

Thailand's Response to HIV/AIDS: Progress and Challenges



Thematic MDG Report



United Nations Development Programme

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Rajdamnern Nok Avenue

Bangkok 10200 Thailand

Tel: (66-2) 288 2130

Fax: (66-2) 280 0556

E-mail: registry.th@undp.org

Web site: www.undp.or.th

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Preface

Thailand's response to HIV/AIDS is a story of impressive achievements. Since 1991, yearly new infections have fallen dramatically and millions of lives have been spared. Thailand is one of the very first countries to have achieved the sixth Millennium Development goal, to begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015, well in advance of the target date.

This success of Thailand must first and foremost be attributed to courageous and visionary top-level leadership displayed at a relatively early stage of the epidemic. This strong commitment created the political and institutional environment necessary for a broad-based response. Public health agencies, government ministries, the military, non-governmental organizations, communities and the media all joined together in the campaign to confront the growing epidemic. Most striking of all was the pragmatism that guided the Thailand's response. This allowed for an open dialogue about safe sex and condom promotion and a no-nonsense approach to preventing HIV transmission among sex workers and their clients.

Yet it is too early to claim victory. The epidemic is evolving and there are now clear warning signs of a new wave of infections. The virus is spreading unchecked among certain vulnerable groups. Young people in general are becoming increasingly vulnerable to infection. Also, as the epidemic matures, hundreds of thousands of young adults who are living with HIV/AIDS are reaching the stage when they urgently require treatment.

This report provides an in-depth analysis of what went right in Thailand. As such, it is an important contribution to the global policy debate about how best to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We hope that it will become a valuable resource for other countries as they intensify their efforts to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The report also takes a hard look at the many new challenges now facing Thailand as the epidemic evolves. It offers concrete suggestions for the way forward and how to avoid that past success turn into complacency and inaction.

The report forms part of Thailand's UN Country Team's efforts to promote dialogue around the Millennium Development Goals, focusing on the sixth goal of reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. The report is also an expression of UNDP's longstanding advocacy for a broad-based and multi-sectoral response to HIV/AIDS that takes into account the socio-economic drivers and implications of the epidemic, respects the human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, and recognizes that leadership is crucial to achieve real and sustainable results.

The production of the report was guided by an Advisory Panel of eminent experts and leaders, as well as the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in Thailand, benefiting greatly from specific input and contributions from its members. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all that have contributed to this report.



J.K. Robert England
UN Resident Coordinator
UNDP Resident Representative
Thailand

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Advisory Panel of Eminent Experts

The production of the Report was guided by an Advisory Panel of eminent officials and experts: Mechai Viravaidya (Senator, Co-Chair of Community Programme Committee, XV International AIDS Conference), Jon Ungpakorn (Senator), Pradap Pibulsonggram (Department of Technical & Economic Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Dr. Anupong Chaitwarakorn (Ministry of Public Health), Dr. Sombat Tanprasertsuk (National AIDS Programme Manager, Ministry of Public Health), Dr. Somyos Kittimankong (Ministry of Public Health), Priyanut Pibulsavut (National Economic and Social Development Board), Kamon Upakaew (Thailand Network for People Living with HIV/AIDS), Dr. Kiet Rakrungtham (Thai Red Cross Society, AIDS Research Center), Usa Duongsaa (Chiang Mai University), Anthony Pramualratana (Thailand Business Coalition on AIDS), Paul Cawthorne (Médecins Sans Frontières, Thailand), Dr. Swarup Sarkar (UNAIDS Secretariat, SEAPICT), Sompong Chareonsuk (UNAIDS Secretariat, Thailand), and Håkan Björkman (UNDP). The panel was chaired by J.K. Robert England (UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative),

UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in Thailand

The Report forms part of the UNAIDS Joint Plan of Action for Thailand. The Report was guided by the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in Thailand, and benefited greatly from specific input and contributions from its members: J.K. Robert England (UN Resident Coordinator and Chair of the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in Thailand), Anthony Banbury (WFP), Håkan Björkman (UNDP), He Changchui (FAO), Christine Evans-Klock (ILO), Akira Fujino (UNODC), G. Giridhar (UNFPA), Lucita Lazo (UNIFEM), Dr. Praphan Phanuphak (Thai Red Cross Society's AIDS Research Center), Chakramon Phasukvanich (Secretary-General, National Economic and Social Development Board), Anthony Pramualratana (Thailand Business Coalition on AIDS), Ian Porter (World Bank), N. Kumara Rai (WHO), Sheldon Shaeffer (UNESCO), Nimitt Tienudom (Thai NGOs Coalition on AIDS), Dr. Charal Trinwuthipong (Director-General, DCD, Ministry of Public Health), Kamon Upakaew (Thailand Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS), Irena Vojackova-Sollorano (IOM), Inese Zalitis (UNICEF).

Contributors

Contributions, comments, and advice were received from: Scott Bamber (UNICEF), Wayne Bazant (UNODC), Tim Brown (East-West Center, Thai Red Cross Society), Sompong Chareonsuk (UNAIDS), David Feingold (UNESCO), Caroline Haddad, Julie Hamblin, Neil McFarlane (UNDP), Dr. Swarup Sarkar (UNAIDS), Alice Schmidt, Werasit Sittitrai (UNAIDS), Susan Squarey, Karen Stanecki (UNAIDS), Pornchai Suchitta (UNFPA), Laksami Suebsaeng (WHO), Gunnar Walzholz (ILO), and Jan W de Lind van Wingen (UNESCO).

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UNDP Team

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Authors/Researchers

Dr. Wiput Phoolcharoen (Director, Health Systems Research Institution, Ministry of Public Health), Dr. Vichai Posyachinda (Chulalongkorn University), Churnrutai Kanchanachitra (Institute of Population and Social Research, Mahidol University), Waranya Teokul (National Economic and Social Development Board).

Principal writer and editor

Hein Marais

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