

THAILAND — Country Profile

Overview

Thailand is a tropical country in the Indo-Chinese peninsula of southeast Asia bordered by Kampuchea and Laos on the east and northeast, by Burma on the west and northwest, and by Malaysia on the south. Thailand includes tropical rain forests, agriculturally rich plains, and forest-clad hills and mountains. The patterns of rivers and mountains divide Thailand into four natural regions: the mountainous north; the northeast, consisting primarily of the Korat plateau; the central region, consisting primarily of the Chao Phraya Basin; and the south, consisting of the long peninsular extension of Thailand south from the Chao Phraya Basin to the Malaysian frontier.

Unlike many other developing countries and all its southeast Asian neighbors, Thailand has never been colonized by a foreign power. A common religion is one of the most important factors contributing to the relative cultural homogeneity of the Thai population. The large majority of the population (95.9 percent in 1980) professes Buddhism as its religion. Most non-Buddhists adhere to Islam, which is practiced by about 4 percent of the population. Most Thai Muslims, about 80 percent, live in the south, where they constitute the majority of the population in the four southernmost provinces and make up one fourth of the total population of the south, despite their small percentage nationally.

Source: *extracted from the Thailand Demographic and Health Survey (1987)*

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Key findings from the *Thailand Country Profile* on the situation of SRHR in Thailand are as follows:

Maternal Health:

- The national fertility rate is 1.5 children per woman.
- Due to this low figure, the Thai government has focused efforts on maintaining fertility at replacement level.

Contraception:

- There are 50.1 births per 1000 women between 15-19 years of age in 2008.
- It is estimated that 20-30 percent of sexually active young people are using condoms regularly.
- Since 2003, over 3,500 peer educators have been trained to visit migrant schools and other spaces frequented by migrant youth to teach educational curriculum about contraception, family planning, and sexually transmitted infections.

Abortion:

- Abortion is permitted in cases to save a woman's life and when a pregnancy endangers the physical health of the mother, to preserve a woman's mental health or when the pregnancy is due to sexual offenses such as rape or incest.
- A woman who causes her own abortion is subject to three years' imprisonment and/or a fine up to 6,000 THB (200 USD).
- Most illegal abortions are performed by non-medical personnel, such as self-trained practitioners, within the first trimester of pregnancy.
- The mental health reason for abortion is rarely honored by doctors.

HIV & AIDS:

- 440,000 people are living with HIV and AIDS throughout the country.
- The majority of AIDS patients (89.41%) fall between 15-59 years old.
- Most cases are a result of unprotected sex (84.17%), followed by drug use (4.34%), mother-to-child transmission (3.61%), and blood transfusion (0.02%).
- According to the World Bank in 2011, infection rates remain high amongst vulnerable groups, most notably injecting drug users (20-60%, depending on the region in Thailand).

Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Child Early & Forced Marriage (CEFM):

- There are 50.1 births per 1,000 women between 15-19 years of age.
- The legal minimum age for marriage without parental consent is 17 years.

Violence Against Women (VAW)

- 47.4 percent of women living in rural areas in Thailand had experienced physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partners in their lifetime.
- 33.8 percent of women reported experiencing intimate partner violence of a physical nature.
- 28.9 percent reported experiencing intimate partner violence of a sexual nature.
- 41.1 percent of women living in city areas reported having experiencing physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partner (22.9 percent reported physical and 29.9 report sexual).
- The percentage experiencing forced sex was 5.3 percent in the provinces and 3.6 percent was in the cities.
- Abuse during pregnancy was reported by 4.0 percent of women in the provinces and cities.

Current initiatives in Thailand

- In Thailand, ARROW works with its partner organisation Migrants Assistance Programme (MAP) Foundation in monitoring, reviewing, and advocating for the implementation of the universal access to SRHR.