

# A policy brief on Recommendations on Strategic Actions for a Healthy Ageing Society of Thailand through Social Participation

- **Introduction**

Thailand is expected to become a super-aged society by the next decade and the elderly population will increase to 28%. This demographic change will affect advancements in society, economy and health, especially for health expenditure. There is projection that health expenditure may reach 2.2 trillion baht in 2032 (Department of Older Person, 2019). Despite having the intensive national policies and plans, the challenge lies in effective collaboration among government agencies and related stakeholders.

In response to this challenge, National Health Commission Office (NHCO) Thailand in collaboration with the Department of Older Person (DOP), Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) organized a national senior assembly to support the healthy ageing society in 2023 with application of a social participation concept that engaged civil society in the agenda-setting, consultation and decision-making process.

The result of the assembly leads to 3 resolutions namely 1) the management of integrated government work plans for effective support of an ageing society 2) the development of integrated system and mechanism in social and health services for the senior citizens development in Thailand 3) the technology and innovation to support an ageing society.

The successful implementation of the said resolutions requires even more participation from all stakeholders. Therefore, NHCO in collaboration with MSDHS and relevant national agencies developed the Implementation Roadmaps and Recommendations on Strategic Actions for a Healthy Ageing Society of Thailand through Social Participation in accordance with the senior citizen assembly's resolutions 2023. This collaboration was initiated with the financial support from World Health Organization, Thailand Country Office.

- **Methods**

- 1) Drafted the implementation roadmaps of 2023 senior citizen assembly's resolutions by a multi stakeholder core group.
- 2) Consulted the draft implementation roadmaps with communities at the local level and with stakeholders at the national level.
- 3) Developed and finalized recommendations on strategic actions based on the consultation at the local and national level.
- 4) Advocated the implementation roadmaps and the recommendation on strategic actions.

- **The Recommendations on Strategic Actions for a Healthy Ageing Society in accordance with the Senior Citizen Assembly's Resolutions 2023**

- 1. Establishment of the integrated mechanisms in 3 levels that are the national, provincial and local levels to drive the integrated plan for supporting an aging society**

The challenge of achieving the integrated plan as mentioned above is a horizontal and vertical integration of involved organizations which work in preparation for the aging society, such as, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Public Health, and Ministry of Interior. As of now, there is only an order of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security to form the sub-committee on driving the integrated plan for supporting an

aging society. This sub-committee is aimed at coordinating at the national level. This sub-committee has not yet been established.

It is recommended that a mechanism at the provincial level and local levels should be set up to coordinate and streamline with the national mechanism. Local governments such as the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and Pattaya City Administrative Organization should also be involved.

## **2. Engagement of civil society organizations (CSOs) related to older persons and/or an aging society in the 3-level integrated mechanisms**

CSOs such as the Senior Citizens Council of Thailand (SCCT), the Provincial Health Assembly networks (PHA) should participate in policy development that affect the health and wellbeing, across the policy cycle and at all levels of the system. This is in line with the concept of social participation<sup>1</sup>. Engagement of CSOs in the 3-level integrated mechanism will make policies, programs and projects effective and responsive to their needs especially the vulnerable persons in the older person group.

## **3. Ensuring regular inclusive participation on this agenda by organizing a National Senior Assembly to support the healthy aging society**

Department of Older Persons, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security as the primary host of the National Senior Assembly should grant an adequate budget and manpower to organize the assembly regularly, at least every two years. The assembly should be used as a platform to monitor the progress on the past resolutions and to address new problems as well as to find solutions together with stakeholders. The agenda of the assembly should emphasize persons of all ages, not only older persons, in order to support of the health aging society. Doing so, multiple actors should be involved in the assembly. Furthermore, the assembly should engage communities and civil societies to share their best practices and innovations of their areas.

## **4. Integration of Social Service and Health Service Systems**

Healthcare services are mainly provided by the Ministry of Public Health, while social services such as elderly living allowance, social assistance, recreation (parks and sport stadiums), education, housing, are provided by different ministries. The integration of social services and health services should be taken place in the provincial and local levels. It is recommended to develop and test the model of social services and health services integration. If the integrated model is feasible, this should be proposed to the responsible organizations, for example, the National Commission on Older Person.

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. (2023). Social participation for universal health coverage: technical paper. World Health Organization. <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/375276>. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO

## **5. Elderly related data integration**

Data related to older persons has many dimensions and are collected by different ministries such as Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Interior, National Statistics Office, and Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council. It is highly recommended to set up a platform or API for exchange data in various dimensions for planning, implementation and monitoring. Doing so, a set of data for decision-making and data standardization needs to be established.