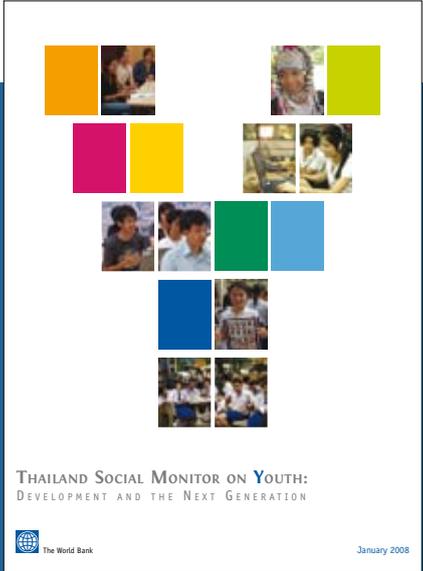


# Development in Partnership

the World Bank's activities in Thailand and other news related to development

March 2008



## WELL COORDINATED YOUTH POLICY COULD HELP THAI YOUTH COPE WITH SOCIAL, ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

**BANGKOK** – To meet emerging social and economic challenges, Thailand needs to establish a clear and coherent youth development strategy, as well as encourage young people to contribute to youth policies, a new World Bank report recommended.

With young people now forming a smaller portion of the population than in the past, this issue deserves immediate attention, according to *Thailand Social Monitor on Youth: Development and the Next Generation*, the new World Bank report on the country's youth affairs and challenges. Over the last decade, delayed marriages and lower birth rates have led to a steady decline in growth of the youth population in Thailand. As a result, the country's younger labor force today is smaller than during the three decades of rapid growth up to the late 1990s.

"Thailand is going to face a shortage of youth labor force in the next 10 years, while competition in labor-intensive industries from neighboring countries is expected to become even more intense," said **Ian Porter**, the World Bank Country Director for Thailand.

"To stay competitive, the Thai Government will have to focus more on enhancing the quality, the knowledge, and the skills of its young labor force. This requires a well coordinated youth development policy and a lot of thinking from a youth perspective."

Despite a few brief interruptions, Thailand's social and economic development over the past three decades would be envied by many poor countries. Its rapid economic growth has been accompanied by tremendous improvements in important social indicators, including life expectancy, mother as well as child mortality rates, literacy, and school enrollment.

With rapid social and economic change, come new challenges. According to the *Social Monitor*, Thai youths are facing different health risks now than in past decades, thanks to changing lifestyles and habits. Many studies showed that drinking, smoking, and drug abuse have been rising among people of ages 15-24. In addition, the number of overweight children and young people in Thailand is on the rise due to lack of exercise and unhealthy dietary habits.

Furthermore, young people are starting to have sex at an earlier age while only a small percentage of them report using condoms or female contraceptives. As a result, early pregnancies are becoming more prevalent, and HIV/AIDS infection rates among Thai youth are relatively high. Recent estimates suggested that people of ages 15-24 account for half of new HIV cases in Thailand each year, the *Social Monitor* reported.

And, while more and more youths enroll in universities today, a large percentage of them may still face unemployment after graduating. This is because the skills demanded by current industries do not match what they are learning in school.



Concerted strategy for youth development is key to the country's economic and social development, said the *Thailand Social Monitor 2008*

Continue on page 2

Despite notable success in providing education to the wider population, Thailand is still facing challenges stemming from poor quality of education, high dropout rates, and low student achievement levels. Recent World Bank surveys also show that shortages of skilled workers, especially those with language and technology skills, are a common complaint among Thai industries. As a result, filling a vacancy for a skilled production worker or a professional in Thailand can take up to six weeks, the **Social Monitor** found.



building up technology skills

"This issue has become a real constraint to Thailand's competitiveness," said **Luis Benveniste**, the coordinator of the World Bank's human development work in Thailand, who led the team that prepared the **Social Monitor**. "During our study, we also found that youth unemployment is a major concern here. This implies that the Government has to look more closely at its youth employment policy and perhaps place more emphasis on education for employment."

The Thai youth of today will provide the next generation of workers, parents and citizens. Thus, a concerted strategy for youth development is key to the long term economic and social development of the nation. It is also critical to involve youth in the design of policy to make the programs effective, the **Social Monitor** recommended.

"We do have a national youth development agenda, but having the agenda does not guarantee that the problems will be solved," said **Kanda Vajrabhaya**, the Deputy Permanent-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, one of the four ministries responsible for youth development.

"I really think that strengthening coordination between different government agencies can help us achieve better results than we did in the past. We have to start recognizing that youth issues are so complex and involve so many stakeholders. It is a mistake to think that one single agency can address them all."

For more information, contact **Achariya Kohtbantau**, Human Development Program Specialist, tel. (66-2) 686-8347, email: [akohtbantau@worldbank.org](mailto:akohtbantau@worldbank.org), **Pichaya Fitts**, Senior Communications Officer, tel. (66-8) 4752-1783, email: [pfitts@worldbank.org](mailto:pfitts@worldbank.org)

To download the full report, the executive summary, and related documents, go to [www.worldbank.or.th](http://www.worldbank.or.th)

## FIRST REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON ASSET RECOVERY ORGANIZED BY THAILAND. WORLD BANK. UNODC

**BANGKOK** – Thailand played host last month to the first regional conference on asset recovery and reaffirmed its commitment to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), as well as to the Stolen Asset Recovery (StAR) initiative, launched in 2007 by the World Bank and the UN office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

In his opening remarks, Thai Justice Minister, **Sompong Amornvivat**, said the ratification process is well underway. The National Legislative Assembly has approved the UNCAC in principle. Many other significant steps have been taken, including a comprehensive assessment of where Thai laws stand vis-à-vis the Convention. At the moment, the Government is reviewing three pieces of legislation to bring them into compliance with the UNCAC, Mr. Sompong said.

"Thailand will be able to ratify the UNCAC once these three proposed draft laws are approved and come into effect," he confirmed.



Distinguished guests at the StAR conference in Bangkok, including (from left) Mr. Stuart Gilman, Acting Deputy Director, StAR, Mr. Ian Porter, Mr. Charun Phakdeethanakul, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice, Mr. Akira Fujino, UNODC Thailand Representative, and Assoc. Prof. Tongthong Chandragu, Deputy Permanent-Secretary, Ministry of Justice

Launched in 2003, the UNCAC is an international agreement aimed at fighting corruption, the misuse of public resources for personal gain. It provides for the recovery of stolen assets or property and the return of such assets to the rightful owners. More than 100 countries have signed on to this Convention.

In September last year, the World Bank joined the UNODC to launch a joint initiative, the StAR, to help countries accelerate the recovery of their stolen assets. In the words of World Bank President **Robert Zoellick**, the StAR aims to ensure that *"there is no safe haven for those who steal from the poor."*

A background report compiled by the Bank and UNODC shows just how serious the stolen asset problem is. It reports that cross-border flows of the global proceeds from criminal activities, corruption, and tax evasion range anywhere from \$1 trillion to \$1.6 trillion per year. Every \$100 million recovered could fund full immunizations for 4 million children and provide water connections for some 250,000 households.

Specifically, the StAR initiative will:

- **Build institutional capacity in developing countries**
- **Strengthen the integrity of financial markets**
- **Assist the asset recovery process**
- **Monitor the use of recovered assets**

Having become party to the UNCAC, the Thai Government readily joined the StAR initiative. The Ministry of Justice offered to host the regional conference on **"The New Strategic Directions for Controlling Corruption: The Recovery of Stolen Assets,"** in partnership with the World Bank and the UNODC. This knowledge-sharing conference brought together more than 40 law enforcement officials from across the region, as well as legal experts from the UNODC and the World Bank.



*Every \$100 million of recovered stolen assets could fund full immunizations for 4 million children*

The StAR Initiative begins from the premise that both developed and developing countries must work in partnership, said **Ian Porter**, the World Bank Country Director, Thailand. Developing countries need to improve governance to stop the flow of money out. More of developed nations must stop the inflow illegal money by cracking down on money laundering and related financial crimes.

The first step, said Mr. Porter, is for all nations to ratify the UN Convention against Corruption, which provides the framework for controlling illicit flows. Only half the OECD nations and four of the G-8 countries are parties.

*"A week ago Friday at a meeting of the StAR Advisory Group, President Zoellick promised to redouble the Bank's efforts to encourage other countries to ratify the Convention,"* he told the conference.

*"East Asian nations must also do better,"* Mr. Porter urged. *"While pleased that the People's Republic of China, Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines have all ratified the convention, and Thailand is close to doing so, this is not enough, we also want to encourage the governments of the Lao People's Republic, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam to join their neighbors in ratifying the convention."*

## The World Bank Development Marketplace Comic Book on Coastal Erosion



The World Bank, in partnership with the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR), invite young comic book writers to participate in the Development Marketplace competition for a comic book on coastal erosion. The winning comic books will be used in outreach program over the next three years to encourage young people in the areas affected by coastal erosion to contribute to the solutions.

*For more information, please visit [www.worldbank.or.th](http://www.worldbank.or.th).*

*Continue on page 4*

## What Went On At the World Bank...

The Vice President of the World Bank's Human Development Network, **Joy Phumaphi**, was in Thailand in January to attend the Prince Mahidol Award Conference in Bangkok. The conference was co-organized by the Prince Mahidol Award Foundation, the Ministry of Public Health, Mahidol University, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Bank.

During her speech on 30 years of primary healthcare, Ms. Phumaphi highlighted the need for countries to learn from one another in order to find solutions to ongoing as well as emerging health issues. Most of the world's development thinking cascades from wealthy OECD countries in the North, to countries in the South. So, it is especially important that countries which have achieved breakthroughs in primary healthcare export their practical



development experience to other countries in Asia, as well as other regions. Notable successful examples include Thailand, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Vietnam.

*"This experience should not stay confined to national borders. Show others what you have done, and the world will learn from you,"* she said.

She also visited a hospital in Ayutthaya province, which has been successful at integrating community participation with a modern health promotion program.



The Thai Commission on Higher Education, in partnership with the World Bank, hosted a regional conference in February on post-basic education systems. Titled **"Education for Development and Competitiveness: Challenges and Opportunities for Post-Basic Education,"** the seminar brought together more than 90 high-level education officials and administrators from 10 Asian countries. The seminar focused on the need for improvements in the quality and the relevance of post-

basic education, as well as the overall efficiency and flexibility of education systems and institutions.

*"This is a rare chance for us to share post-basic education experiences and exchange ideas on how to reform our post-basic education systems,"* said **Dr. Sumate Yamnoon** (in photo, second left), the Secretary-General of the Thai Commission on Higher Education. *"It also gives us an opportunity to form a regional network of education authorities and professionals, who will support one another as we all carry out these important and difficult reform initiatives."*

Such improvements are aimed at stimulating a country's engagement with the global knowledge economy through improving individual skills and thus boosting economic competitiveness. While the seminar emphasized linkages between post-basic education and the labor market, and thus economic development, participants also discussed equity and social development issues. The six-day seminar ended on March 1.



World Bank Country Director for Thailand, **Ian Porter** (left), shook hands with **Dr. Ampon Kittiampon**, Secretary-General, National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), after signing the Memorandum of Understanding for continuing the knowledge-sharing partnership between the World Bank and the NESDB into the future. The MOU signing ceremony took place at the NESDB on March 3, 2008 and was presided over by **Dr. Panas Simasathien** (center), the Chairman of the NESDB Board.



**For comments or questions about this newsletter,** please contact Mr. Tinnakorn Sareenun  
**The World Bank Office, Bangkok**  
Siam Tower, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor, 989 Rama I Road, Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330

Tel.: +66 (0) 26868300  
Fax: +66 (0) 26868301  
Email: [tsareenun@worldbank.org](mailto:tsareenun@worldbank.org)  
Website: <http://www.worldbank.or.th>