

***Annex 2 | Policy on Religions, Social
Welfare, Public Health, Education and
Culture***

Policy on Religions, Social Welfare, Public Health, Education and Culture*

Policy on Religions, Social Welfare, Public Health, Education and Culture (Sections 79-80 of the Constitution and Policy on Social and Quality of Life under the Public Administration Plan) The Government has provided support and protection to Buddhism and other religions by promoting the disseminating of Dharma practices, providing training to Buddhist monks, implementing the “Model Temples” Project, as well as providing maintenance to 3,269 temples and renovating 917 religious buildings of various religions. The Government also worked on promoting understanding and harmony among members of all religions by jointly organising youth camps involving five religions (Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism) at the central and provincial levels in 38 provinces with a total of 4,104 participants.

The Government’s Hajj pilgrimage programme also drew a large number of interested participants that exceeded the quota set by Saudi Arabia. The Government has supported the dissemination of religious principles to promote morality and improvement in the quality of life through activities and programmes such as the “Dharma Practice for the Family” Programme, attended by 179,000 participants, the “Sunday Buddhist Learning Centre” which garnered 1,074,438 members, and the “Dharma Practice on Buddhist Holidays” Programme, which aimed to attract people from all regions to visit temples and listen to sermons. A total of 2,508 temples participated in the latter programme. In addition, the government established and funded Islamic Learning centres at 822 mosques. To promote unity, learning, decency, cultural/ traditional values and local know-how, various projects were implemented.

These include the “Laan Boon, Laan Panya” (Merit and Wisdom) Project at 600 locations nationwide under the Government’s Strength to Strength Plan for strengthening communities of all religions, including Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism, the “Buddhism Week on the Occasion of Asanha Bucha Day and Khao Phansa Day” in which 25,758 attendants took part,

* Resource: Summary of the Performance of the Cabinet in Accordance with the Directive Principles of Fundamental State Policies / 30 December 2552 (2009) – 30 December B.E. 2553(2010)

and the “Gathering of Religions to Promote Reconciliation in Honour of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit”, in which 1,076 attendants took part.

The Government also has a policy to revive the Sea Gypsy way of life by taking short-term measures to solve racial discrimination, promote local language and culture, and use various media channels to preserve the community’s culture.

The Government has long-term measures to establish a cultural district to accommodate ethnic groups of particular cultures. The Government also has a policy to revive and promote the Karen way of life and culture in a 6-12 month short-term plan and to study the concept of a cultural district in a 1-3 year long-term plan. A Thai Language Day was organized under this policy to conserve local languages, where 41 individuals were chosen for their contributions to the Thai language and other local languages and received awards and certificates.

To promote reconciliation through the medium of culture, the Government has used principles from the National Reconciliation Plan as the key to implementing reconciliation strategies through culture. Examples include: organising a seminar on “Thailand’s Cultural Direction under the National Reconciliation Plan”, which was attended by 673 people; organising activities to uphold the institution of the Monarchy; developing safe and creative media; promoting a culture of democracy; and, carrying out the Thai Culture for Community Bonding Project.

Moreover, the Government has set up the national and local museum development committee, in accordance with the policy on reviving museums to make them interactive learning sources. The Government has selected Bangkok National Museum as the pilot model museum to lead the way for the project in 2011. The goal is a 5-year project that aims to improve the visual appearances of Siwamokhaphiman Hall, Buddhaisawan Chapel, Patihantasanai Pavilion, the Royal Chariot Museum, as well as other museums of note.

The Government has laid social foundations with emphasis on the protection and development of children and youth, child upbringing, early education, gender equality, family and community solidarity, as well as welfare for the elderly, the poor, the disabled, and the unfortunate. This has been implemented through various measures and projects, such as the drafting of the Reproductive Health and Privacy Protection Act B.E., Miracle of Life Project (10,925 persons in 2009 and 12,000 in 2010), setting up of Children and Youth Councils in 3,500 districts in 75 provinces (228 projects and 46,183 participants), improved School Milk Programme and Free School Lunch, which raised per capita spending for school milk from 6 Baht/day to 7 Baht/day, and for school lunch from 11 Baht/day to 13 Baht/day, respectively. Other measures include: Free Education Programme for Disabled Children (from primary school to undergraduate level); Early Education Programmes, implemented through 19,481 child development centres under local administration offices with 49,587 staff assisting 891,651 children in their development; and standardising National Child Development Centres.

The Government also pushed for amendment of the legislation regarding discrimination against women, setting up of Gender Equality Indicators and Indices, enhancing the solidarity of the family institution through the Sai Yai Rak (Bonds of Family Love) Project under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, provision of senior citizens' allowances whereby senior citizens aged over 60 receive an allowance of 500 Baht per month (1,763,966 registered in 2008, 5,652,893 in 2010), the establishment of the countrywide Community Welfare Funds, for which the Government provided a budget of 727.30 million Baht in 2010 to support the funds at a 1:1 ratio, covering 2,048 funds with 1,199,654 members, and in 2011 a budget of 800 million Baht, covering 3,300 targeted districts and 2.4 million people.

The Government has worked to promote, support and develop the healthcare system towards sustainable healthcare for the people by providing welfare and an allowance of Baht 600 per month for 1,005,633 village health volunteers. The Universal Health Insurance Scheme in 2010 provided coverage to every Thai citizen. Moreover, 4,010 health stations have been elevated to District Health Promoting Hospitals. The Thai ID card can be used in place of the Universal Health Care card in receiving healthcare at all levels. The development of Thai establishment of 9 model hospitals, support for research and preparation of handbooks for traditional Thai and herbal medicine, and the integration of traditional Thai and modern medicine.

The quality and standard of education was improved at all levels and in all categories in order to keep up with economic and social changes. This was achieved through programmes such as the 15-Year Free Education Scheme (12,480,473 students benefited from the programme in 2010), Second Decade of National Education Reform Programme (2009-2018), Regional Science School Programme, Student Channel and Thai Teacher TV Programme, Information Technology for Education Fund, National Education Development Plan (2009-2016), and improving the quality of teachers and education personnel through the Developing Teacher Qualification Project, the production of a new generation of teachers, as well as the Teachers' Morale Support Project. The Government has worked to enhance the distribution of power in order to allow local administrative authorities, religious institutions, and the private sector to participate in education.

The Government has allowed various parties and networks to be involved in non-formal and informal education (10,786), vocational education (69,808), and basic education through homeschooling (216 students and 23 educational institutes) nationwide. Measures to promote and support research and innovation include promoting the transfer of technology and innovation in industry, agriculture, and services. The promotion of unity and learning, morality, arts and culture, customs and traditions, values, and local knowledge has been carried out through activities such as bilateral cooperation and exchanges of culture, building knowledge of the arts and culture, supporting a new generation of artists, driving

a creative economy, revitalising the Sea Gypsy lifestyle through written material on Sea Gypsy culture, and supporting local knowledge.

Obstacles include the fact that assistance to the elderly and the disadvantaged is still slow and limited. Greater assistance to the homeless after revitalisation of the family and community spirit is needed, especially in job and income creation. The private sector should also be encouraged to support religious sites and preserve Thai culture, especially in underdeveloped areas or ancient and historical sites, including the preservation of customs and traditions that are unique to a particular area.