



UN-HABITAT

UN-Habitat Thailand Country Programme Overview 2023-2026



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เจริญกรุง
Joong Krung Rd

โรงพยาบาล
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Country facts

National population

71,601,103

National urbanisation rate

52%

Largest urban area

Bangkok (10,539,000)

Annual urban growth rate

1.6%

(Source: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2018. World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision, Online Edition)



By 2030, Thailand's projected urbanisation rate will be 58.4%.¹



Thailand's GDP per capita is \$8,182, the fourth highest in Southeast Asia.²



Only 24 per cent of the urban population has convenient access to public transport.³



By 2030, secondary and intermediate urban areas of 1 to 5 million people will accommodate most of Thailand's urban growth.⁴



COVID-19 led to reduced incomes for 54 per cent of Thais. The urban poor and vulnerable groups are particularly at risk.⁵



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Overall progress towards achieving SDG 11 in Thailand remains inconsistent. Thailand has made encouraging progress in reducing urban slum populations, and in local and national governments adopting and implementing disaster risk reduction strategies. However, there is regression in the areas of persons affected by disasters and air quality.⁶

¹ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2018. World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision, Online Edition

² IMF, 2023. World Economic Outlook (April 2023): Thailand

³ Thailand's VNR on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2021

⁴ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2018. World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision, Online Edition

⁵ Thailand's VNR on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2021

⁶ Sustainable Development Report, 2022. Available at: <https://dashboards.sdqindex.org/profiles/thailand>

Thailand's urban context and challenges

“Urbanisation continues to increase in Thailand in line with global megatrends. Urban expansion and urban migration rates remain the highest in the world in the Asia-Pacific region. The Government has therefore implemented a number of policies that promote sustainable urban development and safe, comprehensive, resilient, and sustainable urbanisation in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda (NUA), and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030).”⁷

Demonstrating sustained economic growth and impressive poverty reduction over the last four decades, Thailand is aligning its urban development plans with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda, creating liveable cities and ensuring equal opportunities and access to government services for all.

Building upon recent iterations, the 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027) has a specific milestone on smart and liveable cities with sustainable growth, and sets priorities on strengthening economies, promoting collaboration across sectors, developing physical and digital infrastructure, and strengthening local governance.

Thailand's National Strategy 2018-2037 is clear in highlighting that better planned and managed urbanisation will lead to improved national development outcomes.

Urbanisation is dominated by the primacy of the Bangkok Metropolitan Area and surrounding peri-urban areas, with a population approaching 15 million people. However, secondary and intermediate urban centres such as Chiang Mai, Hat Yai, Khon Kaen, Nakhon Ratchasima, and Udon Thani, will play a growing role in ensuring more balanced urban development and connectivity.



Finally, cities in Thailand are highly susceptible to climate change impacts. Seasonal monsoon weather results in heavy rainfall across Thailand. Extensive waterways connecting with major river systems have also made the country's urban areas particularly vulnerable to severe flooding.

⁷ Ibid

UN-Habitat and Thailand



UN-Habitat is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities. UN-Habitat is the focal point for all urbanisation and human settlement matters within the UN system.

UN-Habitat has a long and enduring history of work in Thailand, establishing its office in Bangkok in the late 1990s. UN-Habitat and Thailand maintain and build strategic partnerships with key line Ministries and key national, provincial, and local partners to support governments and communities to deliver upon SDG 11, the urban dimensions of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.

Through close collaboration with the United Nations Resident Coordinators Office and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), UN-Habitat also supports a range of regional and global programmes implemented across Thailand. Bangkok remains the only duty station globally where UN-Habitat, the UN Regional Commission (REC), and UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) share common premises. UN-Habitat is further strengthening its partnerships across Thailand and Southeast Asia, standing ready to work in partnership across Thailand for the full implementation of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.



As part of the UNCT in Thailand, UN-Habitat supports the delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Thailand 2022-2026 and its three strategic outcomes that: support inclusive and sustainable economic development, strengthen institutions, partnerships and human capital for sustainable development, and support development especially for people at risk of being left furthest behind. The Framework also supports sustainable and smart, liveable cities by showcasing regional and global best practices, with particular attention paid to increasing resilience to climate change impact (SDGs 5, 9, 11, 13, 16 and 17).

Priority intervention area

Accelerating strategic sustainable urbanisation

Partners

Member States, local and national authorities and agencies

Location

Partner cities

Target partners

Local governments, national and provincial governments and agencies, academia, civil society, and local entities

Key SDGs alignment

SDGs 8, 10, 11, 13, 17

UN-Habitat supports local governments and partners across Thailand and Southeast Asia to analyse and understand their strategic urban contexts and to develop viable and bankable project proposals in line with regional and global frameworks. Cities across Thailand have demonstrated appetite for increased technical and financial support to deliver sustainable urbanisation.



In partnership with the ASEAN Secretariat, from 2020 to 2022 UN-Habitat delivered the Accelerating the Implementation of the ASEAN Sustainable Urbanisation Strategy (ASUS) Project, providing technical support across eight ASEAN pilot cities through diagnostic, knowledge management, production, and advocacy initiatives. UN-Habitat partnered with Hat Yai, in the south of Thailand, to deliver a city technical proposal on digital solutions to enhance safety and security.

Key proposed outcomes

- Deliver strengthened strategic and technical support for sustainable urbanisation in partnership with cities.
- Further build capacity within cities to execute viable and bankable project proposals in alignment with ASUS and other regional frameworks, the SDGs and New Urban Agenda.
- Deliver outputs that enhance knowledge and build capacity to support a broader adoption of regional and global sustainable urbanisation frameworks.

Priority intervention area

Advancing Agenda 2030 Goals in Thailand

Partners

Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC), National Municipal League of Thailand (NMT), civil society, UCLG ASPAC, UNDESA, UNESCAP

Estimated budget

US > \$100.000 secured, \$3 million required for full implementation

Proposed timeframe

2 to 3 years

Location

Partner cities

Target partners

Local governments, national and provincial governments and agencies, academia and local entities

Key SDGs alignment

All SDGs, with a particular focus on priority SDGs for partners

UN-Habitat works at all levels and across sectors in Thailand to assist partners in harnessing the potential and capacities of governments to deliver an improved quality of life in all urban areas.

In line with national frameworks and community priorities, UN-Habitat is assisting Thailand to advance Agenda 2030, including enhanced reporting upon and monitoring of the SDGs, building of capacities to capture and measure SDGs and their indicators, and comprehensive data analysis within SDG frameworks.

These processes integrate the Global Urban Monitoring Framework, which supports the development of indicators and the collection of data to monitor SDG progresses at the local level, in alignment with the New Urban Agenda and relevant indexes.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Key proposed outcomes

- Build and institute capacity to advance Agenda 2030 across national, provincial, and local governments.
- Increase alignment between national, provincial, and local Agenda 2030 plans and strategies.

Priority intervention area

Urban climate action and resilience

Partners

National and provincial governments and agencies, UN agencies, international organisations and development partners, academia

Estimated budget

US \$3 million

Proposed timeframe

2 to 3 years

Location

Cities and provinces across Thailand

Target partners

Local governments, national and provincial governments and agencies, academia and local entities

Key SDGs alignment

SDGs 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15

The effects of urbanisation and climate change are converging in dangerous ways.

Urban areas in Thailand are becoming increasingly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Some impacts such as flooding, temperature increases, and loss of biodiversity are already apparent and having profound impacts upon the liveability of Thailand's cities and towns. Across Thailand, there are opportunities to build upon UN-Habitat's global and regional flagship work in implementing climate change adaptation plans and strategies, as well as building urban resilience.



Key proposed outcomes

- Build institutional capacity within local governments to develop climate change plans and policies, nature-based solutions, and build urban resilience.
- Provide technical support to develop city policies and action plans on climate change and urban resilience.
- The needs of the most vulnerable, including the urban poor, are prioritised in developing climate change and resilience interventions across Thailand.

Priority intervention area

Innovative and catalytic urban solutions

Partners

National and provincial governments and agencies, UN agencies, international organisations and development partners, Chulalongkorn University, Asian Institute of Technology and other local academia partners

Estimated budget

US \$1 to 2 million

Proposed timeframe

2 to 3 years

Location

Cities and provinces across Thailand

Target partners

Local governments, national and provincial governments and agencies, academia, and local entities

Key SDGs alignment

SDGs 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15

UN-Habitat has a strong track record of providing policy and technical assistance to local authorities across Thailand in improving and innovating for urban basic services, including tackling the growing challenge of municipal solid waste management and contributing to a circular economy.

Across Thailand, there are opportunities to build upon UN-Habitat's global, regional, and local flagship work in improving and innovating for urban basic services, including improving provision of municipal solid waste management, building a circular economy, water and sanitation, and other areas.



Key proposed outcomes

- Build capacity within local governments and partners to improve and innovate for urban basic service delivery and their infrastructure, including municipal solid waste management.
- Strengthen policies and institutional frameworks for expanding equitable access to urban basic services, especially for the urban poor and vulnerable.



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A better quality of life for
all in an urbanizing world

