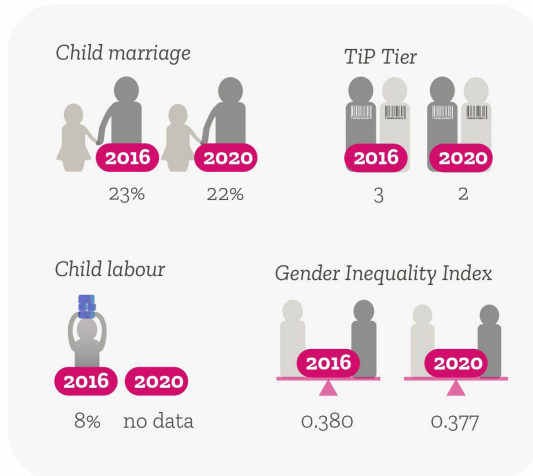


# Thailand

## KEY NATIONAL INDICATORS IN 2016-2020



The Royal Thai Government has been a signatory of the WeProtect initiative to end online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) since 2015. It has adopted national strategies to protect children from OSEC as well as to guide agencies at the national and local levels in addressing violence against children. For the demonstrated efforts of government working towards eliminating trafficking, in late 2016 Thailand moved from Tier 3 to Tier 2 on the watchlist in 2018, where it currently remains.<sup>1</sup>

Thailand's civic space is currently rated as 'repressed' by Civicus, a global alliance of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) dedicated to strengthening civil society. Since 2017, CSOs in Thailand have been reporting no improvements in civil liberties, a decline in the imprisonment of dissidents and lack of justice for human rights violations.

## FOCUS OF OUR WORK

As soon as the Thai Government decided to open Children Advocacy Centers to enable close collaboration between NGOs and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) in the prevention of sexual exploitation of children (SEC) in 2018, the Down to Zero programme has supported the establishment of such a centre in Chiang Mai. This in addition to the regular activities taking place such as the work focused on empowering children at risk, addressing OSEC, strengthening community-based protection, and working with the private sector and the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs).

Budget 2016-2020

€ 2,222,456

## MAIN RESULTS ON CHILDREN/YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

The programme has started by providing children at risk knowledge and skills to recognise and report abusive situations. The following years children and young people were trained in reporting cases and in skills to become peer educators to advocate against (SEC).

As a result of this support, in 2017-2018, trained children conducted their own awareness-raising activities with peers in their schools. A striking example is the "Short Film Campaign to End Online Child Sexual Exploitation" project in 2018, where youth leaders from the Wattanaseree Foundation told the story of how children can prevent OSEC. In 2019-2020, participants of the Young Safe Internet Leader Camp carried out campaigns on how to stay safe online, with students actively engaging in cyber camp educational activities. Over the

years, children started to report SEC cases, mainly online SEC, including grooming and sextortion.

Through the programme boys and girls accessed specialized services including health and educational services as well as legal aid. The programme also provided legal assistance to survivors and supported them in testifying in court. This has led to the conviction of offenders and compensation for survivors.

The programme has facilitated children's advocacy at a national level. In 2018, the Children's Forum was organised, bringing together youth leaders from provinces all across Thailand: Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Tak, Nakhon Ratchasima, Phuket, and from Bangkok. They provided inputs to policies promoting child safety in the digital world and shared their recommendations with representatives of the National Legislative Assembly, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and the Royal Thai Police.

## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION

In Chiang Rai, with support from the Down to Zero Alliance (DtZ), in 2017, community members from different communities were trained to raise their awareness on sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) including SEC. However, due to a lack of trust in law enforcement, the reporting of cases by community members has remained low. The DtZ programme has also collaborated with schools which has resulted in significant developments. In 2018, 2 schools (in Bangkok and Chantaburi) incorporated SEC into their curricula

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and the headmasters of 3 schools in Bangkok requested their teachers to attend DTZ training on SEC. Teachers from the Bann Roummit School in Chiang Rai organised a training about OSEC and child protection for their teachers.

The Director of the Chiang Rai Provincial Administrative Organization School agreed to create and support a “Creative Computer Club”, which now counts 31 secondary school and high school students as members. The DtZ programme has also supported the establishment of the Chiang Rai Coordination Committee including different community based organisations (CSOs) to protect Children, Women and Counter-Trafficking in Persons. This committee developed an annual plan for the joint protection of children from all forms of violence.

## PRIVATE SECTOR

In 2020, the DtZ Alliance worked with international businesses at a national level. As a result, Facebook and Google have actively responded to the programme’s analysis of online content marked as containing a risk for SEC and took it down accordingly. Work with DTAC, one of the three top IT companies in Thailand, has led to the co-organising of a youth camp in 2019 and 2020 for children to learn how to stay safe online.

At the local level, DtZ boosted the scale of hotels joining The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from sexual exploitation in Travel and Tourism. The programme successfully encouraged the private sector to become part of a network to support the work of CSOs against SEC. In 2019, different private companies, government representatives and CSOs in the provinces of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Lampoon signed an Memorandum of Understanding to cooperate and promote child-safe and -friendly tourism. Since then, the programme supported a number of hotels in developing ethical (anti-SEC) policies, leading to hotels, governmental organisations and NGOs in different provinces to install child protection policies and training their staff.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES (LEAS)

Achieving results with law enforcement agencies (LEAs) requires long-term efforts and multi-sided pursuits, such as instrumental collaboration between the police, Ministry of Justice and the Office of Attorney General as well as considerable investment in capacity building of LEAs. The multi-year advocacy for changes in policies and mechanisms by DtZ related to SEC prosecution and protection of victims, including the establishment of a new criminal court division to handle human trafficking cases, has paved the way for LEAs to accept technical assistance in fact-finding related to SEC cases. Moreover,

the DtZ training of representatives of the police and Ministry of Interior was effective: more offenders have been arrested with the use of CPS (software to track sexual exploitation of children) installed on mobile phones of the police. The CPS was used in the field, while the programme supported investigation of cases. Due to these changes by 2020, it was possible to compensate SEC survivors after the litigation of human trafficking cases. Offenders were given severe sentences, with 36% of them punished by imprisonment of 10 years or more.

<sup>1</sup>The Trafficking in Persons Report, or the TIP Report, is an annual report issued by the U.S. State Department. The report ranks governments based on their perceived efforts to acknowledge and combat human trafficking, from Tier 1 (full compliance with the minimum standards) to Tier 3 (no compliance and no significant efforts to do so).