



The Kingdom of Thailand

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(This country profile is available online at www.unisa.edu.au/genderbudgets)

1 Background

Socio-economic indicators	
Population in 2008	66.1 million
Projected population change 2008–50	4%
GDP per capita (PPP \$US) 2005	\$8,677
Proportion (percent) of population below the Poverty Line (\$1 PPP a day) 2005	Under 2%*
Gender equality indicators	
Seats in parliament held by women (% of total) 2007	8.7%
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births) 2005	110
Adult literacy rate, females (aged 15 and older), 2005	90.5%
Adult literacy rate, males (aged 15 and older), 2005	94.9%
Gross secondary enrolment: Ratio of female rate to male rate 2005	1.05
Gross secondary enrolment: Female ratio (% of the female secondary school aged population), 2005	72%
Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (% of total employment in the sector) 2005	47.9%
Budgetary indicators	
General Government public expenditure on education (% of GDP) 2002–05	4.2%
General Government public expenditure on education (% of total expenditure) 2002-05	25%
General Government public expenditure on health (% of GDP) 2004	2.3%
General Government public expenditure on health (% of total government expenditure) 2005	11.3%
Central Government military expenditure (% of GDP) 2005	1.1%
Central Government public expenditure on defence (% of total outlays) 2007	2.6%
Open Budget Index: Overall Score	54%. Government provides the public with some information on the central government's budget and financial activities during the course of the budget year

* According to Asian Development Bank (2008) Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2008 all 2% estimates indicate that actual values are less than or equal to 2% and should be treated with caution.

Sources: UNDP (2007) *Human Development Report 2007/08*; Population Reference Bureau (2008) *World Population Data Sheet*; World Economic Forum (2007) *The Global Gender Gap Report*; UN Statistics Division (2008) *Millennium Development Goal Indicators*; United Nations Population Division (2008) *World Population Prospects*; UNESCAP (2008) *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific*; IMF (2008) *Government Finance Statistics*; Open Budget Initiative (2008) (See Explanatory Notes for details).

The Kingdom of Thailand is located in the centre of peninsular Southeast Asia. It shares borders with Laos (north and east), Cambodia (southeast), Malaysia (south) and Myanmar (west). The south coast of Thailand faces the Gulf of Thailand and is bordered on the west by the Andaman Sea. Thailand has a population of 66.1 million. About 75% of the population is ethnically Thai, 14% are of Chinese origin, and 3% are ethnically Malay. The rest belong to minority groups including Mons, Khmers and various hill tribes. The country's official language is Thai and about 95% of the population are Buddhist (Government of USA 2007).

2 The Kingdom of Thailand

Unlike other countries in Southeast Asia, Thailand was never colonised. A bloodless coup d'état in 1932 ended the absolute monarchy and ushered in a constitutional regime. The constitution was amended in 1946 to establish a constitutional monarchy and a bicameral legislature with a popularly elected lower house and an upper house elected by the lower house which continues today (Government of USA 2007).

Thailand's economy recorded the world's highest growth rate from 1985 to 1996, averaging 9.4% annually. Speculation occurred against the Thai baht in 1997, which eventually triggered its collapse and the start of the Asian Financial Crisis. Thailand's economy started to recover in 1999. Thailand's GDP per capita is US\$8,677 (2005), with about 2% of its population living below US\$1 (PPP) a day.

The 1997 Constitution provides women and men in Thailand with equal rights. Nevertheless, gender inequality persists (OECD 2009). Thailand is ranked 70th out of 157 countries on the GDI and 73th out of 93 countries on the GEM. The Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,000 live births) in 2005 was 110 and, despite a high adult literacy rate for women (aged 15 years and older) of 90.5%, only 8.7% of seats in lower house were held by women in 2007.

2 Gender- responsive budgeting

The guarantee of equality between men and women entrenched in the 1997 Constitution has enabled increased advocacy for gender mainstreaming and some initial promotion of gender-responsive budgeting by the national women's machinery and non-government organizations (Bhongsvej 2007).

A 2000 analysis of public expenditure from a gender perspective was undertaken by academics at the government supported National Institute for Development Administration. The *Public expenditure and gender sensitive budget analysis – preliminary study for Thailand* (2000) focused on government programs targeting women and those with a strong component related to women and children. This analysis highlighted the difficulties in determining the impact of the budget allocations on men and women and argued for investment in raising awareness on the impacts of the budget on men and women within the Parliament, government and NGOs (Vichit-Vadakan and Lorsuwannarat 2000). Other analyses have focused on adequate budgeting for gender mainstreaming. Tonguthai and Putananusorn (2005: 244), in their report on progress of the national plans for women covering the decade 1997-2006, stressed the importance of increasing these budgets as less than half of the government agencies had submitted their required Master Plans on Gender Equality Promotion to the newly established Chief Gender Equality Officers located in all government agencies.

In 2004 the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development (OWAFD 2004: 4) acknowledged that GRB was 'still far-fetched to achieve in Thai budgeting system'. However, in the same report, OWAFD (2004) noted the increase in budget allocations for awareness-raising, training of trainers and development of materials on gender issues. Since 2005, the Office of Women and Family Development (OWAFD), with support of UNIFEM and the donor Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), has conducted a series of awareness-raising and capacity-building GRB activities. These have been primarily directed at gender focal points and Chief Gender Equality Officers (CGEOs) across departments (Bhongsvej 2007; email communication with donor 06/01/09). These efforts were further assisted by provision of a GRB manual in Thai at the December 2006 seminar for gender workers and activists organized by OWAFD with donor support from Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. At this seminar OWAFD agreed to coordinate a network on gender budgeting as a forum for broad based discussion (FES 2006). Since then, GRB awareness raising has expanded to engage women's organizations, NGOs and academia. In 2007 FES supported an effort to mobilise political parties to embrace GRB in their policies (Bhongsvej 2007: 1).

Bhongsvej (2007:2) reports that GRB is a priority for the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development (OWAFD) with gender mainstreaming in the budgeting process integrated in its medium term plan. A further sign of the commitment to progressing GRB is its inclusion in the training program provided to local government officials. In 2009 preliminary discussions took place between OWAFD and UNIFEM about a small GRB pilot (email communications with donor 06/01/09; 28/05/09).

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