality health services with sufficient budget allocation, retraining the health workforce, and harmonizing data and information. A life course approach is also recommended to integrate with the reproductive health program and initiatives.

**04 Education:** Thailand complements its existing nine years of free compulsory education scheme, by valuing lifelong learning for all, particularly for vulnerable groups, through the enactment of the 2023 Promotion of Learning Act. However, internal cooperation within the ministry and among responsible line ministries is still challenging, which result in a need for more data management.

**05 Gender:** Thailand has made significant progress in gender equality, highlighted by the 2015 Gender Equality Act and Women's Development Action Plan. However, challenges persist with the women's underrepresentation in leadership and the underreporting on gender-based violence (GBV). Effective GBV responses and a supportive system are recommended to empower women and other genders on their rights on autonomy as well as to prevent them from GBV, while promoting the active role of men as agent of changes. Costed gender strategy is highly recommended to advocate with local communities and private workplaces.




## THAILAND ELEVEN ELEMENTS OF THE POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT, 2023 VNS.



**06 Supporting adolescents and the youth:** Thailand has advanced in youth development by having the National Child and Youth Development Action Plan, supporting youth participation through the function of Children and Youth Council of Thailand, and other youth-led campaigns and initiatives. However, the vulnerable youth still face challenges with limited employment opportunities, inadequate access to education and reskilling - upskilling, and high rates of adolescent pregnancies. Harmonization of data and youth-related policy, again, is required among responsible line ministries and stakeholders.

**07 Ageing:** The ageing issue is highlighted in the current five-year National Economic Development Plan, complemented by the Elderly Person Act and the Action Plan for the Elderly. Initiatives include financial incentives for hiring elderly workers and promoting self-sufficiency among older age population. However, holistic care measures, inclusive policies, and combating age-related stigmas need to be prioritized. Reinforcing financial and healthcare systems, promoting active aging, and enhancing public-private-academia partnerships and intergenerational approaches are also recommended to tackle challenges.



**08 International migration:** As Thailand is one of major destinations for migrants, regional coordination is vital to promote legal employment and combat exploitation despite the persistent need to be comprehensively considered by the country. Streamlining legal migration, enhancing protective and grievance mechanisms with gender concerns, intensifying data collection, and preparing for climate-induced migration, all crucial for effective migration management are highly recommended to improve the situation.



**09 Urbanization and internal migration:** Thailand's rapid urbanization demands sustainable measures. Despite progress, challenges persist, such as financial constraints and data collection. Recommendations include developing comprehensive urbanization strategy, ensuring equitable public services, and fostering collaboration to alleviate urban poverty and enhance infrastructure.





## THAILAND ELEVEN ELEMENTS OF THE POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT, 2023 VNS.

**10 Population and Sustainable Development:** Thailand navigates the complex relationship between demographic changes and sustainable development, confronting declining fertility rates despite concerted efforts among stakeholders. At the same time, Thailand is committed to combating climate change, with goals for carbon neutrality by 2050. Challenges involve constraints in resources and cross-ministerial coordination. The recommendations may highlight the need for reinforcing population stability, fortifying data management systems, embedding sustainability in educational curricula and learning processes, and enhancing collaborative approaches across various sectors for effective resource allocation and climate mitigation initiatives.

**11 Data and statistics:** Thailand has improved its data infrastructure and civil registration systems, leveraging technology to inform policies. However, harmonization in data management and collaboration are still crucial. Recommendations include improvement of data infrastructure, upskilling data and policy practitioners, enhancing disaggregated data collection, promoting data visualization and analytical tools, for example, provincial life tables, and solidifying partnerships.

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