

Thailand as an ageing society

OUR PAST: HOW WE GOT HERE

- During the early 20th century and into the 1960s, Thailand was officially pro-natalist.
- In 1911, when Thailand had 8 million people, the minister of interior explained why 5 or 6 times that was needed.
- Government health services were established to reduce mortality and increase population.
- Early marriages were encouraged. Population size was believed to correlate to national strength.

Population planning began as an official policy in 1970

- Goal of the Third National Economic and Social Development Plan (1972-6) was to reduce birth rate from over 3% in the early 1970s to 2.5% by 1976.
- The policy was a great success. By 1976 the birth rate was down to 2.5%. By 1991 it was down to 1.3%, a 56% decline in only 19 years.
- This resulted from a decline in the total fertility rate from 5.4 children per woman in 1972 to 2.17 in 1991, or a 60% decline over the same period. Replacement level is 2.1%.
- Victim of our own success.

Proportion of older persons

- 2011: 12%
- 2025: 19%
- 2030: 22.7%.
- 2050: 26%
- By 2030, the number of older persons will double the present number, for a ratio of one older person for every 4 Thais.

Life expectancy

- Before 1967: 60
- Present: 75

Limited time to prepare

HOW THAILAND IS USING MIPAA TO PREPARE

Adopted MIPAA

- as the national guideline for policy and national planning development on older persons.

First Pillar: Older Persons Development

The Act on Older Persons 2003

Older persons' rights

- entitles older persons to rights protection and guarantees their health, social and economic security

National focal point on elderly issues:

National Committee on the Elderly, chaired by PM

- orients policies and issues the master plan on prevention, protection, promotion and support of the elderly status.
- conducts research, compiles and analyzes data and information that are useful for protection, promotion, and support of the elderly

Tax privileges for older persons

- gives (1) tax deductions to any child who takes care and give support to his/her own parents,
- (2) who purchases health insurance policies for their parents, and
- (3) to persons aged 65 years and above who gain income not exceeding 190,000 baht

Elderly Fund

- The government has set aside 80 million baht to serve as financial support for activities designed for the elderly and as a resource for supporting occupational promotion of the elderly (e.g. promotion of the elderly on education, healthcare, social living, and occupational training)

Older Persons Fund

- provides zero-interest loans to elderly persons who want to start their own business after retirement. This is important to the implementation of MIPAA because it enables older persons to be active agents of social development, as opposed to being its passive beneficiary

Universal non-contributory pension for the elderly

- introduced to give the elderly progressive monthly allowances for senior citizens, above the previous flat rate of 500 baht

- tested since 1993, scaled up for all Thai elderly in 2009

For the first time ever, brought together public and private sectors to contribute benefits to improve quality of life for elderly.

National Savings Fund Act

- In effect since May 2011
- Joint contribution from government
- to encourage all persons of working age, not covered by any Government pensions scheme, to contribute to their savings. This will allow them to receive lifelong monthly pension after retirement
- Fund is an expansion of government retirement scheme to promote long-term savings

Second National Plan on Older Persons 2002 – 2021 (revised 2009)

- Provides comprehensive guidelines on long-term development, social protection
- Emphasizes key dimensions of socioeconomic security to prepare Thais for quality ageing
- implemented a comprehensive and strategic 20 year-term plan in orienting the development and action plans for the elderly.
- In particular, the Plan includes preparation for a quality ageing society, promotion of development for the elderly and their social protection, management of integrated work on the elderly and the dissemination of knowledge on ageing.

Second Pillar: Advancing health and well-being into old age

National Health Care Scheme under National Health Security Act, 2002

- Guarantees all Thais quality healthcare services
- For the elderly: free comprehensive medical services:

Physical and mental health promotion

○ **Mental Health Needs of Older Persons**

- The Department of Mental health has initiated short-term training and basic practice

guidelines of mental health care for older persons

- *Prevention, care, rehabilitation*
- *Eye, dental care, assistive equipment*
- *Access at all community hospitals*
- *Referral system links provincial and central hospitals*

Home Health Care

- Operated by multidisciplinary teams from community and provincial hospitals

Prototype project: “development of a community based integrated health care and social welfare services model for older persons in Thailand”

- Aims to study and develop a model of health care and social welfare services that can suitably respond to the needs of the elderly in the community
- Received active participation from local administrative organizations, civil society, elderly clubs
- Technical support from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
- 4 years of operation, followed by evaluation: fulfilled development of community models and community integration of health care and social welfare services for the elderly.

Elderly Clubs

- Senior Citizen Centers (SCC) initiated by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security serve as centers to organize activities for all ages including older persons.
- Activities include health, socializing, arts, cultural, educational and learning, occupational, income strengthening, and recreational arenas.
- In collaboration with several local administration organizations in all regions of the country, SCCs have been established around the country.
- Promoted in communities nationwide
- Supporters include Thai Health Promotion Foundation, Senior Citizens Council of Thailand, the Elderly Fund, LAOs.

Neglect, Abuse, and Violence

- The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security:
- enacted Ministerial Rules
- that provide assistance and counseling services to older persons who are in need, neglected and facing difficulties.
- also developed a Manual on Elderly Abuse Management Guidelines for distribution to all involved sectors in order to utilize as a practice guideline for providing care and assistance to the abused elderly

Third Pillar: Ensuring and enabling a supportive environment for older people

Ageing in Place

- Community volunteer caregivers for the elderly
- The Project of Community Volunteer Caregivers for the Elderly began in 2003 in 8 provinces in the 4 regions of Thailand, 2 provinces per each region. The Project has objectives to give care and support older persons in communities, by training people in communities to act as volunteer caregivers
- Train locals on basic knowledge and skills to provide for elderly daily care, social surveillance, early intervention and services.
- From local pilot project to national implementation
- Support from LAOs, Senior Citizens Council of Thailand, civil society

Age-friendly housing and supportive environment

- Promote independent living
- Inexpensive prototype initiated
- Technical support and cooperation from academia and LAOs
- In-house modification using local materials
- Age-friendly Housing and Supportive Environment Manual given to stakeholders and involved agencies to raise public awareness of safe living of the elderly

Long-term care for the elderly

- Pooling knowledge, expertise, resources from all concerned to develop, design and establish model of appropriate care in urban and rural areas.

Public Transportation Services

- Ministry of Transport, transportation state enterprises, and transportation businesses give special discounted fares to the elderly

OUR FUTURE: WHAT LIES AHEAD

Challenges

Provision of public facilities that are accessible, proper and safe for the elderly

- Government is to promote and campaign for public facilities and services that the elderly can access, taking into account convenience, properness and safety

How to balance between traditional support systems and the formal support system provided by the government

- Traditional system has been eroded by socioeconomic changes. Extended family has become less prevalent among the urban middle class.
- The formal support system has become more necessary for families facing problems such as poverty, family disintegration, or the elderly who live alone or abandoned, among other things.

How to change attitudes towards independent elderly

- The elderly are traditionally held in high respect in Thai society. Social stigma associated with elderly who live by themselves – appearance of abandonment by their children. It is therefore common for adult children to live with and take care of their elderly parents.
- A steadily decreasing proportion of senior citizens will have children to turn to for support. An increase in long-term institutionalization among the elderly seems likely. Personal safety may also be a growing concern.

How to raise awareness of the needs of the elderly

- Celebration of National Day for Older Persons and National Family Day on April 13. This was initiated to encourage people to realize the significance of the family institution.

How to make use of the growing numbers of the elderly

- Older Persons' Brain Bank
- Launched by the Bureau of Empowerment for Older Persons
- Searched, collected, and compiled records of older persons in communities who have expertise and local wisdom in various fields. Objectives: transmission of knowledge, wisdom, and expertise to younger generations, and the integration of knowledge of older persons and social development
- Extending the working years of the elderly can help solve future labor shortage. This would require healthy ageing.

How to maintain economic growth

- Policies on immigration and migrant labor may need to be reviewed
- A resumption of pro-natalist policies? But how to get it right this time?