

THAILAND'S COUNTRY REPORT ON WELFARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Children and youth are important sources and the future of the country. For decades, Thailand has made significant progress in child and youth development as witnessed in the amendment and enactment of laws and regulations, the implementation of projects and programmes to enable children and youth to reach their full potential.

The Royal Thai Government puts utmost significance to children and youth by declaring the 2007 national agenda for children, youth, and the family. The essence of the agenda is the promotion of child and youth's participation in solving social problems, the mechanisms to promote capabilities of children and youth, the production of media programmes of good quality, and the development of child development centers. Thus far, many projects and programmes with joint cooperation from relevant government agencies and stakeholders have been put in place nation-wide.

On the international front, Thailand became party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. The main principles of the convention and the two optional protocols have become the main guideline to map out Thailand's children and youth development plan. Moreover, Thailand is fully committed to the realization of the child's rights and welfare in line with the collective vision of "A World Fit for Children" to ensure that children can grow up in safe and promising environment and become a productive force in the society

Significant Initiatives, Welfares, and Protection of the Child

1. Thailand has established appropriate institutional arrangement in the form of a sub-committee to review laws and regulation concerning children in compliance with the Thai Constitution and the CRC in 2000. The sub-committee comprises law experts and child rights practitioners from both the government and non-government sectors and has been working continuously in this direction to date.
2. A number of new legislations concerning the protection and development of children were introduced, including those concerning the safety promotion in sports and recreational activities; suppression of items instigating dangerous behaviors; protection of children born by assisted reproductive technology; and child adoption.

3. Efforts to promote and protect the rights of the child are demonstrated in the following significant legislations and national policies and programmes:
 - Child Protection Act of 2003;
 - National Child and Youth Development Promotion Act of 2007;
 - Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act of 2007;
 - Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2008;
 - The National Policy and Strategy for the “World Fit for Children”;
 - The National Policy to Stop Domestic Violence against Child and Women;
 - The National Plan and Policy on the Prevention, Suppression and Combating Domestic and Transnational Trafficking in Children and Women.
4. In terms of national mechanisms, Thailand established national and local mechanisms for strengthening enforcement of the laws, policies and strategies. Moreover, training of personnel in concern includes workshop, seminar, and sensitization for child protection workers, officers, professionals, and anti-human trafficking multi-disciplinary team as well as regional networking activities;
5. The National Agenda for Children and Adolescents in 2008 announced by the Prime Minister includes five main issues:
 - a. Promotion of creative activities, through Child Development Caravan Project;
 - b. Family strengthening, creating network and knowledge;
 - c. Promotion of educational and learning media for children and adolescents and their families;
 - d. Development of Child Friendly City Strategy (safe city, healthy city, family-oriented city, learning city, rights-based city, participation-centered city, risk-free city, and other appropriate issues);
 - e. Promotion of early childhood development. The implementation is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.
6. In 2008, the provision of free basic education is expanded to 15 years, from pre-school up to upper secondary level. Additional budget was allocated for this purpose to be used for subsidizing textbooks, learning equipment, school uniforms and development activities. The right of all children in Thailand to receive education on an equal basis and without discrimination is guaranteed in the Constitution and other acts, regulations and policies concerning the provision of education. In addition, the right of children with disabilities to access special education according to their disabilities is guaranteed under the Persons with Disabilities Education Act of 2008. The Act promotes fairness of access to education and vocational training for all persons with disabilities. Presently, children with disabilities are provided with free education up to university level.
7. Health services in Thailand are accessible to all people across the country. Sub-district health centers are functioning nation-wide. There are public

health mobile units providing out-reach services to both rural and urban communities, including in remote areas. Services include pre- and post-natal care, vaccination, breastfeeding support, disease surveillance and nutrition and development surveillance up to pre-school level. Efforts to promote breastfeeding have been intensified in compliance with the goals of World Fit for Children (2007-2016) and through technical cooperation with UNICEF.

8. Recognizing that children and youth have been the prime target victims of human trafficking, The Royal Thai Government proclaimed human trafficking a national agenda in 2004. Women and children, in particular are the most vulnerable groups to be easily trapped by organized crime gangs. An important progress is the enactment of the Anti-Trafficking in Person Act of 2007 which adopts a right-based approach for a more effective fight against traffickers and a more comprehensive protection of the victims. The law includes the following key elements:

- a. heavier penalties on all persons involved in human trafficking;
- b. compensation which victims may claim from the offender for any damages caused by human trafficking;
- c. shelter and other necessities including physical, psycho-social, legal, educational and healthcare service provided to victims; and
- d. protection of all victims of trafficking regardless of their gender, nationality or legal status. In this regard, Baan Kredtrakarn Protection and Occupational Development Center is one among the welfare homes that has been widely recognized by anti-trafficking organizations as performing good practices. It has recently been developed to be an exemplary learning center in the region for its holistic assistance to victims of trafficking. Services provided to trafficked women and children by the government include basic necessities, education, vocational training, physical and psychological recovery, telephone counseling (at phone number 1300), etc. In addition, the government ensures that all victims are considered and treated as victims, not criminals.