

Decent Work for People with Disabilities

# Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Thailand



International Labour Organization



FACT SHEET

*Women and men with disabilities can and want to be productive members of society. In both developed and developing countries, promoting more inclusive societies and employment opportunities for people with disabilities requires improved access to basic education, vocational training relevant to labour market needs and jobs suited to their skills, interests, and abilities, with adaptations as needed. Many societies are also recognizing the need to dismantle other barriers - making the physical environment more accessible, providing information in a variety of formats, and challenging attitudes and mistaken assumptions about people with disabilities.*

## Current Situation

Nearly two million women and men in Thailand, or approximately 3 per cent of the population, have a disability<sup>1</sup>. A majority of people with disabilities in Thailand live in rural areas.

Figures from National Statistics Office 2007 Survey show that 65 per cent of persons with disabilities over the age of 15 were unemployed. Among those employed, a small percentage worked in professional occupations while a majority (over 50 per cent) worked in agriculture and fishing. What is more, men with disabilities are more likely to have jobs than women with disabilities, 43 per cent and 28 per cent respectively<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Thailand has as its formal name the "Kingdom of Thailand". Estimates of the percentage of the national population with disabilities are based on 2007 National Statistics Office data.

<sup>2</sup> 2007 Survey on Health and Welfare National Statistics Office.

## Governmental support for people with disabilities

The Government of Thailand has adopted and implemented a number of laws, Cabinet resolutions, regulations and policies pertaining to people with disabilities, including their right to productive and decent work and to basic services, workers' compensation, social security and entrepreneurship development. The main ones are listed below.

- The **Thai Constitution**, adopted in 1997 and amended in 2007, contains anti-discrimination provisions based on physical or health conditions and guarantees accessibility to social welfare and services for persons with disabilities.
- **The Persons with Disabilities' Quality of Life Promotion Act** B.E. 2550 (2007) is a comprehensive rights-based law for persons with disabilities and contains an anti-discrimination component. It repeals the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act A.D.1991 (B.E.2534), which was the first law on disability in Thailand. The new Act establishes the **National Commission for Promotion and Development of Disabled Persons' Life Quality, which replaces the Office of the Committee for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons.** It also establishes an Office to implement recommendations of the Commission, and a fund to be managed by the Office for the rehabilitation of disabled persons.
- **The National Persons with Disabilities' Quality of Life Development Plan** (Volume III) B.E. 2550–2554 (2007–2011), provides guidance for disability development practice for all authorities concerned.
- **The Persons with Disabilities Education Act** B.E 2551 (2008), promotes fairness of access to education and vocational training for all disadvantaged groups.
- **The Declaration on Rights for People with Disabilities in Thailand** (3 December 1998), approved and signed by the former Prime Minister, is a pledge made by the people of Thailand to persons with disabilities. It is now used as a reference in the provision of services for people with disabilities.

## Key ministries responsible for people with disabilities

**The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security is the principal Ministry responsible for policies, programmes and services relating to people with disabilities. It works in coordination with:**

- The Ministry of Public Health
- The Ministry of Education
- The Ministry of Labour

## Key international standards on disability and their status

- International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, 1958, (No. 111). *Status: not ratified.*
- ILO Convention concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), 1983, (No. 159). *Status: ratified, 11 October 2007.*
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and Optional Protocol. *Status: ratified on 29 July 2008. Optional Protocol not ratified.*

Thailand also works to achieve targets set in the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for the second Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities.

## National organizations of persons with disabilities

- Thailand Association of the Blind
- Association of the Physically Handicapped of Thailand
- Council of Disabled People of Thailand (DPI-Thailand)
- National Association of the Deaf in Thailand
- Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability of Thailand

## Organizations providing services to persons with disabilities

- Christoffel-Blindenmission (CBM)
- Handicap International

## The role of the ILO

The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for everyone, including people with disabilities, to obtain decent and productive work, based on the principles of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The ILO works to achieve its goals of decent work for all through promoting labour standards, advocacy, knowledge building and technical cooperation services and partnerships, both within the ILO and externally. A Thai Decent Work Country Programme is currently being formulated (May 2009). It will establish the framework for ILO action towards achieving decent work goals.

In Thailand, a current ILO technical cooperation project on disability is **“Promoting the Employability and Employment of People with Disabilities through Effective Legislation” (PEPDEL)**. Earlier phases of PEPDEL included the compilation of a country study on employment and training policies and practices which contributed to the building of a knowledge base on people with disabilities and to the sharing of examples of good practice; identification of priority and needs in consultation with government, representatives of workers' and employers' groups and disabled persons' organizations;

support for the Review Group established to revise the Thai Rehabilitation Law of 1991, including arrangements for specialist commentary on the Persons with Disabilities' Quality of Life Promotion Act at the draft stage; and development and pilot testing of a training curriculum on disability legislation, policies and their implementation at Ratchasuda College at Mahidol University.



## The way forward

Productive and decent work enables people with disabilities to realize their aspirations, improve their living conditions and participate more actively in society.

Ensuring a disability perspective in all aspects of policy and labour legislation, effective implementation and enforcement of existing disability laws and policies and providing for equal employment opportunities and training are among the factors that contribute to the reduction of poverty and to the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities in Thailand.

### Further information:

**Emanuela Pozzan**  
Subregional Coordinator on Disability  
ILO/Irish Aid Partnership Programme,  
PEPDEL Project, Thailand  
[pozzan@ilo.org](mailto:pozzan@ilo.org)