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**Child And Family Welfare Programmes
And Role Of Communication In Thailand**

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Child and Family Welfare Programmes
and
Role of Communication in
Thailand

by

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General Background

Thailand is located in the middle of mainland Southeast Asia with a total land area of 514,000 sq km (198,456 sq mi) extending 1,555 mi) E to W. Its coastline on the Gulf of Thailand extends 1,875 km (1,165 mi) and that on the Andaman Sea 750 km (460 mi). The capital is Bangkok, the country's only metropolitan center. Together with Thon Buri, a major suburb on the west bank of the Chad Phraya River, Bangkok forms a special administrative unit known as Krungthab Mahanakon with a 1980 population in excess of 5 million. The only other city is Chiang Mai (100,000) in the northern part of the country.

The population of Thailand in 1980 is about 46 million which ranks 19th in the world in size of population. The annual rate is 2.2 % in 1979. Overall population density is 81 per sq km (210 per sq mi). The lowest density is in the northern highlands, where it does not exceed 32 per sq km (83 per sq mi) and highest in the central lowlands where, in the agricultural areas, it approaches 234 per sq km (606 per sq mi), and when nearly 40% of the national population is concentrated. In some sections of the southern peninsula, the density approaches 1,158 per sq km (3,000 per sq mi). Thailand ranks 54th in the world in nationwide density and 28th in terms of density in agricultural areas.

Thailand is predominantly a rural nation, with 80% of its population living in rural areas. About one half of the country's urban dwellers live in and around Bangkok. The migration to Bangkok is demographically significant in recent. Thailand ranks 8th in the world in urbanization. The age profile

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shows 43% in the under-14 age group, 54% in the 15-64 age group and 3% in the over-65 age group. The sex ratio is uniformly well balanced in all regions. In 1974 the government appointed a special committee to advise the cabinet on population policy. Official policy is to reduce the population growth rate to 2% by 1981 which will be the last year of the fourth national economic and social development plan (1977-1981). To expand family planning services in rural areas, an Accelerated Development of Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning Services is underway with assistance from UN Fund for Population Activities known as UNFPA.

Population Development

During the past 15 years of planned development under the first three plans (1961-1976), the government mobilized approximately US\$15,000 from both foreign and domestic sources to finance various public development programmes and projects which have strengthened the country's economic and social structure. The reduction of population growth of the third national economic and social development plan (1972-1976) was quite satisfied and successful. For the fourth national economic and social development plan concerning population development deals with not only the reduction of population growth rate but also the quality of population. Firstly the policy of food production and food and nutrition is the main objective of the plan. Malnutrition is one of the major problems affecting the life and well-being of the population. The third plan had stipulated a number of measures to alleviate the malnutrition problems, but these measures were rather limited. Major malnutrition problems are protein-calorie malnutrition, Vitamin A, B-1 and B-2 deficiencies, endemic goitre due to iodine deficiency, anemia due to iron deficiency and bladder-stone. The most severe malnutrition problem is protein-calorie malnutrition among infants, pre-school children, school children, pregnant and lactating mothers. It has been found that approximately 52-76 % of pre-school children aged from 6 months to 5 years living in slum areas of Bangkok (108 slums) and rural areas are suffering from malnutrition. In addition, in 1976, was the root cause of 55,000 deaths. The poverty is the main cause why food consumption is not sufficient to meet daily requirements. The people living in the northeastern region face serious problems and the malnutrition problems in Bangkok are confined to slum areas. In general, people lack of knowledge of proper utilization and consumption of food. Traditional beliefs of various localities are causing improper food consumption since the majority of the population still believe that daily food consumption is just to fill one's stomach.

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In the fourth plan (1977-1971) the government promotes the status of food and nutrition to solve the problems of vulnerable groups of the population such as infants, pre-school children (below 5 years of age) and mothers. There are some projects such as breast feeding, local nutrition food production, health care for pre-school children, education on nutrition values of various foods and sharing of food within the family etc.

Children and Youth Development

Since children and young people will one day become the essential human manpower for national development, it is vitally important to plan their development ahead of time. Thailand at present has 27 million children and young people (under 24 years) which represent nearly 60 % of the total population. There are about 10 million children at pre-school age at present. There are many projects mostly under government agencies such as Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Interior and Metropolitan Bangkok or Krungtheb Mahanakon and some of private sectors such as Pierra Maternity and Child Welfare Foundation, Holt Sahathoi Foundation, the Pearl S Buck Foundation (Thailand Branch), Terre Des Hommes etc. These following projects are carried on by various ministries such as:

Ministry of Public Health

Project No 169 - Child Nutrition Centres of Nutrition Division. There are 9 regional centres in different parts of the country and 65 public health offices which are responsible for nutrition additional to routine work. The activities will deal with nutrition for pre-school children age 2-5 years. At the end of the fourth year plan (1981) there will be at least 1,000 centres throughout of the country located in rural areas which are facing malnutrition problems with the cooperation of Ministry of Interior.

Ministry of Interior

Project No 53 - Child Development Centres of Community Development Department. To cooperate with village council and village development committee to set up a child development center for each village in rural areas. This project will include not only the fostering of development and growth of physical, mind, intelligence and social but also nutrition and health of children.

Project No 82 - Food and Nutrition Development for infants and pre-school children in land settlement areas of land settlement division of Department of Public Welfare.

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There are 43 land settlements throughout of the country at present. Infants and children are facing malnutrition and lack of protein.

Metropolitan Bangkok

Project No 184 - Nutrition for infants and pre-school children (8 months - 5 years).

To deal mostly in the slum areas of Metropolitan Bangkok.

Project No 185 - Ammunition for infants.

There are 14 health centres throughout Metropolitan Bangkok which have services of ammunition for infants. Twice a week additional to routine work of health care.

Policy and Child Development Planning (Long Planning for 1960-2000)

In 1979 which was the Child Year, the Government of Thailand proclaimed the National Youth Policy as followed:

Notification of the Office of the Prime Minister

Re: National Youth Policy

Whereas young people, being very important resources of the country, will inherit the national culture, and whereas approximately two-third of the population are twenty five years of age or under, it is expedient to especially develop the national youth extensively in accordance with the provision of section 62 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, B E 2521 which provides that "the State should support and promote national youth development so that they may be physically, mentally and intellectually sound for the purpose of economic and social development and for the security of the State."

Therefore, the Council of Ministers hereby lays down the National Youth Policy so as to be the principle and guideline to assist government and private organisations in formulating their national youth development plans with a clear and coordinated objectives as follows.

(1) To instill into young people the awareness of the national security, the belief in democracy having the King as Head, the nationalism and pride of being Thai, including the preservation and promotion of culture which is a unique characteristic of the nation.

(2) To intensify the sincere desire of young people to participate and accept responsibility in developing the society in order to effect the greatest benefit to the public, to usefully employ free time and to reduce conflict among various groups of young people so as to enable them to live

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together in the society, to respect the opinions and not to violate the honour and dignity of others and to solve problems peacefully through reasoning by adhering to the principles of the middle path and for mutual benefit.

(3) To promote health whether physical, mental or intellectual so as to be in readiness for the development of ability, attitude, behaviour, value and morality of young people so that they will become good citizens.

(4) To instill into young people good personality, strong determination, constructive initiatives, belief in reason, discipline and unity, sporting spirit, perseverance, unselfishness, being helpful to each other, knowledge to work with others, diligence, thrift, awareness of right, duty and responsibility towards the society, respect and obedience of the law.

(5) To promote the daily way of life of young people to be within the moral principle, ethics according to their religion, to be honest and impartial and to behave in such a way as to be suitable to their age, which will be the foundation for happiness, peace and prosperity of society.

(6) To urge young people to continue acquiring further knowledge, to promote vocational training especially in agriculture and home industry, to acquaint young people with the use and conservation of natural resources, to recognise and arrange self-economy and take up occupation suitable to the local conditions.

(7) To encourage young people to learn to protect themselves from vices and environments which are not suitable for life and harmful to society, to be ready to confront social problems as well as to create appropriate environment so as to reduce mental stress, as well as to promote research concerning ways and means of solving various problems of young people.

(8) To give aid, treatment and protection to young people who are disabled, incompetent or quasi-incompetent, invalid, orphan, indigent, homeless, drug addicted so as to enable them to take care of themselves and become good citizens. To give instruction, aid and support concerning the basic necessities in life to needy young people, to provide effective measures for regulating the employment of children, and young women.

(9) To promote friendship and understanding between young people in Thailand and those in foreign countries in accordance with the State policy for the regional security and progress as well as the promotion of world peace.

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In order to attain the objectives stated in this policy, the National Youth Promotion and Coordination Committee shall be responsible for the supervision and coordination of the support and development of the youth policies of various Ministries, Sub-Ministries, Departments and private organisations concerned.

Give on the 11th day of May B E 2522 (1979)

In responding to the national policy the committee for long range planning was set up in the middle year of 1979. The committee submitted the proposal to the cabinet recently and was approved in October 1980. The purpose of the policy and planning is to increase the quality of Thai children (0-14 years). It will be annexed into the national long range development plan (1982-2001). There is a proposal dealing with mass media and children since there was no policy of mass media for children before so the committee purposed a program to review the law of mass media dealing with the quality and content of mass media for children.

Infact mass media in Thailand like other developing countries play a great role on children in urban areas only. The children in rural areas are not exposed to the media as in urban. Though radio is available in rural areas but it does not provide appropriate program for children as it should be. There were very few studies carried on about children's program. So it is vital for mass media men to think about their responsibility for children in rural areas.

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