

CLIMATE AND HEALTH COUNTRY PROFILE – 2015

THAILAND



World Health
Organization



United Nations
Framework Convention on
Climate Change



OVERVIEW

Thailand is a country of 67 million people^a which, despite challenges, has had sustained economic growth since the late 1980's.^b After many years of progress Thailand has attained upper middle income status and is likely to meet most of the Millennium Development Goals.^c

A universal health-coverage scheme was established in 2002^d and in 2013 total expenditure on health was 4.6% of GDP.^d Investments in population health and infrastructure, though, are likely to be threatened by climate change – particularly through increased exposure to rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and sea level rise. Poverty (12.64% of the population was below the poverty line in 2012^e), urban expansion, deforestation, and soil degradation may further complicate the situation, reducing community resilience and adaptive capacity.

A climate-change strategy is currently being devised, but efforts are still required to ensure the health system in Thailand is fully prepared to respond to many of the worst effects of climate change.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Under a high emissions scenario, mean annual temperature is projected to rise by about 4.3°C on average from 1990 to 2100. If emissions decrease rapidly, the temperature rise is limited to about 1.3°C.
- Under a high emissions scenario, and without large investments in adaptation, an average of 2.4 million people are projected to be affected by flooding due to sea level rise every year between 2070 and 2100. If emissions decrease rapidly and there is a major scale up in protection (i.e. continued construction/raising of dikes) the annual population affected by flooding could be limited to about 600 people. Adaptation alone will not offer sufficient protection, as sea level rise is a long-term process, with high emissions scenarios bringing increasing impacts well beyond the end of the century.

- Under a high emissions scenario heat-related deaths in the elderly (65+ years) are projected to increase to about 58 deaths per 100,000 by 2080 compared to the estimated baseline of about 3 deaths per 100,000 annually between 1961 and 1990. A rapid reduction in emissions could limit heat-related deaths in the elderly to just under 11 deaths per 100,000 by 2080.
- By 2070, approximately 71 million people are projected to be at risk of malaria assuming a high emissions scenario. If emissions decrease rapidly, projections indicate this number could decrease slightly to about 66 million.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

Thailand is currently implementing projects on health adaptation to climate change and is taking action to build institutional and technical capacities to work on climate change and health. Country reported data (see section 6) indicate there remain opportunities for action:

A (Draft) National Strategic Plan on Climate Change and Health B.E. 2015–2020 has been drafted; approval is being processed. This Strategic plan will be a national framework for building resilience to climate impacts and health risks which include adaptation and mitigation measures.

1) Adaptation

- Increase climate resilient infrastructure, including health infrastructure.
- Build capacity for public to understand health risks and take appropriate actions to prepare and reduce climate change impacts.

2) Mitigation

- Encourage public health facilities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Identify the health benefits associated with reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other climate pollutants.

DEMOGRAPHIC ESTIMATES

Population [2013] ^a	67 million
Population growth rate [2013] ^a	0.4%
Population living in urban areas [2013] ^f	47.9%
Population under five [2013] ^a	5.8%
Population aged 65 or older [2013] ^a	9.7%

ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

GDP per capita (current US\$, 2013) ^g	5,741 USD
Total expenditure on health as % of GDP [2013] ^d	4.6%
Percentage share of income for lowest 20% of population [2010] ^h	6.8%
HDI [2013, +/- 0.01 change from 2005 is indicated with arrow] ^h	0.722 ▲

HEALTH ESTIMATES

Life expectancy at birth [2013] ⁱ	75 years
Under-5 mortality per 1000 live births [2013] ^j	13

a World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, UNDESA [2015]

b The World Bank Country Overview, 2015. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/thailand/overview>

c National Health Security Office, Thailand [2012] [Thai] http://library2.parliament.go.th/giventake/content_sn/2556/d080256-31.pdf

d Global Health Expenditure Database, WHO [2014]

e Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, Thailand [2014]

f World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, UNDESA [2014]

g World Development Indicators, World Bank [2015]

h United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports [2014]

i Global Health Observatory, WHO [2014]

j Levels & Trends in Child Mortality Report 2015, UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation [2015]

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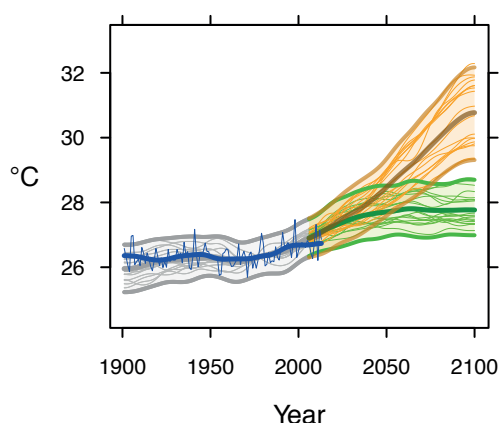
CURRENT AND FUTURE CLIMATE HAZARDS

Due to climate change, many climate hazards and extreme weather events, such as heat waves, heavy rainfall and droughts, could become more frequent and more intense in many parts of the world.

Outlined here are country-specific projections up to the year 2100 for climate hazards under a 'business as usual' high emissions scenario (in orange) compared to projections under a 'two-degree' scenario with rapidly decreasing emissions (in green).^a Most hazards caused by climate change will persist for many centuries.

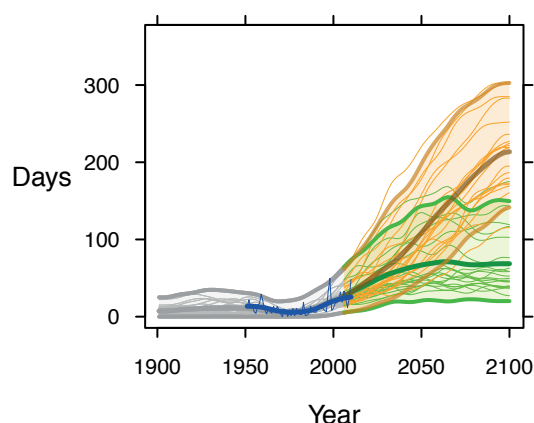
The text boxes below describe the projected changes averaged across about 20 models (thick line). The figures also show each model individually as well as the 90% model range [shaded] as a measure of uncertainty and, where available, the annual and smoothed observed record (in blue).^{b,c}

MEAN ANNUAL TEMPERATURE



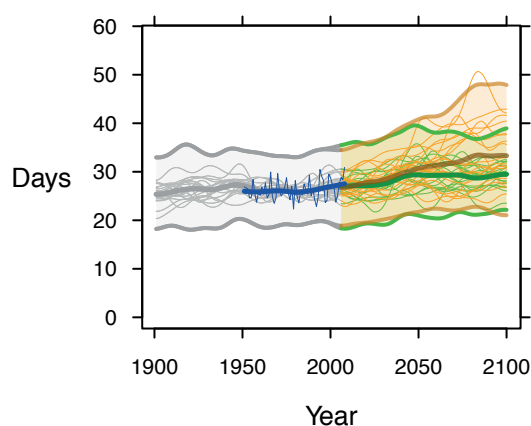
Under a high emissions scenario, mean annual temperature is projected to rise by about 4.3°C on average from 1990 to 2100. If emissions decrease rapidly, the temperature rise is limited to about 1.3°C.

DAYS OF WARM SPELL ('HEAT WAVES')



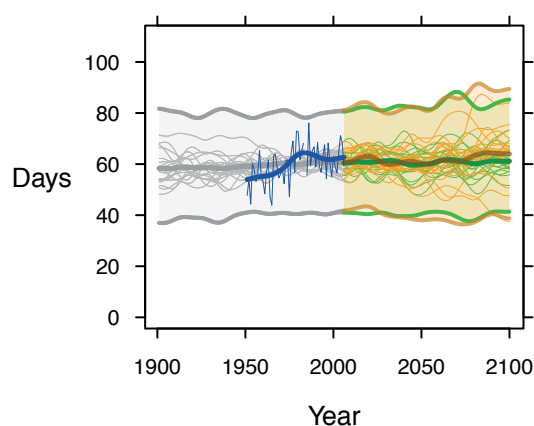
Under a high emissions scenario, the number of days of warm spell^d is projected to increase from about 10 days in 1990 to about 210 days on average in 2100. If emissions decrease rapidly, the days of warm spell are limited to about 70 on average.

DAYS WITH EXTREME RAINFALL ('FLOOD RISK')



Under a high emissions scenario, the number of days with very heavy precipitation (20 mm or more) could increase by about 7 days on average from 1990 to 2100, increasing the risk of floods. Some models indicate increases outside the range of historical variability, implying even greater risk. If emissions decrease rapidly, the risk is much reduced.

CONSECUTIVE DRY DAYS ('DROUGHT')



Under both high and low emissions scenarios, the longest dry spell is not indicated to change much from an average of about 60 days, with continuing large year-to-year variability.

^a Model projections are from CMIP5 for RCP8.5 [high emissions] and RCP2.6 [low emissions]. Model anomalies are added to the historical mean and smoothed.

^b Observed historical record of mean temperature is from CRU-TSv3.22; observed historical records of extremes are from HadEX2.

^c Analysis by the Climatic Research Unit and Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, University of East Anglia, 2015.

^d A 'warm spell' day is a day when maximum temperature, together with that of at least the 6 consecutive previous days, exceeds the 90th percentile threshold for that time of the year.

CURRENT AND FUTURE HEALTH RISKS DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Human health is profoundly affected by weather and climate. Climate change threatens to exacerbate today's health problems – deaths from extreme weather events, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, infectious and vector-borne diseases and malnutrition – whilst undermining water and food supplies, infrastructure, health systems and social protection systems.

EXPOSURE TO FLOODING DUE TO SEA LEVEL RISE

Severity of climate change scenario	RCP2.6	Without Adaptation	With Adaptation
		491,300	600
	RCP8.5	2,451,300	1,400

* Medium ice melting scenario

** Values rounded to nearest '00

Under a high emissions scenario, and without large investments in adaptation, an average of 2.4 million people are projected to be affected by flooding due to sea level rise every year between 2070 and 2100. If emissions decrease rapidly and there is a major scale up in protection (i.e. continued construction/raising of dikes) the annual population affected by flooding could be limited to about 600 people. Adaptation alone will not offer sufficient protection, as sea level rise is a long-term process, with high emissions scenarios bringing increasing impacts well beyond the end of the century.

Source: Human dynamics of climate change, technical report, Met Office, HM Government, UK, 2014.



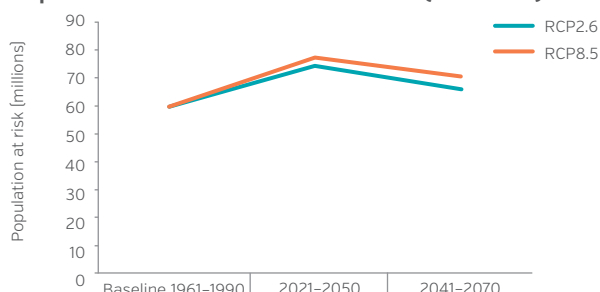
KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH

Thailand also faces inland river flood risk due to climate change. Under a high emissions scenario, it is projected that by 2030, 244,100 additional people may be at risk of river floods annually due to climate change and 242,800 due to socio-economic change above the estimated 1.1 million annual affected population in 2010.^a

In addition to deaths from drowning, flooding causes extensive indirect health effects, including impacts on food production, water provision, ecosystem disruption, infectious disease outbreak and vector distribution. Longer term effects of flooding may include post-traumatic stress and population displacement.

INFECTIOUS AND VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES

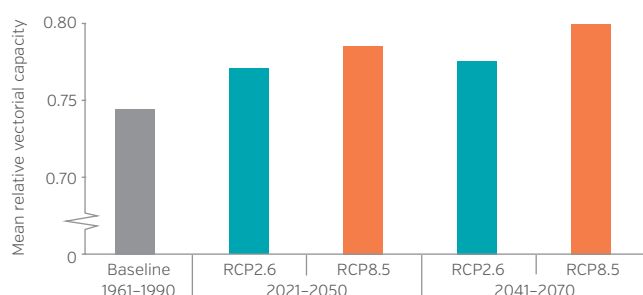
Population at risk of malaria in Thailand (in millions)



By 2070, approximately 71 million people are projected to be at risk of malaria assuming a high emissions scenario. If emissions decrease rapidly, projections indicate this number could decrease slightly to 66 million. The estimated baseline is 60 million people at risk per year between 1961-1990.

Source: Rocklöv, J., Quam, M. et al. 2015^d

Mean relative vectorial capacity for dengue fever transmission in Thailand



Under a high emissions scenario, the mean relative vectorial capacity for dengue fever transmission is projected to increase from about 0.75 during the the baseline period, to 0.80 towards 2070. If emissions decrease rapidly the mean relative vectorial capacity for dengue fever transmission is projected to reach approximately 0.78, remaining only slightly closer to the baseline value.

Source: Rocklöv, J., Quam, M. et al., 2015^d

a World Resources Institute, Aqueduct Flood Analyser; Assumes continued current socio-economic development trends [SSP2] and a 10-year flood plan.

b Atlas of Health and Climate, World Health Organization and World Meteorological Organization, 2012.

c Quantitative risk assessment of the effects of climate change on selected causes of death, 2030s and 2050s. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2014.

d Country-level analysis, completed in 2015, was based on health models outlined in the Quantitative risk assessment of the effects of climate change on selected causes of death, 2030s and 2050s. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2014.

HEAT-RELATED MORTALITY

Heat-related mortality in population 65 years or over, Thailand (deaths / 100,000 population 65+ years)



Under a high emissions scenario heat-related deaths in the elderly (65+ years) are projected to increase to about 58 deaths per 100,000 by 2080 compared to the estimated baseline of about 3 deaths per 100,000 annually between 1961 and 1990. A rapid reduction in emissions could limit heat-related deaths in the elderly to just under 11 deaths per 100,000 by 2080.

Source: Honda et al., 2015.^a



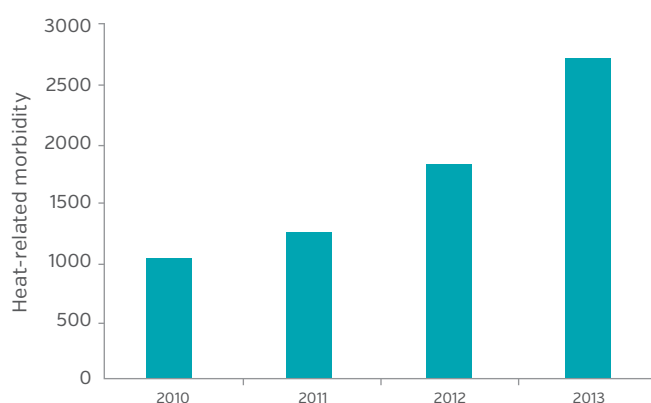
KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH

Climate change is expected to increase mean annual temperature and the intensity and frequency of heat waves resulting in a greater number of people at risk of heat-related medical conditions.

The elderly, children, the chronically ill, the socially isolated and at-risk occupational groups are particularly vulnerable to heat-related conditions.

HEAT-RELATED MORBIDITY AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Current heat-related morbidity in Thailand



In Thailand, heat-related morbidity has been increasing in recent years, from an estimated 1,020 cases in 2010 to 2742 cases in 2013. Over 50% of these cases are from agricultural workers. Source: Bureau of Occupational and Environmental Diseases, Thailand, 2013. Please note, cases might be under-recorded.

In addition to heat-related medical conditions, labour productivity of workers carrying out heavy labour (e.g. agricultural, construction and some industrial workers) is projected to decline significantly under a high emissions scenario with annual daily work hours declining by over 25% if global mean temperature increases by 4°C.^b

UNDERNUTRITION

Climate change, through higher temperatures, land and water scarcity, flooding, drought and displacement, negatively impacts agricultural production and causes breakdown in food systems. These disproportionately affect those most vulnerable to hunger and can lead to food insecurity. Vulnerable groups risk further deterioration into food and nutrition crises if exposed to extreme weather events.^c

Without considerable efforts made to improve climate resilience, it has been estimated that the risk of hunger and malnutrition globally could increase by up to 20 percent by 2050.^c

In Thailand, the prevalence of child malnutrition in children under age 5 is 9.2% [2012].^d

^a Country-level analysis, completed in 2015, was based on health models outlined in the Quantitative risk assessment of the effects of climate change on selected causes of death, 2030s and 2050s. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2014.

^b Kjellstrom, T., et al, 2015 <http://www.climatechip.org/>

^c World Food Project 2015 <https://www.wfp.org/content/two-minutes-climate-change-and-hunger>

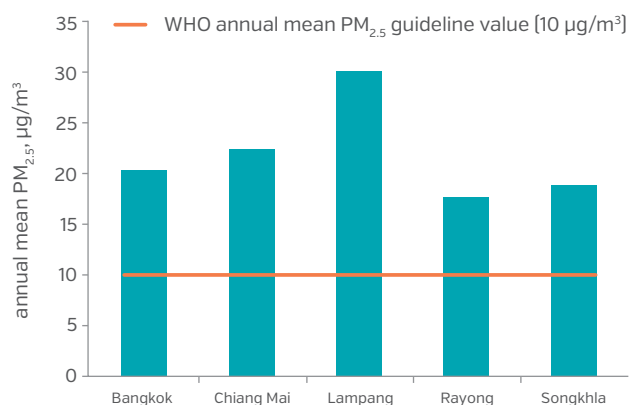
^d World Health Organization, Global Database on Child Growth and Malnutrition [2015 edition]. Child malnutrition estimates are for % underweight, defined as: Percentage of children aged 0-59 months who are below minus two standard deviations from median weight-for-age of the World Health Organization (WHO) Child Growth Standards.

CURRENT EXPOSURES AND HEALTH RISKS DUE TO AIR POLLUTION

Many of the drivers of climate change, such as inefficient and polluting forms of energy and transport systems, also contribute to air pollution. Air pollution is now one of the largest global health risks, causing approximately seven million deaths every year. There is an important opportunity to promote policies that both protect the climate at a global level, and also have large and immediate health benefits at a local level.

OUTDOOR AIR POLLUTION EXPOSURE

Outdoor air pollution in cities in Thailand
annual mean PM_{2.5} (µg/m³), 2012*



The five most populated cities for which there is air pollution data available have annual mean PM_{2.5} levels that are above the WHO guideline value of 10 µg/m³.

Source: Ambient Air Pollution Database, WHO, May 2014.

* A standard conversion for Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Lampang has been used. Please see source for more details.



KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH

Outdoor air pollution can have direct and sometimes severe consequences for health.

Fine particles which penetrate deep into the respiratory tract subsequently increase mortality from respiratory infections and diseases, lung cancer, and cardiovascular disease.

HOUSEHOLD AIR POLLUTION

THAILAND

Percentage of population primarily using solid fuels for cooking [%], 2013



RURAL
AREAS
31



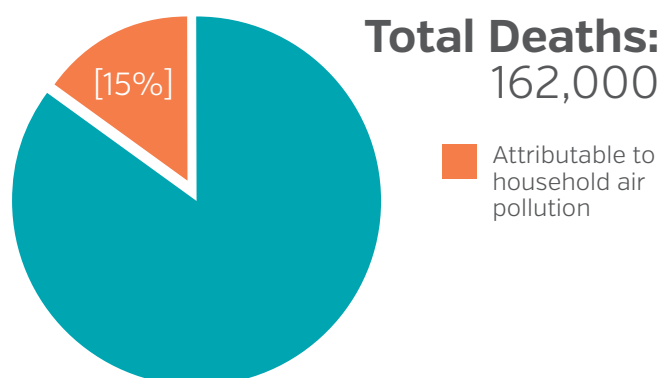
URBAN
AREAS
13



NATIONAL
TOTAL
23

Source: Global Health Observatory, data repository, World Health Organization, 2013

Percent of total deaths from ischaemic heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (18 years+) and acute lower respiratory infections (under 5 years) attributable to household air pollution, 2012.



Source: Global Health Observatory, data repository, World Health Organization, 2012



KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH

Air pollution in and around the home is largely a result of the burning of solid fuels (biomass or coal) for cooking and burning of other sources (crop waste, incense sticks, mosquito coils, etc.).

Women and children are at a greater risk for disease from household air pollution. Consequently, household air pollution is responsible for a larger proportion of the total number of deaths from ischaemic heart disease, stroke, lung cancer and COPD in women compared to men.^a

In Thailand, 29% percent of an estimated 750 child deaths due to acute lower respiratory infections is attributable to household air pollution (WHO, 2012).

^a Annu. Rev. Public. Health. 2014;35:185-206. http://www.who.int/phe/health_topics/outdoorair/databases/HAP_BoD_results_March2014.pdf?ua=1

CO-BENEFITS TO HEALTH FROM CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

Health co-benefits are local, national and international measures with the potential to simultaneously yield large, immediate public health benefits and reduce the upward trajectory of greenhouse gas emissions. Lower carbon strategies can also be cost-effective investments for individuals and societies.

Presented here are examples of opportunities for health co-benefits that could be realised by action in important greenhouse gas emitting sectors.^a

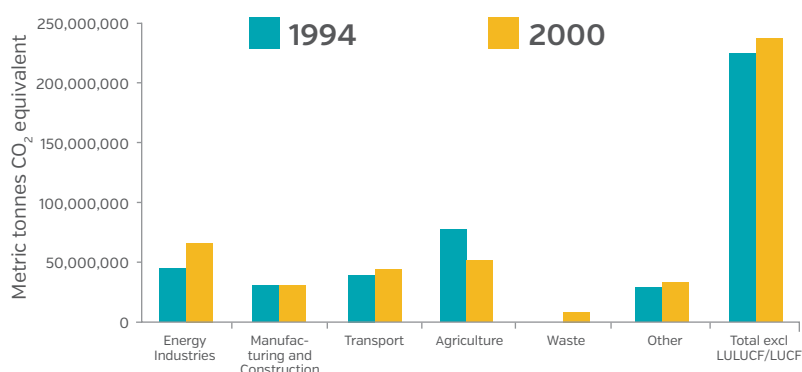


In Thailand, by 2030, an estimated 2,600 annual premature deaths due to outdoor air pollution may be avoided and near-term climate change mitigated by implementing 14 short lived climate pollutant reduction measures. [Source: Shindell, D., et al, Science, 2012.]

^a For a complete list of references used in the health co-benefits text please see the Climate and Health Country Profile Reference Document, <http://www.who.int/globalchange/en/>

Global carbon emissions increased by 80% from 1970 to 2010, and continue to rise.^{a,b} Collective action is necessary, but the need and opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions varies between countries. Information on the contribution of different sectors, such as energy, manufacturing, transport and agriculture, can help decision-makers to identify the largest opportunities to work across sectors to protect health, and address climate change.

THAILAND ANNUAL GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS (metric tonnes CO₂ equivalent)



A 2°C upper limit of temperature increase relative to pre-industrial levels has been internationally agreed in order to prevent severe and potentially catastrophic impacts from climate change. Reductions are necessary across countries and sectors. In order to stay below the 2°C upper limit it is estimated that global annual CO₂-energy emissions, currently at 5.2 tons per capita, need to be reduced to 1.6 tons per capita.^c

The most recent emissions data from Thailand indicates that carbon emissions were declining in the agriculture sector but increasing in other sectors, with the largest contributions in 2000 from the energy and industries sector. Through intersectoral collaboration, the health community can help to identify the best policy options not only to eventually stabilize greenhouse gas emissions, but also to provide the largest direct benefits to health.

Source: UNFCCC Greenhouse Gas Data Inventory, UNFCCC [2015].

NATIONAL RESPONSE^d

1992	THAILAND SIGNED THE UNFCCC
1992	THAILAND'S ENERGY CONSERVATION PROMOTION ACT
2002	THAILAND RATIFIED THE KYOTO PROTOCOL
2004	THAILAND ESTABLISHED CLIMATE CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION DIVISION (NATIONAL FOCAL POINT)^e
2007	THAILAND ESTABLISHED NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE (CHAIRMAN BY PRIME MINISTER)
2007	ESTABLISHMENT OF THAI GREENHOUSE GAS MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION
2008-2012	NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN ON CLIMATE CHANGE MANAGEMENT
2015	THAILAND CLIMATE CHANGE MASTER PLAN 2015–2050

a Boden, T.A., G. Marland, and R.J. Andres [2010]. Global, Regional, and National Fossil-Fuel CO₂ Emissions. Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy, Oak Ridge, Tenn., U.S.A. doi 10.3334/CDIAC/00001_V2010.

b IPCC [2014] Blanco G., R. Gerlagh, S. Suh, J. Barrett, H.C. de Coninck, C.F. Diaz Morejon, R. Mathur, N. Nakicenovic, A. Ofosu Ahenkora, J. Pan, H. Pathak, J. Rice, R. Richels, S.J. Smith, D.I. Stern, F.L. Toth, and P. Zhou, 2014: Drivers, Trends and Mitigation. In: Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Edenhofer, O., R. Pichs-Madruga, Y. Sokona, E. Farahani, S. Kadner, K. Seyboth, A. Adler, I. Baum, S. Brunner, P. Eickemeier, B. Kriemann, J. Savolainen, S. Schlömer, C. von Stechow, T. Zwickel and J.C. Minx (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom

c Pathways to deep decarbonization, Sustainable development Solutions Network, 2014 report.

d Columbia Law School, 'Climate Change Laws Of The World'. N.p., 2015.

e <http://climate.onep.go.th/index.php?p=3677&lang=en>

The following table outlines the status of development or implementation of climate resilient measures, plans or strategies for health adaptation and mitigation of climate change [reported by countries].^a

GOVERNANCE AND POLICY	
Country has identified a national focal point for climate change in the Ministry of Health	✓
Country has a national health adaptation strategy approved by relevant government body	✗
The National Communication submitted to UNFCCC includes health implications of climate change mitigation policies	✓
HEALTH ADAPTATION IMPLEMENTATION	
Country is currently implementing projects or programmes on health adaptation to climate change	✓
Country has implemented actions to build institutional and technical capacities to work on climate change and health	✓
Country has conducted a national assessment of climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation for health	✓
Country has climate information included in Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) system, including development of early warning and response systems for climate-sensitive health risks	✗
Country has implemented activities to increase climate resilience of health infrastructure	✗
FINANCING AND COSTING MECHANISMS	
Estimated costs to implement health resilience to climate change included in planned allocations from domestic funds in the last financial biennium	✗
Estimated costs to implement health resilience to climate change included in planned allocations from international funds in the last financial biennium	✗
HEALTH BENEFITS FROM CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION	
The national strategy for climate change mitigation includes consideration of the health implications (health risks or co-benefits) of climate change mitigation actions	✓
Country has conducted valuation of co-benefits of health implications of climate mitigation policies	✗

a. Supporting monitoring efforts on health adaptation and mitigation of climate change: a systematic approach for tracking progress at the global level. WHO survey, 2015.

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To ensure readability, health estimates and projections have been presented without the margins of uncertainty which are available upon request.