THAILAND SOCIAL MONITOR ON YOUTH:

DEVELOPMENT AND THE NEXT GENERATION

January 2008

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The Thailand Social Monitor series was conceived as a tool to reflect on current situations about selected issues in Thailand's health, education and social protection sectors. The first Social Monitor, *Challenge for Social Reform*, was launched in 1999 in response to the 1997 economic crisis. To date, six Social Monitors have been issued.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BAAC	Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CDP-H	Country Development Partnership in Health
COPD	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
CWDs	Children with Disabilities
DALY	Disability Adjusted Life Year
DVT	Dual Vocational Training
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICL	Income Contingent Loan
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IHPP	International Health Policy Program
ILO	International Labor Organization
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean
LMIS	Labor Market Information System
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOPH	Ministry of Public Health
MSDHS	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
MSM	Men Who Have Sex with Men
NCYD	National Council for Child and Youth Development
NEA	National Education Act
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
NYB	National Youth Bureau
NYO	National Youth Office
NYP	National Youth Plan
OEC	Office of Education Council
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONEC	Office of National Education Commission
ONESQA	Office of National Education Standards and Quality Assessment
ONFEC	Office of Non-Formal Education Commission
OPP	Office of Welfare Promotion, Protection and Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups
OPPC	Bureau of Child Promotion and Protection
OPPY	Bureau of Youth Promotion and Protection
OVEC	Office of Vocational Education Commission
OYP	Office of Youth Promotion
PACES	Plan de Ampliación de Cobertura de la Educación Secundaria
PETI	Program to Eradicate Child Labor
PATH	Program for Appropriate Technology in Health
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RTG	Royal Thai Government
SES	Socio-Economic Survey
SEU	Subjective Expected Utility
SLS	Student Loan Scheme
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WDR	World Development Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Young Thai people, as the next generation of workers, parents and citizens, represent the future of their country. This stage of life is when personality, habits, lifestyles and skills are shaped and when previous investments in education and health can be reaped. Therefore, an inadequate transition into adulthood can have very negative long-term impacts that will be costly to mitigate later in life. Ensuring that young people become healthy, educated and productive workers, citizens and parents needs to be regarded at the center of the country's development strategy. This need is acute in the case of Thailand, which has been experiencing dramatic social and economic changes that have given its young people a much broader range of choices, while also giving rise to new risks that could threaten their development.

Thailand's current demographic profile points to the relevance of youth issues and the urgency of addressing human development challenges. The youth population ratio has been declining steadily since peaking at 22 percent around 1990, mainly due to delayed marriages and declining fertility rates. The projected youth population ratio for 2050 is 11.7 percent. This trend suggests that the abundant young labor on which Thailand has relied for economic growth will be soon in shortage. To maintain its future growth and competitiveness, Thailand will need to place renewed emphasis on strengthening the capabilities of its young people and boosting productive opportunities for them. It will also need to help youth avoid risky behaviors as well as provide second chances to those youth who may be suffering the consequences of poor decisions.

This Thailand Social Monitor provides an overview of the challenges facing Thai youth today, identifying the factors that make them vulnerable and outlining possible policy directions in moving forward. This Social Monitor studies three key transitions faced by Thai youth, using the youth development model proposed by the World Development Report 2007. This model helps provide an understanding of the interactions among the various factors that affect youth development and how they influence in three important life transitions, namely: *growing up healthy*, *learning for work and life* and *moving from school to work*. In this model, the role of public policy is to help youth succeed in the transition to adulthood by *broadening their opportunities*, *expanding their capacity* and *providing them with second chances* to overcome negative outcomes. These areas are the three youth policy lenses through which policy priorities are assessed throughout this report.

Growing Up Healthy

Changing cultural values and behaviors, together with the epidemiological shift the country is undergoing, have presented new health-related challenges for youth. Traffic accidents and HIV/AIDS have become the leading causes of death among youth, while chronic diseases developed from unhealthy habits formed during youth have become one of the major causes of death for adults. Evidence indicates that smoking, alcohol consumption and drug use have been rising among youth in Thailand in recent years. In addition, a large percentage of Thai youth reports engaging in unsafe sexual relationships and at younger ages, which has led to increased prevalence of early pregnancies.

Influencing health habits and lifestyle formation during youth is critical for avoiding the loss of productive human capital and increases in future health care expenditures. Using the three policy lenses of the youth development model, this report highlights the need to promote youth health in the following areas:

Expanding opportunities – Creating an environment for the young to practice healthful behaviors, making risky behaviors costly and limiting the opportunities for them. Policies that could help expand youth opportunities to make healthy decisions include: enforcing bans on advertisement of tobacco and alcohol and restrictions to their consumption by age and in public places; providing the means required to practice healthy behaviors, such as condom provision; and subsidies and taxation policies to decrease the cost of healthy options and increase that of unhealthy ones. Evidence in high-and middle-income countries shows that an increase in the price of tobacco products through taxation reduces the demand significantly, particularly among young people and the poor.

Improving young people's capacity – Providing young people with the knowledge to make informed choices and with the skills to negotiate safe behaviors with peers and partners. Mechanisms or programs to reach youth could include school-based tailored programs, peer education and mass media programs, innovative campaigns making use of new technologies and popular public personalities and sponsorships of youth events. Programs should be

comprehensive and diverse in terms of both the risks to be prevented-given that most risky behaviors tend to reinforce each other-and the tools used to reach youth.

Providing second chances – For young people harmed by poor health decisions or environments, adequate youth-friendly treatment and rehabilitation services are needed. Young people consulted have highlighted the importance of drug treatment and rehabilitation services that are provided on a voluntary basis and are accompanied by follow-up services. Health services for the treatment of sexually transmitted infections are also essential. It has been estimated that less than 5 percent of young people are being reached by adequate HIV/AIDS prevention services in Thailand

Learning for Work and Life

Despite Thailand's great progress in extending primary and lower secondary education during recent decades, further challenges remain. Despite recent progress, it appears that Thailand's education system is not producing enough qualified graduates to meet the rapidly evolving demands of the labor market. One of the main challenges is to encourage students to stay in school beyond lower secondary school since upper secondary education enrollment rates are still low, particularly in the vocational track. The quality and equity of secondary education, the efficiency of public expenditures and the provision of second chances for children who drop out of school early are additional areas for further improvement

Public interventions to provide young people with the skills and knowledge necessary to be productive workers and to become committed parents and citizens could focus on the following areas:

Expanding opportunities – Improving the quality and relevance of education to prepare youth to meet the demands of the labor market. Recent efforts to improve the quality of secondary education to prepare young people for higher levels in Thailand need to be strengthened and complemented. Very few Thai students score in the top proficiency levels for mathematics or reading according to international assessments, while a very large proportion are performing at or below the most basic level of mathematics, science and language ability.

Improving young people's capacity – Addressing financial constraints to enable young people to pursue upper secondary or higher education. The direct and opportunity costs of education beyond the lower secondary level deter Thai parents from sending children to school after the compulsory level. Different student loan programs/schemes need to be developed and tested to ensure that young people have the means to stay in school, regardless of their social and economic background.

Providing second chances – Providing second chances so underprivileged youth can integrate or reintegrate into the education system. Non-formal education has the potential to play a stronger role in providing second chances or alternatives to out-of-school youth, given its flexible nature.

Moving from School to Work

Making the successful transition from school to work is a challenge for many young people in Thailand. Although the incidence of child labor has fallen in recent years, some youth drop out of school and start to work too early, which can affect future productivity and income. At the same time, youth with higher levels of education face difficulty finding employment in high-skilled sectors and occupations because they lack the qualifications sought by employers. Thailand will therefore need to focus on human capital development, emphasizing innovation and the development of skills and technological capabilities.

Key policy areas to help youth enter the labor market successfully include the following:

Expanding opportunities – Generating more positive employment opportunities for youth. Mainly through demand-driven mechanisms, measures could include such as Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programs, which provide financial assistance for in-need households to send children to school; strengthening the labor market information system to provide timely information that would help match supply and demand for labor; promoting rural off-farm work opportunities; facilitating the successful integration of young migrant workers; and facilitating self-employment through the provision of financing and other support. As a complementary measure, a continued focus on eliminating child work is also needed.

Improving young people's capacity - Improving the capabilities of the young people to meet market needs. Schools need to become a bridge between education and employment. To ease the transition between the school and the workplace, more programs involving on-the-job training are needed. Additionally, the diversification of education and training options to accommodate varied student needs/capabilities as well as market needs should be considered.

Providing second chances – Helping those who have dropped out of the labor market to reintegrate into it. The main second chance program offered by the Ministry of Education is the Non-Formal Education system. Other innovative approaches used in other countries should be explored to complement this effort.

Youth Policy and Institutional Framework

Both the policies and the agencies in charge of youth have changed numerous times, undermining their effectiveness. Young people today will be the leaders of tomorrow. A nurturing environment can support the realization of their full potential-a society that invests in education and its children and provides them with an equal chance to learn and to be; a society that promotes better and healthier quality of life, both physically and mentally; a society that kindles more and better jobs for shared economic growth and well-being; and a society where good governance prevails and is guided by high ethical and moral principles.

Thailand has had many policies and plans related to youth development over the past few decades. Currently, the responsibility for youth policy formulation and coordination lies within the recently established Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. However, the responsible Bureaus do not have the required capacity to undertake such a paramount task, particularly in terms of coordinating the efforts of several different Ministries and agencies involved in youth-related issues.

Key areas for improving the Thai youth policy and institutional framework include: ensuring that youth policy is a long-term policy commitment of the State and not merely of a given government; providing effective coordination

of all policies that directly or indirectly affect youth; ensuring that youth policies and plans are better translated into agencies' programs and activities and establishing adequate mechanisms of accountability for youth outcomes; developing tools to measure both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of youth policy initiatives; and institutionalizing consultation mechanisms that allow youth groups and civil society organizations to participate in policy formulation as well as implementation.

Building the next generation of Thailand human capital requires a concerted effort. The four main ministries responsible for promoting the country's youth development agenda-Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Health and Ministry of Justice-must work towards ensuring that every stakeholder-including other governmental departments, NGOs and the private sector-come together to bring about an enabling environment for youth of all walks to thrive and realize their full potential. Moreover, policymaking must also be in tune with reality. It needs to listen, understand and incorporate the voices and vision of youth, the central stakeholder in this process, in order to be grounded on the will and aspirations of the next generation.

CHAPTER 1:
OVERVIEW AND FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

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Young Thai people, as the next generation, represent the future of Thailand. Their development is a function of multiple factors and involves many stakeholders, not least the national government. The interaction among these factors and stakeholders will determine the outcomes of youth development and the future roles of youth as they become adults in society. Ensuring a smooth, productive transition to adulthood requires first and foremost an understanding of the environment in which these young people live and the effects it has on them. As they grow up, young people will encounter a range of opportunities and risks and it is a question of how well existing and new opportunities can be maximized and promoted and how well the capacity of young people can be improved to enable them to make positive decisions regarding their education, health, family or employment situations. This chapter describes the urgency of addressing youth issues, pointing to recent demographic changes and social trends that pose new challenges for Thailand. It also provides a brief overview of the interactions among the various factors affecting youth development and the conceptual framework used to analyze youth transitions in this report.

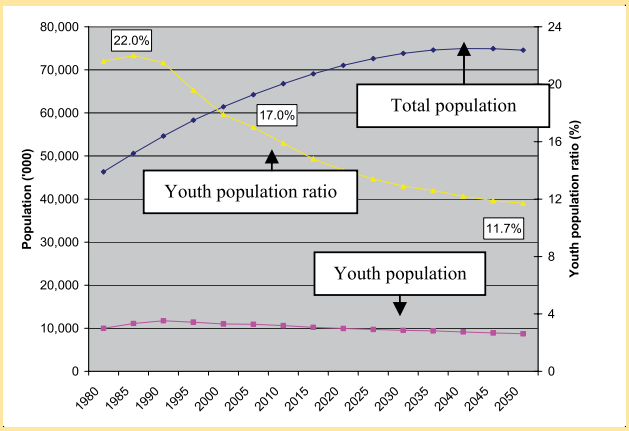
I. Why focus on youth in Thailand and why now?

Youth[1] are important actors in Thailand's national development. As the next generation of workers, parents and leaders, young people represent the future of Thailand. The future of these youth-as well as the futures of their families and country-depends heavily on how they manage the key transitions of their lives, namely growing up healthy, learning for work and life and moving from school to work. Their decisions at this stage in life can have a large impact on economic development and poverty reduction since they determine how human capital is safeguarded, developed and deployed. Improved access to education and employment have shown to bring positive social returns, particularly in improving health outcomes, lowering crime rates and boosting participation in public affairs. At the same time, the consequences of poor decisions during youth may be very costly and difficult to correct later in life. Building the capabilities of young people and helping them manage their transitions to adulthood successfully are therefore key development priorities for Thailand.

Thailand's demographic profile underscores the urgency of addressing youth issues to support its future growth strategy. The opportunity to reap the demographic dividend of a "youth bulge," in which countries can capitalize on a large number of new workforce entrants to boost economic growth, has passed in Thailand. The youth population ratio in Thailand has been on a steady decline after peaking at

[1] Different national governments and international organizations have used different age brackets to define "youth" and "young people." For example, the World Development Report 2007 uses the 12-24 age group, while the United Nations General Assembly defines youth as those between 15-24 years of age. Thailand's own National Youth Policy refers to youth as those between 18-25 years. For the purposes of this study, "youth" is defined as those in the 15-24 age bracket (unless otherwise specified). In Thailand, decisions about whether to pursue further education or seek employment are most relevant for those between the ages of 15-24, particularly since the 1999 National Education Act raised the level of compulsory education to nine years and the passage of the Labor Protection Act B.E. 2541 raised the minimum working age from 13 to 15 years of age in 1998.

Figure 1.1: Population Projection and Youth Population Ratio in Thailand



Source: UN, 2005

22 percent around 1990 (Figure 1.1). One of the driving forces behind the falling youth population ratio is the decreasing total fertility rate,[2] which dropped from 6.4 between 1960 and 1965 to 1.95 between 1995 and 2000. The fertility rate in Thailand is now below the replacement level.[3] This pattern can be explained by the increasing delay in marriages, postponed childbirth and the trend toward fewer children, as seen in many other middle-and high-income countries.

Thailand has integrated itself well into regional as well as global economies. In order to remain competitive, maintaining productivity gains will be critical. As highlighted in *An East Asian Renaissance: Ideas for Economic Growth,*[4] growth records of emerging East Asian economies during the past decades have been impressive. Over the last quarter century, East Asia has grown more rapidly than any other region in terms of GDP. It is also the poverty reduction champion of the world, where headcount poverty (at US$ 2 a day) has fallen by about 250 million people since 1999. While the region as a whole is doing remarkably well, individual East Asian countries have experienced different degrees of development. Korea and Taiwan (China) have emerged as regional technology leaders. China's spectacular economic boom has driven not only the regional economy but its influence has been felt worldwide. Vietnam's economic expansion has also contributed significantly to East Asian growth. Vietnam's per capita income will likely reach US$1,000 by 2010, becoming a middle-income country such as China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.[5] In a rapidly evolving and increasingly sophisticated economic environment, Thailand and its policy makers must continue to enable the foundations for sustainable growth, regionally and globally and foster progress towards higher levels of development.

[2] The average number of children born to mothers during productive life who lives beyond her childbearing years, worldwide on average between ages 15 and 49.

[3] Replacement fertility is the total fertility rate at which women would have only enough children to replace themselves and their partner. By definition, replacement is only considered to have occurred when the offspring reach 15 years of age. If all offspring survived to the age of 15 the replacement rate would be exactly 2, but in practice it is affected by childhood mortality. The replacement fertility rate is roughly 2.1 births per woman for most industrialized countries and has not been evaluated for poorer countries.

[4] Gill and Kharas, 2007.

[5] The World Bank classifies countries by income per capita as follows: below US$825 as low income; between US$826 and US$3,255 as lower middle income; between US$3,256 and US$10,065 as upper middle income; and over US$10,066 as high income.

To maintain its competitiveness, Thailand must focus on strengthening the capabilities of its youth cohort and boosting productive opportunities. The youth labor force is expected to shrink by around 10 percent in the next decade,[6] and the cheaper abundant young labor from which economic growth in Thailand has benefited in the past will soon be in shortage. At the same time, Thailand is facing increased competition in labor-intensive industries from its neighbors and from other countries that are benefiting from their own youth bulges. To stay competitive, Thailand will need to focus on developing the human capital of its 10.6 million youth and providing young labor force entrants with better opportunities.[7] However, it appears that the higher education system has not yet equipped these youth with the enhanced skills necessary to help Thailand move up toward more knowledge-intensive products. Improving the quality of education and labor, ensuring that the existing skills match the market's demand and investing in skills development, technology and innovation are therefore pressing challenges.

A number of social problems, which reveal the increasing risks, faced by youth today, also point to the critical need to support positive youth development. For example, suicide is the third leading cause for death among young men and women. Teenage pregnancy has increased from 10.8 percent in 2002 to 13.9 percent in 2004, partly due to changes in sexual practices among Thai youth over the last decade. The age of sexual initiation has decreased for females and a greater proportion of teenagers report having sexual relationships.

"I got money from an older man whom I had sex with several times. He gave me cheques for 20,000 baht, sometimes 30,000 baht. When I slept with him, I felt very disgusted—you know, he wasn't my boyfriend whom I love. The money I earned, I spent on frivolous things. It's a very bad habit, but too bad—I'm already addicted to this habit." Gip, a 15-year-old sex worker, Bangkok Post, April 11, 2001

The number of young people practicing unsafe sex in non-commercial sexual relationships has been on the rise, along with the numbers of those engaging in other unhealthy behaviors. A study conducted in 2005 found that the median ages for starting consuming alcohol are as early as 11 years of age for boys and 15 years for girls.[8] These types of risky behaviors can have serious health consequences over the long term and undermine the productive potential of youth. Violence among Thai youth is also worrisome as it has steadily increased over the past few years, given the growing number of delinquents serving time at correction centers.

Another major concern that has emerged in recent years is rising consumerism among Thai youth, along with the negative behaviors they may engage in to help fuel

[6] ILO, 2006b

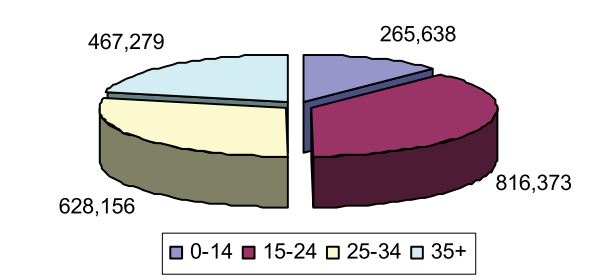
[7] "Human capital" refers to a broad range of knowledge, skills and capabilities that people need for life and work. The traditional definition of human capital refers to the education and health levels of people as they affect economic productivity. The World Bank World Development Report 2007 also highlights skills and capabilities required for successful living as part of human capital.

[8] Dr.Suriyadeo Tripathi, quoted in Matichon, September 14, 2005.

such consumption. Although globalization and the Internet have helped open up a world of information and possibilities for youth, they have also fueled expectations that can, if left unfulfilled, lead to frustration and disillusionment. In Thailand as in many other countries, consumerist images and messages conveyed through the popular media have shaped the lifestyle expectations of young people and led to a heightened focus on materialism. However, these expectations may go unsatisfied since many youth do not have the education and work opportunities that would allow them to grow professionally and earn enough income to achieve their desired lifestyle. Non-consumption can lead to feelings of exclusion, withdrawal, lack of control and relative deprivation, prompting youth to search for wealth even through illegal conduct. Around 8.9 percent of youth use proceeds from the Government's education loans for shopping and almost 1 percent of youth reported seeking additional financing for their lifestyles from "adult sponsors," loan sharks, soccer and other gambling, or stealing from their parents.[9] Survey results also suggest that the number of youth engaging in commercial sex activity has increased, citing financial need as a motivating factor.[10]

Although youth are becoming exposed to greater risks, the traditional support provided by families appears to be weakening. Longer working hours and migration of parents and young people to cities have led to a declining influence of parents and family. A survey of 1,066 households in Bangkok found that 43 percent of parents feel distant from their children since they only spend an average of 1-3 hours together each day.[11] Another survey found that 40 percent of youth in secondary and higher education have not gone out with their parents in the past month.[12] In addition, increasing rural-to-urban migration among parents has left 37.3 percent of children in rural areas to be reared by their grandparents. Migration among youth themselves also places them outside the reach of

Figure 1.2: Number of Migrants by Age Group, 2006



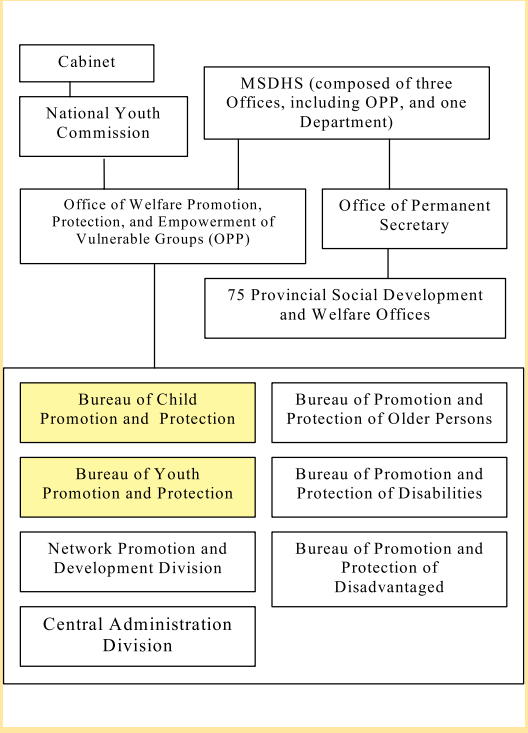
Source: Migration Survey, 2006

[9] Ramajitti Institute, 2005
[10] See, for example, results from the ABAC poll of young people aged 11-26 in 29 provinces, cited in "When 500,000 youth are about to engage in commercial sex," Manager Online (25 July 2004).
[11] Family Network Foundation and Ramkhamhaeng University, 2003.
[12] Thailand Research Fund Regional Office, 2003

parental influence at an earlier age than in the past. According to the 2006 Thailand Migration Survey, among all age groups, 816,373 youth age 15 – 24 comprise the largest proportion of migrants (37.4 percent). And from around 10.6 million youth population, 7.7 percent of them are migrants. (see Figure 1.2)

Government institutions for youth have also weakened in recent years, lowering capacity to support youth development issues. Since the inception of youth development work in Thailand in 1965, the national youth policy and supporting institutional framework have undergone numerous changes, mostly as byproducts of political change. The National Youth Commission has primary responsibility for proposing overall youth policies and plans, while the National Youth Bureau has historically been charged with implementation and coordination. However, the latest reform, brought about through the Bureaucratic Reform Act B.E. 2545 (2002), downgraded the departmental status conferred on the National Youth Bureau (NYB)-previously under the Prime Minister's Office-to the Office of Welfare Promotion, Protection and Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups (OPP) in the recently established Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) (see Figure 1.3).[13] Under this office, the Bureau of Child Promotion and Protection (OPPC) and the Bureau of Youth Promotion and Protection (OPPY) are mandated to promote and protect the welfare and rights of children and youth as well as to develop policies and programs to pursue their goals. The more limited responsibilities of the Bureaus are reflected in their relatively small budgets; whereas that of the NYB was around Baht 200 million per year, the combined annual budget of the two Bureaus is approximately Baht 40 million.[14] Coordination capacity is also limited, given the position of the Bureaus within the MSDHS and the fact that the MSDHS has no representation at the district, sub-district and community levels. Even before the 2002 reforms, the coordination of youth policies was already a formidable challenge, since it entailed working with approximately fourteen agencies involved in youth education, seven in youth health, seven in youth employment, three in youth participation and seven in cross-cutting areas related to youth.[15]

Figure 1.3: Structure of the Youth Institutional Framework after Enactment of Act B.E. 2545



[13] The Ministry was established by combining a number of agencies from different ministries, including the Department of Public Welfare (formerly under the Ministry of Labor), the Office of Accelerated Rural Development, the Community Development Department (both formerly under the Ministry of Interior) and the National Youth Bureau.

[14] These budgets are estimates and were obtained from discussions with government officials.

[15] UNESCAP, 2005

However, the Children and Youth Development Act aims to restore an institutional structure that would enable Thailand to address youth challenges more effectively. Since the bureaucratic reform, policymakers and officials have been struggling to obtain cross-ministerial/sectoral support and mobilize sufficient resources for youth-related policies and programs. In response, the new Children and Youth Development Act includes the following elements:

- Local Administrations must devise children and youth development plans in line with the national children and youth development plans and set aside sufficient budgets for children and youth development programs/activities. The role of the private sector and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in children and youth development is also acknowledged.
- A Children and Youth Development Commission will be established to replace the National Youth Commission. The Commission will be chaired by the Prime Minister and will include representatives from social and economic ministries as well as experts on youth development issues.
- The Office of National Children and Youth Development will receive Departmental-status within the MSDHS, with broader and more comprehensive roles and responsibilities.

The development of new plans for youth development also offers an important window of opportunity for shaping future youth policy. The Royal Thai Government (RTG)'s approach to youth is laid out in the Fifth National Youth Plan (NYP) and the Long-Term Strategy (2002-2011), which were translated into a five-year Plan of Action (2005-2009) to support the work of the youth agency and other responsible ministries/agencies. Now a long-term National Strategy and five-year Plan of Action for youth development in accordance with the United Nations (UN) framework on "A World Fit for Children" have been completed. The Plan covers the following areas:

1. Family and children
2. Health and mental health of children
3. Safe environment for children and prevention of injuries and accidents
4. Children and impact from HIV/AIDS
5. Education
6. Recreational activities
7. Media and children
8. Culture and religion
9. Participation and involvement
10. Safeguard for children requiring special protection[16]
11. Laws and regulations relating to children

The monitoring and evaluation framework for the Plan implementation is under preparation.

[16] "Children requiring special protection" includes 16 groups ranging from children suffering from orphanages, abuse (sexual and substances), exploitation, trafficking, displacement deprivation and social disadvantage.

This Social Monitor aims to inform the development of a comprehensive youth development strategy, seizing the opportunity to help Thailand craft policies and programs responsive to the needs of today's youth. Youth development in Thailand is at a critical juncture, as Thai youth face a host of unprecedented opportunities and risks. With the anticipated establishment of stronger institutional arrangements for youth, the RTG will be in a better position to execute youth-related policies and programs. The key issue now is how to develop policies that respond effectively to the country's youth challenges, expanding opportunities and building the capabilities of its young people while discouraging negative risk-taking behaviors that may prevent them from reaching their full potential. The information and analysis presented in this Social Monitor is expected to help inform the public discourse on youth issues as well as future policymaking, particularly the formulation of the new National Strategy and Plan of Action for youth.

The report adopts a multi-dimensional approach to youth issues, using the framework developed in the World Bank's World Development Report (WDR) 2007. Numerous studies have been conducted on youth issues in Thailand, but most are narrowly focused on a specific issue or on a particular city or region. Few studies provide a larger picture of the situation of youth in Thailand which would give a sense of priorities across the major areas-taking into account the inter-connectedness of many of the issues-and facilitate coordination among the many agencies and partners involved in youth. The approach developed in the WDR 2007 allows for a systematic analysis of youth issues and identification of policy priorities, which can be used as a basis for future policy making and coordination efforts. The following section describes the youth development model underlying the analysis in greater detail.

II. The youth development model

Analyzing youth issues and challenges: the youth transitions

The outcomes of youth development are determined by the interplay of various factors and the kind of support directed or available to youth. While it is true that negative outcomes may be the result of misjudgments by young people who are inexperienced in decision making, they may be also a legacy of family and community structures. Policies that fail to deliver basic services can also have an impact on the formation of structural foundations for better youth outcomes. The interplay of numerous factors influences the pathway from youth to adulthood and affects its ultimate direction at various levels:

- At the micro level: family socio-economic background, health and home life;
- At the meso level: community characteristics, school and workplace conditions; and
- At the macro level: socio-economic factors, macroeconomic stability, labor market regulations, public health services and environmental policies.

The youth development model used for this analysis aims at helping to identify the most relevant factors influencing youth development outcomes. The model outlined below attempts to portray a holistic view of youth development and promote a better understanding of how various factors interact. It focuses on three key pivotal transitions of life, namely growing up healthy, learning and working.

In this model, the main factors affecting youth development include:

Genetic and non-genetic biological factors	Physical and Mental Maturation

At the most basic level, people are born with certain *genetic and non-genetic traits*, which are key determinants in the maturation process of an individual.

Maturation is also affected by a major mechanism usually coined as "learning," through which influences of other factors interact and are assimilated by the individual.

Socialization	Development
Expectations, norms, values	Cognitive and moral

The two basic components of this mechanism include: *Socialization and Development*. *Socialization* emphasizes the interpersonal content of learning; *Development* emphasizes the individual context of learning.

These two aspects are formed and changed over the years as well as influenced by family, peer groups, society and government policies.

Family
Socio-economic status, number of siblings, family structure, parent-child relationship

Family is probably the most important influence on young people. The education, occupation and socio-economic status of parents, parents' family background and parents' age at marriage and first birth can all influence youth outcomes. The number of children, presence of other family members, family experience (such as divorce or separation), interactions among family members and the attitudes, values and norms of family are all determinants in this context.

Peer group
Friends' behaviors Friends' attitudes

It is often assumed that during adolescence, the role of the family in socialization declines in importance, while the role of the peer group increases. Included under the peer group are the values and attitudes of peers and their actual behaviors, as well as the extent to which individuals' beliefs match friends' behavior and attitudes.

Society
City, region, neighborhood, religion, media, technologies, schools, work places, culture

Furthermore, society/culture/subculture, including characteristics and values of the larger society, may affect individuals through membership or residence in certain cities, regions, communities and neighborhoods. School, the media and availability of/exposure to new technologies also have an influence on youth.

Government
Economy-wide policies and institutions, macro stability, investment climate, governance, labor market regulations, education and training, health, welfare and family services, infrastructure

Finally, government policies can affect the lives of young people-from determining the broad economic context in which they live and work to providing education and setting laws about early marriage, voting and child labor.

Access to Opportunities, Alternatives and Information

In this model, the influences of family, peer groups, society and government policy and institutions are shown to affect youth through the *Socialization and Development* mechanism as

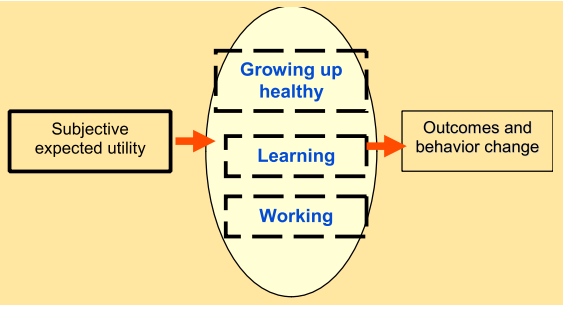
well as through providing *Access to Opportunities, Alternatives and Information* on which youth decisions are based.

Personality, knowledge, intelligence, values, attitudes, "tastes"

An important premise of the model is that individuals incorporate their own experiences and learning, as well as the experiences conveyed by families, peer groups, societies, governments and institutions, into their development through the *Socialization* and *Development* mechanism. This mechanism further interacts with the *Physical and Mental Maturation* process, forming young persons' expectations and capabilities. The outcomes of these processes then form young persons' personality, knowledge, intelligence, values, attitudes and tastes, which ultimately lead to their subjective expected utility as described below.

Capabilities

At the age of 15, all the factors mentioned above will have already influenced a young person to a certain extent and will have (i) determined an individual's likelihood to engage in any activity, or *Capabilities and* (ii) formed a basis for the individual's evaluation of the expected positive and negative outcomes of his or her behavior, described by the term *Subjective Expected Utility (SEU)*. Youth's *SEU* and capabilities are closely related. Capabilities are developed and stay within youth, but the *SEU*-though built upon capabilities-is expectation-based and influenced by other surrounding factors at the time of the activity/transition.



When entering each transition/activity, youth carry this *SEU* with them. The youth's *SEU*, will either complement (a match) or conflict (a mismatch) with the situation they are facing, possibly due to lack of access to information, opportunities and alternatives. For young people with a match, their transitions will be smoother and tend to produce a positive final outcome. However, some youth may be deprived of opportunities and alternatives or struggling to find opportunities and alternatives that will allow their capabilities to flourish. For these youth, the outcomes experienced during each transition/activity could be disappointing.

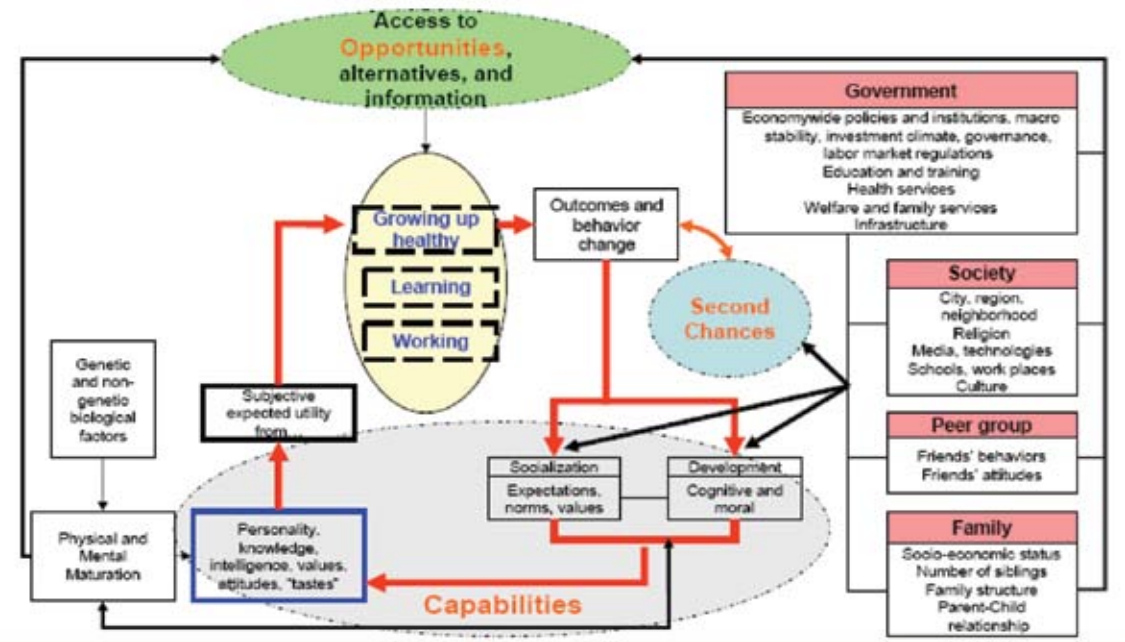
Second Chances

Young persons bearing the burden of negative outcomes should be provided with *Second Chances* to enable them to fully capitalize on past experience and fulfill their potential.

The outcome from each transition/activity will feed back into the *Socialization and Development* mechanism to create new expectations, norms, values, cognitive experiences, knowledge and so on for that individual, which will ultimately generate a new set of *capabilities* and *SEU* for future activities and transitions. Family, peer groups and society will also react to particular outcomes, influencing the new *Capabilities* and *SEU* of youth.

Emerging from the model are the factors and linkages affecting who youth are and who they will become. The basic premise of this model is that youth personality, knowledge, intelligence, values, attitudes, tastes and so on-

Figure 1.4: Youth Development Model



Source: Adapted from Hofferth, 1987 and World Bank, 2007b

which are influenced, in turn, by other factors-will determine a young person's likelihood/perception in succeeding/engaging in a particular activity. As illustrated by Figure 1.4 below, the *SEU* plays a significant part in determining the outcome of each activity or transition.

Policy implications: the three policy lenses

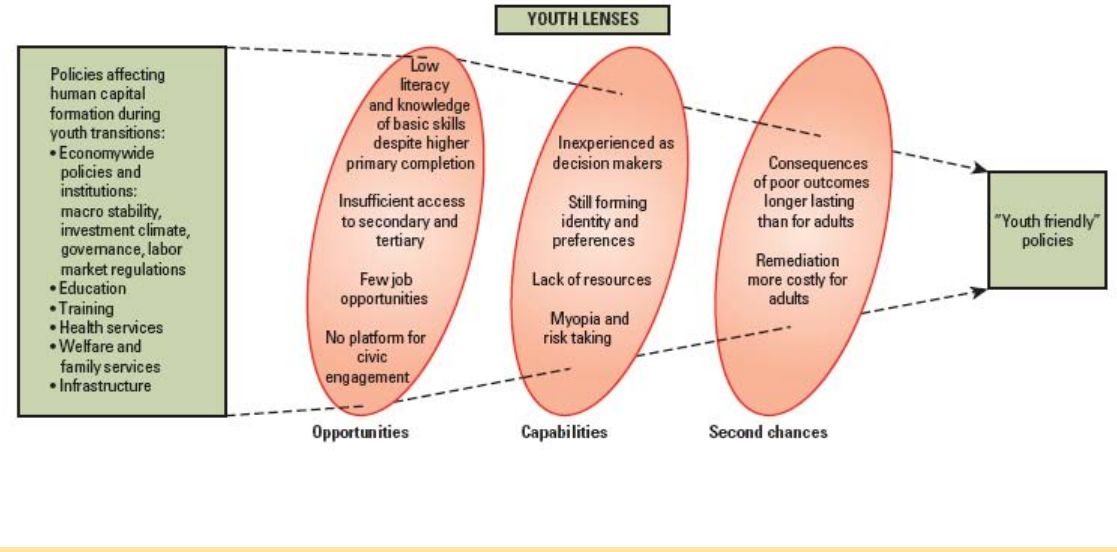
The model illustrates the broad nature of youth development and the importance of finding the correct policy focus. The model serves two purposes: (i) to broaden the areas to be explored for policy interventions that can ultimately improve the situation of youth and (ii) to highlight critical entry points and mechanisms for enhancing opportunities and mitigating risks for youth. Of particular importance is how to ensure that all youth have full access to opportunities, full support to develop their capabilities and full understanding to be provided with second chances.

The three elements of opportunities, capabilities and second chances provide "youth lenses" through which policy priorities can be evaluated. Applying a youth lens to policies can help determine whether resource allocations and service provision in various areas are sufficient or even appropriate. The lenses can focus on policies as well as magnify their impact. As described in the WDR 2007, these lenses suggest three broad directions for youth policy:

i) broadening *opportunities* to develop skills and use them productively, for example by improving the quality of education and health services and facilitating their entry into the labor force;

ii) helping them acquire the *capabilities* to make good decisions in pursuing those opportunities, for example by giving

Figure 1.5: Youth Lenses to Evaluate Policies



Source: World Bank, 2007b

them access to sound information and equipping them with analytical skills to make well-informed decisions; and

iii) offering them *second chances* to mitigate the negative effects of past policies and behaviors through targeted programs such as drug rehabilitation and retraining.

The emphasis of this policy framework is on strengthening the positive aspects of youth development. This approach emphasizes the idea that youth development policies need to help young people acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to make a successful transition to adulthood. The framework therefore takes a positive approach to youth development, moving beyond the notion that youth development is simply the prevention of risky or bad behaviors. It extends the human capital model by treating young people, as well as families and governments, as potential investors in their future.

This Social Monitor applies the policy lenses to three key transitions of Thai youth to help inform future policies. This Report looks across the major youth transitions of leading a healthy life, learning for work and moving into the labor force, describing the current situation of Thai youth in these transitions and the factors that make youth vulnerable. For each transition, the Monitor assesses whether government policies are effective and sufficient in trying to broaden opportunities, strengthen capabilities and provide second chances to help youth successfully manage these major transitional stages. While the three transitions are examined individually, health, education and work behaviors are all co-dependent.

The Monitor follows this policy framework as it applies to youth age 15-24; however the early years of one's life are extremely important in defining who a person will

become. The most effective way to ensure the success of youth tomorrow is to invest in children today. Effective programs improve environmental conditions, as well as impact individuals directly. Early childhood development programs for children under-five can help build cognitive skills, improve nutrition and teach parents effective parenting skills. Programs that ensure children remain in school up to the secondary level can also reduce the risks to which children are exposed. While this report does not specifically address the issues facing children 0-14, youth do not arrive at age 15 without a past that has shaped their growth. It is important to recognize that programs providing opportunities, capabilities and second chances are as important for the youth population prior to their reaching 15, as the programs are during their youth years. Low investment in the young often requires high investment in adults who cannot care for themselves.

The report is organized as follows: Using the three lenses framework, Chapter 2 studies the transition to *Growing Up Healthy*. The transition of *Learning for Work and Life* is studied in Chapter 3, while Chapter 4 focuses on the transition of *Moving from School to Work*. Finally, Chapter 5 provides an overview of the institutional framework for youth development in Thailand and suggests directions for future policy. The Report investigates what the current institutional arrangements in Thailand are and how they can be strengthened to improve the effectiveness of support delivery and opportunities for youth, allowing Thailand to help maximize the potential of its young generation. The Social Monitor concludes with a brief summary of recommendations for future policy directions.

CHAPTER 2:
GROWING UP HEALTHY

CHAPTER 2: GROWING UP HEALTHY

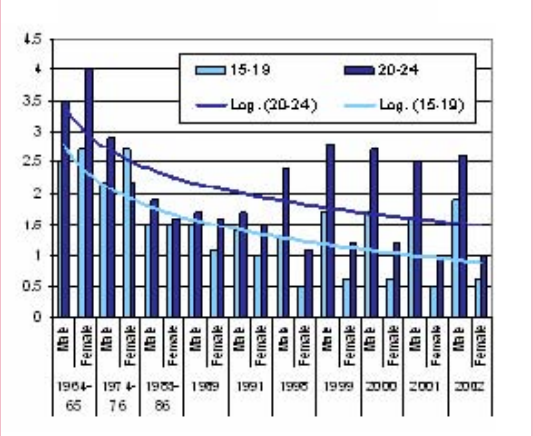
Health and physical well-being during the transition from childhood to adulthood can deeply affect the rest of people's lives. Although young people normally experience lower mortality rates and better health status than adults, they develop habits and behaviors at this stage in life that are key determinants of health outcomes as they grow older. The 15-24 age range is usually when people tend to engage for the first time in risky behaviors such as smoking, alcohol and drug consumption and unsafe sexual relationships. During this age range, people also start having more control over their diet and physical activities. This trend is particularly worrisome since unhealthy habits and behaviors developed at a young age can cause serious health problems during adulthood, affecting productivity and even leading to early death. In Thailand, the proportion of youth engaging in these risky behaviors has been rising in recent years.

I. Symptoms: Health trends and challenges among Thai youth

Youth mortality and morbidity

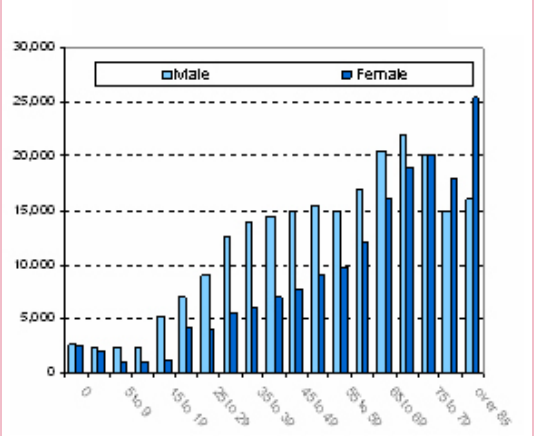
Mortality among Thai youth has been on a constant decline over the past few decades. Mortality rates of young people have been decreasing since the 1960s as part of the overall improvement in health status of the Thai population. In particular, mortality rates for the younger age group (15-19 years old) and for women in the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups have been falling steadily (Figure 2.1). As of 2004, mortality among Thai youth was significantly lower compared to adult age groups (Figure 2.2). Risky behaviors and habits developed in younger years, however, normally show their negative impacts on health later in life.

Figure 2.1: Youth Mortality Rates in Thailand, 1964-2002



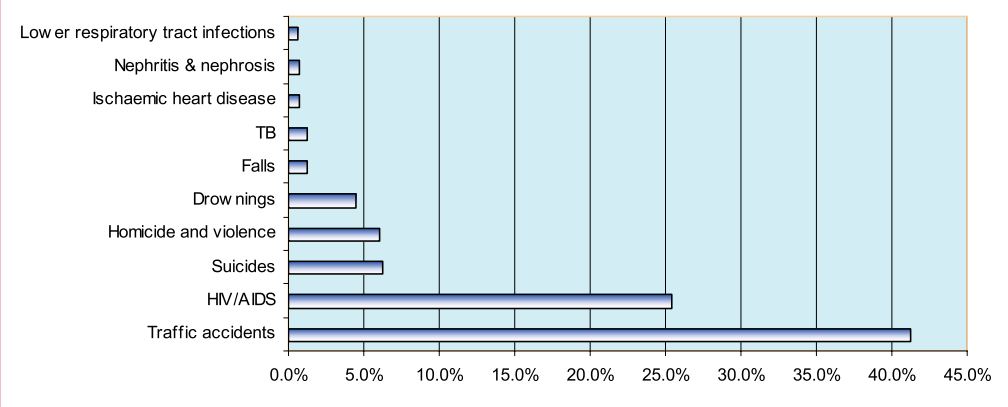
Source: Ministry of Public Health, 2002

Figure 2.2: Mortality Rates in Thailand by Age Group and Gender, 2004



Source: Ministry of Public Health, 2004

Figure 2.3: Causes of Deaths among Young Male Aged 15-29, 2004



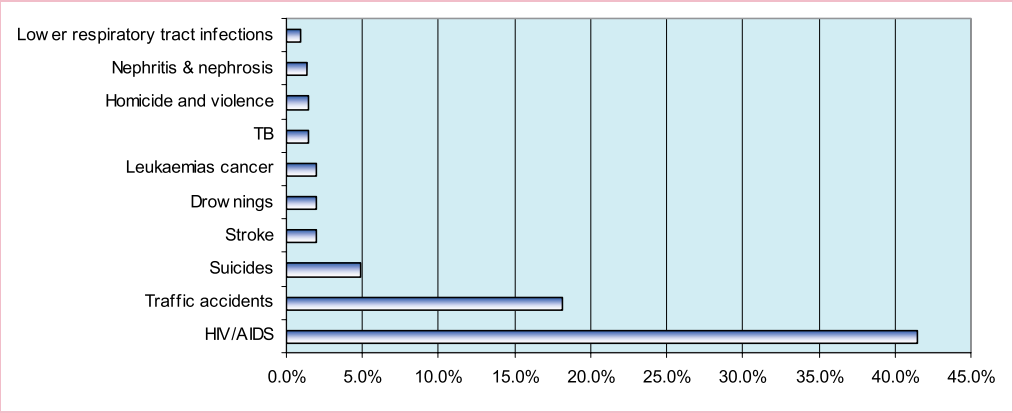
Source: International Health Policy Program, 2004

Mortality is disproportionately higher for young men than for young women. In 2004, around 76 percent of deceased youth in Thailand were male, compared to 23 percent who were female.[17] Deaths among male youth are primarily due to traffic accidents, whereas the first cause of death for young women is HIV/AIDS; the second factor is HIV/AIDS for male and traffic accidents for women; and the third is suicide for both. Injuries and deaths caused by road traffic accidents have become a major public health issue in Thailand while the number of motor vehicles has increased as well. Over the past decade, the number and percentage of young people dead as a result of traffic accidents has been increasing constantly. Around 43.5 percent of serious traffic accidents occurred among people in the 15-24 age group in 2003.[18] Various studies estimate that the risk of traffic accidents is between four to five times higher for Thai men than women, which may be explained in part by the alcohol consumption habits of men and women. Alcohol consumption is a habit normally associated with men in Thai society and alcohol is present in a high proportion of traffic accidents in Thailand. An estimated 50 percent of deaths from traffic accidents in Thailand were due to alcohol consumption.[19]

HIV/AIDS is also a major cause of mortality among youth in Thailand, particularly for young women. Although the number of young people deceased as a result of HIV/AIDS has been falling, AIDS remains a leading cause of death among youth, as noted above. It has been estimated that around half of new annual HIV infections in Thailand occur among people aged between 15-24.[20] Figure 2.5 shows that 29.3 percent of new HIV infections in 2004 were young women aged between 15-24 years old while young men in the same age bracket accounted for 26 percent. Another estimate suggests that prevalence of the disease among people aged 22 or younger rose from 13 percent in 2003 to 22 percent in 2005.[21] Additional evidence shows a large increase in the prevalence rate among young men who have sex with other men (MSM). HIV prevalence among MSM in Bangkok increased

[17] National Statistical Office, 2006c
[18] National Statistical Office, 2003b
[19] Don't Drive Drunk Foundation, http://www.ddd.or.th
[20] UNESCAP, 2006
[21] UNAIDS, 2006

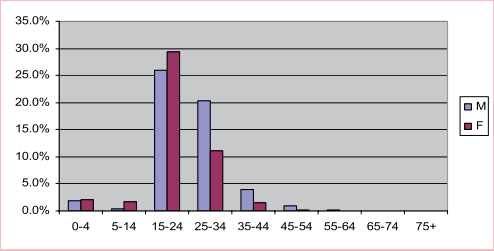
Figure 2.4: Causes of Deaths among Young Female Aged 15-29, 2004



Source: International Health Policy Program, 2004

from 17 percent in 2003 to 28 percent in 2005 and it tripled among MSM under age 21 in the same period.[22] Thus, concerns have been growing over the possible re-emergence of HIV/AIDS spread among young people in Thailand. The main causes appear to be the changing sexual behaviors among youth and their lack of awareness about the consequences of engaging in unsafe sexual intercourse. In the case of MSM, the increase in incidence is largely explained by stigma issues and the previous exclusion of this group from HIV/AIDS prevention strategies.[23]

Figure 2.5: Age and Gender Distribution of New HIV Incidence, 2004

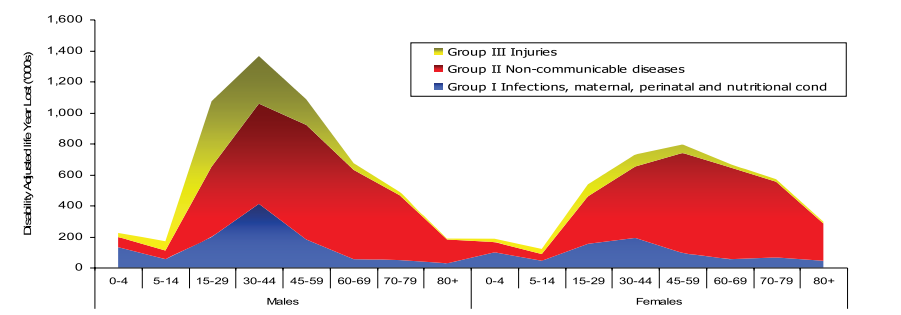


Source: Thai Working Group, 2004

Although non-communicable chronic disease incidence is low among youth, Thailand is undergoing a changing disease pattern in which non-communicable chronic diseases are overtaking infectious ones as the main cause of death. The incidence of non-communicable chronic diseases and their death toll are already on the rise throughout the world and in Thailand. Young people generally do not experience high rates of morbidity due to non-communicable chronic diseases, given that such diseases are usually generated by unhealthy habits maintained over long periods of time. However, the incidence of chronic diseases among young people in Thailand is expected to increase in the coming years due to changing dietary habits, environmental pollution, increased alcohol and tobacco consumption and substance abuse. Thailand, like many other Asian countries, is undergoing an epidemiological shift in which non-communicable chronic diseases are overtaking infectious ones as the main cause of death and morbidity among both youth and adults (Figure 2.6). For instance, the rate of admissions per 100,000 people due to heart disease rose

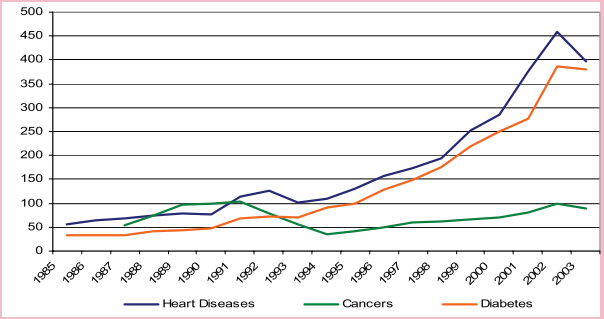
[22] United Press International, 2006
[23] Van Griensven and others, 2005

Figure 2.6: Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs)[25] Lost by Age and Disease Categories, 2004



Source: International Health Policy Program, 2007

Figure 2.7: Hospitalization Rate of Patients with Heart Diseases, Cancer and Diabetes, 1985-2003



Source: Ministry of Public Health, 2004

sharply from 109.4 in 1994 to 397 in 2003. Over the same period, the rate of admissions for cancer increased from 34.7 to 89.4.[24] The incidence of diabetes is also rising (Figure 2.7). Among Thai youth, the most common chronic diseases today are allergic conditions and diseases of the respiratory and nervous system.

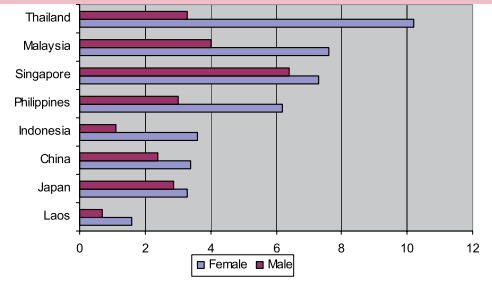
The problems of obesity and being overweight are occurring at an early age and increasingly having a health impact on youth and adults. Like most middle-income countries, Thailand is undergoing a nutritional transition. The diet in Thailand increasingly includes added sugar and fat, food from animal origin and alcohol. Changing dietary habits, cultural perceptions of fat children being healthy and sedentary lifestyles have also contributed to an increase in obesity. In 2006, the prevalence of obesity and being overweight was high in Thailand compared to

[24] Herald Tribune, 2005

[25] The Disability Adjusted Life Year or DALY is a health gap measure that extends the concept of Potential Years of Life Lost (PYLL) due to premature death to include equivalent years of 'healthy' life lost by virtue of being in states of poor health or disability. The DALY combines in one measure the time lived with disability and the time lost due to premature mortality. One DALY can be thought of as one lost year of 'healthy' life and the burden of disease as a measurement of the gap between current health status and an ideal situation where everyone lives into old age free of disease and disability (Health Statistics and Health Information System – WHO)

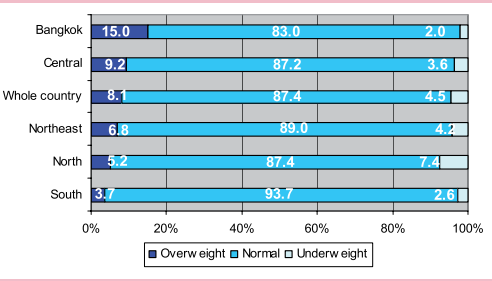
other Asian countries, particularly for women (Figure 2.8). The concern is relevant to both children and youth. The percentage of obese children aged 5-12 years old rose from 12.2 to 15 percent between the years 2000-2003,[26] whereas obesity of young people aged 20–29 years old increased from 3 to 22 percent during 1986-2003. Overweight children are 3-5 times more common in Bangkok and the Central region than in other parts of Thailand (see Figure 2.9). This regional difference can partly be explained by

Figure 2.8: Obesity in Asia, 2006



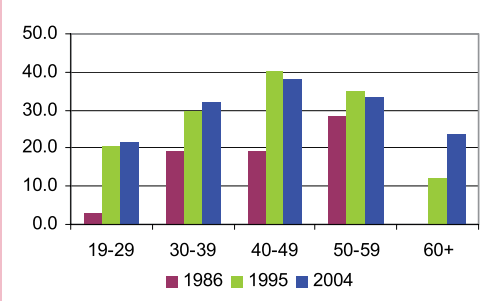
Source: WHO Global Database on Body Mass Index

Figure 2.9: Nutritional Status of Children Aged 6-14 Years, 2003-2004



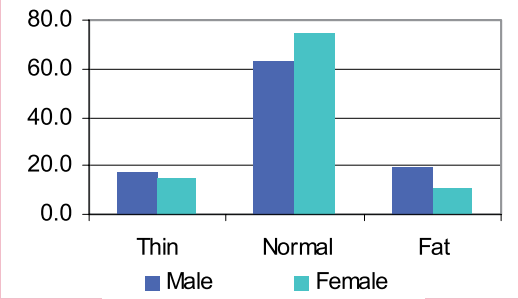
Source: Ministry of Public Health, Thailand Nutrition Survey, 2003

Figure 2.10: Prevalence Rate of Obesity by Age and Gender, 1986 – 2004



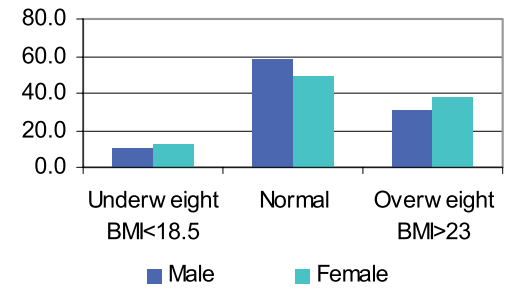
Source: Ministry of Public Health, Thailand Nutrition Survey, 2003

Figure 2.11 : Percentage of Young People Aged 15 – 18 Having Standard Weight and Deviating from Standard Weight, 2003



Source: Ministry of Public Health, Thailand Nutrition Survey, 2003

Figure 2.12: Percentage of Young People Aged 19 – 29 by Body Mass Index (BMI), 2003



Source: Ministry of Public Health, Thailand Nutrition Survey, 2003

[26] UNICEF, 2006

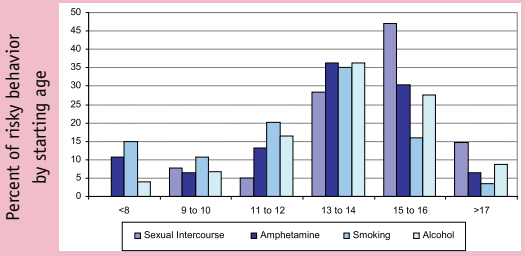
the relatively high consumption of fast food and soft drinks in these localities.[27] It is also evident that the prevalence of being overweight among men aged 15-18 years old is higher than that of women (Figure 2.11). However, for the 19-29 age group, the prevalence is higher among women than men (Figure 2.10). Obesity during childhood and youth can be perpetuated as people get older and lead to chronic diseases such as diabetes and circulatory diseases.

Risky behaviors of youth

Risky behaviors developed at a young age can have negative impacts on health status during adulthood. As noted above, young people generally have better health status than adults. However, it has been estimated that around one-third of the total disease burden in adults is related to behaviors or conditions developed during youth.[28] Thus, preventing youth engagement in risky behaviors that could compromise their health status is critical for preventing negative health outcomes later in life.

The increasing engagement of youth in risky behaviors has become a major concern in Thailand. The numbers of young people smoking, drinking alcohol, experimenting with drugs and having unsafe sexual relationships have been rising in Thailand in recent years. Evidence shows that these kinds of behaviors start at an early age. According to the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, in 2007 Thai male youth started drinking as early as 11 years old, while females started at 15 years old. Another study conducted in 2005 shows that the median ages for starting smoking, alcohol consumption, amphetamine use and sexual relationships were between 12 and 15 years old in the selected sample (Figure 2.13).

Figure 2.13: Initiation of Risky Behaviors in Thailand



Source: Ruangkanchanasetr and others, 2005

Table 2.1: Proportion of Smokers by Age and Gender in 1999, 2001 and 2003 (percent)

Age group (years)	1999			2001			2003		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
11-14	0.2	0.5	-	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1
15-24	12.3	24.0	0.3	13.5	26.0	0.6	15.2	32.1	0.9
25-59	26.3	49.8	3.0	26.2	49.9	2.6	25.3	51.8	3.4
60+	23.3	45.1	4.8	21.1	40.9	4.3	21.5	43.3	4.6
Total	20.5	38.9	2.4	20.6	39.3	2.2	21.6	44.1	2.9
Age at first smoking	18.2	17.9	22.2	18.5	18.3	21.9	18.4	18.2	21.5

Source: Ministry of Public Health, 2004

[27] Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 2006
[28] World Bank, 2007b

Figure 2.14: Projection of Prevalence of COPD, 2001-2010

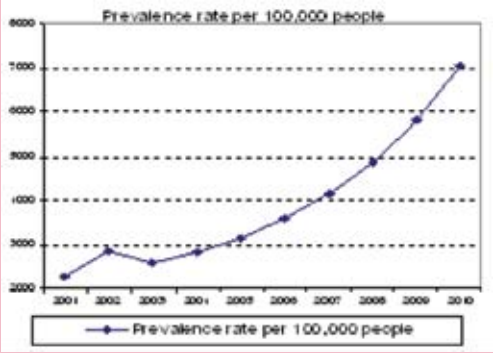
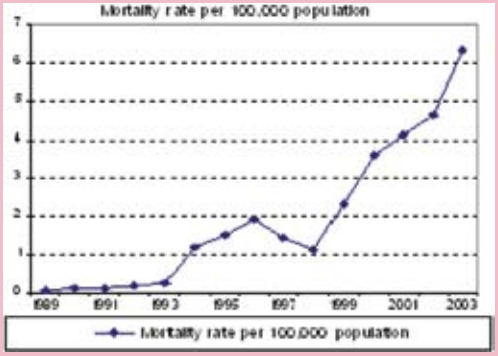


Figure 2.15: Mortality Rate due to Emphysema, 1989-2003



Source: Ministry of Public Health, 2004

The proportion of youth who smoke has increased significantly in recent years. Just between 2001 and 2003, the percentage of young males who smoked increased from 26 percent to 32 percent (Table 2.1). Smoking is much more prevalent among young males. In 2003, less than 1 percent of young women were smokers.

The increased prevalence of chronic respiratory and circulatory diseases in Thailand has been attributed to rising smoking rates. Abundant evidence shows the relationship between tobacco consumption and emphysema, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), coronary atherosclerosis and lung cancer, which have been on the rise in Thailand.

It has been estimated that by 2010, the prevalence of COPD will be 7,035 per 100,000 population over age 15, compared with 143 per 100,000 population over age of 20 in 1991.[29] The mortality rate due to emphysema has also risen from 0.07 percent in 1989 to 6.3 percent in 2003.[30]

Table 2.2: Percentage of People Who Drink Alcohol, 1991-2003

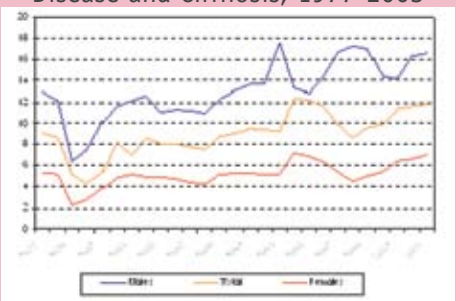
Age group (years)	1991		1996		2001		2003	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
11-14	-	-	0.2	0.05	-	-	0.5	0.4
15-19	21.7	2.1	20.8	1.0	19.9	1.9	33.5	5.6
20-24	59.5	5.4	56.0	5.7	55.8	7.2	70.4	11.8
25-29	66.7	9.2	67.6	6.9	68.1	10.2	75.7	16.8
30-34	68.6	11.9	67.7	9.5	67.0	12.3	76.5	20.0
Total	53.7	9.5	50.1	7.4	55.9	9.8	60.8	14.5

Source: Ministry of Public Health, 2004

[29] Chitanondh, 1991
[30] Ministry of Public Health, 2004

The rate of alcohol consumption among youth is also rising. Most people who drink alcohol in Thailand started at an early age. As mentioned earlier, Thai youth start drinking as early as 11 years old for males and 15 years old for females. Around half of the Thai population who drinks alcohol started when they were under 20 years old and around 80 percent of drinkers were familiar with drinking before they were 24 years old. Male and female drinkers differ in this regard: not only do more males drink compared to females, but males also tend to begin drinking at younger ages.[31] The share of young people, both female and male, who report drinking alcohol, has increased significantly in recent years. For the youngest group (15-19), while only 21.7 percent of males and 2.1 percent of females drank alcohol in 1991, 33.5 percent and 5.6 percent reported drinking alcohol in 2003. This pattern is even more pronounced among youth between 20 and 24 years old. In 1991, 59.5 percent of males and 5.4 percent of females in this age group reported drinking alcohol. By 2003, these shares rose to 70.4 percent for males and 11.8 percent for females.

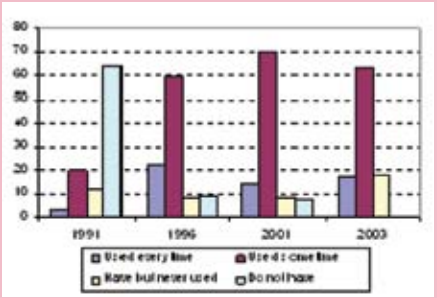
Figure 2.16: Mortality Rate from Liver Disease and Cirrhosis, 1977-2003



Source: Burean of Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Public Health

Alcohol consumption can pose a major health hazard during youth and over the longer term. As noted above, a clear correlation can be seen between alcohol consumption and mortal or serious traffic accidents in Thailand. It has been reported that around 50 percent of Thai youth drink alcohol **sometimes when they have to drive**.[32] The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) estimates that around 50,000 people are seriously injured or disabled a year as a result of driving after drinking alcohol, with drinking contributing to 73 percent of the total number of severe cases.[33] Alcohol consumption can also have serious health consequences when excessive and maintained over a long period of time, for example, in contributing to liver disease and cirrhosis. More specifically, alcoholism can lead to a 20 percent higher rate of liver cirrhosis.[34] Between 1977 and 2003, the mortality rates from liver diseases and chronic cirrhosis increased for both males and females, while the trend in cirrhosis resulting from hepatitis B virus is declining (see Figure 2.14).[35]

Figure 2.17: Helmet Use by Males 15-24 Years Old



Source: National Statistical Office, Health and Welfare Survey, 2003

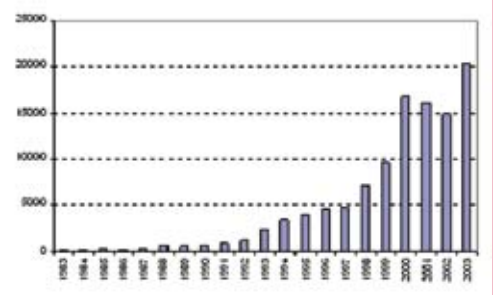
With regard to traffic accidents, young people's use of helmets while riding a

[31] Podhisita, Xenos, Juntarodjana and Varangrat, 2001
[32] Report of 2003 Health and Welfare Survey, quoted in Thai Health 2005
[33] UNESCAP, UN Focus, Vol. 24, 2006
[34] Thailand's Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Public Health was quoted in the Nation, July 10, 2006, Thailand is 40th in World Alcohol Drinking.
[35] Ministry of Public Health, 2004

motorbike is low. In Thailand, around 80 percent all accidents causing death involve motorcycles.[36] In the Health and Welfare Survey 2003, the number of young people who reported using a helmet sometimes increased significantly from 20 percent in 1991 to over 60 percent (Figure 2.17). However, the survey also showed that only around 18 percent of young motorcycle riders used a helmet every time they rode.

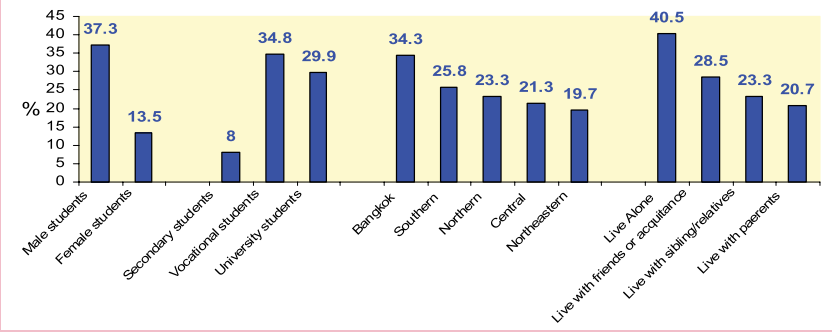
As in the case of alcohol consumption, evidence from various sources shows increasing incidence of drug abuse in Thailand. The number of reported adverse events from drug use has risen from 2,303 in 1993 to 20,287 in 2003 (Figure 2.18). Moreover, about 18-30 percent of all patients hospitalized have had problems related to drug use and this proportion appears to be on the rise.[37] In addition, the number of new drug-dependence cases of all ages reported increased from 19,162 in 1992 to 35,851 in 2002. The number of students as new drug-dependence cases rose from 1,119 in 1992 to 5,903 in 2002.[38] A study conducted in 2002 in Chiang Rai province revealed that 29 percent of the young people surveyed had experience using methamphetamines.[39] The 2001 survey on youth in Bangkok found that 37.8 percent of adolescents had used at least one illegal drug in their life.[40] A study conducted in 2002 in Chiang Rai province revealed that 29 percent of the young people surveyed had experience using methamphetamines.[41] Despite major efforts to disincentivize consumption and prevent drug trade, the supply and varieties of drugs have expanded. Heroin is the predominant substance used, as well as marijuana, opium and inhalants. The increase in the supply of amphetamine, cocaine and ecstasy could indicate a rise on the demand for these substances.[42]

Figure 2.18: Number of Reported Events from Drug Use 1983-2003



Source: Division of Planning and Technical Administration, Thailand's Food and Drug Administration

Figure 2.19: Students with Sexual Experience, 2004



Source: ABAC Poll, cited in *Thai Health 2004*

[36] Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 2006
[37] Ministry of Public Health, 2004
[38] Ibid.
[39] Sattah, Martin., Somsak Supawitkul and others, 2002
[40] Ruangkanchanasetr and others, 2005
[41] Sattah, Martin., Somsak Supawitkul and others, 2002
[42] Podhisita, Xenos, Juntarodjana and Varangrat., 2001

Thai youth are also engaging in unsafe sex and at an earlier age. According to one estimate, the average age at which Thai youth have their first sexual experience is 14-18 years old.[43] The Durex Global Sex survey estimates that the average first sexual encounter for Thais is 18.3, while the global average is 17.3 years old. Figure 2.19 shows that around 37.3 percent of male students and 13.5 percent of female students were already sexually experienced. Among these, students attending vocational schools and living alone in Bangkok are the most likely to have had a sexual encounter.[44] Evidence also suggests that Thai youth are now having sex earlier: The cohort of age above 45 had on average their first sexual experience at age 18.2 while it is 17.5 and 16.5 for the 21-24 and 16-20 age cohorts respectively.

Although youth engagement in sexual relationships is becoming more common, condom usage in non-commercial sexual relationships remains low in Thailand.[45] Different surveys show that only between 10-30 percent of sexually active young people use condoms.[46] Another study of Thai youth found that only 6.3 percent of the participants used condoms every time they had sex at the beginning of a relationship,[47] and the rate seems to be equally low for young men who have sex with men.[48] A study in four cities (including Bangkok and Chiang Mai) also found that sex workers reported using condoms only 51 percent of the time, mostly with foreigners and only about one in four Thai clients was likely to use a condom.[49] In addition, it is estimated that 15.8 percent of married men aged 20-24 pay a visit to a commercial sex worker and so do 26.2 percent of single men in the same age cohort.[50]

``Youngsters have sex in order to forget something they don't want to remember and they have drugs to make them smile, a smile that will cover up the distress in their lives."
A psychiatrist at the Institute of Child and Adolescent Mental Health as quoted in the Bangkok Post, May 4, 2002

The use of contraception methods among young women in Thailand also tends to be low. In 2006, only about 1.5 percent of sexually active females aged 13-14 used at least one kind of contraception. The share increases with age: 51.1 percent of females between 15-19 years of age and 43.0 percent between 20-24 years of age used contraception. Oral pills are the most popular method.[51]

As a result, early pregnancies are becoming more prevalent and HIV/AIDS infection rates among Thai youth are relatively high. The number of pregnancies among female children and adolescents has risen in recent years. The ratio of pregnant women between 15 and 19 years old per 1,000 female population has risen from 31.8 in 1999 to 47.3 in 2004. Although no national data are available on abortion rates since abortion is illegal in Thailand, a study conducted on women seeking illegal abortions reported that 64 percent of clients were young women under the age of 25 years.[52] In addition,

[43] Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 2002
[44] ABAC Poll, cited in Thai Health 2004
[45] Durex Global Sex Survey, quoted in Ramajitti Institute 2005, Thai Children in Cultural Dimensions, 2003
[46] UNAIDS, 2006; Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 2005; and Ramajitti Institute, 2005
[47] Thato, Sathja and others, 2003
[48] World Bank, 2006
[49] UNAIDS, 2005
[50] Thai Working Group on HIV/AIDS Projections, 2001
[51] National Statistical Office, 2006
[52] UNESCAP, 2000

youth represent around half of new HIV/AIDS infections in Thailand and are increasingly considered a group at risk, as discussed above.

Violence among Thai youth has become an emerging concern. A study by Ramajitti Institute shows a steady increase in the number of juvenile delinquents who serve time at correction centers over the past few years. Between 2004 and 2006, the number of teenagers under 18 years old who were sent to correction institutions increased more than 10 percent a year on average. Among top offences, burglary is listed first, followed by physical assault. Each year, there are roughly 40,000 cases of assault being reported to the police, or more than 100 cases a day. Given that physical assault cases could be conciliated among the two parties without going through legal processes, the actual number is expected to be much higher than reported. According to the study, violent behaviors are usually associated with disadvantaged upbringing.

II. Diagnostics: What makes youth vulnerable?

Health behavior, habit formation and irreversibility

Young people oftentimes engage in risky behaviors because they believe that the short-term benefits outweigh the long-term costs. Habit formation, particularly in the case of addictive substances such as tobacco or alcohol, normally occurs during this period of life and its consequences are often hard to overcome. Given the long time spell between the risky behavior and its negative impact, young people tend to focus on the perceived short-term benefits rather than the longer-term costs. As described in the previous section, most deaths among young males are caused by traffic accidents-often involving motorcycles and alcohol consumption-and HIV/AIDS infection, both of which are related to avoidable risky behaviors. The incidence of non-communicable chronic diseases related to alcohol and tobacco consumption and to unhealthy nutritional habits could also be avoided.

Despite the availability of information on potential consequences of such risky behaviors, youth engagement in such activities is sometimes driven by other factors. As influence from peers gains more influence than parental guidance, young people become more vulnerable to external elements. Since youth is a period of life in which identity is built and the eagerness and possibilities to experience and learn are greater, youth are particularly prone to engaging in risky behaviors that can negatively affect their health later in life. Other influences can reinforce these decisions. According to a 2001 study on youth in Bangkok, factors determining youth engagement in unhealthy behaviors and habits include: broken families; poor relationships with parent, due to financial problems in the household or due to parents' lack of time for taking care of their children; parental addiction; low self-esteem; early school abandonment; being in a gang; or feeling lonely.[53]

[53] Ruangkanchanasetr and others, 2005

Table 2.3: The Main Reasons for Starting Smoking by Age

Reason	Total	Age of starting smoking (Years)				
		<15 yrs.	15-19	20-24	25-29	>30
Total	100.0	11.5	55.9	24.8	4.6	3.2
Want to try	37.5	68.4	39.7	35.7	34.0	55.9
To socialize	7.1	4.0	6.1	9.7	12.6	26.4
Having nothing to do	3.4	7.5	2.1	4.7	4.6	39.3
Follow, or persuaded by friends	34.8	55.2	38.2	32.7	25.1	43.6
Stress and anxiety	3.9	5.2	2.3	5.6	10	56.8
To be smart	3.2	6.7	3.6	3.0	0.8	3.2
To be mature	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.4	2.3	5.3
Follow the family members	3.5	23.1	2.7	3.1	3.4	19.5
Follow other adults	0.6	1.4	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.1
Follow celebrities	2.9	17.7	2.5	2.0	3.3	22.8
Caused by the job	1.3	5.9	0.5	1.5	3.5	27
Others	0.3	-	0.3	0.2	-	0.1

Source: National Statistical Office, Survey on Smoking Behavior of Thai Population, 1999

The behavior of "role models" and peers appears to have a significant influence on youth decisions to engage in risky health behaviors. For example, most of the reported reasons among Thai youth for starting smoking fit a "role model" pattern. For all age groups, the main reason reported for starting smoking was 'wanted to try' (Table 2.3). For the youngest groups, following or being persuaded by friends, family members and celebrities were also major reasons. Clearly, social factors have had a significant impact on the spread of smoking habits in Thailand.

Media and marketing may also influence youth decisions to engage in risky behavior. As described above, alcohol consumption among youth is on the rise. While numerous factors make youth vulnerable to excessive alcohol consumption-such as alcoholic parents as role models, social mores involving drinking as a means of socialization and the availability of and youth accessibility to cheap alcoholic beverages-alcohol advertising can also contribute to this trend. Marketing is a powerful mechanism for attracting young consumers and the alcohol industry is an innovative industry able to use a wide variety of marketing tools. In Thailand, it is estimated that Baht 2 billion (or US$60 million) is spent annually on alcohol advertising. Reports suggest that the marketing activities of the alcohol industry are becoming increasingly youth-targeted.[54]

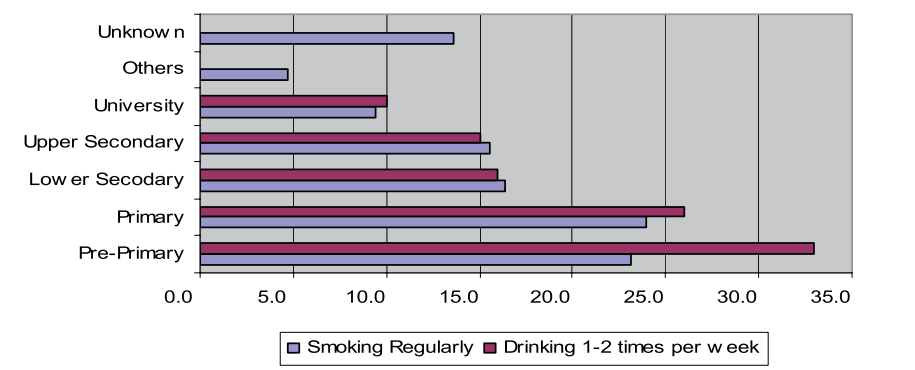
[54] Ramajitti Institute, 2005

Health behavior, imperfect information and inequality

Inadequate information or understanding of the risks faced can lead to unhealthy or risky behaviors among youth. Although individuals might understand health risks over time, they can lack adequate information on the risks they face today for different reasons. Information on HIV status, for example, can be easily withheld from partners and during the early stages of infection, the infected person might not be even aware of it.[55] Many misconceptions regarding HIV/AIDS can also mislead youth and hamper prevention efforts. It has been estimated that less than 5 percent of young people are being reached by adequate HIV/AIDS prevention services in Thailand.[56] The lack of mass prevention campaigns over the past decade in Thailand resulted in decreased awareness of the disease and its transmission. Lack of awareness is particularly evident among youth, who do not remember the campaigns carried out during the 1990s. Around 85 percent of young people in Thailand are not concerned about HIV/AIDS, even when most new cases occur among this age group.[57]

In countries throughout the world, lower income and education levels appear to be related to poor health outcomes. For example, evidence illustrates that despite China's spectacular economic growth, disparities in health outcomes between urban and rural populations have widened during the post-reform period. Large inequalities in health care coverage and thus in health outcomes are evident between the rich and the poor.[58] Although the extent to which income inequality and health interact and the significance of that interaction are not always clear, evidence suggests that low incomes can affect health through the increased likelihood and frequency of unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and alcohol consumption.[59] A stronger sense of being able to have a prosperous future can encourage individuals to make good health more likely. Evidence from different countries also

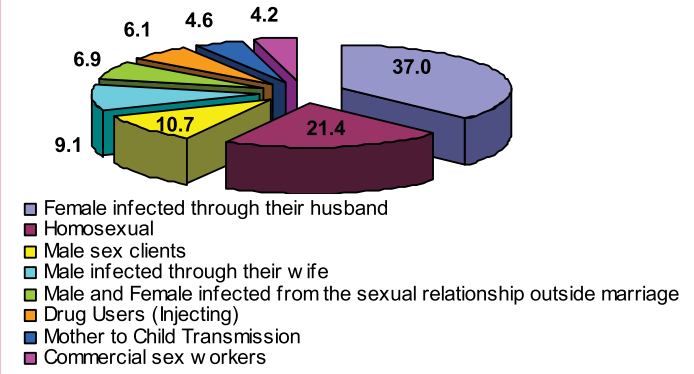
Figure 2.20: Percentage of Smokers and Drinkers Aged above 15 by Educational Attainment Level, 2004



Source: National Statistical Office, Cigarette Smoking and Alcohol Drinking Behavior Survey, 2004

[55] World Bank, 2007b
[56] World Health Organization, 2005
[57] IRINnews, Increased HIV/AIDS awareness needed – UNAIDS, May 2006
[58] Asian Development Bank, 2007
[59] Li and Zhu., 2006

Figure 2.21: Categorization of 17,000 New HIV Infections, 2005



Source: Thai Working Group on HIV/AIDS Projections, 2005

reveals a strong correlation between schooling and youth health behaviors and habits. Education increases the private returns of being healthy, helps young people process health information and provides them with the prospect of a better life, giving them greater incentive to engage in healthy behavior. Schooling is also considered a way to protect young people from engaging in risky behaviors. Therefore, individuals with lower levels of education may have a higher likelihood of deciding to engage in risky behaviors.

In some cases, engagement in risky behaviors can also be explained by unequal relationships, particularly in the case of unsafe sex. Most new HIV/AIDS infections affect women in Thailand and most Thai women are infected by their husbands or boyfriends (Figure 2.21). Gender inequality and violence are key factors explaining the higher risk faced by women. A customary Thai belief that women do not have any sexual knowledge places them in a vulnerable position, since they are not expected to require the use of condoms. A study in 2000 also found that over 40 percent of Thai women surveyed had been physically and/or sexually abused by a partner and condom use was non-existent in those cases.[60]

III. Prescriptions: Policy responses for promoting youth health

Strengthening youth capacity to practice healthy behaviors

Information and education are central to promoting healthy behaviors among youth. For example, adequate knowledge on how HIV is transmitted and can be prevented is essential for reducing its incidence. UNAIDS studies have found that when young people are provided with information on sex and HIV/AIDS, they tend to delay sexual activity and use condoms.[61] Correct information is therefore the first step toward raising awareness and giving young people the tools to protect them from infection. Evidence indicates that adequate and culturally tailored

[60] United Nations Development Program, 2004
[61] UNICEF, 2007

health education programs can improve the capacity of young people to make informed decisions and adopt healthier behaviors. Health education can cover varied areas, from sanitation and nutrition to sexual and reproductive health. And it should not be limited to responsibilities of Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health or Ministry of Social Development and Human Security only. Concerted efforts should come from all related Ministries, private organizations and related functions of NGOs.

Most young Thai people first learn about risky health behaviors at school. School-based health education programs are believed to be particularly effective in countries where primary and secondary enrollment rates are high, as in Thailand. According to a 2001 youth survey in Bangkok, adolescents had most frequently acquired their knowledge about substance abuse, sex and HIV from school. Evidence from around the world illustrates that the longer children remain in school, the less likely they are to engage in risky health behaviors, partly due to this information gathering and sharing at the school level. Some opposition to sex education has been expressed by Thai parents and educational institution administrators on the basis that it could increase promiscuity, although evidence from countries in which it has been introduced suggests otherwise.

Efforts to integrate HIV/AIDS, sexual health information and life skills training into school curricula appear to have had a positive influence on youth behaviors. Since the 1990s, Thai schools and non-formal education centers have been expected to provide students with information on HIV/AIDS in the classroom. However, the extent to which educational institutions have introduced life skills programs and the degree to which efforts have been sustained over time are unclear. Some evidence suggests that life skills training programs have been effective in reducing tobacco and drug consumption among Thai youth. A study carried out in 2006 concluded that life skills training had a positive impact on reducing tobacco and

Box 2.1: The Thai Health Promotion Foundation

The Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth) is an independent organization that was founded in 2001 following the success of Thailand's nationwide anti-smoking movement. The government decision to create the foundation was based on several studies by the Health System Research Institute and through policy advocacy and efforts by civil society groups. The foundation funds, amounting to around USD 50 million per year, come from a 2 percent tax on alcohol and tobacco.

ThaiHealth's goal is to play a facilitating role and support activities that reduce risk factors and promote healthy behavior in a sustainable way. The organization has fostered health promotion alliances and networks and expanded its activities to reach as many people as possible. The "open grants" program allows community-based and other organizations to secure funding for their heath promotion activities and proactive grants support projects according to specific objectives such as model health-promoting schools. ThaiHealth has played a leading role in the movement against tobacco use, prevent drunk driving and reduce alcohol consumption, as well as opportunities to promote physical activity.

drug use among Thai high school students.[62] The study found a statistically significant difference between the knowledge level, attitudes and decision-making and problem-solving skills of students who took part in the program and those who did not.

Provision of comprehensive sex education in school has long been controversial, but recently gained supports. Traditionally, discussing or learning about sexuality is uncommon, if not unacceptable, in the Thai culture. However, with global influence and increasing sexually-related risky behaviors if not well informed, young Thais are in greater need for sex education earlier. A poll conducted in 2007[63] revealed that more than 70 percent of responders support the provision of comprehensive sex education (such as the use of birth-control facilities, how to use condoms, not having premarital sex) and do not think that sex education will promote promiscuity among youth.

The Thai Government recently approved a strategic plan for addressing the increase in HIV/AIDS cases among Thai youth, focusing on education. The three-year plan has been approved by the National AIDS Prevention and Control Committee. Financed with an initial budget of USD 15,550 from the Thai National Health Insurance Office, the plan will focus mainly on educating youth about HIV prevention and promoting social values. Furthermore, 10 percent of the total budget for National AIDS Strategies in order to reduce new infections by half by 2008 has also been earmarked for youth. The National AIDS Strategies target youth at school, workplace and community with an emphasis on highly vulnerable populations. Interventions will be in the form of school programs, condom vending machines, peer and community programs, as well as peer education. The strategies also encourage youth to participate in HIV prevention activities and will call for local organizations to participate in HIV prevention and control activities.

Health-related community information and skills training initiatives also seem to be effective in empowering young people. For example, the Thai Youth AIDS Prevention Project started in 1995 to prevent HIV/AIDS infection among young people in northern Thailand and increase their involvement in prevention activities. The project's main goal was to create opportunities for young people to develop the skills and power to diminish the impact of HIV/AIDS. Findings show that young people's involvement as HIV/AIDS educators helped them gain credibility and respect and many of them progressed to positions of leadership. Additionally, the project showed that bringing together children from families affected by HIV/AIDS with children from non-affected families can have a positive impact on reducing discrimination.[64] The Thai Health Promotion Foundation, a public institution financed by the Thai Government, provides grants to communities for similar types of health promotion initiatives (Box 2.1).

Similarly, peer education programs can be effective means of communication and education. Most literature considers the role

[62] Seal, 2006
[63] "Love, Lust and Learning" campaign by the Programme for Appropriate Technology in Health (Path), quoted in The Nation, October 4, 2007
[64] Reproductive health outlook, www.rho.org

of family and peers as the most significant in terms of influencing adolescents' habits and behaviors. Peer education programs respond to young people's preferences to interact with people who are like them, whom they tend to choose as sources of information rather than teachers or family members. Peer education programs train a group of young people to become models and provide information and referral to services to their peers. Some typical elements incorporated into these programs include: a strong identification with the social and cultural environment of the target group, the promotion of values supportive of positive attitudes and healthy behaviors and involvement of the young people in programs designed for them. The impact of this kind of program has not yet been evaluated extensively.

Mass media programs, which have the potential to reach a much wider pool of youth, should complement school-based education

Box 2.2: The Role of Mass Media in Preventing Risky Health Behaviors among Youth

The mass media has the potential to reach large numbers of young people. A 23-country study among 12-year-old school children found that over 90 percent watched television three hours per day on average. Reproductive health groups are increasingly working with the mass media and entertainment industries to reach youth. For example, the Safer Sex or AIDS Campaign in Uganda, which encouraged young people to make responsible decisions about HIV/AIDS, reached 92 percent of its intended audience. In Zimbabwe, a similar communication campaign reached 97 percent of youth surveyed. In Botswana, Tsa Banana, a mass media campaign to improve adolescent reproductive health, reached about 70 percent of adolescents.

Mass media initiatives can also prove to be cost-efficient. The estimated cost of reaching each young person for a call-radio program in Kenya was just 3 U.S. cents and the estimated cost of getting one young person to take action to improve reproductive health-for example, visiting a health clinic-was 12 cents.

Mass media communication programs can positively influence health behaviors among young people. In Zimbabwe, young people reached by a communication campaign to encourage "saying no" to sex were 2.5 times more likely than those not reached to make healthy choices. In Zambia, adolescents exposed to a television campaign promoting abstinence and condom use were 87 percent more likely to use condoms. In addition, viewers were 46 percent more likely to be abstinent or to have resumed abstinence. Self-reported condom use among sexually active young men in Uganda rose from 33 percent to 70 percent following the Safer Sex or AIDS Campaign and from 58 percent to 73 percent among young women. In South Africa, 38 percent of young people who watched the television program Soul City reported always using condoms, compared with 26 percent of those who did not watch it.

However, mass media programs are not able to address all aspects of HIV prevention. Experience shows that the most effective communication programs involve both mass media and face-to-face communication, such as peer education in small groups. Different communication channels reach different audiences and messages are most effective when reinforced by various means.

Source: Kiragu, 2001

and life skills training programs. School-based programs exclude those youth out of school and since they are mostly implemented at the secondary school level, they fail to reach the large proportion of young people who drop out after lower secondary school and may be more likely to engage in sexual relationships. Education and communication programs broadcasted through the mass media have the potential to reach all youth. Given that the second most common source from which youth in Bangkok learn about risky behaviors is mass media, it could also serve as a channel for conveying knowledge and influencing the behavior of young people in a positive way (Box 2.2).

Other innovative information and communication tools for the prevention of risky behaviors among youth should be explored further. Around the world, education and communication programs aimed at reaching young people increasingly make use of new information channels. One group of youth consulted during the preparation of the WDR 2007 suggested both cultural and content-specific ways in which information on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health could be made more effective and attractive to youth. These included making the content short and specific, keeping the message "real, close to daily life," integrating the messages into television programs and advertisements and asking pop stars to perform specific HIV/AIDS songs. In this regard, as part of the nationwide HIV/AIDS prevention campaign, the Thai Government asked local singers to promote condom use and inform young people about the risks of unsafe sex. At the beginning of 2006, the Thai Government also launched the first HIV/AIDS prevention program targeting MSM, called Sex Alert. The program utilized communication tools such as magazine and radio advertisements, cellphone text messages, the Internet and posters. Flyers, postcards and condoms with lubricant were also distributed.[65] The Smokebusters Caravan provides youth appropriate on-site education where young people congregate, such as shopping areas, sports fields, youth centers, village centers and festival grounds.[66] The Royal Thai Government (RTG) has also assigned a number of agencies, including the Department of Disease Control of MOPH, the Directing Centre on Road Safety of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation and the Ministry of Transport, to carry out a number of activities and campaigns relating to helmet-use, safe motorcycle-riding, driving licenses and speed limits. A "drive safely, turn head-light and wear a helmet" campaign and a live television program on road safety, a national seminar on road traffic injuries, have been part of the government's efforts.[67]

Initiatives to prevent unsafe health behaviors and habit formation among youth need to focus on influencing young people's preferences, not only on information dissemination. Interventions to change behavior normally work on the assumption that young people would make better health choices when provided with better information. However, the formation of preferences and decision making capabilities are also very relevant, as evidenced

[65] Medical News, February 2006
[66] World Health Organization, 2002
[67] World Health Organization, Thailand, http://w3.whothai.org/en/index.htm accessed June 18, 2007

by the fact that even young people with adequate information on health risks faced often make poor health decisions. As noted above, youth respond to the short-term benefits to smoking, drinking alcohol and having unprotected sex. A notable time lag oftentimes exists between risky behaviors and negative outcomes. Low value of the future relative to the present and perceptions of invulnerability at a young age might influence a young person's willingness to apply their knowledge in practice. At the same time, in many cases, the reported reasons for undertaking risky behaviors are following the role of peers or famous people and wanting to increase 'social acceptance.' In other words, young people oftentimes tend to behave in line with what is considered the 'preference' of their reference social groups. Therefore, portraying a negative image attached to unhealthy behaviors and promoting the image of healthier ones through mass media programs, pop or television stars' messages and peer education initiatives could help prevent youth engagement in risky health behaviors.

Expanding opportunities to make healthy choices

Providing youth with an adequate environment for making healthy decisions is necessary to ensure their avoidance of risky behaviors. Facilitating the access of young people to preventive and curative health services is believed to encourage healthier habits of youth. Broadening access to these services-whether dealing with unwanted pregnancies, obesity, or drug addiction-would thus minimize the long-term consequences of risky behaviors and lead to better health. At the same time, restricting the opportunities of youth to make poor decisions, for example through tobacco and alcohol advertisement restrictions and bans or the establishment of tobacco-free zones, can also provide a positive environment for helping youth to make healthy choices.[68]

Allowing the space for youth to connect with parents reduces risky behavior. Young adults who are connected emotionally with their parents are likely to make healthier decisions, such as minimizing drug, alcohol and tobacco intake. These youth also tend to engage in sexual activities at a later age and use precautionary measures. Policies that encourage the role families play in the development of children can facilitate in reducing harmful behaviors.[69]

Supply and demand control policies can be effective in limiting youth's risky behaviors. Since young people are generally more sensitive to changes in prices than adults, taxation and subsidies policies can be especially effective in reducing tobacco and alcohol consumption among youth. Price increases encourage youth to stop using tobacco products, prevent others from starting and reduce the number of ex-tobacco users who resume the habit. It is suggested that price and income elasticity of tobacco demand vary across income categories and between urban and rural areas. The overall price elasticity in Thailand is estimated to be-0.39 and income elasticity is-0.70, similar to estimates for many

[68] World Bank, 2007
[69] World Bank, 2007a

other middle-income countries.[70] Likewise, taxation of tobacco products is also very cost-effective. Food and drink taxes also have the potential to generate revenue that can be earmarked for dieting, exercising and obesity-prevention initiatives. Alternatively, subsidies or cash transfers can be used to encourage healthier choices.

The Thai Government has been active in adopting control measures to prevent young people from engaging in risky behaviors. Since 1992, a ban on tobacco advertisement has been effective in Thailand. Although enforcement appears to have been weak in certain cases and non-compliance is extensive, Thailand is cited as the best practice example in this regard. For example, it was the only Asian country that did not allow tobacco indirect advertisements in several international sports events.[71] As a result of continued Government efforts, commercial displays of tobacco are prohibited and cigarette packets must now carry vivid pictorial warnings-21 percent of smokers who saw the warnings quit smoking, 57 percent reduced their consumption while 21 percent continued as before.[72] After the implementation of the Government's anti-smoking campaign, the Thailand Tobacco Monopoly reported a decrease of 23 percent in sales volume for the first eight months of the 2006 fiscal year compared to the first eight months of the previous fiscal year. In December 2007, the Government announced the prohibition of smoking in non-air-conditioned areas in markets and restaurants (in addition to the existing smoking prohibition in air-conditioned areas). A state-run National Quitline will be set up and a toll-free number provided on all cigarette packs sold in Thailand. In general, comprehensive bans on tobacco advertisement are believed to be extremely effective as prevention measures.[73] Cigarette prices have also been increased for one to two Bath per pack, due to a one percent excise tax increase.

In 2005-2006, the cabinet and MOPH continued to implement measures to combat the abuse of alcohol. As part of these measures, the alcohol tax was raised (e.g. the maximum possible rates are 50 percent for spirits); times and places for alcohol sales are restricted (retailers are now only allowed to sell alcohol between 11am and 2pm and 5pm and midnight); and most importantly, a ban on all forms of alcohol advertising in all media was announced.[74]

The promotion of safe sex starts with the adequate provision of the means to practice it. These means would include not only access to family planning and HIV testing and counseling services but also to condoms as the main means to prevent transmission of HIV. As part of the nation-wide HIV/AIDS prevention campaign, the Thai Government installed more condom vending machines throughout the country, especially near secondary schools, offering condoms for one-tenth the price of condoms sold at drug and convenience stores. Views of such policies are mixed, as some argue that increasing the availability of condoms-like providing sex education-might encourage young people to engage in pre-marital relationships

[70] Sarntisart, 2003
[71] Chitanondh, 2002
[72] Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 2006
[73] World Health Organization, 2007
[74] Ibid.

at an earlier age. However, evidence from other countries worldwide shows that these campaigns normally result in a delay in sexual relationships and increased condom use. Social marketing of condoms can improve young people's uptake of condoms through pharmacies and retailers. Condom promotion policies need to target all youth, married and non-married, homosexual and heterosexual. Young married women are normally less likely to use condoms and therefore more likely to be infected by their husbands.

Providing second chances: Helping young people deal with the adverse consequences of poor health behavior or misfortune

Second chance programs are needed to help young people minimize the adverse consequences of poor health decisions. As described in the WDR 2007, despite having good information on health risks, young people often make poor health decisions that lead to negative health outcomes. Sometimes people can be victim to the effects of others' decisions or to the lack of adequate response by the state. Youth health services need to adequately help young people who suffer negative health outcomes to overcome these problems. Young people who are addicted to tobacco, alcohol, or drugs, or have been infected by HIV/AIDS need programs and services that help them stop the harmful behavior and recover. Concerns have been expressed over the potential negative effects of these services on risk-taking behaviors, since if the costs of the risky behavior are not born by the individuals themselves, they could behave more carelessly. In the case of the provision of contraception, no evidence of this association has been found and it is not clear that unsafe sex would increase as a result. However, some evidence indicates that the provision of anti-retroviral treatment for HIV/AIDS could increase risky sexual behaviors.[75] Nonetheless, the provision of second chances remains necessary to help youth cope with the results of unhealthy behaviors and habits.

Young people need adequate and friendly health services to help them overcome addictions. Treating tobacco dependence should be part of any tobacco control policy. For instance, young addicts could benefit from nicotine replacement interventions to address the physiological aspects when trying to quit. Similarly, services that help young people deal with alcohol dependencies, offering counseling and psychological support, should be provided. In addition, strong evidence shows the benefits of treatment for drug abuse, including significantly fewer drug-related health and social problems. Young Asian people consulted on the subject highlighted the relevance of services provision for drug addiction rehabilitation and treatment and emphasized the need for creating supportive environments, given that young dependent people tend to be resentful and distrust service providers. Thai youth, in particular, suggested that treatment services should be provided on a voluntary basis to ensure effectiveness and that follow-up services would be essential to avoid relapse.[76]

[75] World Bank, 2007b
[76] UNICEF, 2003

Health services for the treatment of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are also essential, particularly since they heighten vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Over 100 million STIs affect people under 25 years old every year worldwide and most of them could be easily treated if diagnosed early. Treating STIs prevents HIV/AIDS transmission, since STIs such as syphilis, chancroid and genital herpes facilitate the sexual transmission of HIV. Many of these infections are not noticeable, especially in the case of girls and women. Making clinics youth-friendly may encourage young people to use health services for treatment, although evaluations have not shown any conclusive evidence yet.

To reduce the risk of health problems related to unplanned pregnancy, health care services that provide access to contraception and other reproductive health care services for girls are required. Induced abortion is illegal in Thailand, except in the cases where it is necessary to preserve woman's life and when pregnancy is a result of rape or incest. However, 33 percent of pregnancies each year are unintended and women who do not want to get pregnant are 16 times more likely to have an abortion than women who want to get pregnant.[77] At the same time, the practice of illegal abortion is evident throughout the country, particularly in rural areas, and appears to be increasing. Illegal abortions are mostly carried out by non-medical personnel and often in unsanitary conditions, leading to complications that put women's lives at risk.[78] Girls and poor women are particularly exposed to the risks of illegal abortion, given that they cannot normally afford the high fees charged by private clinics operating in the country. Induced abortion is widely rejected in Buddhist-majority Thailand as immoral. Preventive measures and emergency contraception may be other means of dealing with unwanted pregnancy. Emergency contraception is available in Thailand, but according to one study conducted in 2000, both users and providers of emergency contraception showed significant lack of adequate information on how to use it.[79]

The policy recommendations in this Chapter are promising, but have been successful to varying degrees across the world. International experience can provide Thailand with valuable lessons in framing, prioritizing and coordinating these "growing up healthy" interventions. Table 2.4 documents countries which have implemented similar policies and the degree to which these policies have been effective.

[77] Institute for Population and Social Research, 2006
[78] Boonthai, 1998
[79] Naravage and Yongpanichkul, 2003

Table 2.4: Summary of Growing Up Healthy Policy Recommendations and International Experience

Policy Recommendations	Evidence	Country Examples	Notes for Success
Expanding Opportunities			
1 Effectively implement and enforce bans on advertisement of tobacco and alcohol and restrictions on their consumption by age and in public places	Proven	Thailand, Russia, United States	Enforcement of salespeople essential
2 Provision of the means required to practice healthy behaviors-i.e. condom provision	Unproven, but Promising	Chile, Mexico	Strong political support is needed
3 Subsidies and taxation policies to decrease the costs of healthy options and increase the costs of unhealthy ones	Proven	Kenya, Mexico, United States	Ensure enforcement and sanctions on violators
Enhancing Capacity			
1 Develop and implement information and habit formation programs: -school and community based -peer education -mass media -innovative campaigns making use of new technology	Proven	Peru and Cameroon Paraguay and S. Africa New Zealand	Mass media programs often increase knowledge but do not necessarily alter behavior
Providing Second Chances			
1 Provide youth-friendly health treatment and rehabilitation services	Proven	Developing countries in all regions	More youth-accessible pharmacies and clinics

Source: Adapted from World Bank 2007a and World Bank 2007b

CHAPTER 3:
LEARNING FOR WORKING AND LIFE

CHAPTER 3: LEARNING FOR WORK AND LIFE

In its first national Millennium Development Goals report, the RTG set a target of achieving universal lower secondary education by 2006 and universal upper secondary education by 2015. During the last two decades, Thailand's efforts in this area have resulted in the universalization of primary education and in a significant increase in secondary and tertiary education enrollment rates. Despite these important gains, some significant challenges remain. Enrollment in upper secondary education and higher levels is far from universal and access to education remains unequal. Other critical issues include poor quality of service delivery, relatively high drop out rates between educational cycles-particularly in rural areas-and low student achievement levels. These issues must be addressed for Thailand to fulfill its national aspirations.

I. Symptoms: Education trends and challenges

Enrollment in secondary and tertiary education

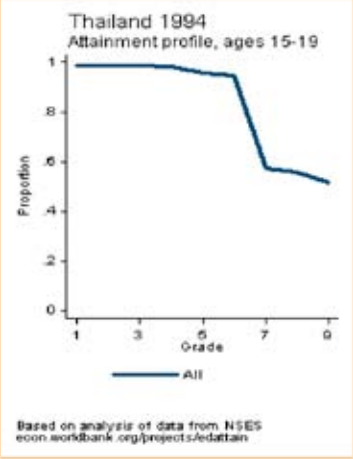
The average number of years of educational attainment of the Thai population over 15 years old has consistently increased in recent years. The 1999 National Education Act (NEA) and the 2002-2016 National Education Plan have respectively raised compulsory education from six to nine years. As shown in Table 3.1, in only the four years between 1999 and 2003, the average years of education increased from 7.1 to 7.8 in Thailand. For the population aged 15-21, the average number of years of education rose from 9.4 to 9.8 over the same period, suggesting that more young people have access to secondary and tertiary education in Thailand than ever before. Furthermore, the growth of educational attainment of the youngest cohort (15-19 years old) has been significantly higher than that of the 20-29 year age group in recent years (Figure 3.1).

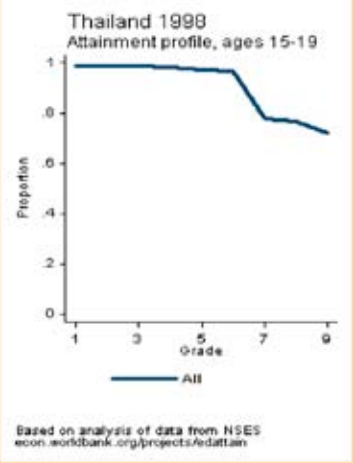
Table 3.1: Average Years of Education Attainment, 1999 – 2003

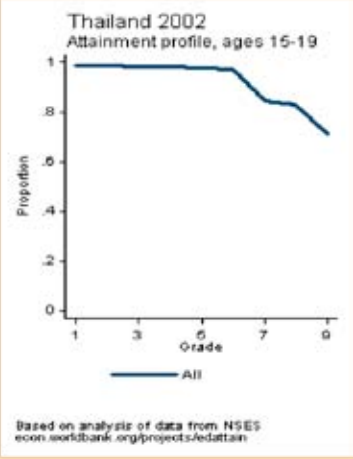
Age	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
15 and over	7.1	7.2	7.4	7.6	7.8
15-21	9.4	9.5	9.6	9.7	9.8
15-59	7.7	7.8	7.7	7.8	7.9
60 and over	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.9

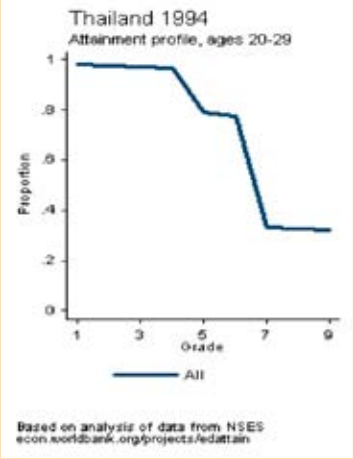
Source: Office of the Education Council, 2006

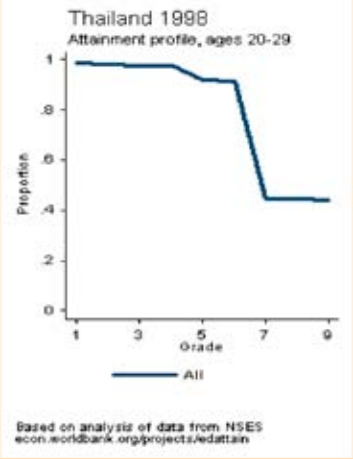
Figure 3.1: Educational Attainment

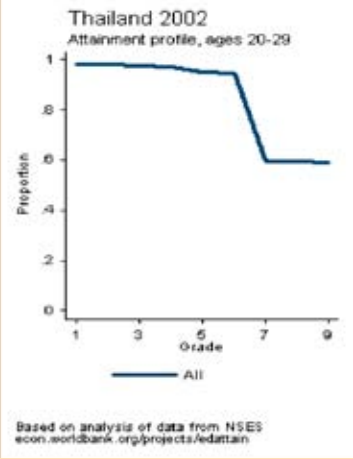












Source: Household Socio-Economic Survey 1994, 1998, 2002

Box 3.1: The Thai Education System

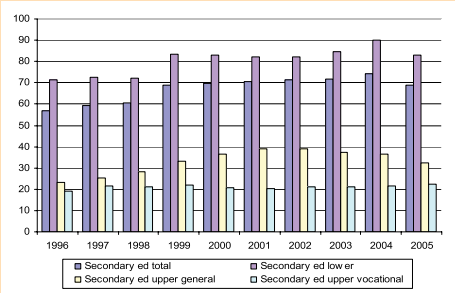
Thai education can be classified into three types: (i) formal education, (ii) non-formal education and (iii) informal education. Formal education services are provided through both public and private bodies to those inside the school system. Formal education consists of basic education and higher education. Basic education includes pre-primary education, primary education, lower and upper secondary education. Formal education also include vocational education, which is provided at the upper secondary level, diploma level (two years study after secondary education) and university level (four or more years of study after secondary education). The table below provides an overview of the Thai education system.

Non-formal education services are provided by both public and private bodies to those outside the school system, such as the early childhood population, school-age population who have missed formal schooling and the over-school-age population (see Box 3.7). Informal education enables learners to learn by themselves according to their interests, potential, readiness and opportunities available from individuals, society, environment, media, or other sources of knowledge. Special and welfare education is provided both in special and inclusive schools for children who are hearing-impaired, visually-impaired, physically-impaired and children with intellectual disabilities.

<table>
<tr><th>Approx. age</th><th>Approx. grade</th><th colspan="2">Education level</th><th colspan="2">Degree</th></tr>
<tr><td>24</td><td>19+</td><td colspan="2">Doctor's degree study</td><td colspan="2">PhD or advanced professional degree</td></tr>
<tr><td>23
22</td><td>18
17</td><td colspan="2">Master's degree study</td><td colspan="2">Master's degree</td></tr>
<tr><td>21
20</td><td>16
15</td><td rowspan="2">Undergraduate programs</td><td rowspan="2">Higher vocational education</td><td colspan="2">Bachelor’s degree</td></tr>
<tr><td>19
18</td><td>14
13</td><td colspan="2">Diploma</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">17
16
15
14
13
12</td><td rowspan="3">12
11
10
9
8
7</td><td>Upper secondary education</td><td>Vocational secondary school</td><td rowspan="4">Basic education</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Lower secondary education</td><td rowspan="3">Compulsory education</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">11
10
9
8
7
6</td><td rowspan="2">6
5
4
3
2
1</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">Primary education</td></tr>
<tr><td>5
4
3</td><td></td><td colspan="2">Pre-primary education</td></tr>
</table>

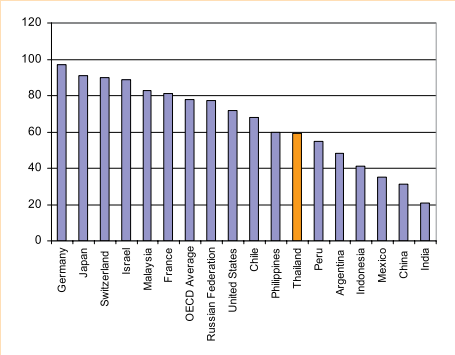
Source: Office of the Education Council, 2004

Figure 3.2: Secondary Education Gross Enrollment Rates 1996-2005



Source: Office of the Education Council, 2006 and Office of the National Education Commission, 1998

Figure 3.3: Percentage of Upper Secondary Graduates to the Population, 2003



Source: OECD, 2005

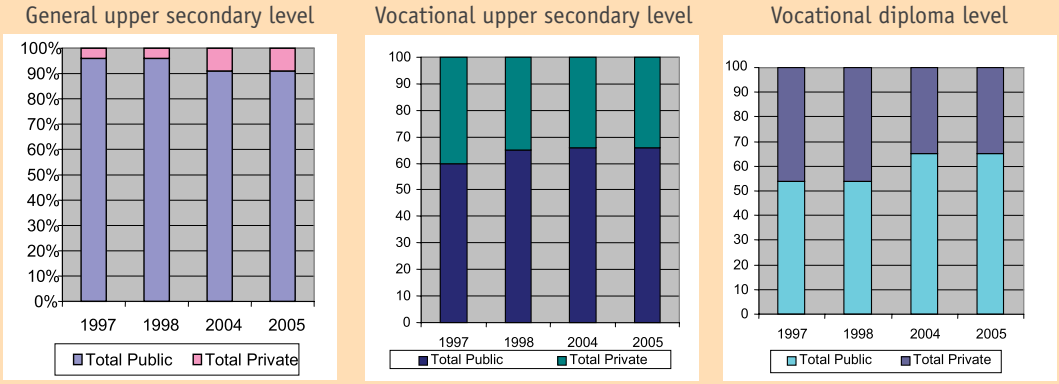
Gross and net enrollment rates have increased substantially in the last two decades. The RTG's efforts during the 1980s to expand primary education resulted in the achievement of near-universal primary education. Further efforts to expand access at the secondary level have also produced dramatic growth in secondary enrollment (Figure 3.2). Lower secondary education gross enrollment rates increased from 72 percent in 1997 to around 90 percent in 2004. Over the same period, the percentage of the labor force with more than primary education rose from 30 percent to 40 percent. Upper secondary education gross enrollment rates have also increased recently, albeit more modestly. The gross enrollment rate in upper secondary education grew from around 57 percent in 1998 to 69 percent in 2005. As of 2005, Thailand had about 3.2 million young students aged 15-21 years old. Around 1.7 million students were enrolled in the upper secondary level, of which 1.0 million students were in the general track and around 0.7 million in the vocational track. Students enrolled in higher education accounted for 10.4 percent of the total student population.

The ratio of upper secondary graduates to the total population in Thailand is high relative to neighboring countries. Thailand performs better than other countries in the region, such as Indonesia, China and India in terms of the proportion of upper secondary graduates. Furthermore, Thailand's share of secondary school graduates was largely at par with countries with higher gross domestic product per capita such as the Philippines, Argentina or Mexico (Figure 3.3).

Despite the recent progress in secondary education enrollment, room for improvement still exists. Over 40 percent of young people who could be enrolled in upper secondary education are not actually enrolled and enrollment rates in secondary education have risen at a decreasing rate in recent years. The challenge of maintaining a constant growth rate over time is common among countries as they approach universal access to schooling and out-of-school populations become increasingly harder to reach.

Vocational education provides an alternative to Thai youth for career development. In 1995, Thailand adopted the German dual vocational education and training model, which is described in Box 3.2. The Dual Vocational Training (DVT) is offered at both the upper secondary and diploma levels. At present,

Figure 3.4: Ratio of Public and Private Enrollment

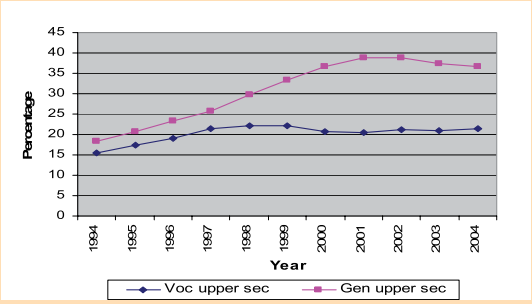


Source: www.moe.go.th/data_stat/, accessed February 20, 2007

vocational education courses cover nine fields and can be regarded as a transitional option from basic to higher education.[80] Trainees enroll with technical or vocational institutions, where they are usually taught vocational subjects two days a week and spend three days at enterprises to practice on-the-job training. Enterprises pay for trainees' allowances. As Figure 3.4 shows, the private sector contributes a great deal in vocational education in both upper secondary and diploma levels compared to the general track, where private institutions only provided around 9 percent of educational services in 2005.

However, participation rates in the DVT system have remained low in Thailand. Despite the growing need for skilled labor, vocational education has been undersubscribed. Figure 3.5 shows that the increase in gross enrollment in upper secondary vocational education from 1994 to 2005 amounted to only 5 percent. In the same period, gross enrollment in general upper secondary education increased by nearly four times that percentage. Low enrollment could be due to a number of factors. First, the curriculum may not be responsive to industry needs, resulting in graduates not finding jobs in their fields of activity. Second, school equipment is insufficient for teachers to teach and for students to practice. Third, the educational path in the vocational track is rather limited. Although graduates at diploma level can continue studying for two years for a Bachelor's vocational degree, or transfer to an academic track, enrollment has

Figure 3.5: Gross Enrollment in Upper Secondary Education as Percentage of Age Group Population



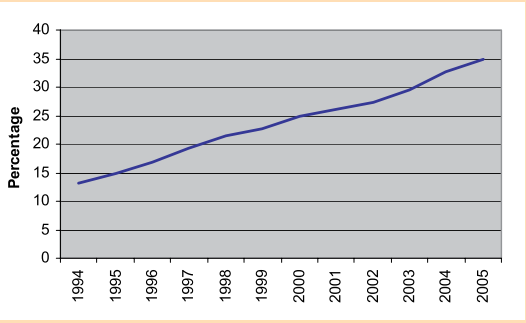
Source: Office of the Education Council, 1994-2003 and Office of the National Education Commission, 2004

[80] (i) Trade and Industry, (ii) Arts and Crafts, (iii) Home Economics, (iv) Commerce and Business Administration, (v) Tourism Industry, (vi) Agriculture, (vii) Fishery, (viii) Textile Industry and (ix) Information Technology and Communication

remained very low (less than 1,000 enrollees a year on average), mainly due to the fact that Bachelor's vocational degree graduates have had difficulty finding suitable jobs upon graduation. Finally, public perceptions convey that vocational education is inferior to the general stream and is not a passport to upward mobility. Better-scoring students and better-off families tend to pursue the academic track up to the tertiary level to access skilled jobs as government officials, state enterprise employees or office workers, not in labor-intensive industries.

Higher education in Thailand has been expanding continuously in terms of number of institutions and enrollment. In 2005, Thailand had 1,055 higher education institutions throughout the country, of which 973 were in the formal system. Enrollment in higher education in Thailand has grown over time and by 2005, more than one-third of youth between 18-21 years old were enrolled (Figure 3.6). Enrollment rates are higher than those of neighboring countries such as Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Lao PDR and Cambodia. Notably, enrollment rates for females are higher than those for their male

Figure 3.6: Higher Education Enrollment Rate, 1994-2005



Source: Office of the Education Council, 1994-2003 and Office of the National Education Commission, 2004-2005

Box 3.2: Dual Vocational Education and Training in Germany

The German dual system of vocational education and on-the-job training has gained acceptance worldwide. The system promotes opportunities for the young generation to have vocational classes and in-company training simultaneously so that students can gain practical experience.

Four key stakeholders are strongly involved: Representatives of the Federal Government (Federal Ministries of Education and Research, Labor and Economics, Interior), Representatives of the States (State Ministries of Education, Economics, Labor and Interior), Representatives of the Employers' Associations (Organizations of Employers, Industries, Chambers) and Representatives of Trade Unions. These stakeholders develop qualification profiles/Vocational Education and Training (VET) standards, examination requirements, the duration and contents of training programs, level of qualifications and criteria for quality assurance.

The dual structured VET has several benefits. First, for enterprises, a pool of skilled workers can be assured. It therefore helps minimize the costs of recruiting new employees. Firms can also influence the contents and organization of vocational training according to their needs. Second, trainees receive labor market-relevant training. As a result, they have better employability after the completion of training and will acquire social and interpersonal skills from working in teams in real life situations. They are also motivated by studying and earning money at the same time. Third, private sector contributions help ease the burden on public budgets. It also involves a public-private partnership in developing competitive national training standards.

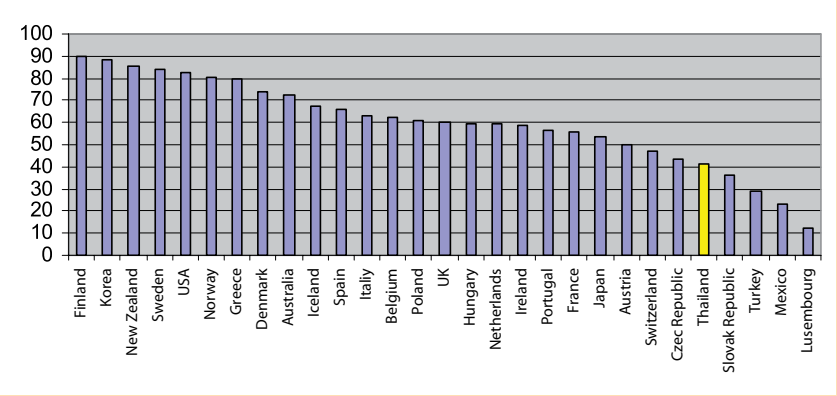
Source: Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, http://www.bibb.de, accessed February 21, 2007

counterparts, with female students accounting for 53 percent of tertiary enrollment on average from 1999 to 2005. On the other hand, Thailand still lags behind OECD countries in tertiary education enrollment ratios (Figure 3.7).

The pattern of school participation in Thailand reveals that the majority of school abandonment is occurring between cycles. In 2005, transition rate to lower secondary level was 93.2 percent and to upper secondary level was 87.2 percent. Discontinuations between cycles tend to be sharper in rural areas than in urban areas, although this gap has diminished over time. Possible explanations for higher discontinuation of education between cycles may relate to basic supply constraints: students simply do not have access to the next education cycle and are forced to drop out of school. Between-cycle abandonment may also be due to low perceptions of the benefits of the subsequent education cycle. Low real or perceived returns to education, high private costs, or high opportunity costs may induce students not to enter higher education cycles. Lack of relevance or poor school quality can also play an important role in a household decision to pull their children out of school.

Higher levels of education are associated with higher economic returns in Thailand. Figure 3.8 shows the average wages associated with different levels of educational attainment in February and August of 1991 through to 2004. Among all levels of education, university education clearly yields the highest returns, followed by vocational education. The high returns to vocational education coupled with its low enrollment rates, suggests that employability after vocational school may be low and suggests that the quality of vocational education is generally low. As the returns to completing secondary education in Thailand are especially low and wage premiums to education attainment only accrue for those with a university degree, choosing to work to gain experience and skills may be perceived as more efficient in Thailand than staying extra years in secondary school.[81] Notably, no substantial difference is seen in

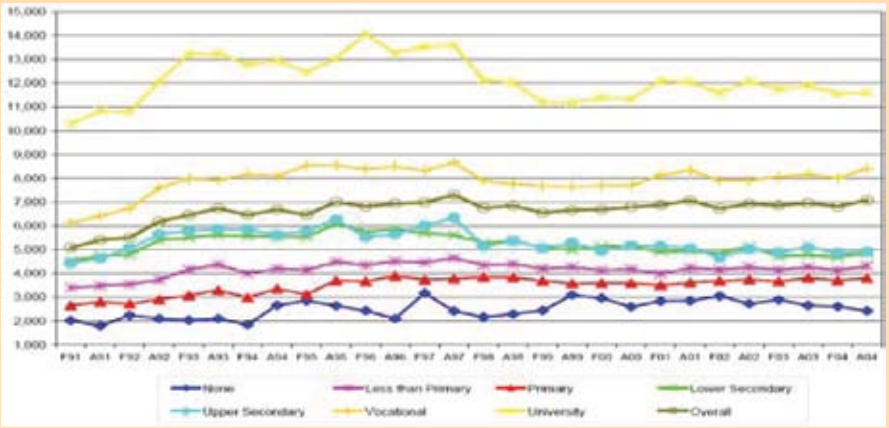
Figure 3.7: Tertiary Gross Enrollment Rate in OECD Countries and Thailand, 2004



Source: World Bank, Edstats, http://devdata.worldbank.org/edstats/ accessed May 23, 2007

[81] World Bank, 2006a

Figure 3.8: Real Monthly Wages by Education of Wage Earners, Labor Force Survey 1991-2004



Source: Richter, 2006

the average wages gained by those with lower and upper secondary education. The return to upper secondary vocational education is only 5.3 percent, increasing to around 12 percent in the case of diploma vocational education and then reaching nearly 35 percent in the case of a university level degree. Premia for tertiary education graduates in Thailand have been high for the past 10 years, indicating high levels of excess demand for the most skilled labor in the Thai economy and the value that employers place on skilled workers.[82]

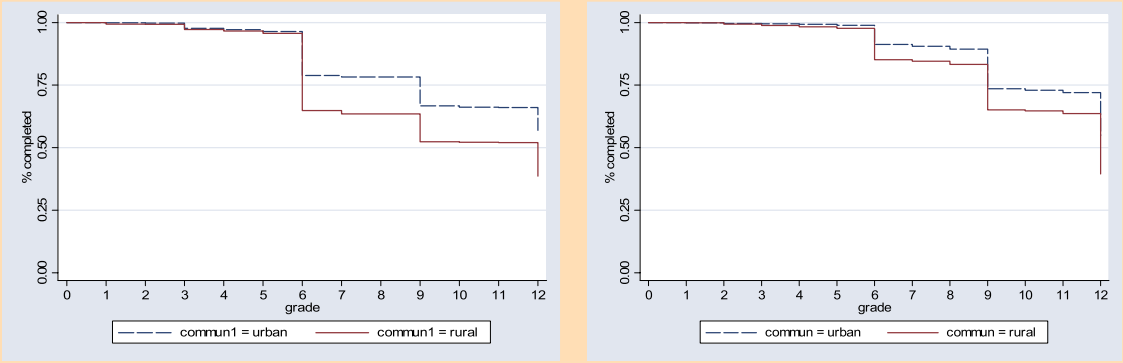
Returns to education and experience are higher for females than for males across all levels of education and vary widely by geographic location. Higher returns for females are partly a reflection of the lower stocks of female human capital in the labor market and therefore higher associated marginal product from females. The gender gap in education typical of developing countries is not as evident in the case of Thailand, especially at the tertiary level.[83] As mentioned in Chapter 1, females continue to represent a greater share of enrollment in tertiary education. In terms of geographic location, substantial differences in education returns can be seen. Returns are higher in municipal areas relative to non-municipal areas and in Bangkok relative to other regions, especially for higher levels of education. These differences are primarily due to the fact that skills are in higher demand in urban areas.[84]

Equity in access to education in Thailand

Although equity in access to secondary education has improved in recent years, areas for improvement remain. Following the massive increase in rural schools in the 1980s, the gap in net enrollment and school participation between rural and urban areas has diminished. In some cases, enrollment rates in rural areas even exceed those in urban areas. Most provinces achieved secondary gross enrollment rates of around 60-70 percent by 2002. Similarly, the urban-rural gap for grade completion has decreased from 25 percent

[82] World Bank, 2006a
[83] Blunch, 2004
[84] Ibid

Figure 3.9: Grade Completion by Urban/Rural Location between 1994 and 2002



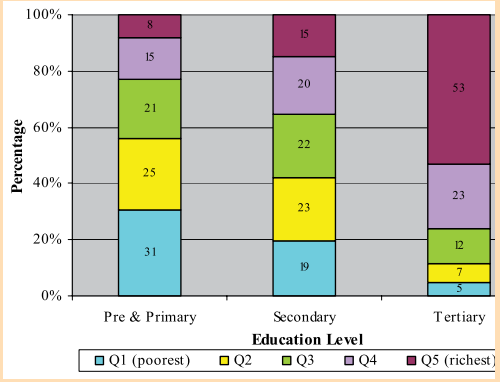
Note: Graphs examine children aged 13 to 19 only
Source: Household Socio-Economic Surveys, 1994 and 2002

in 1994 to only 8 percent in 2002 (Figure 3.9). However, the provinces in the wealthiest quintile show higher rates than those in the bottom quintiles across all age groups. Furthermore, discontinuation between education cycles is more frequent in poor quintiles, although the gap has narrowed in the last decade.

The reverse gender gap in access to secondary schooling has continued to grow. Thailand is facing a different equity problem than most developing countries: keeping boys in school. Although enrollment rates for both boys and girls are increasing, girls outperform boys in secondary school participation and completion. The net enrollment rate (NER) for girls was 83.1 percent in 2006, compared to 76.6 percent for boys.[85] Female completion rates at grade 9 have also surpassed that of males.

Although geographically every region offers tertiary education options and degree levels, the highest income groups benefit from public expenditure on tertiary education disproportionately. Despite the fact that some institutions, particularly limited admission public universities, have stricter acceptance criteria, Thai higher education institutions are relatively open. Two open admission universities, Ramkhamhaeng University and Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, hold a large number of students enrolling each year. Nonetheless, overall public spending in higher education is clearly regressive, favoring the economically better-off groups.

Figure 3.10: Incidence of Public Expenditure across Income Quintiles by Education Level, 2002



Source: Household Socio-Economic Surveys, 2002

[85] UNICEF, 2006

Figure 3.10 shows that the wealthiest 20 percent of the population receives 53 percent of total spending at the tertiary level, suggesting an inequitable distribution of resources among income groups.

Quality of education for work and life in Thailand

Thai secondary students perform well academically relative to countries at similar income levels, but a high proportion of children scores below a minimum acceptable level. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) results suggest that Thailand's performance is acceptable given its income level and knowledge is rather fairly distributed across socio-economic levels. However, Thailand had roughly 45 percent of students performing at or below PISA level one in literacy and over 50 percent of students performing at or below the PISA level one in mathematics. This contrasts greatly with upper income countries, where only around 10 percent of students score at or below level one. As Figure 3.11 and Figure 3.12 suggest, a vast proportion of students are functioning below the most basic level of language, mathematics and science ability.

A recent external quality evaluation conducted by Office of National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) indicates that vocational education in Thailand also requires urgent attention. Students and teachers themselves are not satisfied with their learning and teaching inputs. Educational equipment is of low quality, with the exception of some private vocational schools. A shortage of teachers is prevalent, particularly in agricultural schools and private vocational schools and teachers are not sufficiently qualified. Oftentimes, their qualifications are not related to the subjects they teach. Research and innovation by vocational teachers are at a minimum level, less

Box 3.3: Evaluating Students Performance: PISA

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international assessment that measures 15-year-olds' capabilities in reading, mathematics and scientific literacy every three years. PISA was first implemented in 2000 and is carried out by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

PISA 2006 used six performance levels, one through six, with Level 6 being the highest level of proficiency for mathematics and science literacy and five performance levels for assessing reading literacy skills. At Level 1, students can answer questions involving familiar contexts where all relevant information is present and the questions are clearly defined. They can carry out routine procedures according to direct instructions in explicit situations. They can perform actions that are obvious and follow immediately from a given stimuli. At Level 6, students can conceptualize, generalize and utilize information based on their investigations and modeling of complex problem situations. They can link different information sources and flexibly translate among them. They can formulate and precisely communicate their actions and reflections regarding their findings, interpretation, argument and the appropriateness of these to the original situations.

Source: PISA, http://www.pisa.oecd.org, accessed January 16, 2008

Figure 3.11: PISA Test Scores Results in Mathematics Literacy, 2006

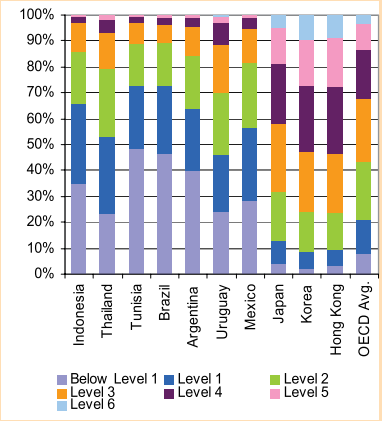
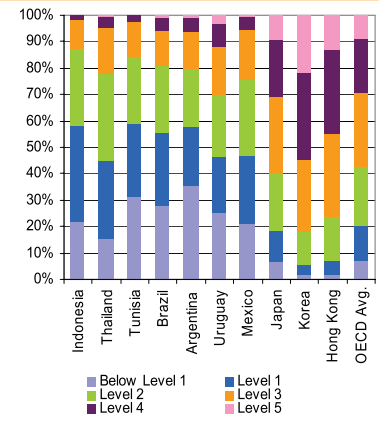


Figure 3.12: PISA Test Scores in Reading Literacy, 2006



Source: PISA 2006

than one research project per teacher per year. Employers or business operations are moderately satisfied with the overall quality of vocational graduates. Satisfaction on quality is also reflected in the training that employers need to give to newly hired graduates to compensate for the unsatisfactory quality of the education outputs. Training in Thai manufacturing establishments is extensive, indicating that educational institutions are not providing the skills needed by employers.[86] ONESQA's assessment also points to the large proportion of vocational education graduates not entering the labor market directly as a failure of the education system. Only 12.5 percent of total students with a technical vocational certificate and 26.5 percent of those with higher vocational certificates found jobs. Most graduates sought to complete bachelor's degrees at university instead.

The quality of tertiary education is difficult to measure, but different academics and stakeholders have criticized the quality of education of Thai university graduates. No universal definition of quality in tertiary education or agreement on general principles of good practice is available, given the heterogeneity of institutions, programs and degrees at the tertiary level. Although there is no comprehensive scientific study on overall quality of tertiary education in Thailand, concerns have been raised over the unsatisfactory quality of the young generation's educational background and their lack of comprehensive knowledge and skills. Universities offer narrowly-specified fields of study, equipping youth with single tasking skills and making them unable to adapt or relate their knowledge to broader contexts.[87] The poor command of English language is another constraint for Thai youth to acquire further knowledge outside their classrooms and to perform satisfactorily in their jobs, especially those related to international markets and clients. At the same time, research on university mapping indicates that Thailand has an oversupply of social science graduates while lacking graduates

[86] World Bank, 2006a
[87] Vasi, 2002 and Tangnamo, 2003

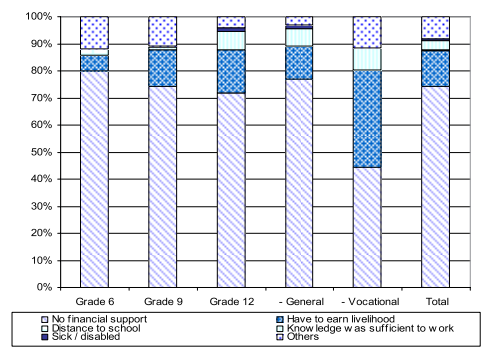
in the fields of science, technology and health sciences.[88] As a result, those in oversupplied fields have had more difficulty finding jobs and oftentimes end up working in jobs unrelated to their areas of study.

II. Diagnostics: What makes youth vulnerable?

Demand-side factors

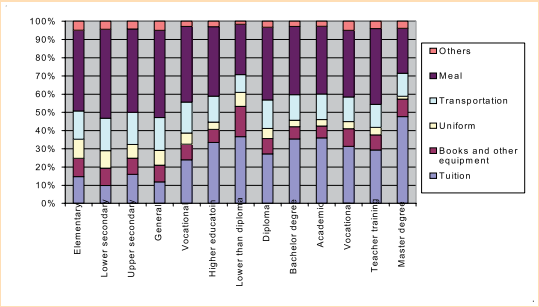
Direct and opportunity costs are the main demand-side constraints to continuing education. The 2002 Thai Children and Youth survey identifies the major constraints for children and youth not intending to proceed to the next educational level. The survey results indicate that direct and opportunity costs act as major constraints for children and youth educational opportunities. Across the different levels of education, the answer "no financial support" accounted for between 44 and 80 percent of responses and the answer "have to earn livelihood" accounted for between 6 and 36 percent. Lack of financial support and the need to earn a livelihood accounted for over 80 percent of dropouts for all school types (Figure 3.13).

Figure 3.13: Percentage of Children and Youth Who are Attending Schools and Reported "Not to Continue to Study," by Reason and School Type



Source: Children and Youth Survey, 2002

Figure 3.14: Household Education Expenditure across Education Levels, 2002



Source: Children and Youth Survey, 2002

Young people and their families who choose to invest in skills development incur substantial costs from tuition and other related expenses. Tuition is not the major direct cost of education. It accounts only for 8.5 percent and 14.6 percent of public secondary school expenditures in the general and vocational tracks, respectively and 25.4 percent for public higher education (Figure 3.14). Tuition shares are much larger for private schools, representing around 30-50 percent of total direct costs. These figures suggest that other costs must be considered when analyzing the financial burden that households have to bear to provide education to their children. Direct expenditures on education, which include various costs such as tuition, meals, transportation and school uniforms, can be significant. For example, transportation costs at lower educational levels

[88] Suwan, 2001

are as high as tuition costs and represent over 10 percent of direct costs.

Direct education costs as a share of per capita household expenditure increase sharply at higher levels of education. While direct education costs represent about 21 percent of per capita household expenditure in public lower secondary school, they increase to about 29 percent in general upper secondary, 42 percent in vocational school and 98 percent at the bachelor level. The direct costs of public schooling increase by 45 percent for a child who pursues public general upper secondary school and by 110 percent for public vocational upper secondary school. The direct costs of public tertiary education also increase significantly. The average direct cost of public tertiary education is about 106 percent higher than the average direct cost of public upper secondary school and the cost of private university is about twice the cost of private upper secondary education (see Table 3.2). The average costs of private schools are higher than those of public schools across all education levels, increasing at higher educational levels.

"I hope to have more financial support, such as scholarships, in order to continue my studies and hopefully obtain a higher education." World Bank "Thailand Street Children Open Space" in Chiang Rai on November 18-19, 2006

Opportunity costs also deter households from sending children to school. Rural children, particularly those in poor families, normally contribute to household income through their work. By sending these children to school, households forego the financial benefits generated by children and youth work. In Thailand, this is apparently a problem for only a very small fraction of children at the lower secondary level. According to the Children and Youth Survey, only a small minority of out-of-school youth consider having to work as a reason not to enter lower secondary education. As expected, work begins to compete with schooling by precluding school attendance at a higher rate in the upper secondary level. The issue of entry into the labor force is further explored in Chapter 4.

"I would like to have a job so that I can help my mom." World Bank "Thailand Street Children Open Space" in Chiang Rai on November 18-19, 2006

The gap between expenditures on secondary and tertiary education by the rich and the poor is widening. Average household spending on education was Baht 3,449 per year in

Table 3.2: Direct Costs of Education as Percentage of per Capita Household Expenditure

			Upper secondary		Higher education					
	Primary	Lower sec.	Gen.	Voc.	Lower than diploma	Diploma	Academic BA	Voc. BA	Teacher training BA	Master degree
Whole country	14.8%	23.4%	31.0%	49.9%	66.7%	54.7%	97.7%	66.5%	70.4%	146.8%
Public	10.6%	20.9%	28.8%	41.5%	41.8%	47.5%	77.7%	63.5%	67.8%	141.5%
Private	47.9%	56.7%	59.6%	72.8%	100.4%	71.7%	147.8%	92.8%	103.0%	203.4%

Source: Calculated from Socio-Economic Survey 2004 and Children and Youth Survey 2002

2002, with vast differences across quintiles-from Baht 840 in the poorest quintile to over Baht 7,870 in the richest quintile-and across regions-from about Baht 1,750 in the Northeast to over Baht 9,585 in Bangkok. The gap between richest and poorest quintiles in terms of secondary education expenditures has widened over time. Between 1994 and 2002, spending on secondary education in real terms by the poorest quintile decreased, while spending by the other four quintiles increased. Similar variation across income quintiles can also be seen in estimated expenditures on tertiary education. The estimated private expenditure per capita on tertiary education was Baht 22,821 for the richest quintile in 2002, compared to Baht 9,403 for the second highest quintile and Baht 1,864 for the poorest. The expenditure on tertiary education for the poorest quintile registered a decrease of around 28 percent between 1994 and 2002, whereas the estimated expenditure on tertiary education for the highest income quintile increased by around 94 percent in the same period (Table 3.3). Poor families may be unable to afford sending their children to universities, resulting in subsequent decrease in private spending on tertiary education in this income group. Meanwhile, children from better-off families can get into universities and their families are willing to spend more on their children's future.

Table 3.3: Private Expenditure Estimates on Education by Income Quintile 1994-2002, Real Baht

		1994	1996	1998	1999	2000	2002
Overall							
	Primary	1,308	1,233	1,447	1,631	1,569	1,701
	Secondary	2,053	2,16	1,909	2,202	2,194	2,353
	Tertiary	9,465	13,429	15,839	17,010	17,344	18,203
Poorest quintile							
	Primary	414	502	477	500	471	469
	Secondary	967	1,175	1,175	1,053	1,081	864
	Tertiary	2,583	2,417	2,392	3,303	3,143	1,864
Quintile 2							
	Primary	658	721	646	676	733	717
	Secondary	1,425	1,501	1,551	1,682	1,599	1,490
	Tertiary	3,467	3,058	4,237	3,549	3,231	5,888
Quintile 3							
	Primary	898	1,081	1,176	1,291	1,064	1,318
	Secondary	2,032	2,143	1,929	1,935	2,242	2,18
	Tertiary	4,117	3,908	4,35	5,731	4,795	6,044
Quintile 4							
	Primary	1,772	1,915	2,240	2,588	2,541	2,876
	Secondary	2,399	2,898	2,874	2,864	2,908	2,963
	Tertiary	5,866	6,233	7,142	7,082	8,095	9,403
Richest quintile							
	Primary	5,604	4,850	6,735	8,702	7,144	8,380
	Secondary	4,330	4,394	5,244	6,500	5,087	6,889
	Tertiary	11,759	18,560	21,584	22,698	22,615	22,821

Source: Household Socio-Economic Surveys, 1994-2002

Supply-side factors

The RTG spends more than one-fifth of its total budget on education annually. Over the past decade the Thai Government allocated more than 20 percent of its total budget to education, accounting for 4 to 5 percent of the country's GDP. This level of allocation was maintained even through the economic crisis in the late 1990s although it has experienced a slightly declining trend in recent years.

In order to achieve universal secondary education, sufficient supply of educational services is needed. While secondary schools seats have grown over time, a simple analysis shows that there may still be room for expansion. Comparing the number of students in the official secondary level age group between 12-17 years old and the number of secondary classrooms available by province, it becomes evident that more classrooms are needed. The student-to-classroom average ratio ranges from 27:1 in Pattani to 42:1 in Nontaburi and Samutprakarn. For many provinces, if all students in the respective age group decided to attend secondary school, there would not be enough classrooms to hold them. In the case of vocational education, statistics from the Office of Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) in 2003 showed that institutions can only accept approximately 80 percent of applicants.

Thailand's southernmost provinces of Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and Songkhla are facing specific challenges with regards to the supply of education. During the past three years, schools in the country's Muslim majority south have been specifically targeted by a local insurgency. From 2004 to 2007, 23 percent of government schools in the South have been torched-252 schools of the region's 1,094 schools-while 92 teachers and education personnel have been killed and 88 injured in shooting and bomb attacks.[89] Although a school reconstruction budget has been allocated, it has not been easy to find local suppliers and more importantly to maintain morale of teachers and education personnel in the area.

Table 3.4: Number of Educational Institutions

	Total	Public	Private
Total	92,939	87,104	5,835
Pre-primary	44,760	42,075	2,685
Primary	33,043	31,426	1,617
Lower-secondary	10,490	9903	587
Upper-secondary (general)	2,837	2,666	171
Upper-secondary (vocational)	889	540	349
Below bachelor degree	646	324	322
Bachelor degree	206	131	77
Postgraduate degree	66	39	27

Source: Ministry of Education, 2004

Higher education in Thailand lacks a coherent plan and effective management. Research shows that the existing number of institutions throughout the country has the potential to meet the targeted number of higher education graduates,[90] yet 75 percent of places available at tertiary education institutions remained unoccupied in 2006.[91] The problem is not on quantity but how to effectively manage

[89] Coordination and Education Management Center for Southernmost Provinces, http:www.coad3.org, accessed February 6, 2008. According to UNICEF, only 60 percent of the population in these Southernmost provinces attends government schools. Many of the remainder attends *Pondok*, Islamic schools, or private schools that include both the government curriculum and religious instruction. Hence, steps towards universal secondary education will need to take these facts into account.

[90] Suwan, 2001

[91] Krissanapong Kirtikara, Secretary-General, Commission on Higher Education, quoted in *Matichon*, March 15, 2007.

existing institutions. The establishment of new universities is driven by political as well as community interests rather than by a clear rationale or alignment with the country's development strategy. In addition, repetition in disciplines offered by universities has resulted in oversupply of graduates in some fields.

The educational resources of Thai schools are rated well below the OECD mean and vary widely based on the socio-economic background of students. PISA 2006 collected extensive data on principals' perceptions about the adequacy of school resources. School principals perceived the quality of educational resources to be a more important obstacle to student achievement than school physical infrastructure. School educational resources were rated more than two-thirds of a standard deviation below the OECD mean (-0.67). Thailand is also in the lowest quintile among all PISA participating countries with regard to the difference in the quality of school resources between the top and bottom quarters of schools, as characterized by a proxy of the schools' socioeconomic backgrounds. A statistically significant performance difference can be seen between schools in the top and bottom quarters of this educational resources index. According to TIMSS, less than 40 percent of eighth grade students in Thailand had access to a calculator in mathematics class compared to an international average of 73 percent and around 85 percent of Thai students had never used a computer in class. Unsurprisingly, countries that tended to report shortages in the availability of instructional materials were significantly below the international average in mathematics or science achievement.

III. Prescriptions: Policy responses for supporting youth learning

Expanding youth opportunities for quality education

The post-primary education system should serve the needs of young people as learners and future workers. To ensure a successful transition into the workforce, the education system must equip students with the skills and knowledge demanded by the labor market, which can evolve rapidly. Evidence indicates that Thai employers already perceive a need for enhanced skills. A recent survey revealed that future Thai workers will be required to have a multiple set of skills including vocational, communication and computer-related skills. About 95 percent of employers interviewed reported that greater skills will be needed in the future, such as occupational/job/technical skills, computer skills, the ability to learn new occupations/machines and English language skills.[92] Currently, the Thai education system does not adequately provide students with this range of skills.

Vocational education should be promoted as a more competitive choice. Given social perceptions of vocational education as inferior to university degrees-resulting in a steady

[92] Abelmann, Chang and Tinakorn Na Ayudhaya, 2000

Box 3.4: Rajabhat Universities

Recognizing the difficulties experienced by untrained teachers and a need to continuously upgrade teacher competencies while at the same time producing more new teachers, the Government of Thailand established Rajabhat Institutes in 1995, some of which have been teacher training colleges. Rajabhat Institutes have a strong community orientation. Specifically, the aim of Rajabhat Instititues is to support local development through providing academic and advanced vocational education, conducting research, offering services to communities, developing and transferring technologies, nurturing cultural customs and providing pre-service and in-service teacher training.

Rajabhat Institutes became universities in 2003 and since then have been under supervision of the Commission on Higher Education, MOE. Currently, there are 41 Rajabhat Universities strategically located all over the Kingdom to serve their respective communities. They offer courses from diploma level up to Doctorate degrees.

decline of entrants to vocational schools-the Commission on Higher Education is planning to promote vocational education as a more attractive option. One way is to declare an "open door" policy in which vocational students can enter universities at any point in time suitable to their schedules as long as they are qualified for admission. In so doing, it will offer life-long higher education as well as skills advancement opportunities according to learners' or labor market needs rather than through a traditional 4-year higher education system.

Improving the quality and relevance of education is therefore imperative. Given the low levels of academic achievement in absolute terms, policies to improve the performance and competencies of Thai students are necessary. To boost the quality of education, it will be critical to improve the availability of learning resources as well as enhance teacher quality, for example through Rajabhat Universities described in Box 3.4. Key measures would include enhancing teacher preparedness and practice, providing adequate instructional materials, promoting performance incentives for school staff and encouraging greater accountability for results.

To improve the quality of education, the Thai Government is piloting a system that adapts to different students' profiles. Thai schools have varied degrees of readiness and resources to provide quality education and the capacity of students is diverse. The Government has therefore concentrated on ensuring minimum quality standards while establishing a fast track for those students who can cope with a more challenging program. The 'five new school designs program' began in late 2003 in a small number of pilot schools. Under the program, autonomous schools have decentralized authority in academic, financial, personnel and general administrative matters, while a participatory approach is promoted through school committees. Buddhist Way Schools seek to apply the teachings of morality, meditative concentration and wisdom. Strategic Plans for Gifted Children emphasize science, music, sports and Thai arts for high-performing children. Bilingual schools administer English Programs and Mini English Programs through a language immersion curriculum. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Schools integrate computers to teaching and learning, distance education and university school linkages.

Internal and external quality assurance mechanisms are being applied to tertiary education. As required by the National Education Act, every tertiary institution has adopted the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system whereby 9 quality aspects are reviewed.[93] An institution will perform an annual internal quality assessment, submitting the assessment report to its parent organizations and/or concerned entities, as well as making this report available to the public. Thailand has also made its first attempt to administer university rankings on two main functions, research and teaching. Although it has been the subject of some controversy, it provides a good start for quality measurement in addition to the internal and external quality assurance mechanisms that are already in place. Indicators will need to be reviewed carefully to ensure the inclusiveness of all university functions, with feedback from universities and other stakeholders.

The provision of life skills is equally important for youth development and their transition into adulthood. Life skills refer to "a large group of psycho-social and interpersonal skills which can help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and self-management skills that may help them lead a healthy and productive life."[94] For example, decision making involves critical thinking (what are the options available?) and values clarification (what is important?). Ethics and morals are also becoming the center of attention in Thai society where a number of social problems are reportedly on the increase among youth. Concerns are being raised over whether the education system sufficiently addresses these issues and teaches youth how to become responsible and productive citizens. Education could play a more active role in equipping youth with necessary life skills, both through the school curricula and extracurricular activities.

Improving capacity to make better education choices

The Government's focus on supply-side constraints to expand education has appropriately shifted to demand-side constraints. One of the greatest barriers to the opportunity for educational choices is lack of financial resources. The MOE has introduced a variety of financial incentives to tackle the cost barriers associated with schooling participation and reduce the cost burden on families. Recent initiatives include a school lunch program, a scholarship program for poor children, the "one district one scholarship" program and the bicycle lending project. The development of innovative financial solutions needs to be encouraged and new programs designed and tested, particularly at the tertiary level. Thailand can also learn from the experiences of other countries in implementing demand-side programs, such as the *Plan de Ampliación de Cobertura de la Educación Secundaria* (PACES) Vouchers program in Colombia (Box 3.5).

The Student Loan Scheme (SLS) targeting disadvantaged students in upper secondary and tertiary education has not

[93] 1) philosophy, mission, objectives and implementation plan; 2) teaching learning provision; 3) student development activities; 4) research; 5) academic service to community; 6) preservation of art and culture; 7) administration and management; 8) finance and budgeting; 9) QA system and mechanisms.

[94] http://www.unicef.org/life skills/index_7308.html, accessed on March 28, 2007

been successful. Although considered a leading example of social targeting when it was put in place in 1996, its original design was not effective in reaching targeted groups. Education institutions were allocated a budget for loans on the basis of enrollment numbers rather than low-income student estimates. The autonomy given to institutions in fixing loan amounts resulted in inequities and inadequately sized loans. In addition, the program heightened risks for students in a number of respects. First, students had to be accepted to schools prior to applying for loans. However, they had no guarantee of receiving financing due to high competition among loan applicants. Second, procedural delays, especially for new loan recipients or those transferred to another school, caused financial difficulties to poor families who could not find other temporary financing sources. In some cases, students had to leave schools because they could not pay for expenses in the first semester, which may partially explain why supply of places in university far exceeds the number of new entrants. Low repayment rates and high costs of legal enforcement on unpaid loans also raise questions about financial sustainability of the SLS in the absence of Government subsidies.

"I want money from the education loan fund. I've told them my needs but I've never been able to get a loan." Bangkok Post, June 12, 2001.

The Income Contingent Loan (ICL) Scheme introduced in 2006 intended to expand access to upper secondary and higher education. Criticism of the SLS led the RTG to adopt the new ICL scheme. Implemented in 2006,

Box 3.5: Policy Options to Address Demand-Side Constraints: the Plan de Ampliación de Cobertura de la Educación Secundaria (PACES) Vouchers' Program in Colombia

To deal with low enrollment rates among the poorest in Colombia (around 55 percent) and the lack of sufficient public educational supply in the early 1990s, the Colombian Government adopted the PACES program. PACES was a unique partnership between the public and private sectors, with the objective of using excess capacity in the private sector to cover the excess demand for education. The Colombian government issued private school vouchers for students entering grade six, the start of secondary school. The vouchers targeted the poorest third of the population and were renewable as long as the recipient made adequate progress towards secondary school graduation. By 1997, PACES had grown into one of the world's largest private school voucher programs. Over 125,000 PACES vouchers had been awarded.

The voucher program in Colombia proved to be very successful for students who were able to participate. Not only did their academic outcomes improve, but so did many of their non-academic outcomes. After three years, students winning a voucher had higher test scores, less grade repetition and more years of schooling completed than students who had lost the voucher lottery. Additionally, voucher winners were more likely to attend private school, less likely to be working and less likely to be married or cohabiting. By the end of high school, voucher winners were more likely than voucher lottery losers to have taken the college entrance exam and voucher winners had higher college entrance exam scores.

Source: Bettinger, 2005

it focused on easing the heavy burden on the Government to fund tertiary education. A massive reduction in direct budgetary allocations to institutions, a substantial increase in university tuition fees and considerably greater cost recovery are envisaged. Loans were available to all members of the student population but were restricted to covering tuition fees; alternatively, students may pay tuition fees up front, at a discount. Loans for living expenses were no longer available, but a special fund was to be set up to provide grants to poor students with the amount of support depending on family income. However, this grant mechanism did little to attempt to raise the proportion of poor young people enrolling in tertiary education, as grantees are considered on a yearly basis. More importantly, disadvantaged households would still face financial difficulties since the ICL only covers tuition fees. In addition, given that the ICL does not have interest rates and is subject to inflation, the estimated costs of its implementation are rather high. The repayment mechanism, which is tied to the income levels of loan recipients and their tax payments, poses another challenge. Loan recipients would repay only when they earn Baht 16,000 a month, but Thailand does not have an effective tax system to track workers in the informal sector in place. With many implementation concerns in May 2007 the Cabinet agreed to abolish the ICL and revitalize the SLS. Loans under the SLS include tuition fees, education expenses and living expenses. The revitalized SLS has been in effect since the 2007 academic year. It still suffers nonetheless from very poor repayment rates.

Providing second chances: helping those who dropped out and the underprivileged to reintegrate

Despite Thailand' s success in the expansion of primary and lower secondary education, many children and youth drop out of school early and there are limited channels for them to return to the formal system. Children and youth who have dropped out, especially from the academic stream, may have difficulty returning to school. Although schools are not prohibited from accepting over-aged students, students themselves may find difficulty in adjusting to a classroom environment and socializing with peers again, especially if they are older than their counterparts. In addition, over-aged youth may not be motivated to return to school due to the rising opportunity costs of forgone income.

Greater efforts are needed to provide second chances for these disadvantaged young people. In the Education Provision Policy for Disadvantaged Children, the Thai Government has outlined its vision to include traditionally disenfranchised groups in formal education through specifically-targeted programs. However, this policy has not yet translated into a practical implementation plan. Key leading agencies have not been identified and required resources have not been allocated. Better data collection and analysis are also necessary to enhance resource targeting and enable the design of suitable programs. The Thai education management information system has limited information on out-of-school children. Statistics about school dropouts from various organizations vary widely.

Children with disabilities (CWDs) have been a group largely neglected from efforts to universalize basic education. Thailand has 41 specialized basic education schools for CWDs serving approximately 13,000 students. The MOE has adopted an inclusive policy of mainstreaming CWDs within the regular system, but this policy has not been clearly articulated. As a result, children with disabilities have remained largely excluded from the regular education system. In 2004, only 175,000 children with disabilities were enrolled in pre-primary through upper secondary school, comprising approximately 1.3 percent of total children enrolled. In other middle-income countries, the share of children with disabilities tends to be around 4-5 percent, suggesting that Thailand likely has a few hundred thousand CWDs outside the school system.

Another group that has remained at the margins of inclusive education policies is children of non-Thai citizens living in Thailand. Although non-Thai children and youth is one of disadvantaged groups who can potentially benefit from existing education provision policies, actual practice is complex and unable to reach the majority of young people outside the formal system. Currently, approximately 45,000 non-Thai children and youth are reported to be in school and benefiting from per capita budget allocations from the RTG. However, the out-of-school population is estimated to be considerably higher. Demand-side constraints keep a large share of non-Thai youth out of school. Language of instruction has also been a problem, as these young people may not be fluent in Thai. Efforts to reach immigrant out-of-school youth have been small in scope and mostly led by specialized non-governmental organizations.

"I want to study further, yet I dropped out of school in the middle of the course because I cannot afford the tuition fee anymore. Besides, getting in the Thai educational system requires having a Thai nationality. This is the very thing that I lack." Arporn Khara from Baan Namlad, Chiang Rai

Non-formal education represents a unique opportunity to provide young people out of the formal system with skills for work and life.

Box 3.6: An Unanswered Question

- "I want to be a police man." answered a 16 year-old when asked what he wants to be in the future.
- "This school can offer him up to grade 9, which is compulsory education only. He doesn't have Thai citizenship. It will be difficult for him to continue upper secondary level in town, let alone going to a police school as he wants," said his teacher.

Cases like this are not rare, especially in remote schools along the Thai border. According to Thai law, non-Thai citizens have the right to access to basic education. Their education completion will be certified, but not their citizenship. As a result, they cannot work legally in Thailand.

- "Where this kid can go and work I really don't know," his teacher concluded.

Source: Interview, Mae Hong Son

Box 3.7: Non-Formal Education in Thailand

Thailand has four types of non-formal education:

Pre-school (2-6 years) non-formal education can take place at centers established by local communities, be family-based or be organized by the Council of Early Childhood and Youth Development Organization.

Education for literacy is provided to promote literacy among adults, ages 14 years and over and covers a wide range of activities and programs.

General non-formal education provides continuing education programs for those having no chance to study in the formal system. It covers primary to higher levels and is normally organized in public schools, official premises, factories, or other organizations. Learners are awarded the same certifications as those within the formal system.

Non-formal technical and vocational education and training is offered through polytechnics, industrial and community colleges under the supervision of the Office of Vocational Education Commission and the Office of Non-Formal Education Commission. Other ministries include Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and Ministry of Labor who provide non-formal education through regional institutions and provincial skills training centers.

Non-formal and skills training can be divided as follows:

1) **Vocational certificates** normally require at least three years of learning, by which non-formal activities are provided to lower secondary graduates through distance learning. The unemployed and those working in private companies and public organizations are targeted.

2) **Short-course vocational training** is provided by both public and private institutions and agencies. They range between 6 to 225 hours. Pre-employment training and training for skills upgrading are also offered. At present, these courses are designed with self-employment in mind and are articulated with formal programs to serve lifelong learning needs.

2.1) An occupational certificate (225 hours) is designed for primary graduates who have no chance to study at higher levels. It aims to provide opportunities for training in vocational skills and quality of life promotion. It targets rural populations and provides a certificate equivalent to a general lower secondary education.

2.2) Interest group programs are organized according to individuals' needs and interests. Those with the same interests can form groups of between 5 and 15 people and receive training for up to 30 hours.

2.3) Agricultural short courses are provided to local farmers according to their needs.

3) **A special vocational education program for young farmers** targets youth between 15-25 years of age who have completed compulsory education to further their study at colleges of agriculture and technology. Upon completion, they are awarded a special certificate equivalent to a vocational certificate.

Source: Ministry of Education, 2006

Greater flexibility in terms of learning sites, class schedules and curriculum can provide a more suitable environment to fit the needs of children who cannot participate in traditional school settings, such as rural migrant workers. Increasing the role of alternative education service delivery programs may provide further opportunities for rural and poor students. According to the Office of Education Council, about 4.8 million individuals were participating in non-formal education programs in 2004 (Box 3.6). However, existing programs are small and do not seem to satisfy the potential demand. The Thai Children and Youth Survey found that out of about 7.0 million youth who do not attend school, only 3.8 percent received non-formal education.

Completion of non-formal education is low, particularly at the basic level. Only around 14 percent of the total number of enrollees in basic non-formal education complete it (Table 3.5), compared to completion rates of nearly 95 percent for vocational education and skills training programs.[95] The long duration of programs-three years-could be a factor contributing to low completion rates in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. Education for occupational improvement and education for life skills improvement are relatively in high demand and seem to respond to the needs of learners, as shown by high completion rates. Both programs require shorter time commitments. The knowledge gained can be applied directly to learners' current work and their everyday life.

Creating opportunities, building capabilities and providing second chances are critical to learning for work and life. The policy recommendations given in this chapter seek to meet these goals and are portrayed in Table 3.6, along with available evidence from international experience. Proven programs from Latin America and promising programs in China, Australia, Senegal, Ghana and Germany offer opportunities for Thailand to further develop the learning for work and life agenda.

[95] Office of Non-Formal Education Commission (ONFEC) is the main provider of non-formal education. It solely provides education for literacy and academic stream non-formal education. It also holds a significant share of technical and vocational non-formal education and training.

Table 3.5: Completion of Non-Formal Education, 2005

Type of Education	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Student Completed	Percentage of Completion
1. Basic Education	**1,855,686**	**253,565**	**13.66**
Functional Literacy	96,002	40,949	42.65
Primary	176,715	19,303	10.92
Lower Secondary	607,105	67,511	11.12
Upper Secondary	905,441	118,237	13.06
Hill Area Education	70,423	7,565	10.74
2. Vocational Education/ Skills Training	**2,054,708**	**1,943,303**	**94.58**
Occupational Certificate (=Lower Secondary Level)	17,467	561	3.21
Upper Secondary Vocational Certificate	15,210	5,779	37.99
Education for Occupational Improvement	1,282,363	1,230,051	95.92
Education for Life Skill Improvement	739,668	706,912	95.57
Total	**3,910,394**	**2,196,868**	**56.18**

Source: Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission, Permanent Secretary Office, Ministry of Education, 2005

Table 3.6: Summary of Learning for Work and Life Policy Recommendations and International Experience

	Policy Recommendations	Evidence	Country Examples	Notes for Success
Expanding Opportunities				
1	Improve the quality and relevance of academic and vocational education as a bridge to the labor market	Unproven but promising	China, Chile, Germany	Build connection between education and economy; programs should provide occupational skills and knowledge of social skills
Enhancing Capacity				
1	Help alleviate the direct and opportunity costs of pursuing education at the upper secondary and tertiary levels	Proven	México Oportunidades and Colombia Familias en Acción and PACES	Conditional Cash Transfers and Vouchers;
		Unproven but promising	Australia and Thailand	Income Contingent Loans
Providing Second Chances				
1	Continue monitoring and strengthening non-formal education as a way to reintegrate youth who dropped out of the education system	Proven	Jóvenes Argentina and Entra 21 in Latin America;	Combines vocational training with life skills;
		Promising	Senegal and Ghana	Combines literacy programs with skills training

Source: Adapted from World Bank 2007a and 2007b

CHAPTER 4:
MOVING FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

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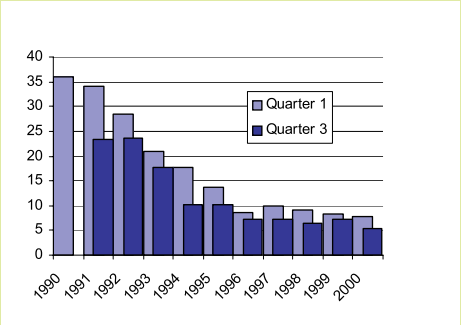
An adequate transition from school to work is essential for youth to move successfully into adult life. Once young people enter the labor market, they and their countries can start reaping the benefits of previous investments in education and health. Lack of adequate employment opportunities for youth not only affects individual prospects, but it also has an impact on overall economic development. The economic and social costs of negative youth labor market outcomes are multiplied by the fact that young people are the future of their societies. Young people who do not have access to labor markets do not actively participate in the economy as consumers and generators of wealth-on the contrary, they represent a loss of investment and a future cost for society. Additionally, youth unemployment can lead to costly social tensions. Inadequate transitions for youth from school to work could therefore compromise the long-term development of their countries.[96]

I. Symptoms: Employment trends and challenges among youth

Starting work too early

A number of youth start working at 15 years old in Thailand. According to Socio-Economic Survey data, most working youth in Thailand start to become involved in productive work at around 15 years of age.[97] The proportion of working children under age 15 fell significantly during the last decade, from 20-30 percent in the 1990s to 5-8 percent today (Figure 4.1). This decrease can be attributed to high economic growth rates, an increase in the minimum legal working age from 13 to 15 years old and legislative measures to expand and extend compulsory schooling, which brought an increase in the proportion of children in school (Figure 4.2). In 2002, 17 percent of 16-year-olds were engaged in productive work (excluding young persons who are attending school and working at the same time) and 14 percent of children in Grade 9 (aged 14-15) cited work as a reason to stop their education at the lower secondary level.[98] Analysis by the Ministry of Labor suggests that around 300,000 children aged 15-17 years were legally employed in Thailand in 2005. However, this official figure does not include illegal work by children under 15.[99]

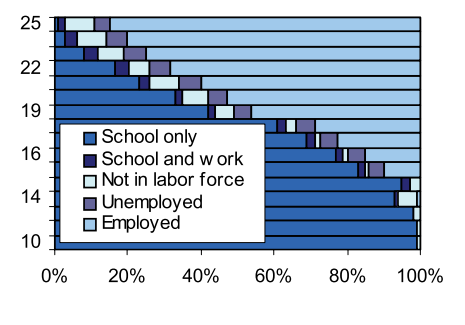
Figure 4.1: Proportion of Working Children Aged less than 15 Years Old, 1990-2000



Source: National Statistical Office, 2003b

[96] World Bank, 2007b
[97] World Bank, 2006b
[98] World Bank, 2006b
[99] Unofficial estimates that include the informal sector point to a much higher number of 1.7 million working children between 15-19 years. See Lisborg Anders and Paul Buckley, 2006.

Figure 4.2: Share of Children at School or Work, 2002



Source: National Statistical Office, 2003b

Although it is illegal, some children under the age of 15 continue to be employed, especially in small-scale factories and unregulated sectors. In the 1980s and 1990s, Thailand's labor market participation rates of children aged 10-14 years were high compared with other Asian countries (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Labour Participation Rates of Children Aged 10-14

	Per capita GNP	1980	1999
Nepal	1,219	56	43
Bangladesh	1,475	35	29
Cambodia	1,286	27	24
PNG	2,263	28	18
Thailand	5,599	25	14
India	2,149	21	13
China	3,291	30	9
Indonesia	2,439	13	9
Vietnam	1,755	22	7
Philippines	3,815	14	6
Malaysia	7,963	8	3
Mongolia	1,496	4	2

Note: at PPP (1999 USD)
Source: Ray, 2004 and World Bank 2001

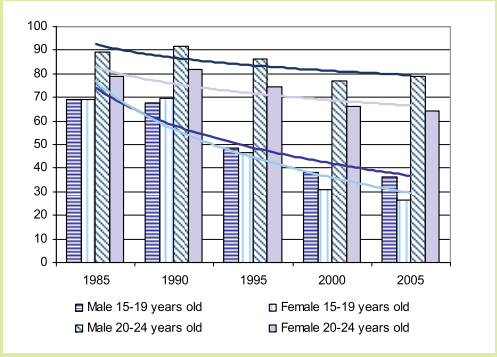
The aftermath of the 1997 financial crisis and subsequent political changes brought new constitutional decrees into play, stating that the State must protect children and youth from violence and unfair treatment as well as that all children are entitled to free basic education up to 12 years. Furthermore, the Thai government ratified the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 (Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor) and No. 138 (Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment – minimum age is set at 15 years old) in 2001 and 2004 respectively. These measures have contributed to a significant reduction in employment of children aged below 15. However, child labor[100] still exists in Thailand's large unregulated sectors, such as in small-scale factories, fisheries, construction, agriculture, the service sector (including domestic work), forced begging and commercial sex. Of more than 2,600 child laborers surveyed in five provinces, 35 percent were below the legal minimum age of 15 years; 63 percent worked more than 8 hours per day; 41 percent had to do evening or night work; and a large proportion of all child laborers were exposed to hazardous working conditions: 40 percent were exposed to dust and smoke; 26 percent to noise; and 15 percent to "moral harms." Nonetheless, the participation of child labor (aged 11-14) has shown a decreasing trend and it is estimated to be at the rates of 1.08-1.37 percent.[101]

[100] Thailand's Ministry of Labor regards workers aged between 15-18 years old as child labor. However, in this report, child labor is defined as working children aged less than 15, which is the minimum legal working age.
[101] Ptanawanit and Boribanbanpotkate, 2006

In addition, use of children and young persons in drug trafficking is also evident. It was reported that 4,232 juveniles, ages 7-18 years, committed a crime relating to narcotic drugs; 1,441 were found guilty of drug trafficking; and 12 were convicted of drug production in 2002.[102] Also 80,000 students were estimated to use at least one type of drug when surveyed during May-June 2001.[103] A recent ILO assessment of children and illicit drug trade in Thailand reports that these children were typically brought up in broken families; drop out of school early and experience a serious lack of opportunities;[104] and the groups most susceptible to child work are children of migrants, ethnic minorities and poor children.[105] The social environment was also a crucial factor in pushing them to commit illegal activities. They gradually became drug addicts and eventually turned to drug pushing when they had no money to buy drugs for themselves. Persuasion by friends was also an important factor inducing these children into drug circles.[106]

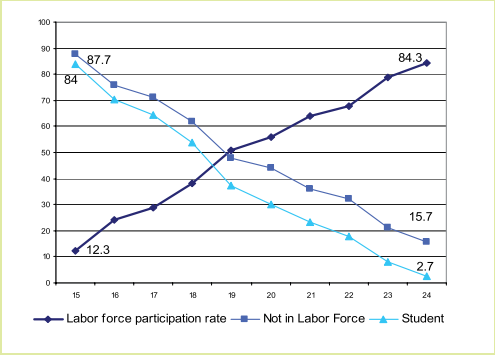
``Kids under seven are getting involved in drug trafficking since the legal penalties are much less severe.'' Bangkok Post, January 23, 2002.

Figure 4.3: Youth Labor Force Participation Rate in Thailand,1985-2005



Source: Labor Force Surveys, 1985, 1990, 1995 and 2005

Figure 4.4: Proportion of Youth in the Labor Force in Thailand, 2005



Source: Labor Force Surveys, 2005

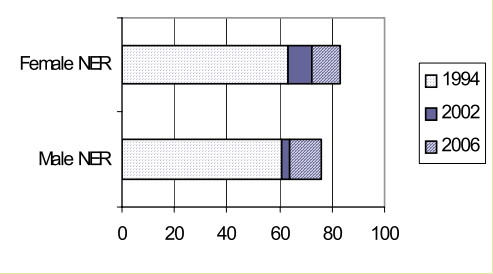
Youth entry into the labor market

Youth labor force participation rates have decreased sharply since the 1980s in Thailand, particularly among women. Figure 4.3 shows a notable decline in youth labor force participation rates over the period. This trend is particularly pronounced for 15-19 years old. The relatively smaller decline for older youth is mainly a result of the progressive extension of education beyond the compulsory levels.[107] Female labor participation decreased at a faster pace since the 1990s, particularly for the age group between 15 and 19 years old. Participation rates of male youth between 20 and 24 years old have been consistently higher than those of females and the gap in participation rates

[102] Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection, quoted in Ptanawanit and Boribanbanpotkate, 2006
[103] Results from ABAC Poll survey cited in Sunthornkajit, Vittawan and others, 2002
[104] ILO, 2006c
[105] Lisborg Anders and Paul Buckley, 2006
[106] Ptanawanit and Boribanbanpotkate, 2006
[107] Arya, 2002

between males and females has widened from 6.2 percent in 1985 to 14.9 percent in 2005. In 2005, a significant 13 percent of 24-year-old youth were out of the labor force and out of school (Figure 4.4). Although this indicator can be used as a proxy for "discouraged youth" withdrawing from the labor force, it likely masks a large share of youth working in the informal sector as mentioned above.

Figure 4.5: Secondary Education Net Enrollment Rate by Gender, 1994-2006

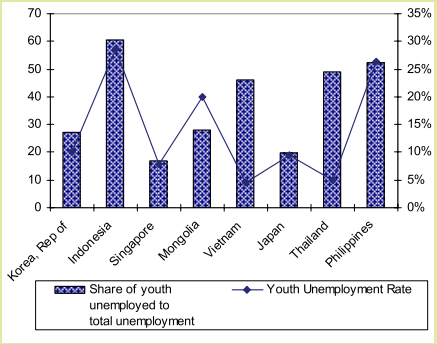


Source: World Bank, 2006c and UNICEF, 2006

The faster decreasing trend in female labor force participation is mainly attributed to higher enrollment rates in upper secondary and tertiary education among females. Girls have particularly benefited from the application of compulsory education policies, to the point in which an inverse gender gap has arisen in secondary education. As Figure 4.5 shows, girls outperform boys in secondary school participation and completion. In 2006, net enrollment was 83 percent for girls, compared to 76 percent for boys.[108] In addition, women's enrollment in tertiary education has increased to the point where gender ratios have been over 1 during the last 10 years (1.17 in 2005).[109] This trend is mostly explained by the ongoing change in the role of women toward increased economic and political participation in Thai society.

As in the rest of Asia, young people in Thailand are disproportionately bearing the burden of unemployment in Thailand. While young people comprised 20.5 percent of Asia's labor force in 2005, unemployed youth represented 47.7 percent of the region's total jobless population. The youth unemployment rate is highest in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, at 16.9 percent compared to 7.8 percent in East Asia and 11.3 percent in South Asia. Although Thailand's youth unemployment rate is relatively low at 5 percent, the share of youth to the total unemployed is among the highest in the region at almost 50 percent (Figure 4.6).[110] As Figure 4.6 illustrates, younger age groups' unemployment rates in Thailand were consistently two to three times higher than those of adults during 1995-2005. In addition, the youth unemployment rate is around three times more sensitive to economic shocks than that of adults.[111] This sensitivity

Figure 4.6: Unemployment Rates and Share of Youth Unemployed to the Total in Thailand, 2005

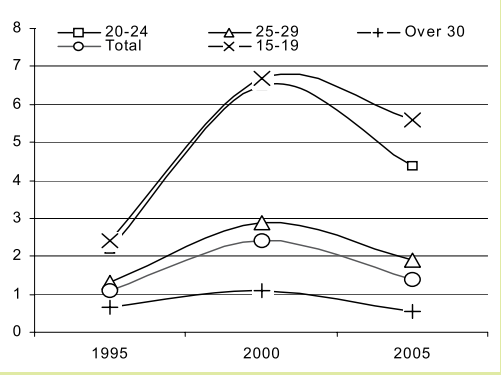


Source: ILO, 2006b

[108] World Bank, 2006c
[109] Millennium Development Goals, UN
[110] ILO, 2006b
[111] Arya, 2002

is reflected in Figure 4.7, which shows how the unemployment rates for young people rose significantly during the years leading up to the Asian economic crisis and thereafter.

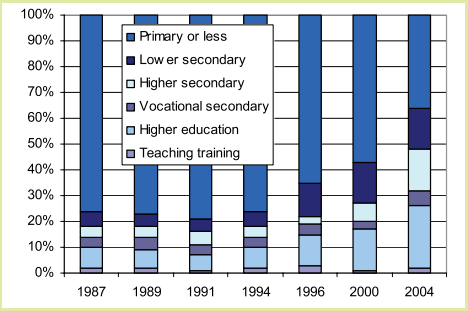
Figure 4.7: Unemployment Rates by Age Group in Thailand, 1995-2005



Source: Labor Force Suyveys 4th quarter, 2005

The incidence and size of youth unemployment varies among regions. In the Northeast, which is the poorest region in Thailand, the low overall unemployment rate of 1.8 percent hides a large number of unemployed youth. Around 63,797 or 23.8 percent of youth in this region are unemployed. The higher unemployment rate for youth in the Northeast might be explained by lower affordability of unemployment for young people and higher migration rates of the young to other regions. Bangkok, which has the second lowest overall unemployment rate at 2.5 percent, is the region where the proportion of unemployed youth is also lowest at 9.1 percent (Table 4.2).

Figure 4.8: Share of Unemployed by Education Level in Thailand, 1987-2004



Source: Labor Force Surveys, 1985, 1990, 1995 and 2005

In Thailand, the inverse relationship between the level of education and the rate of unemployment is not evident. A number of studies based on the "human capital theory" claim that the level of education is inversely related to the unemployment rate, using the rationale that workers with higher human capital would have

Table 4.2: Youth Labor Force Status by Region in Thailand 2005

	BKK	Central	North	Northeast	South	Total (%)	Total (No.)
Total Labor Force	47.5%	54.9%	48.0%	49.5%	50.4%	50.5%	5,339,112
Employed	45.0%	52.0%	44.9%	47.5%	47.1%	47.8%	5,058,136
Unemployed	2.5%	2.8%	3.0%	1.8%	3.4%	2.5%	267,697
Seasonal inactive workers	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	13,279
Not in Labor Force	52.5%	45.1%	52.0%	50.5%	49.6%	49.5%	5,232,212
Student	47.4%	35.7%	42.5%	37.8%	38.4%	39.1%	4,134,169
Others	5.1%	9.4%	9.4%	12.6%	11.2%	10.4%	1,098,043
Youth population share	9.4%	24.2%	17.2%	34.2%	15.0%	100.0%	---
# of youth unemployed	24,488	71,526	54,308	63,797	53,578	---	267,697
% of youth unemployed	9.1%	26.7%	20.3%	23.8%	20.0%	100.0%	---

Source: Labor Force Survey 4th quarter, 2005

a greater number of job opportunities, which in turn would reduce unemployment.[112] ILO data shows that in advanced industrialized countries, in general, the higher the level of education, the lower the rate of unemployment.[113] However, this statement assumes that there is sufficient demand for educated youth, which might not be the case in many countries.[114] The transformation of the Thai economy has led to a decline in the share of primary (or lower)-educated workers in total employment from 84 percent in 1987 to 61 percent in 2004, while workers with higher education are taking over larger shares in total employment-from 8 percent in 1987 to 22 percent in 2004. The 9-year compulsory education policy has decreased the return rates of lower secondary education, since primary-and secondary-educated workers have become more abundant. However, the unemployment shares of university graduates and those with higher vocational education are generally increasing, particularly in the case of women. Therefore, the inverse relationship between education level and unemployment rates as predicted by "human capital theory" does not hold true for Thailand (Figure 4.8). This phenomenon may be due to a mismatch between the skills demanded by the labor market and those provided by universities or tertiary education institutions, as discussed in greater detail below.

Young educated women face higher unemployment rates. The exact reasons for higher unemployment among young females are unknown. It might be explained by discrimination based on cultural stereotypes regarding the

Table 4.3: Level of Education of Youth Unemployed in 2005

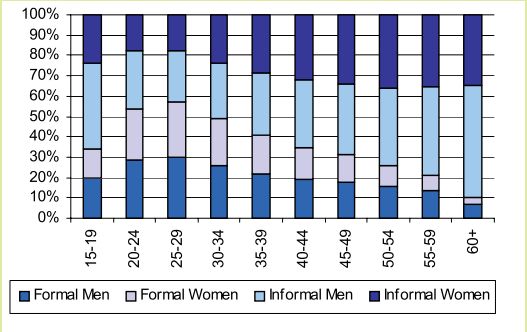
	Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Total (%)	Total (no.)
None	0.0%	5.3%	2.9%	5.0%	3.8%	10,046
Less than primary	3.2%	3.7%	4.9%	1.7%	3.5%	9,432
Primary	17.8%	24.3%	29.2%	13.2%	22.4%	60,025
Lower secondary	31.1%	27.0%	31.2%	24.1%	28.2%	75,423
Upper secondary-General/Academic	15.1%	14.0%	12.6%	16.7%	14.3%	38,401
Upper secondary-Vocational	4.1%	5.3%	5.2%	4.6%	5.0%	13,314
Diploma level-Higher Tech Education	8.0%	5.6%	6.5%	6.1%	6.3%	16,955
Diploma level-Teacher Training	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	260
University – Academic	17.6%	13.1%	6.3%	25.4%	14.4%	38,565
University-Higher Technical Education	1.6%	1.2%	0.8%	2.1%	1.3%	3,553
University-Teacher Training	1.4%	0.2%	0.3%	0.8%	0.5%	1,433
Unknown	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	288
Total (%)	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	---
Total (no.)	78,391	189,304	154,571	113,124	---	267,695

Source: Labor Force Survey 4th quarter, 2005

[112] Filer, Hamermesh and Rees, 1996
[113] Weisberg and Meltz, 1999
[114] ILO, 2006a

kinds of jobs suitable for women. Another possible explanation would be related to the concentration of girls in "traditional" areas of study and the social sciences as opposed to the "hard" sciences and engineering, which may not meet the rapidly evolving needs of the Thai labor market. Young women may also be more likely to be willing to wait for a certain level or type of job than young men. More in-depth research would be required to determine the reasons for this gap.

Figure 4.9: Proportion of Employed Men and Women in Formal and Informal Sectors by Age in Thailand 2006



Source: Internal Sector Survey, 2006

Youth in the labor market: how do they fare?

Thailand's labor market continues to be heavily informal, which affects young workers. Despite the increasing "formalization" of the Thai labor market since 1988, 67 percent of total employment is still categorized as informal.[115] Of the 1.5 million young workers aged 15-19, at least two-thirds are engaged in the informal sector (Figure 4.9). The high level of informal sector engagement among these younger workers seems to be due to the fact that those who join the labor market at an older age are more likely to have been studying for longer and thus to be more qualified to find jobs in the formal sector.[116] Employment in the informal sector is often low-skilled and requires lower educational qualifications. It is also often characterized by low levels of productivity, low or irregular incomes, long working hours, small or undefined workplaces and lack of access to information, markets, finance, training and technology. Young informal workers, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, can get caught up in a vicious cycle in which they must work in the informal sector to earn their livelihoods and cannot access formal sector jobs due to lack of necessary experience.

Youth participation in agriculture has decreased but remains significant. The "industrialization" process since the 1980s has been accompanied by the expansion of non-agricultural sectors and the growth in their Growth Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (from 1:7.8 in the late 1970s to 1:13.3 in the late 1990s).[117] Hence, in the past two decades, the percentage of young workers engaged in agriculture has fallen from around 42.7 percent of working youth in 1997 to 35.2 percent in 2005.[118] Participation in agriculture is much higher for older age groups, particularly for those over 55 years old (Figure 4.10). Nonetheless, agriculture is still the sector that accounts for the largest proportion of employed youth, followed by manufacturing at 22.2 percent and wholesale and retail trade at 17.4 percent.

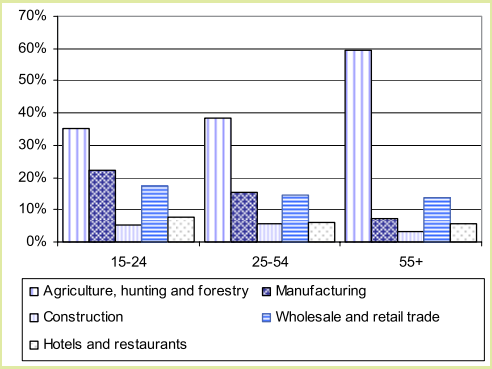
[115] Informal workers include own account workers, unpaid family workers, employers and employees of enterprises with less than 10 employees. See Deolalikar, 2005.

[116] Multivariate analysis by Deolalikar, 2005 shows that the probability of being an informal-sector worker declines with schooling: secondary education being 3 percent less likely; vocational education being 16 percent less likely and university education being 42 percent less likely to be in the informal sector (relative to those with no formal education).

[117] Reunglertpanyakul, 2001

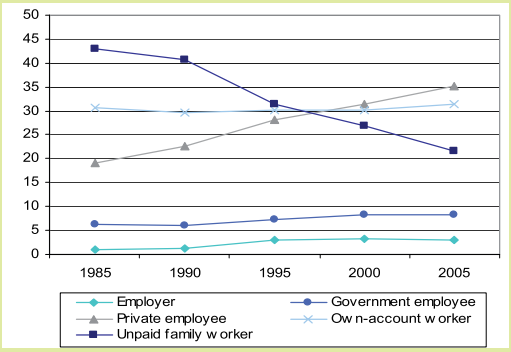
[118] The figures for 1997 and 2004 are not directly comparable, since available statistics for 1997 (when the legal working age was 13 years old) are for 13-24 year olds while the available statistics for 2004 (when the legal working age was 15 years old) are for 15-24 year olds.

Figure 4.10: Proportion of Workers by Type of Industry and Age Group in 2005



Source: Labor Force Surveys 1985, 1990, 1995 and 2005

Figure 4.11: Youth's Work Status from 1985 to 2005



Source: Labor Force Suyveys 4th quarter, 2005

At the same time, the share of youth employed in the private sector has increased. Young workers are increasingly being employed in the private sector, the work status category that accounts for most youth, particularly in urban areas (Figure 4.11).[119] The share of youth who are "private sector employees" increased from 19.2 percent in 1985 to 35.2 percent in 2005, while the share of youth who are "unpaid family workers" decreased significantly from 42.9 percent in 1985 to 21.6 percent in 2005. The decrease of youth as "unpaid family workers" could be attributed to the fall of youth in agriculture. As in the case of unemployment, the Northeast region has the highest share of youth engaged in unpaid family work at 49.7 percent.[120]

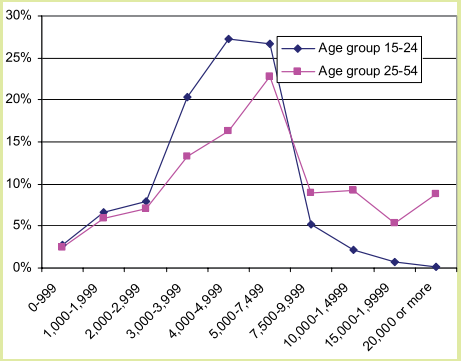
Table 4.4: Proportion of Workers according to Type of Occupation and Age Group in 2005

Occupational category	Age			Total
	15-24	25-54	55+	
Higher-skilled occupations				
Legislators, senior officials and managers	0.8%	7.6%	11.2%	7.1%
Professionals	1.5%	4.7%	1.6%	3.8%
Technicians and associate professionals	4.3%	4.5%	1.3%	4.0%
Clerks	4.9%	3.7%	0.8%	3.5%
Lower-skilled occupations				
Service workers and shop and market sales workers	16.9%	13.2%	12.7%	13.6%
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	30.7%	33.8%	52.3%	35.8%
Craft and related trade workers	14.2%	10.4%	6.8%	10.5%
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	11.3%	8.8%	2.4%	8.3%
Elementary occupations in sales and services	15.5%	13.3%	10.9%	13.3%
Number of Current Labor Force ('000)	5,325.8	26,488.8	4,723.7	36,538.3

Source: Labor Force Survey 4th quarter, 2005

[119] The NSO considers six categories in "type of employment" regarding the status of the employees, including "employer", "government employee", "private employee", "own-account worker (self-employed)", "unpaid family worker" and "member of co-operative."
[120] National Statistics Office, Labor Force Survey, 2005

Figure 4.12: Monthly Wage Distribution According to Age Group in 2005



Source: Labor Force Suyveys 4th quarter, 2005

Most young Thai people, regardless of gender, are engaged in mid/low-skilled occupations. As shown in Table 4.4, the occupation with the highest share of youth was "skilled agricultural and fishery workers" (30.7 percent) in 2005, followed by "service workers and shop and market sales workers" (16.9 percent) and "elementary occupations in sales and services" (15.5 percent). Older age groups also have similar distributions among occupational categories.

Average wages for young Thai people are half those of adults and are generally higher for females than males above age 21. The average monthly wage for young private employees was Baht 4,585 per month, whereas that of the employed between 25-54 years old was Baht 8,005 and that of the total workforce was Baht 7,400 a month (Figure 4.12). The Bangkok area offers the highest average wages, whereas the wages in the North and Northeast regions are the lowest. Females over age 21 earn consistently higher wages than males, which could reflect the fact that females in this age bracket, on average, have higher levels of education and therefore can find better rewarded jobs.

A significant proportion of youth are working for less than the minimum wage. In 2005, between 18-38 percent of total youth were working below the minimum wage level (Baht 2,800-3,680 per month, depending on the province), compared to 8.5-18 percent for adults aged 24-54 years. The ages of youth earning less than the minimum wage ranged between 15-18 years and they were mostly concentrated in the North and Northeast regions, which have the highest poverty and probably informality. The proportion of youth in rural areas receiving a wage below minimum wage was more than twice that in urban areas, which is also likely to be related to higher informality that allows non-compliance with regulation in rural areas. Around 3 percent more young men than women were below the minimum wage threshold in 2005.[121]

Table 4.5: Youth Living in Poverty in 2002 (millions)

	Pop 15-24 less than US$1/day	Pop 15-24 less than US $2/day
China	33.1	93.3
Indonesia	3.1	22.2
Vietnam	2.9	10.4
Philippines	2.4	7.6
Myanmar	2.6	7.1
Thailand	0.3	3.8
Korea DR	0.7	2.1
Cambodia	0.9	2
Lao PDR	0.3	0.8
PNG	0.08	0.5
Malaysia	0.09	4.2

Source: World Bank, 2004

[121] National Statistics Office, Labor Force Survey 4th quarter, 2005

Around 3.8 million young people between 15-24 years old were living on less than US$2 per day in 2002. In addition, around 300,000 young people were living in extreme poverty below the US$2 per day threshold (see Table 4.5).[122] The extent to which people in this group are engaged in economic activities is unknown.

Youth represent a high proportion of total underemployed in Thailand.[123] Data from Labor Force Surveys indicate that the youngest groups are the most affected by underemployment in terms of hours worked.[124] However, Labor Force Survey data split workers working less than 35 hours into 2 groups: i) having additional spare time and willing to work more and ii) having no additional spare time and not willing to work more and it is suggested that youth might fall into the latter category. Research on underemployment in Thailand finds that the average age of a person underemployed in terms of hours worked is 37-40 years old. It also shows that age does not influence the likelihood of time-related underemployment.[125] Underemployment in terms of education level–i.e. working in jobs that require lower qualification levels-is particularly high among young workers below 25 years old. The same study found that the education-related underemployed as a percentage of the total labor force increased from 9.2 percent in 1996 to 14.8 percent in 2000.[126] Among the education-related underemployed, 31-40 percent were below 25 years old. This trend could be caused by insufficient job opportunities for better-educated youth, but it is likely to be related to disconnection between labor demand and supply of skills.

The structure of the young Thai labor force is expected to change in the coming years. The composition of the youth labor force has suited the needs of economic growth in Thailand since 1999, based on the employment of large reserves of rural labor in the urban sectors. However, as competition from neighboring countries in low-skilled manufacturing increases and the nature of growth in Thailand evolves, the future demand for unskilled labor in Thailand is likely to decrease. According to the 2006 *Thailand Investment Climate, Firm Competitiveness and Growth*, the new growth strategy for Thailand will need to be based on the increased contribution of total productivity factors, including labor and the emphasis should be on skills development, technological capabilities and innovation.[127]

II. Diagnostics: What makes youth vulnerable?

Misalignment of existing skills and market demand

Skills shortage remains one of the main problems of the Thai labor force. The 2006 *Thailand Investment Climate, Firm Competitiveness and Growth* identifies skills shortages and mismatch as major obstacles for the competitiveness of Thai companies. Thai

[122] Curtain, 2004
[123] The Thai National Statistical Office considers those who work less than 35 hours a week to be underemployed.
[124] The group between 13-19 years old accounted for around 35 percent of the total underemployed in 2000, whereas the group between 20-29 years old represented around 15 percent of the total underemployed between 1996 and 2000.
[125] Tirasawat and others, 2003
[126] Tirasawat and others, 2003-using survey data of 3rd quarters, 2003
[127] World Bank, 2006b

companies pay large wage premia to employees with tertiary education or technical skills training, indicating excess demand for and/or short supply of the highest skilled labor in Thailand. As described in Chapter 3, a wide gap still exists between returns to secondary and tertiary education, which disincentivizes enrollment in secondary education if continuation through tertiary is not an option.

In particular, relatively few Thai workers have the information technology and English language skills needed to fill highly skilled or professional positions. The *Thailand Investment Climate, Firm Competitiveness and Growth* highlights the incidence and intensity of hard-to-fill vacancies as being very high in Thailand compared to neighboring countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. In Thailand, it takes more than six weeks-longer than in any other benchmark country-to fill a vacancy for a skilled production worker or a professional. Over 80 percent of managers cited the applicants' lack of appropriate basic and technical skills as a reason. Employers in Thailand particularly rate the information technology and English skills of their employees as poor, especially among skills production workers.

Employment conditions and access to credit and information

The 1997 financial crisis has caused firms to be more cautious about providing stable employment contracts, making workers-especially young workers-more vulnerable. Following the crisis, many firms prefer to hire workers on more flexible terms of employment, such as fixed-term contracts, temporary work and part-time jobs. Terms and conditions of such contracts are usually less favorable for workers than standard long-term contracts, reducing worker bargaining power and limiting investment by firms in skills development and training. Increased use of subcontracting and outsourcing has also created more employment in the informal sector, making it more difficult to systematically upgrade the skills of the young workforce.

Although overall access to credit and financial markets has rapidly improved during the last five years, youth generally have less access to credit. According to the *Doing Business 2007: How to Reform* report, one of the biggest improvements made by Thailand is increasing accessibility of credit for entrepreneurs. Thailand's Credit Information Index ranks at 5.0 on a 0-6 scale, at the same average level as OECD countries, while the average for regional competitors was only 1.9. However, youth are still considered a high-risk group by financial institutions due to their lack of collateral and/or experience. In some respects, youth share the problems common to most micro and small entrepreneurs. Age works against young people in terms of greater difficulty in getting access to credit and their lack of networks.

A high proportion of young job seekers depend on family and personal connections for employment information. As in many countries in South Asia and South East Asia, the large majority of youth in Thailand rely on informal networks and contacts to search for jobs (Table 4.6). Employment prospects of youth therefore depend to a large extent on the types of networks they have been able to develop. Public employment services, education and training institutions and job fairs play a very small role in assisting young people in the search for jobs. In addition, the lack of experience of young people relative to adults generally places them

Table 4.6: Channels of Information for First Employment

Internal family (parents and relatives)	64.4%
Close networks (people in same village, friends, teachers)	22.5%
External (employer, announcements, walk-in)	13.0%

Source: Thailand Development Research Institute, 2001

in a disadvantaged position, as it does the more pronounced lack of labor market information and job search expertise among young people.[128] As a result, many young workers enter the labor market unprepared, experience long spells of unemployment when they look for their first job and often feel discouraged and end up in the informal sector after unsuccessful attempts to find employment in the formal sector.

III. Prescriptions: Policy responses for supporting the move to work

Expanding youth employment opportunities

An effective strategy for generating youth employment should be part of an overall employment strategy at both the macro and sectoral levels. Overall, employment growth has the strongest influence on the ease or difficulty with which young people eventually make the transition to employment. Despite higher levels of formal education than earlier generations, young people are often at the end of the hiring queue when limited job opportunities exist. However, many governments normally give little attention to developing and implementing youth employment strategies. An adequate strategy should take into account the growth sectors in the local and global economies. Clear youth employment targets, including employment in the informal sector, should also be incorporated into medium-term plans and strategies.

Eliminating the remaining constraints for Thai competitiveness can have a positive impact on youth employment opportunities. Improving the conditions for private investment in a country can boost economic growth and employment creation through foreign investment and the development of the private sector. Generally, an increase in the demand for labor has a positive impact on youth employment, whereas youth unemployment declines. The *Doing Business 2007: How to Reform* report identifies Thailand as one of the world's top economies for doing business. Thailand's place in the ease of doing business rankings moved up to the 18th position out of 175 countries. However, according to the *Thailand Investment Climate, Firm Competitiveness and Growth* report, Thai firms confirmed that three major constraints remain: heavy regulatory burden, shortages of skills and deficient infrastructure, especially outside Bangkok. Making progress in these areas should be the focus of policy efforts in the short to medium term in order to provide the foundations for sustained productivity improvements and growth into the future, which will help generate productive employment among young workers.

[128] ILO, 2006a

Given the importance of education for employment prospects, a continued focus is needed on eliminating child work. Law enforcement and legal prosecution are required, but that alone would simply force the use of children work underground. Policies to end child labor would ideally include both supply-and demand-side mechanisms for keeping children in school. Supply-side mechanisms focused on improving the accessibility and quality/suitability of education services can help promote school enrollment. Evidence suggests that parents generally withdraw their children from work as soon as they can afford it, as children from wealthy families are not engaged in work even in least developed countries.[129] In the Thai context, the perceived opportunity cost in terms of the household's foregone income mainly hinders the continuation of education above lower secondary level. This suggests that demand-side mechanisms such as conditional cash transfers might be effective in reducing child labor. The use of conditional cash transfer programs has proved to be successful in increasing school attendance, although to a lesser extent in decreasing child labor (Box 4.1).

At the same time, the employment needs of young protected people between 15-18 years old should be considered. Thai labor market regulations on work for young people between 15-18 years old might be generating undesirable outcomes for them. While it is legal for children ages 15-18 to work, the Labor Act has made it very cumbersome for enterprises to hire these young workers. One possible consequence is that workers in this age group who cannot afford further education and have to enter the labor market face difficulties finding employment opportunities. They may be forced to settle with employment in the informal sector, where labor inspection and labor law compliance are less effective. Around 65 percent of workers ages 15-19 work in the informal sector, while less than half of those ages 20-24 do. The former group's more limited access to quality productive jobs also prevents them from realizing their full potential, compromising their long-term career prospects. Hence, a review of the child labor regulations and their implementation might be needed to ensure that they do not pose a major stumbling block for young workers, since the demand and supply of workers in this age group still remain very much a part of the Thai labor market structure.

Youth can particularly benefit from improved non-farm opportunities in rural areas. As noted above, evidence reveals that youth in rural areas of Thailand experience higher informality and underemployment. The proportion of youth receiving a wage below minimum wage in rural areas was twice that in urban areas; and youth represent a high share of rural-to-urban migrants, motivated to find improved job opportunities. Few employment opportunities outside agriculture are available in rural areas, although improved wages and productivity in rural areas would have a significant overall impact on the Thai economy and the young labor force. To date, Thailand's strategy for promoting rural opportunities has centered on

[129] Basu and Van, 1998

Box 4.1: Addressing the Needs of Young People through Conditional Cash Transfer Programs

Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programs offer a promising way to reduce the incidence of child work. CCTs are incentive schemes that provide cash to poor young individuals conditional on school attendance or certain health and nutritional behaviors. CCTs started in the late 1990s, particularly in Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries and are quickly becoming popular worldwide. The initial wave of evaluations of these programs in LAC reveals significant impacts on school enrollment. The best documented program is *Oportunidades*, in Mexico, which has shown to increase secondary school attendance rates by 8.4 percent, transition to secondary school by nearly 20 percent and grade attainment by 10 percent, with significantly larger effects for girls than for boys. Maluccio and Flores (2004) report an enrollment increase of about 18 percentage points in Nicaragua as a result of CCTs programs, while Schady and Araujo (2006) report effects on enrollment of between 10 and 13 percentage points in Ecuador. Smaller CCT program effects on enrollment, generally around 3 percentage points, are reported for Honduras, Colombia and Brazil.

Part of the positive impact of CCTs on school enrollment comes from reductions in work. In *Oportunidades*, the decline in work participation for boys was roughly in balance with the rise in school enrollment, except among 16-17 year olds for whom there was no effect on work participation. A similar program in Nicaragua was also found to decrease the incidence of work among 12-13 year olds. Ravallion and Wodon (2002) found that the *Food for Education* program in Bangladesh did reduce child labor. The evaluation of the *Progresa* program in Mexico showed significant increases in education enrollment of girls and boys, accompanied by also significant reductions in child work. The impact was however more pronounced on school attendance than on child work displacement. The program also translated in a large reduction of domestic work in the case of girls, suggesting that the time spent in school competes with that spent on household work.

However, CCTs alone do not appear to be enough for reducing work significantly. *Oportunidades* did not have any significant effect on schooling time, particularly in the case of girls. The evidence from the *Program to Eradicate Child Labor* (PETI) in rural Brazil suggests that after-school programs may be a good complement to the conditionality on school attendance. Sparrow (2004) found that a scholarship program in Indonesia had a significantly effect on work participation that was even larger than the effect on enrollment.

Sources: Rawlings and Rubio, 2005; Morley and Coady, 2003; Schultz, 2001; Skoufias and Parker, 2001; Glewwe and Olinto, 2004.; Attanasio, Fitzsimons and Gomez, 2005; Cardoso and Souza, 2004; de la Brière and Rawlings, 2006.

community-based microfinance/revolving funds. However, success rates often hinge on high levels of cooperation among community members and strong leadership. Efforts to generate non-farm employment in rural areas have also included tourism promotion and schemes for silk and cotton weaving and handicrafts. The impact, coverage and targeting of these programs are not youth-specific. Therefore, options should be explored to: i) identify and create employment opportunities for youth in emerging sectors such as tourism, mass media, health and education, environmental conservation, ICT product and service industries and agro industry and ii) reinvigorate rural development and attract investment in rural areas through non-farm skills development programs, infrastructure development and policies to promote private sector involvement.

If properly managed, migration can also help expand opportunities for youth. In recent decades, rural–urban flows in Thailand have increased as the chances of acquiring more farmland have decreased and few other means of earning are available in rural areas. At the same time, the urban labor market has grown in Bangkok and in adjacent peripheral areas of the Central region, where new industrial facilities are emerging.[130] According to the 2005 Migration Survey, about 2.8 million people or 4.3 percent of the total population migrated in Thailand between 2004 and 2005 and youth comprised around 36 percent of all migrants surveyed, the highest share of any age group. Positive effects of migration can include household income support and rural families' gains from remittances, while potential negative effects include social problems due to increased population pressure on urban labor markets and the receiving provinces. Rural-to-urban migrants can face poor working conditions and limited access to social services as well as lack information on required skills in the labor market. To maximize the benefits of migration, policies should aim to facilitate the assimilation of young migrants into their new communities and minimize potential stress on the host populations.

"I want to own a motorcycle repair shop in my village because it is a self-reliant business." Along from Chalom House, Chiang Rai.

Although entrepreneurship and self-employment of youth have several direct positive impacts, they have not increased in the last two decades. The potential benefits of such entrepreneurship include reducing youth unemployment and creating a tier of young start-ups, as well as increasing the employability of youth. However, youth face many obstacles when starting up a business. Despite the Government's policy to promote self-employment and small entrepreneurship in successive National Economic and Social Development Plans, self-employment of youth has remained constant at 30 percent during the last two decades. The official figure may underestimate the real size of youth self-employment in Thailand given that informality, particularly in rural areas, is widespread. Nonetheless, financial constraints and start-up costs play an important role in

[130] Osaki, 2003

shaping the patterns of entrepreneurship**.** Using survey sampling in the rural Northeast and semi-urban Central regions in Thailand, Paulson and Townsend (2004) found that households rely heavily on savings to fund initial investments in their businesses. Approximately 60 percent of the total initial investment in household businesses comes from savings, while loans from commercial banks account for about 9 percent of total business investment and those from the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC) account for another 7 percent. Youth from wealthier households are therefore more likely to start businesses if they so desire. Further efforts are needed to improve the availability of adequate business education; provide start-up grants for sound business proposals and facilitate access to low-or no-interest "soft loans" for young entrepreneurs, particularly those from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

Improving the capacity of young Thai people

The development of adequate skills to meet labor market demand is critical for promoting youth employment and overall economic growth in Thailand. As seen above, one of the main obstacles young Thai people face when searching for their first job is inadequate education and skills to meet the needs of the labor market. Skills upgrading in Thailand has been slow and until recently, the main focus in education was on expanding coverage rather than improving quality. The recent *Thailand Investment Climate, Firm Competitiveness and Growth* report showed a clear need to upgrade the skills of the labor force in Thailand, particularly in the fields of IT and English language. It has been estimated that Thai firms are losing nearly 15 percent of their output as a result of operating with the wrong skills mix. Firms in all surveyed industries are operating with a ratio of skilled workers to the total number of workers lower than the optimal for their industry**.**

Schools should be viewed not only as educational institutions but also as bridges to the labor market and broader society. The world of work is constantly changing and Thai youth have to be trained to keep up with the job market as it evolves. Therefore, the "can-do-abilities" that private enterprises are looking for must be identified. The "competency-based" framework, which countries like Korea have started to adopt, is one attempt to address this need. Schools can also help young people align their aspirations with the realities of the labor market by providing proper career guidance and counseling, truly preparing the young for their first job.

Diversification of education options would help accommodate diverse student needs and capabilities as well as ease the transition between school and the workplace. Young people looking for their first job lack experience in the labor market, while employers are oftentimes not prepared to give them that chance. Secondary education, both lower and upper, in Thailand is heavily concentrated on the academic path, whereas the size of the vocational education sector in Thailand is small relative to that in OECD countries. The "Dual System" in Thailand, combining educational programs at higher-level vocational schools and on-the-job training at companies, has approximately 45,000 students. The internship program, another type of vocational training program which provides actual work experience for university graduates, should become more widely available as the number of university students continues to grow.

Various means/modes of providing training should be explored, with coordinated efforts between the public and private sectors. As a source of skills for youth, employers are often overlooked in favor of public training programs. It could be argued that training by enterprises does not ensure access for all, hence, public interventions are needed. In the public sector, responsibilities for training are spread over several ministries, with lack of national coordination in policy design as well as limited coordination between public and private suppliers, limited participation of industry in policy and planning and an absence of national standards and recognition. Going forward, public and private partnerships could help move the current training system beyond meeting enterprises' "operational needs" and towards upgrading skills or providing new technologies, while not forgetting particular support for the poor and marginalized youth who are excluded from the job market due to technical, geographical and socio-cultural divides.

The labor information system must also be strengthened to help young labor force entrants find suitable jobs, as well as inform the development of an effective youth employment strategy. The National Statistical Office and the Ministry of Labor cooperate in gathering and disseminating provincial labor market information. Several technical issues, such as the time lag between data collection and data dissemination or sample sizes in the Labor Force Survey, could hinder policymakers from devising appropriate and timely youth employment interventions.[131] The Government has been pursuing efforts to improve the Labor Market Information System (LMIS) in recent years. For example, the LMIS piloted a project to develop provincial labor market centers.

Providing second chances for the most vulnerable

Second chance interventions are needed to give disadvantaged youth a chance to reintegrate into the workforce. Vulnerable or disadvantaged young people include youth who started working too early, ended up in dead-end jobs, or were unable to find a job at all. Inactivity of youth not only wastes potential but also poses a risk to society, as a young person who is unable to integrate into the labor market successfully can be susceptible to poverty and dissatisfaction. Therefore, although policies for second chances can be costly and have yielded mixed results, they are necessary. The WDR 2007 reviewed 19 of these second-chance programs worldwide and found that programs offering training rarely improve the employment and earnings of young participants. However, experience in some countries shows that programs can be cost-effective if well-designed, while the costs of not implementing second chance programs can be overwhelming.[132] In Thailand, training services have generally been limited to meeting enterprises' "operational needs" rather than contributing to upgraded skills or providing new technologies.[133] Improving their chances of success will require clearly defined targets, systematic monitoring and evaluation and political commitment.

[131] According to Mizunoya and others, 2006, the Labor Force Survey collects about 210,000 data points per quarter, which is large enough to estimate the national and regional level market data. However, once the data is divided into provincial cells (76 provinces), sex (2 cells), location of residence (urban and rural: 2 cells) and age (90 cells by single age, or seven cells by categorizing), then the available sample size of each cell becomes quite small. If one's focus is on development of employment policy for youth, then the sample size is no longer sufficient

[132] World Bank, 2007b

[133] Lall, 1999

Box 4.2: Second Chances Programs for Youth Employment

The *Entra 21* and *Jovenes* job training programs in Latin America provide technical training and life-skills training to disadvantaged young people on a massive scale. They also cooperate with both the public and private sectors to providing internship opportunities to young people to help facilitate their later employment. The keys to the success of these programs are the high quality of the training providers, frequent feedback from employers and strong institutions managing the programs. Evidence from both programs shows that job training programs need to be part of a larger package of services to maximize their impact.

Other programs in a number of countries have also shown successful implementation and results. Experiences in the United States and Latin America suggest that a successful second chances program should offer bundled or comprehensive services which include not just training but also placement and mentoring. Public works programs in low-income countries targeted to low-skilled and unemployed youth and the *Proempleo* program in Argentina, which combines public works and wage subsidies, have also proven successful. Given the high cost of second-chance programs, it is important to direct them to those young people who are most in need and design them in ways that meet their needs. Geographical targeting may be a better option where poverty is clustered in specific poor regions and in remote rural areas.

Source: World Bank, 2007b

The main second chance program offered by the Ministry of Education is the Non-Formal Education system. The mandate of the Office of Non-Formal Education Commission (ONFEC) includes providing basic education opportunities to the underprivileged. The main target group was initially the out-of-school population in rural areas who missed the opportunity to participate in the formal schooling system. These services have been expanded to cover more target groups, including children, women, people with disabilities, conscripts, workers in the agriculture sector, hill tribes, slum dwellers and people having no opportunity to continue their studies in formal schooling after compulsory education. In 2005, around 4 million people across all ages registered with and graduated from such programs; 95 percent of these students were outside Bangkok and 57 percent enrolled in vocational education, while 43 percent enrolled in the academic track. In addition, the Department of Skills Development and the Department of Employment under the Ministry of Labor offer some skills upgrading, training and retraining programs.

Policy recommendations for the third youth transition, moving from school to work incorporate all three lenses-opportunities, capabilities and second chances-but largely focus on creating opportunities and building the capacity of youth. Many promising programs exist across the world; and Thailand can benefit greatly from its own experience in this regard, as well as the experience of other nations, both near and far. Table 4.7 records international experience gained with the policy recommendations catalogued in this chapter.

Table 4.7: Summary of Transition to Work Policy Recommendations and International Experience

	Policy Recommendations	Evidence	Country Examples	Notes for Success
Expanding Opportunities				
1	Strengthen labor market information systems	Proven	United States and Europe	Increase capacity to collect and analyze data on youth and labor markets
2	Eliminate child work, e.g. through demand-side mechanisms	Proven	Brazil PETI, Mexico Progresa, Ecuador BDH	Provide incentives to young people, rather than parents
3	Facilitate self-employment through the provision of financing alternatives for youth	Unproven, but promising	South Africa, Brazil, Argentina, Chile	Provide financial/technical assistance to young entrepreneurs
4	Promote rural off-farm work opportunities for young people	Proven	Taiwan, China	Promotion of rural manufacturing
Enhancing Capacity				
1	Ensure that schools operate as a bridge to the labor market	Proven	Germany, Korea	Dual tracking
2	Explore various modes of training programs, including on-the-job training	Proven	Germany, Kenya, Ghana	Traditional apprenticeships and enterprise programs
		Unproven, but promising	Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, Australia, Mauritius	Matching agencies, new service sector apprenticeships and reforming training institutes
3	Diversify education options to accommodate various student needs/capabilities as well as market needs	Unproven, but promising	Pakistan	Empowering youth with disabilities
Providing Second Chances				
1	Continue monitoring and strengthening non-formal education	Proven	Jóvenes Argentina and Entra 21 in Latin America;	Combining vocational training with life skills
		Unproven, but promising	Senegal and Ghana	Combining literacy programs with skills training
2	Explore new programs based on international experiences to help reintegrate young people who dropped out of the labor market	Proven	United States, Argentina, Chile, Peru	Comprehensive programs providing training, job placement, mentoring, etc.
		Unproven, but promising	Hungary	Reintegrating youth with disabilities
			Korea, Thailand, Philippines	Public employment services

Source: Adapted from World Bank, 2007a and 2007b

CHAPTER 5:
YOUTH POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 5: YOUTH POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The previous Chapters outline the main challenges and difficulties facing Thai youth across three major transitions to adulthood. The ways in which these challenges are addressed through youth policy will not only shape the present but also profoundly determine the future of the next generation and, hence, the future of the country. Given that youth development cuts across many areas and involves diverse segments of society and various government agencies, youth policies must be integrated and cross-sectoral to be effective. This Chapter outlines the parameters of a youth policy framework, using the approach developed in the WDR 2007 and reviews the institutional arrangements for youth policy in Thailand. Building on the analysis of the previous Chapters, it then provides recommendations for future policy directions to help Thailand's young people seize opportunities and successfully manage risks they might encounter as they move into their next phase of life.

I. The World Development Report approach

No "one-size-fits-all" approach is available for youth development policy. A country's national youth policy must be tailored based on a rigorous assessment of the country's youth situation. There are four important dimensions: *which* priorities to focus; *how urgent* the country action should be; *whom* to target; and the *type* of intervention required. Specifically, key areas of consideration include:

- *Levels of young people's skills and capabilities* (their human capital)-indicating whether priorities should be to expand quality basic education; ensure quality and relevance of higher/tertiary education systems; address new health threats; provide second chance programs; reform labor markets to better accommodate new entrants; and/or encourage entrepreneurship among youth.
- *Stage of the demographic transition*-indicating the urgency of country action. Countries with declining dependency ratios (ratio of the sum of the population aged 0-14 and that aged 65+ to the population aged 15-64) are presented with a window of opportunity to invest more of their resources in young people. If the investment is sufficient and effective, the increased productivity of youth from earlier investments can help maintain country growth rates when, in the future, the population starts to age and fewer workers are available to realize economic growth.
- *Country income* can be a determinant of young people and their families' ability to pay for human capital investments themselves and also a proxy for the country's administrative capacity to implement policies and programs-indicating the type of intervention required. Taking education as an example, the priority for low-income countries would be to provide quality basic education, whereas for middle-income and high growth countries, the challenge would be to develop upper secondary and tertiary education systems. In both cases, financial incentives are often an

important component for encouraging students to attend schools and/or pursue post-compulsory or higher education since students and their families must handle their direct and indirect private costs. The forms of intervention to provide financial incentives for education range from grants and scholarships to loans, income-contingent loans, vouchers, conditional cash transfers and saving schemes. However, which combination of these interventions is best suited for each country depends on its capacity and constraints to implementing such programs.[134] For instance, income-contingent loans may be a realistic option for middle-income countries, while conditional cash transfers can be effective in a wide range of contexts.[135]

- *Autonomy of youth in decision making*- indicating which groups should be the target of public interventions. A survey in Pakistan found conflicting views among adults, male and female youth when asked about their role in the decision to drop out of school.[136] Research in Thailand found that the youth decision to enter the labor market early is greatly influenced by families and that families are important as a source of information for youth employment, as described in Chapter 4. Youth development policies and interventions may thus not simply target youth as beneficiaries but should also consider societal decision-making structures.

In addition, many national youth policies oftentimes fail to coordinate action to implement and deliver the intended results. Although many national youth policies clearly lay out their vision and priorities, they prove to be unsuccessful in implementation. The WDR 2007 highlights a number of reasons why youth policies often fail young people: (i) poor coordination among policies and sectors, (ii) weak voice of young people in quality of policy and service delivery and (iii) the paucity of proven successes (Box 5.1). The International Council on National Youth Policy analyzed actions to implement national youth policies and estimated that about 30 percent of the United Nations member countries had formulated national youth policies. Of these, about one-third had active youth participation in the national youth policy process, while the other two-thirds were mostly controlled and dominated by respective Governments with no space for youth participation.[137]

II. Youth national policy and institutional framework in Thailand

Youth development emerges as a key area in National Economic and Social Development Plans. Thailand's five-year National Economic and Social Development Plan provides the framework for overall national development. The current national plan is the tenth in the country's history. The primary focus of the First to Fourth plans was stimulating economic growth through industrial development. It was not until the Fifth Plan (1982-1986) that policymakers incorporated

[134] Constraints to interventions can be at different levels: community and household level, service delivery level (e.g. shortage of qualified staff or poor access), sector policy and strategic management level (e.g. ill-capacitated bureaucracy), environmental and contextual characteristics (e.g. corruption, weak institutions, social and geographical conditions).
[135] World Bank, 2007b
[136] Ibid.
[137] International Council on National Youth Policy (ICNYP) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), 2005

Box 5.1: Three Reasons Why Youth Policy often Fails Young People

Poor coordination among policies and sectors that affect youth and limit accountability. Challenges in youth transitions tend to overlap, requiring cross-sectoral work to develop policies and outcomes. For example, addressing the difficulties in going to work requires looking beyond the labor market to macroeconomic policy, the investment climate and the quality of education and training. Likewise, making secondary education universal will require physical access to schools through improvements in roads or other infrastructure. Sector ministries are responsible for the bulk of policies that affect youth, while ministries or departments of youth are responsible for youth outcomes. This arrangement has weak lines of accountability and youth outcomes suffer as a result.

Weak voice of young people in monitoring and providing feedback on quality of policy and service delivery. About two-third of countries with national youth councils, bodies intended to reflect the views of different stakeholders, do not listen to youth non-governmental organizations.[138] Service delivery is another area in which youth are not visible. As direct clients, they can be crucial to improving the quality of service delivery. Yet many health services project an unfriendly image to young people, while many school systems do not recognize youth as stakeholders in improving the quality of education.

The paucity of proven successes. Many youth programs in developing countries lack critical monitoring and evaluation (M&E).[139] They often ambiguously identify the causality from policy to program to effect, giving youth policy the impression of being soft and lacking in rigor. Without a strong M&E component, it is difficult to understand what affects outcomes in youth development and to extract lessons learned for future activities and programs. The absence of stock on lessons learned and "best practices," especially in developing countries, limits the ability for countries to share what works and does not work. Although a body of developed-country literature is available, the very different circumstances of developed-country youth vis-à-vis their counterparts in developing countries and differences in capacity for implementation constrain the applicability of these studies.

Source: World Bank, 2007b

human resource development and youth issues to the framework for overall development. In the Ninth Plan (2002-2006), which has just ended, a specific focus was on human rights and human development while the Tenth Plan aims to devote children and youth development efforts towards instilling moral values and virtues along with mental and emotional development from the fetus stage to later growth.

Since the inception of youth development work in Thailand in 1965, the national youth policy and supporting institutional framework have undergone a number of changes. The work on youth development in Thailand started when the National Youth Office was established

[138] World Bank, 2007b
[139] Lloyd, 2005 and Knowles and Behrman, 2005

in 1965 under the National Research Council, Office of the Prime Minister.[140] The first national youth policy only came into effect in 1973. In the late 1990s continuing into the early 2000s, Thailand experienced successive military coups and changes of government as well as the subsequent promulgation of new constitutions. These political changes not only signified regime changes but also institutional changes which affected youth development policy and the institutional framework for youth work (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: The Oscillations of Politics and the Youth Policy and Institutional Framework

Political changes		Changes on youth policy and institutional framework	
		1965	National Youth Office (NYO) was first established under the Prime Minister (PM)'s Office
		1969	NYO was renamed and moved to Office of Youth Promotion (OYP) under the PM Office
1973	Military regimes were toppled by student demonstrations/revolution	1973	OYP was upgraded to departmental status and became "National Youth Bureau (NYB)" under the PM Office
			First National Youth Policy (1973-1977) was issued
		1974	NYB became Office of Youth Promotion (OYP) under the Ministry of Education (MOE)
1976	Military rule being re-imposed after military coup and 1976 Constitution was promulgated	1976	OYP was renamed the Commission of the Promotion and Development of Youth under the MOE.
1977 (October)	The army staged another coup and appointed a new Prime Minister	1977	Second National Youth Policy (1977-1979) was issued
1978	New constitution was promulgated		**The National Youth Promotion and Coordination Act B.E. 2521 (1978)** was passed and the National Youth Commission (coordination body) and National Youth Bureau (secretariat) were established.
		1979	Third National Youth Policy (1979-1994) was issued
1991	New constitution was promulgated		
1992	Military staged a coup against a civilian government, a new government was democratically elected		
		1994	Fourth National Youth Policy (1994-2002) was issued
1997	Financial crisis and new constitution promulgated		
2001	Prime Minister wins largest popular mandate in history		
2002	The Bureaucratic Reform Act B.E. 2545 instigated the largest reorganization of Thai Bureaucracy in 110 years	2002	Fifth National Youth Policy (2002-present) was issued in January 2002. The Bureaucratic Reform Act B.E. 2545 (October) moved the National Youth Bureau (NYB) to the Office of Welfare Promotion, Protection and Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups (OPP) in the new Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS).
2006	Military staged a coup and put in place a transitional civilian government	2006	The Children and Youth Development Act was approved.

[140] UNESCAP, 2000.

The latest reform, brought about by the Bureaucratic Reform Act B.E. 2545 (2002), downgraded the status of the National Youth Bureau (NYB). As described in Chapter 1, the Government moved responsibility for the youth agenda from the NYB under the Prime Minister's Office to the Office of Welfare Promotion, Protection and Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups (OPP) in the recently established Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS).[141] Within this office, the Bureau of Child Promotion and Protection (OPPC) and the Bureau of Youth Promotion and Protection (OPPY) handle children and youth policies. The relatively small budgets of the bureaus and their placement within a line Ministry, which hinders their ability to fulfill their coordination functions, are indicative of their more limited responsibilities.

The new Children and Youth Development Act could help strengthen the institutional structure for youth development policy. As described in Chapter 1, the new Act contains a number of elements in response to difficulties encountered under the current arrangement in terms of cross-sectoral support and resource mobilization. Under the new Act, Local Administrations will play an active role in formulating and financing children and youth development plans. A Children and Youth Development Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, will be established and the Office of National Children and Youth Development will be established within the MSDHS with departmental status. The passage of the new legislation is expected to help Thailand address youth challenges more effectively.

Thailand's current National Youth Plan (NYP) endeavors to guide Government and stakeholder actions to deal with these challenges. In January 2002, the Fifth NYP and the Long-Term Strategy for Development of Children and Youth (2002-2011) were approved by the Council of Ministers. Compared to previous NYPs, the Fifth NYP provides a broader framework for youth development. The NYP and Strategy, which have also been translated into a Plan of Action as described in Chapter 1, aim to promote the following:

1. Encouraging and supporting family institutions to have major roles in bringing up children and youth to help them fulfill their potential;
2. Encouraging other important social institutions in different fields (e.g., education, religion, professional development, politics, all levels of governance-in particular the local administrative organizations-private sector and mass media) to play active roles and undertake joint efforts to develop and provide creative life skills to youth;
3. Encouraging the provision of youth services, by both the Government and non-government sectors, to effectively carry out their responsibilities without discrimination and with transparency and full accountability;

[141] See Figure 1.3 in Chapter 1 for a diagram of the institutional arrangements for children and youth.

4. Supporting timely legislation and law enforcement as demanded by the situations and changes affecting youth;
5. Supporting monitoring and evaluation of youth development with systematic indicators for assessment;
6. Encouraging all youth at appropriate ages to receive services in accordance with their basic rights and needs as demanded by international standards, both quantitatively and qualitatively;
7. Encouraging youth to learn how to analyze data, to think, to be responsible and able to make decisions based on rationale, conscience and moral values and be capable of self-adjustment to social changes;
8. Supporting youth to apply advanced knowledge based on local wisdom, religious principles and those of the self-sufficient economy, which will be most useful to them in their daily life and future careers; and
9. Supporting all youth at appropriate ages to contribute constructively to community development and strengthening of friendly relations at the international level.[142]

The Government is also developing and implementing new policies and initiatives for youth development. One of the most significant policy developments is the preparation of a new National Strategy and Plan of Action for Youth Development. The Strategy and Plan of Action, which are being developed in accordance with the "A World Fit for Children" framework adopted by 180 United Nations member governments, is being drafted by the OPP. In addition to this strategic planning, a number of positive initiatives have been undertaken recently. For example, the MSDHS issues an annual Youth Situation Update, which generally covers all topics relating to youth and contains useful information for policymakers. These updates have helped inform the design of several projects, including campaigns and activities to promote and rebuild family structure and values, provision of creative space for children in provinces to aid the process of their identity formation and the successful establishment of youth parliaments in all provinces. The most recent initiative is the launch of a joint project with quasi-public organizations to develop a social monitoring and warning mechanism to tackle youth problems at the provincial level. The Thai Health Promotion Foundation, the Thailand Research Fund and the Ramajitti Institute overseeing the Child Watch project, signed an agreement to cooperate and support MSDHS efforts.

III. Challenges facing the youth policy and institutional framework in Thailand

Strong commitment and coordination is needed to further enhance youth development policies and interventions in Thailand. Apart from the relatively long, uninterrupted spell in the 1980s, youth development work in Thailand has suffered a great deal of disruption in policies and implementation. This lack of continuity has created confusion and affected

[142] National Youth Bureau, 2002

the direction of youth development work. With the new legislation, the government needs to ensure that the National Youth Plan and supporting framework and structure will move beyond a symbolic state. Political will and strong commitment across diverse segments will be required to push the youth development agenda forward. More specifically, particular efforts are needed in the following areas:

- To provide overarching coordination and direction to all policies that directly and indirectly affect youth;
- To ensure that youth policy is a long-term policy commitment of the State and not merely of a given Government;
- To avoid conceiving youth policy out of short-term political expediency but instead as a long-term strategic instrument; and
- To create a national youth NGO platform and institutionalize informal and formal consultation mechanisms between this platform and national youth policy stakeholders.

Beyond strategic planning, greater emphasis should be placed on ensuring that youth policies and plans are better translated into agencies' programs and activities. In Thailand, the real challenge does not lie in the formulation of policy and plans but in how to ensure that youth policies and plans are integrated into agencies' programs and provide for adequate accountability. Typically, once youth policy and plans have been developed, a Plan of Action specifying key strategic areas-each with lists of activities, budgets and responsible agencies for a multi-year period-will be devised. In the past, such Plans of Action simply collated existing activities of different agencies, so programs were often piecemeal and uncoordinated. A set of concrete priority areas for intervention, based on careful analysis of how the overall set of activities will help produce youth outcomes, should be developed up front to inform the design of programs. Given the wide-ranging nature of youth issues, youth development plans can appear overwhelming and be diluted if clear priorities are not established.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are critical for informing program design and determining the effectiveness of interventions. The major challenge for monitoring and evaluation is the development of tools to measure both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of youth policy initiatives. Although Thailand has national surveys such as the five-yearly Children and Youth Survey and situational reports such as MSDHS's Youth Situational Report and the Child Watch campaign by the Ramajitti Institute, a stronger system for assessing the impacts of youth-related laws, policies and programs is required.[143] The system should have mechanisms that link directly to the policy planning process to allow for mid-term adjustments as needed.

[143] UN, 2006 and NCCYD, 2005

IV. Youth civic participation and involvement

Given that youth are central stakeholders, policymakers should encourage young men and women to participate in dialogue and collective action on policy responses. The common operating principle among policy makers and the public at large is that youth are passive beings and passive clients of government services. However, evidence shows that consensual, participatory and transparent processes involving youth can achieve more effective outcomes.[144] Such processes will help policymakers understand youth perspectives, which are critical in the rapidly changing economic and social context of Thailand. This approach will also empower young people themselves to develop and implement key aspects of the strategy.

"What can we-as young people-do to change things? There may not be an answer to this question since we are simply children and cannot solve everything alone. This event opened our eyes to various issues and concerns and has shined a light on the areas and things we-as youth-can improve and fight for." Mr. Surin Sinthas, Burirum, World Bank Youth Open Space

A recent study points to the fact that child and youth participation is considered to be a Western concept in Thailand. Progressive youth development work requires traditional decision-makers to work not only for young people but also with them. However, the level of youth participation is often a composite of complex and culturally differentiated identities, attitudes and behaviors. In Thailand, the concept of child and youth voice is considered to be Western and is not fully appreciated by Thai adults, especially parents, older family members, teachers and policymakers due to the cultural characteristics of Thai society and the demand for obedience that children are expected to show toward adults.[145]

Nonetheless, efforts have been made to encourage and incorporate youth voices into policy and program development. The Government has adopted an increasingly participatory process to policy development. However, the forms of participation that exist may often be adult-led, token, or event-oriented rather than integrated into the social system.[146] Moreover, only selected groups of children and young people have the opportunity to participate and express themselves through these participation mechanisms.

Efforts by Government in the past aimed to promote the establishment and activities of youth NGOs and groups. One example is the National Council for Child and Youth Development (NCYD) under the patronage of Princess Sirindhorn. The NCYD has received some budget support directly from the Government to network NGOs and youth groups and enhance the importance of their roles in the country's youth development work. Furthermore, the Children and Youth Council which were established in all 76 provinces of Thailand in 2006 aim to become the main channel for youth voices to inform policymaking.

[144] World Bank, 2000
[145] National Council for Child and Youth Development, 2005
[146] Ibid.

Assessment of youth involvement in the formal political arena is difficult due to lack of data. Different generations of young people have played major roles in political, economic and social development of Thailand. Student groups have sparked movements for significant political reforms and changes in power at various points in Thai history. Young workers have also made important contributions to the country's recent decades of rapid economic growth. However, lack of data or surveys makes it difficult to determine the extent to which youth are interested and confident in mainstream political institutions.

The school environment, voluntary work and community service can play an important role in improving the recognition and relevance of active youth participation. During their

"I think organizing these kinds of meetings will help gather youth from all over the country and create partnerships as well as collaboration between the youth themselves and the organizations they work with, as well as push youth to be courageous and voice their opinions." Ms. Patchara Sonsa, Mahasarakham, World Bank "Youth Open Space".

Box 5.2: World Bank Youth Open Space – Incorporating Voices of the Young

As part of the preparation of this Social Monitor, The World Bank held a series of Open Space dialogues across Thailand to listen to the concerns and needs of youth and disadvantaged children from diverse backgrounds. In the Open Space dialogue format, participants themselves set the own agenda and topics of discussion. With the help of professional facilitators and teachers, youth were invited to stand up and write on a piece of paper an issue or topic they liked to discuss. They then formed groups with other participants who shared an interest in the same topic. Suggestions were posted on a wall and Open Space facilitators and volunteers facilitated a broader discussion and compiled these results into a report. The overall goal was to give young people and children the opportunity to voice their opinions and perspectives on key issues which affect their every day life and could potentially shape their future.

In September 2006, a "Youth Open Space Dialogue" was held at Siam University involving more than 160 youth participants from all over the country. Developing the workshop's overarching theme, "Challenges and Opportunities-How to Create a Brighter Future for Thai Youth," the participants broke out into groups and engaged in heated debates on topics ranging from improving sex education and enhancing understanding of HIV/AIDS among youth to tackling corruption issues or engaging in educational reforms.

The Bank also organized a "Street Children Open Space Dialogue" in Chiang Rai in November 2006. During this workshop, volunteer teachers as well as representatives from local NGOs, government agencies and youth groups learned about the lives of street children living in Thailand from their perspectives, describing some of the daily concerns and harsh realities they face each day along with the dreams and goals they hope to achieve. More specifically, children discussed issues such as how to obtain better education; how to become a teacher, doctor, or nurse to help other children and adults in difficult situations; how to ensure disadvantaged children are provided with more opportunities; and how to ensure migrants from neighboring countries, such as Myanmar, have chances of obtaining Thai nationality and accessing social services.

Box 5.3: Coordinating Youth Interventions: Roles for Every Actor in the Process

International experience has shown that several sectors of society have a role to play and a comparative advantage in youth policy initiatives, from the National Government to civil society to youth, themselves. As discussed extensively in this Monitor, National Governments hold several comparative advantages for identifying and coordinating youth interventions. The National Government maintains: 1) access to survey data to identify and target youth; 2) technical expertise across line ministries relating to youth issues and monitoring and evaluation; 3) ability to develop national laws and place the agenda on the national front; and 4) financial resources to further this agenda. These comparative advantages allow for broad priorities to be set in the area of investing in youth. In particular, incentives can be provided for cross-sectoral collaboration to target youth and for impact evaluations of youth programs. Common targeting mechanisms can be established and budgets can be a reflection of the priorities established. Furthermore, basic guidelines, principles and frameworks for policy can be developed at the local level to ensure implementation.

Sub-national governments, utilizing their close relationship with local organizations and knowledge of local needs are ideally suited to develop initiatives tailored to youth in their area, but within the principles established by the National Government. Meanwhile civil society can assist by creating and implementing programs for and by youth. Civil society has the ability to provide personalized support and often possesses information about the types of support services needed and who should be targeted. Working together with sub-national governments and by extension, the National Government, the potential exists to implement programs using public resources and technical advice within strategic frameworks at the national, provincial and district levels.

As mentioned throughout the Monitor, families and communities influence youth tremendously and international experience illustrates that this is their greatest advantage with regards to youth policy design and implementation. With this power, families and communities have the potential to create a positive environment for youth, participating in programs to strengthen their positive influence, providing feedback to NGOs and local governments on the needs of youth and the quality of services and encourage youth to participate in programs provided. The final key to bringing all of these groups together for successful youth policies is youth themselves. As the clients for whom the programs are intended, youth can be active participants in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of youth programs.

Source: Adapted from World Bank, 2007b

youth, people start to participate in social and political life independently and develop their sense of social responsibilities. Because of its dominant role in young people's lives, the school environment should provide training in youth participation and non-formal learning. Volunteer work and community service are also central to the development of young people's sense of responsibility and autonomy in becoming social actors. The NCYD also suggests that children and youth groups or organizations should be encouraged with active and continuous support from adults. In addition, society and families should be sensitized to value the participation and potential of young people as citizens.

V. Conclusions

Youth, being the next generation of workers, parents and citizens, are key to the long-term development of a country. Inadequate health, education and employment outcomes can have very negative impacts on overall economic and social progress and be extremely costly to mitigate. In Thailand, youth issues and challenges are becoming increasingly relevant, given the tremendous social and economic changes that the country is undergoing.

As in other middle-income economies, Thailand's epidemiological shift, universalization of basic education and movement toward a more skilled and technology-based labor market are generating new challenges that particularly affect youth. The new health-related problems for Thai youth are now more similar to those of other developed economies, including traffic accidents and unhealthy habits-smoking, alcohol and drug abuse and poor dietary habits-that in turn generate negative health outcomes during adulthood. The new educational challenges include ensuring access to education beyond compulsory levels, improving the quality of education and the efficiency of public expenditure and making the educational system more responsive to labor market demands. The new employment challenges involve the need to focus on skills development of the labor force and on the improvement of labor market information systems. In addition, the expansion of employment opportunities for young people, for example through self-employment and creation of off-farm rural opportunities, is an area that requires further effort. In all three areas of youth health, education and employment, the provision of second chances to overcome negative outcomes is also key for the adequate development of youth and thus for overall country development.

The Thai Government now faces the challenge of addressing these issues through new policies and institutional arrangements. Previous efforts to implement youth-specific policies have had mixed results, mainly due to lack of coordination, insufficient financial resources or changes in Government. Coordination among the many agencies involved in youth-related issues will be critical and special emphasis must be placed on ensuring that the extensive youth policies are effectively translated into programs. Youth participation in the design of such policies and programs will be important not only to help make them more effective but also to engage young people in actively exercising their citizenship. Table 5.2 provides a summary of possible policy directions for the future, using the perspective of the three policy lenses of *expanding opportunities*, *improving capacity* and *providing second chances*, across the three youth transitions of *growing up healthy*, *learning for work and life and moving from school to work*.

Building the next generation of Thailand human capital requires a concerted effort. The four main ministries responsible for promoting the country's youth development agenda-MSDHS, MOE, MOPH and Ministry of Justice-must work towards ensuring that every stakeholder-including other governmental departments, NGOs and the private sector-come together to bring about an enabling environment for youth of all walks to thrive and realize their full potential. Moreover, policymaking must also be in tune with reality. It needs to listen, understand and incorporate the voices and vision of youth, the central stakeholder in this process, in order to be grounded on the will and aspirations of the next generation.

Table 5.2: Potential Directions for Youth Policy in Thailand

	Expanding opportunities	**Enhancing capacity**	**Providing second chances**
Growing up healthy	-Effectively implement and enforce bans on advertisement of tobacco and alcohol and restrictions on their consumption by age and in public places -Provision of the means required to practice healthy behaviors-e.g. condom provision -Subsidies and taxation policies to decrease the costs of healthy options and increase the costs of unhealthy ones	-Develop and implement information and habit formation programs: -school and community-based programs -peer education programs -mass media programs -innovative campaigns making use of new technologies	-Provide youth-friendly health treatment and rehabilitation services
Learning for work and life	-Ensure equitable access to upper secondary and tertiary education -Improve the quality and relevance of academic and vocational education as a bridge to the labor market	-Help alleviate the direct and opportunity costs of pursuing education at the upper secondary and tertiary levels	-Continue monitoring and strengthening non-formal education as a way to reintegrate youth who dropped out of the education system
Moving from school to work	-Strengthen the labor market information system -Eliminate child work, e.g. through demand-side mechanisms such as CCTs; -Facilitate self-employment through the provision of financing alternatives for youth -Promote rural off-farm work opportunities for young people	-Ensure that schools operate as a bridge to the labor market -Explore various modes of training programs, including on-the-job training -Diversify education options to accommodate various student needs/capabilities as well as labor market needs	-Continue monitoring and strengthening non-formal education -Explore new programs based on international experiences to help reintegrate young people who dropped out of the labor market

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