

**Innovative practices**  
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## **Description of Initiative**

Thailand as a developing country with large number of poor people and mostly dependent on agriculture has recognized that water is an essential resource for country development. Although water is our priority, it is interconnected with other sectors particularly sanitation and human settlement. Thailand recognizes the importance of these three themes and their interconnection. As a result Thailand has various initiatives towards enhancing the MD and WSSD goals and targets in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlement. These initiatives have been implemented by integrating poverty eradication, which is the prime concern of the government.

### **Poverty eradication**

In order to enhance the poverty reduction strategy target, 2015, the following policies have been set as urgent policies:

1. granting a grace period of three years for both interest and principle payments for individual small farmers to relieve their debt burden
2. Establishment of a one-million-baht Village and Community Fund in each village to serve as a revolving loan facility for the long-term local investments and income creation at community levels.
3. Promoting a "One Tambon One Product" project to enable each community to develop and market its own local product or products based on traditional indigenous expertise and local know-how.
4. Establish a People's Bank to ensure better and improved access to banking facilities and resources for low-income citizens to enhance their capacity to increasing their income from self-employment and thus reduce their dependence unorganized and punitive money market sources.
5. Turn assets of farmers into capital.
6. Registration of poor people in order to identify their problems and needs.

### **Health**

The government has set up universal health insurance with a view to reducing the overall cost to the country and the people in acquiring healthcare capping each hospital visit at 30 baht. All Thai people will be guaranteed with equal access to a nationally acceptable standard of health care.

## **Human settlement**

In accordance with the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation to *achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers*, the Cabinet approved the Banmunkong Program on 14 January 2003. The major goal of this program is to improve the quality of lives of the slum dwellers in major cities around the country. The projects involve not only the construction of houses, basic infrastructures and services but also the promotion of community participation. Both communities and local authorities are involved in project planning and implementation process. The outcomes of the pilot projects will be adapted and applied for other areas nationwide.

## **Sustainable agriculture**

Supply of irrigation is very important for people in rural areas, which are mainly farmers. They are dependent on water for their livelihood. The statistic figures on poverty showed that in the irrigated area (the central plain) the percentage of the poor is about 10 while the percentage of the poor in rain-fed area (the Northeast) is about 90. While the main problem of water related to agriculture is inadequate supply of water, the farming practices significantly contribute to water pollution. Agricultural wastes are among the three main sources of pollution apart from domestic and industrial wastes. The measures for sustainable agricultural development include:

- Promote the practice of mixed agriculture, alternative agriculture and organic agriculture as well as support the learning process for farmers.
- Support farmers to have adequate land for earning their livelihood by implementing a coordinated and comprehensive land utilization policy and by optimizing the use of idle land.
- The management of water resources at every level must also be improved efficiently in a manner that is suited to the production system of each crop and the conditions of the terrain. Emphasis has been placed on the full participation of the people in the restoration, conservation and development of land that is upriver as well as in river basins, reservoirs, irrigation canals, water quality, and piped irrigation. The use of surface water and underground water must also be efficient and systematic, especially in projects involving the development of large water sources.

## ***The dual tracks approach***

Recognizing the essential value of water the government has set up two tracks of management. The first track is the government programmes and projects. Through these programmes and projects, water is managed base on the ecosystem approach and its complete cycle, covering rain water, surface water, ground water and sea water.

The other track is provision of tools for local management and implementation. Local people can make their own decisions on community development projects according to their needs and circumstances by using these tools. One example is the village fund. The fund is managed by local communities together with local authorities and is available for loan for various activities including water resources development.

## **Water and sanitation**

In response to the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development to halves, by the year 2015, the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water. The government has aimed at increasing village water supply from 76 per cent to 100 per cent by the year 2009. These challenges can be met because of the close collaboration that exists between villagers and local government agencies, with many village water supply systems now being managed successfully by local committees. Although physical, chemical and bacteriological water quality problems still exist in more than 60 per cent of the systems, they are being actively solved. To meet the goals in village water supply, strategies adopted include providing technical assistance and management support; setting community water quality standards, incentives and legislation; and increasing people's awareness of the value of water and water scarcity.

## **Integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans**

In order to develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans by 2005, Thailand is working towards better protection of ecosystems, particularly in sensitive upper catchments, by integrating participatory land use planning into project rehabilitation. A national water vision and water policy have been formulated and endorsed by the government since the year 2000, which provide a strong platform for sharing water resources, by emphasizing fuller people participation and decentralization, including the establishment of river basin committees. Improvements have also been in water-related risk management, covering floods, drought and water pollution, following the establishment of a Center of Water Crisis Prevention in 2002.

## **Ground water**

Over-pumping of groundwater, especially in Bangkok vicinity causing salt water intrusion, land subsidence and contamination in the aquifers lead to recognition of an importance of conjunctive use planning of groundwater and surface water. A system to control and monitor groundwater use were established and implemented.

## **Water pollution**

Policies on water quality management set up by the Government include:

- Rehabilitating water quality in major receiving waters in the country by applying river basin management approach and public participation ;
- Reducing and controlling waste water discharges from community, industry and agriculture by various measures such as the application of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), establishment of effluent and ambient standards;
- Establishing collection and treatment system for urban wastewater. Twenty-nine urban wastewater collection and treatment plants have been constructed in 24 municipalities (serving about 10% of urban population);
- Establishing water quality monitoring programme;

- Applying the “Polluter Pay Principle” or “PPP” as a tool for pollution control;
- Promoting waste minimization, cleaner production as pollution prevention measures.

## **Mainstreaming / Sustainability**

Thailand is in the process of developing its national strategies for Sustainable Development. This process takes into account existing sectoral strategies and aiming at integrating them into a comprehensive and coordinated national sustainable development plan. To ensure the sustainability in the long term, the mechanism will be established to coordinate the implementation and monitoring of such strategies and plan with co-operation with NGOs, and the public.

## **Replicating the Initiative.**

Most of the government initiatives are built upon pilot projects. These projects were then evaluated, adapted and applied to wider implementation throughout the country. The mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of sustainable development strategies has been established in the form of inter-departmental committee at various levels within the government. These committees also include members of the civil societies and NGOs to allow full public participation in the process.