Thailand Public Revenue and Spending Assessment
How can spending on human development be made more efficient and equitable?

**HEALTH**
- Health has been prioritized in the budget; general government health spending accounted for almost 15% of total spending in 2019, tripling in real per capita terms since 2000.
- But at 2.8% of GDP, Thailand’s public health spending remains relatively low in levels compared to peers.
- Public health insurance schemes cover almost the entire population, with good health outcomes despite contained spending.
- Increase in life expectancy from 70.6 years in 2000 to 77.2 years in 2019.
- Substantial declines in infant, under-five, and maternal mortality rates.

**ACHIEVEMENTS**
- Pre-primary enrollment increased from 60% in 2009 to 80% in 2019 due to government policy to expand free access.
- Universal primary enrollment has been achieved since early 2000.
- Student learning outcomes are weak - Thailand ranked 68th in reading, 59th in math, and 55th in science out of 79 PISA-participating countries and economies in 2018.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has led to further learning losses equivalent to more than 1 year of lost schooling.

**CHALLENGES**
- Health spending and service delivery face pressures from Thailand’s aging population, the growing prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and the use of new drugs, procedures, and other medical technologies.
- The service delivery system is fragmented and not well prepared to prevent, detect, and manage NCDs.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
- Better integrate service delivery: a nationwide interoperable health information system and more innovative payment models would allow better coordination across different providers.
- Improve screening of hypertension and diabetes to reduce the need for more expensive treatments.
- Reform public health insurance purchasing arrangements to reduce costs.
- Consolidate small schools to help ensure that primary students have better access to teachers and resources.
- Increase overall per-student spending at the pre-primary and secondary levels: increase investments in preschools and reduce secondary class sizes.
- Increase the Old Age Allowance for the poorest beneficiaries at 2000 THB per month.
- Improve targeting and increase the State Welfare Card payment at 700 THB per month (30% of the poverty line).
- Reduce fragmentation of the social assistance system, including by integrating program databases, consolidating eligibility criteria, and establishing a social registry.
- Implement reforms to public pensions (index pensions and earnings ceilings, raise retirement age, increase contribution rates) to improve adequacy and fairness while ensuring financial sustainability.