

Thailand

In 1992, the Thai government ratified the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC). Since then, there have been major improvements for children. However, children in Thailand still face a number of challenges. Many children have missed out on the benefits of Thailand's development – particularly the children of ethnic minorities, migrants and those living in poverty.

Workplace

According to the [Children's Rights in the Workplace Index](#), companies operating in or sourcing from Thailand should exercise moderate [due diligence](#). Thailand scores 3.9 out of 10, due primarily to challenges with child labour and working conditions for parents and caregivers. To respect and support children's rights in the workplace, businesses should:

- **Contribute to the elimination of child labour**

Children in Thailand are affected by child labour, including the worst forms of child labour. The most recent official survey data from Thailand's National Statistical Office (NSO) in 2015 indicate that out of 10,876,275 children aged 5-17 in Thailand, [there are 692,819 working children \(6.4%\) and 312,675 \(2.9%\) of those are in child labour](#). However, the actual figure may be higher, as the figure may not capture all groups, especially migrant children who are thought to make up a significant portion of child labourers.

Child labour is known to affect the fishing industry. However, a [2018 ILO-EU report](#) observed that less than just 1% of surveyed fishery workers in 11 provinces were under the age of 18. The report remarked that a reduction in the number of child workers could be due to new labour control – including a fine of THB400,000 (US\$12,800) for employing workers younger than 18 years in fishing or seafood processing – coupled with greater monitoring and enforcement by the Ministry of Labour.

The government is committed to eliminating child labour and has ratified ILO Conventions No. 132 on Minimum Age of Employment and No. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour. The National Policy and Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor Phase II (2015–2020) aims to eradicate the worst forms of child labour by 2020. National laws stipulate a minimum age for employment of 15, and children younger than 18 are protected from hazardous work. According to the [2015 NSO report](#) 85,806 out of 692,819 (12.4%) of reported working children aged 5-17 years were in hazardous conditions. However, the proportion could be higher when accounting for working migrant children who are more vulnerable to hazardous work.

- **Provide decent work for parents and caregivers**

Working conditions for parents have a direct impact on the health, development and survival of workers' children. Thailand has ratified six of the eight core ILO conventions, including most recently No. 111 on Discrimination in Employment in 2017. The government has also ratified some relevant to decent working conditions – including No. 14 on Weekly Rest – but has yet to ratify others – including No. 95 on the Protection of Wages and No. 103 and 183 on Maternity Protection.

Women are entitled to 13 weeks (approx. 3 months) of maternity leave, paid at 100% of earnings for the first 45 days. An additional benefit of up to 50% of reported earnings (up to THB7,500 per month) for the next 45 days is available for working mothers in the social security system. Although women are protected from dismissal on the basis of pregnancy, they are not guaranteed the right to return to the same position after maternity leave. Without this guarantee, mothers may feel compelled to return to work as soon as possible, before they and their infants are ready, which can impact maternal and child health. ILO Recommendation No. 191 encourages a minimum period of maternity leave of 18 weeks, paid at a level sufficient to support an adequate standard of living.

Marketplace

According to the [Children's Rights in the Marketplace Index](#), companies operating in Thailand should exercise moderate [due diligence](#). Thailand scores 3.9 out of 10 in the Index. Although the country has safeguards for marketing of tobacco and alcohol products, there are ongoing challenges with regard to the commercial sexual exploitation of children. To respect and support children's rights in the marketplace, businesses should:

- **Ensure the protection and safety of children in all business activities and facilities**

Poverty has contributed to children's vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation, including trafficking for sexual purposes, pornography and prostitution. Although poverty rates have been decreasing, according to UNICEF [14% of children live below the poverty line](#). The recently adopted [National Child Protection Strategy](#), aims to lay out reform steps to improve prevention and protection solutions for children at risk of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Travel and tourism companies should take steps to ensure that their facilities are not inadvertently used for sexual exploitation of children.

The 2003 Child Protection Act protects children from sexual abuse and exploitation, including a prohibition of child pornography. However, the practice of online abuse and cyberbullying is seen as a growing problem in Thailand and across the South Asia region. [A 2016 UNICEF survey](#) found that adolescents agree that they are in danger of being sexually abused or taken advantage of online. [ICT](#) companies, should continue to improve safeguard to proactively tackle cyber-bullying and limit children's access to the online pornographic material.

- **Ensure marketing and advertising respect children's rights**

Thailand has made notable strides in promoting children's health and nutrition through marketing regulations. The government launched an action plan to reduce unhealthy diets, targeted for children. It is expected that the response will contribute to reducing the overweight rate of children under five, which is estimated at [8.33%](#). The government has also made efforts to prohibit children's access to tobacco and alcohol – WHO data indicate that [13.5% of children aged 13-15 years use tobacco products](#) and adolescents aged 15-19 years consume [4.1 litres of alcohol on average each year](#).

In 2017, the Control of Marketing of Infant and Young Child Food Act was passed, which bans all marketing of breastmilk substitutes for children under the age of three. Despite an increase in the rate of exclusive breastfeeding for infants under six months of age [from 12% in 2013 to 23% in 2016](#),

exclusive breastfeeding rates are slightly lower than the average for South East Asia and are below the global average of 40%. [UNICEF and WHO guidelines](#) recommend that infants should be breastfed exclusively for the first six months and continue to be breastfed up to two years.

Community and Environment

According to the [Children's Rights in the Workplace Index](#), companies operating in or sourcing from Thailand should exercise moderate [due diligence](#). Thailand scores 3.9 out of 10, due primarily to challenges with child labour and working conditions for parents and caregivers. To respect and support children's rights in the community and environment, businesses should:

- **Reinforce community and government efforts to protect and fulfill children's rights**

Thailand's score reflects improving socio-economic and development indicators for children. About 98% of the population has access to improved water, and 95% percent have basic sanitation. Nevertheless, the mortality rate for attributable water, sanitation and hygiene attributable deaths is 1.9 per 100,000 children under 5.

Access to education is also improving in Thailand, but [14% of secondary-school age children are not in school](#). The law entitles all children to enrol in school, regardless of their background or nationality. The largest proportion of children not in school are from disadvantaged communities, migrants, or children living with a disability.

Among the most disadvantaged children in Thailand are those whose parents immigrate for work in the agricultural and construction industries. In both industries, businesses have made efforts to improve their situation through public-private coordination, for instance, by providing resources to improve education service provision and establishing education centres. In the construction sector, [Framework for Action](#) has been announced as a guideline for construction and real estate developers to implement child-friendly construction sites in order to improve outcomes for children living in construction camp sites.

- **Help protect children affected by emergencies**

Thailand is vulnerable to natural disasters, especially floods, tsunami and droughts. Thailand scores [6.3/10 in the Index for Risk Management \(INFORM\)](#), a risk index for humanitarian crises and disasters. Thailand has 5.8 million people, including children, living in poverty who are particularly vulnerable to the impact of disasters. Natural disasters hit people in poverty harder because they live in vulnerable overexposed areas, have lower-quality assets, and in rural areas are more dependent on vulnerable agriculture and eco-systems. As a result, they have less ability to cope and recover.

Children are likely to be affected by these disasters; natural disasters increase the vulnerability of affected children to health risks, school disruption, displacement and separation. Floods, droughts and conflicts may force people to move out of their house or communities on either short or long-term basis which directly affects their livelihood. [The Global Report on Internal Displacement \(GRID\)](#) estimates that 90,000 people (including children) were displaced by natural disasters in 2016. In 2015, Thailand adopted a natural disaster risk management plan in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and developed the National Disaster Risk Management Plan 2015.

Further reading

UNICEF, 2017, State of the World's Children 2017, available at: <https://data.unicef.org/>

UNICEF Thailand, 2017, Country website, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/thailand/>