**UNDP**

# INTEGRATED SDG INSIGHTS
# REPORT
# THAILAND

This report provides analysis and insights in preparation for the SDG Summit and the foundation for effective policy implementation in the second half of the 2030 Agenda.

# SDG MOMENT:
# THAILAND

Economic growth serves as an enabler for the SDGs in the short term, while over time **the SDG agenda itself becomes a catalyst for inclusive and low-carbon growth pathways**.

Thailand's economy during 2023-2025 is in coping phase.[1] It is projected to grow on average by 3.4%, slightly higher than the world average of 3% but is still lower than the Asia-Pacific average of 5.3%. The country's growth trajectory is yet to return to its pre-pandemic level.
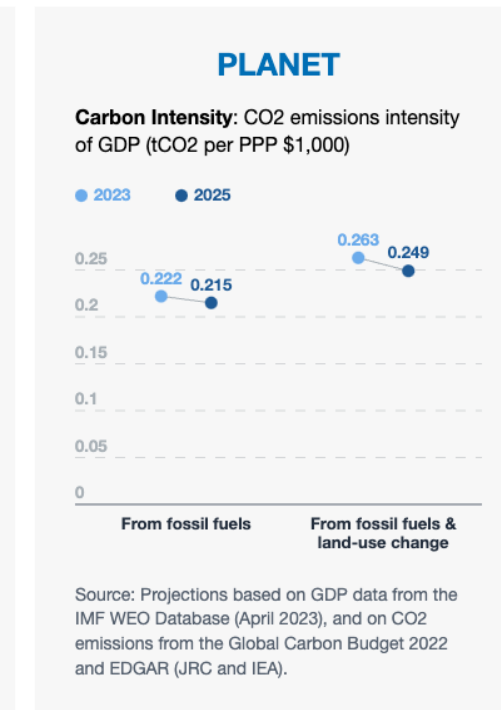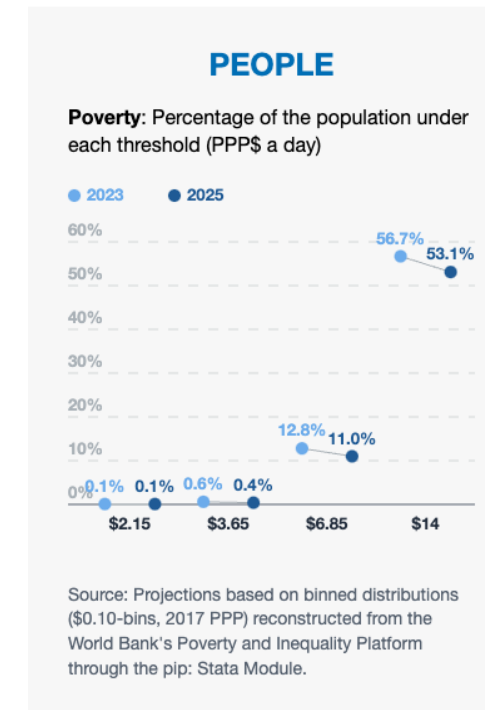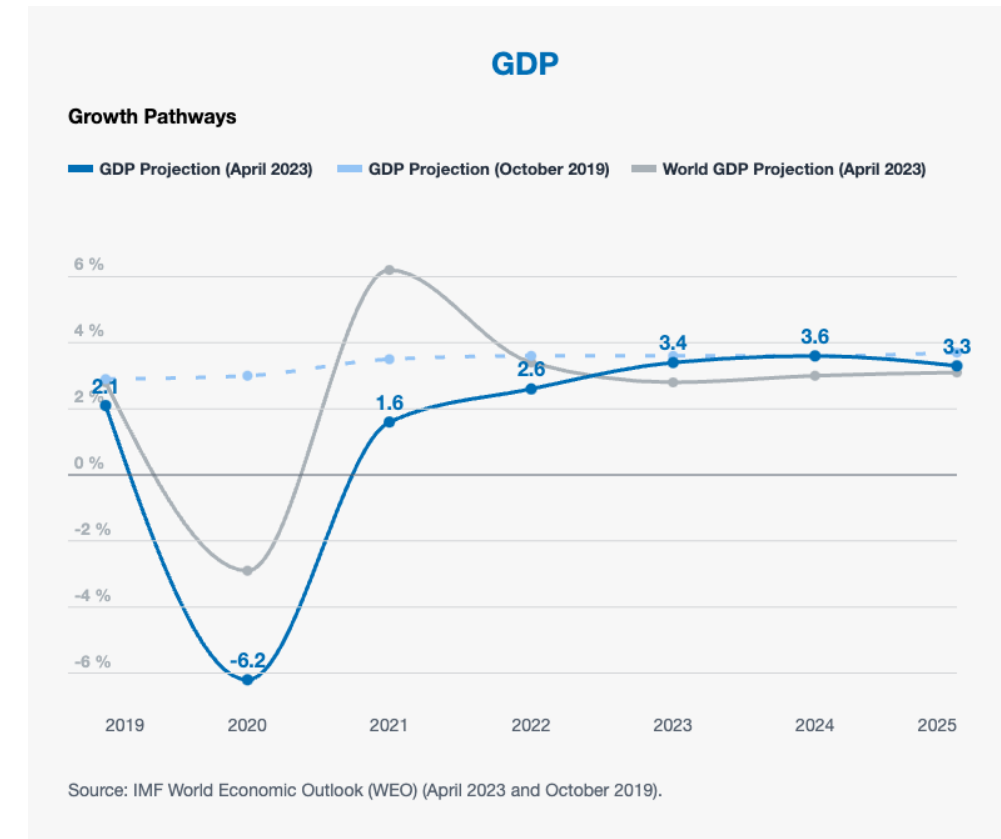
Thailand halved the number of people in multidimensional poverty in just 7 years from 961,000 people in 2012 to 412,000 people in 2019[1]. Its Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) stands at 0.002, the lowest in ASEAN. However, the incidence of multidimensional poverty is 0.6 percentage points higher than the incidence of monetary poverty, implying that individuals, despite living above the monetary poverty line, may still suffer deprivations in health, education and/or standard of living.

Thailand's commitments to achieving the SDGs prioritize achieving a high-value eco-friendly economy, a society of opportunities and equality, sustainable way of life, and strengthening enabling factors for transformation. Thailand reiterated its pledge to reach carbon neutrality by 2050 and net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2065.

Thailand's pace of growth would exert a moderate positive impact on reducing poverty. Going forward, growth will be less dependent on carbon emissions, as the country's fossil emissions intensity of GDP is projected to decrease at an annual rate of 1.6%, and of 2.7% when also considering land-use change.[2]

[1] The economic cycle is determined by adjusting country's current GDP growth forecasts (April 2023) by their gap relative to the forecasts made before the pandemic and subsequent crises (October 2019). If the adjusted rates (not shown) are below 2% it is considered that the economy is in mitigation; it is coping if the adjusted rates range 2%-4%, and it's in acceleration if they are above 4%.
[2] CO2 emissions intensity of GDP is computed as tonnes of CO2 per $1,000 (2017 PPP).

**GDP**

**Growth Pathways**

— GDP Projection (April 2023)  — GDP Projection (October 2019)  — World GDP Projection (April 2023)

Source: IMF World Economic Outlook (WEO) (April 2023 and October 2019).

**PEOPLE**

**Poverty**: Percentage of the population under each threshold (PPP$ a day)

● 2023  ● 2025

Source: Projections based on binned distributions ($0.10-bins, 2017 PPP) reconstructed from the World Bank's Poverty and Inequality Platform through the pip: Stata Module.

**PLANET**

**Carbon Intensity**: CO2 emissions intensity of GDP (tCO2 per PPP $1,000)

● 2023  ● 2025

Source: Projections based on GDP data from the IMF WEO Database (April 2023), and on CO2 emissions from the Global Carbon Budget 2022 and EDGAR (JRC and IEA).

# SDG TRENDS

Understanding how Thailand performs against the SDG targets provides a baseline landscape against which to build SDG policy pathways. SDG progress tracking follows [UN Stats](https://) standards and [methodology](https://), and is aligned with country profiles.



- **ON TRACK**
- **FOR REVIEW**
- **OFF TRACK**
- **TRENDS NA**

- Multiple assessments on Thailand reveal that progress towards achieving a number of the SDGs remain of concern:
  - SDG 2 (zero hunger) , SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing), SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production),  SDG 13 (climate action),  SDG 14 (life below water), and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions)
- The SDG targets organized according to the 5 P's of sustainable development reaffirm the country's need to accelerate the progress toward the achievement of the SDGs, particularly on the off-track targets.
- Strengthening data collection and management should be prioritized to enhance the assessment of the SDG progress and policy pathways.

*Trends in detail:*
*https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/THA/sdg-trends*

# SDG PRIORITIES

Thailand's national priorities are generated using machine learning to reveal the most prominent SDGs referenced in national policy documents. This analysis uses a custom-built model for SDG classification. It considers 100k+ terms, including phrases and expressions.



**Key documents for analysis:**
1. **The Thirteenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027)**
2. **National Strategy 2018-2037**
3. **Thailand's SDG Report 2016-2020**
4. **UNESCAP SDG Snapshot: Thailand's current state of progress against regional targets, since 2015 — which points to the urgent need to bring back the progress on the zero hunger and climate action goals**
5. **Thailand's Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

*Priorities in detail:*
*https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/THA/current-priorities*

# SDG INTERLINKAGES

SDG Interlinkages reveal how actions directed towards one SDG can impact others. Uncovering and understanding these interactions can help Thailand to achieve the 2030 Agenda and navigate trade-offs.

Based on a global framework for interlinkages, Thailand's SDG progress is color coded at the target level.

Building from national priorities, the following pathways reflect policy investments with the most potential to accelerate the SDGs for Thailand:

- Target 8.5: By 2030 achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
- Target 9.4: Upgrade all industries and infrastructures for sustainability
- Target 10.2: Promote universal social, economic and political inclusion
- Target 11.6: By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality, municipal and other waste management
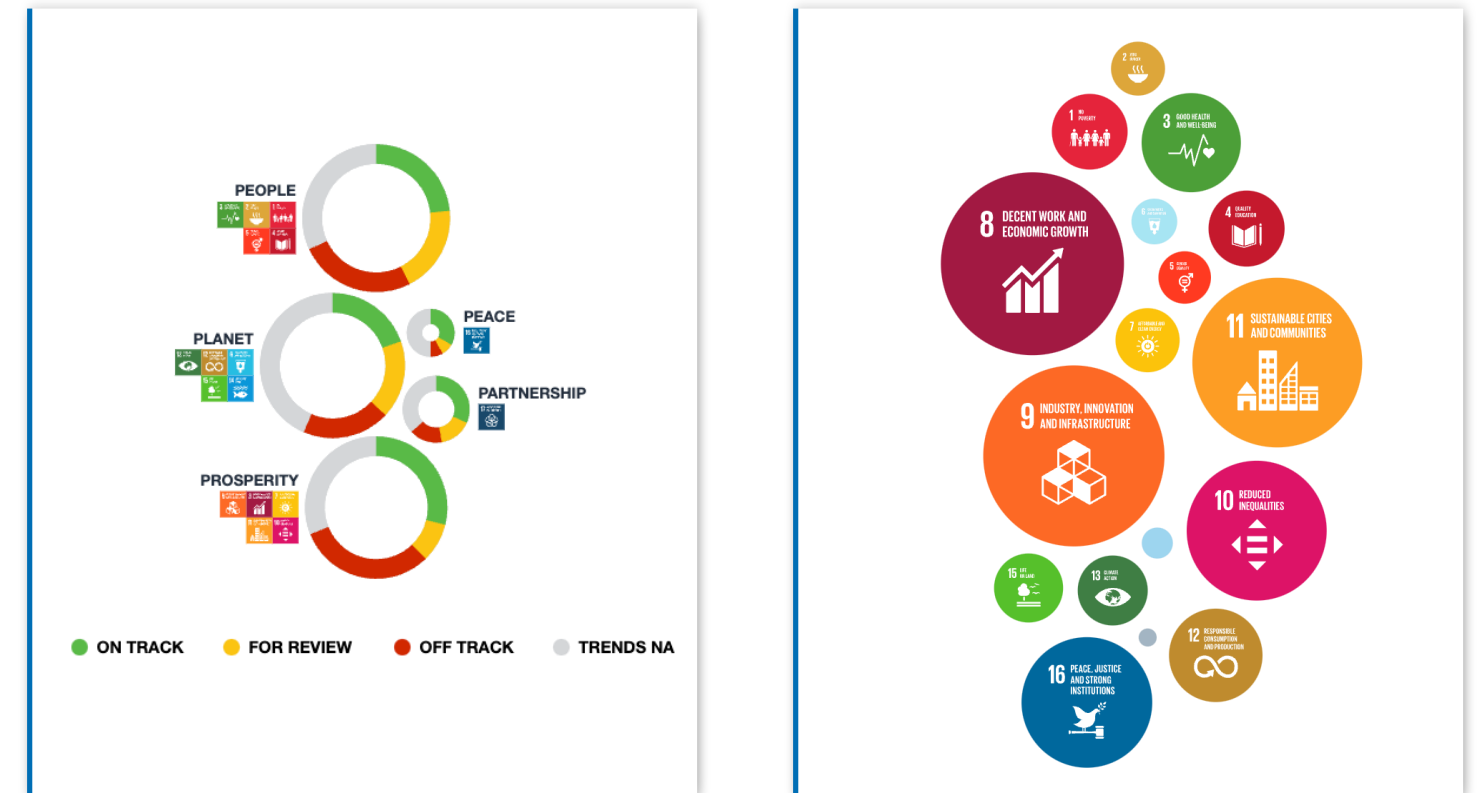


## ACCELERATION PATHWAYS

**SYNERGIES**

**TRADE-OFFS**

# SDG INTERLINKAGES

**8.5: : By 2030 achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value**
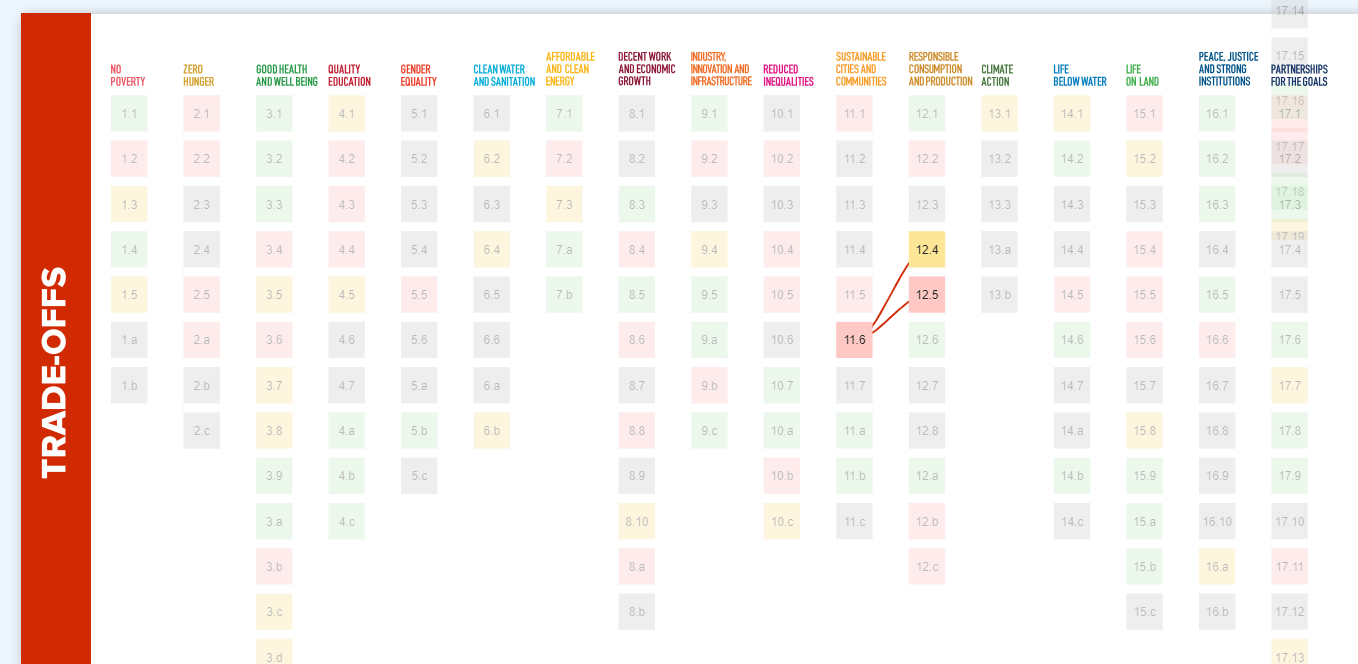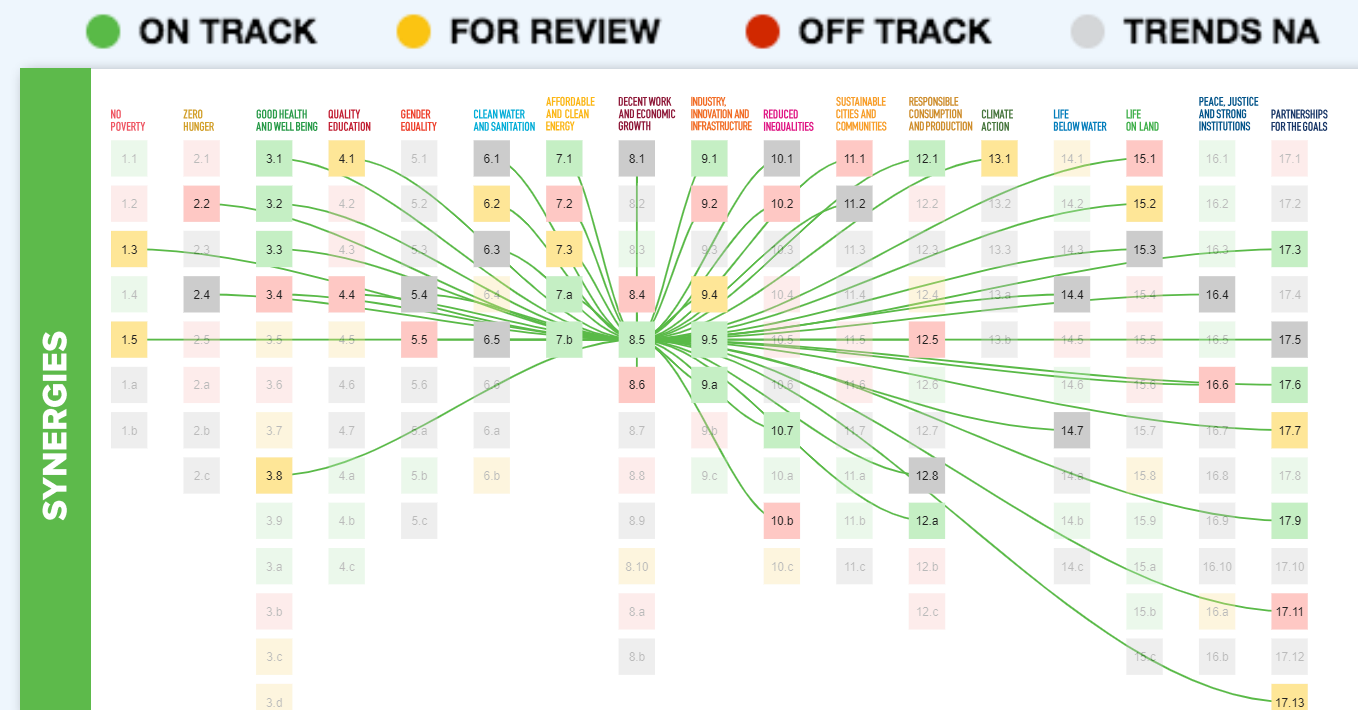
Between 2012 and 2019, the size of the labor force shrank by more than 1.2 million people. Agriculture still employs about 33% of all workers in Thailand compared to 23% of employment in the Philippines, 10% in Malaysia, and 5% in the Republic of Korea. 54% of employment was informal in 2019. In addition, women's labor force participation is 60%, lower than male's 77%. The 2023 Human Development Report revealed that in Thailand, women's income per capita is $15,457 compared to men's $18,694. Women (including elderly women) are primary caretakers of children and elderly populations. In addition, the aftermath of COVID-19 is undermining the progress in reducing poverty and inequality, particularly among vulnerable populations such as youth, LGBTQI, ethnic minorities and people with disability.

Against this backdrop, Thailand's priorities for structural transformation, which will also yield positive spillovers on the off-track SDGs identified by the authorities (SDG 2, 3, 6, 11 and 12), are:

a. **Shifting towards high-value, green and resilient economy**—this entails improving the value of the agricultural sector across the value chains, developing high-value manufacturing and services sectors such as green tourism and medical/wellness sectors, and harnessing technology and innovation (including for MSMEs).

b. **Enhancing human capital**—this includes upskilling and reskilling the labor force for future sectors (including the green sectors) to support the economic transformation, improving the wellbeing of the labor force (this requires investment in, for example, health promotion and noncommunicable disease prevention), and supporting female labor force participation (this entails investment in the care economy). In addition, strengthening digital literacy and addressing stigma are key to improving the employment of people with disability and the LGBTQI community.

*References:*
*The United Nations Socioeconomic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in Thailand (2021)*
**Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in Thailand | United Nations Development Programme (undp.org)**
*Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in Thailand – The Case for Investment (United Nations, 2021)*
**Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in Thailand – The Case for Investment | United Nations in Thailand**
*Thai Women's Unpaid Care and Domestic Work and the Impact of Decent Employment (UNDP, 2020)*
**Thai Women's Unpaid Care and Domestic Work and the Impact on Decent Employment | United Nations Development Programme (undp.org)**

*Explore the interlinkages at:*
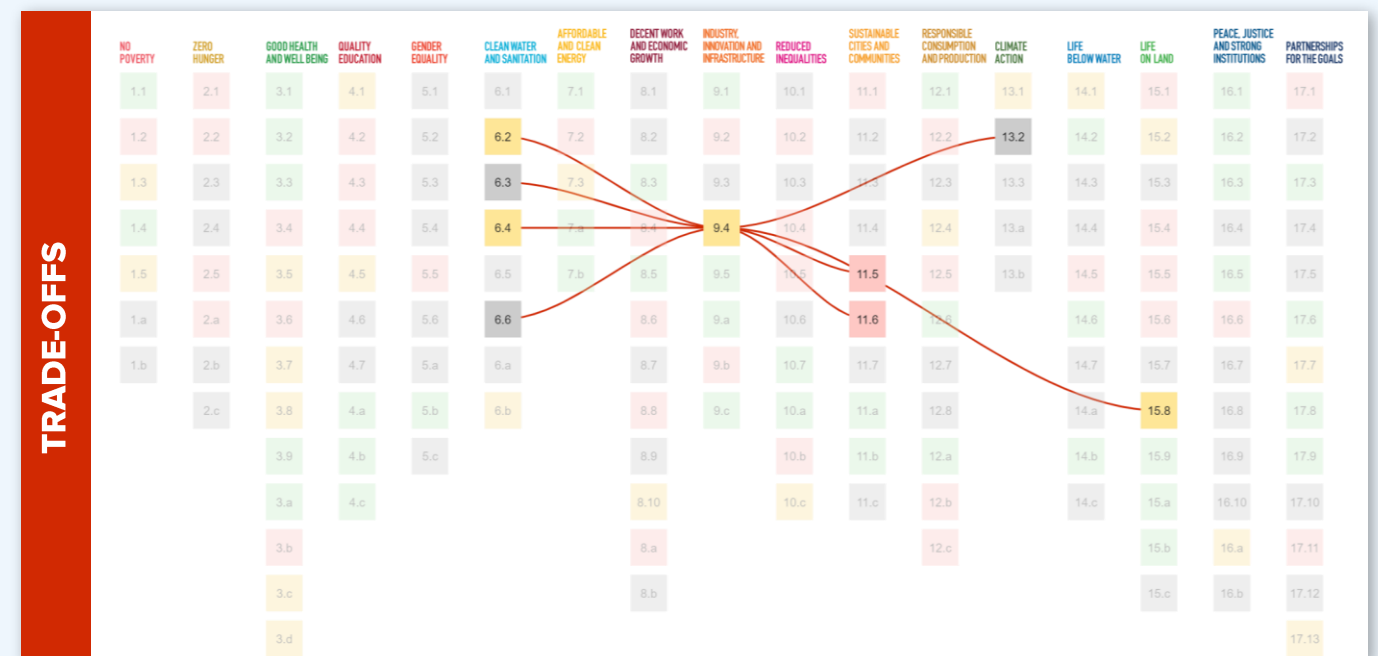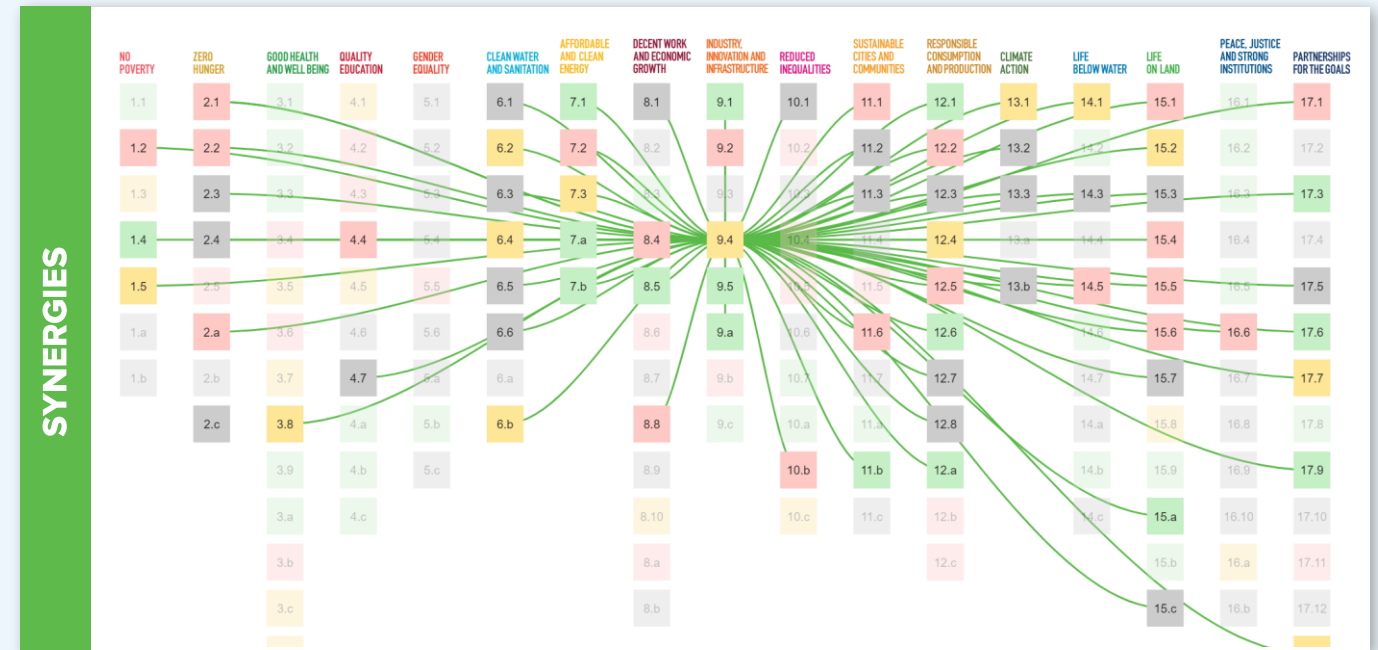*https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/THA/synergies-and-tradeoffs*

# SDG INTERLINKAGES

**9.4: By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities**

In COP26 in November 2021, Thailand committed to carbon neutrality by 2050 and net zero emissions by 2065. The country also intends to reduce emissions by 40% from a business-as-usual level by 2030 with international cooperation (20% to 25% reduction in case of no further international assistance).

These climate policy ambitions will require more low-carbon and climate-resilient investments to commensurate with the scale of climate and environmental challenges. This entails upgrading infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable via higher investment in transition technologies among both large and small enterprises, upskilling and reskilling human capital for greener jobs, and leveraging innovation to support just transition. Investment in research and development is also critical to improve resource-use efficiency and foster the adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes. Finally, concerted efforts in building an enabling ecosystem—from regulation to implementation and governance—will support the reshaping of Thailand's pathway towards resilient, inclusive, and sustainable development, supporting the off-track SDGs, including SDG 2, 6, 11, 12, 13, and 14.



*Explore the interlinkages at:*

*https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/THA/synergies-and-tradeoffs*

# SDG INTERLINKAGES

## 10.2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status

Ensuring that no one is left behind and contributing to a high-opportunity society requires: (a) engagement of state and non-state actors in social dialogues and practices that foster human rights and equality; (b) empowerment of vulnerable groups, particularly women, LGBTQI groups, youth, elderly people, ethnic minorities and people with disability, to engage in decision-making bodies and processes at national and local levels; and (c) improved access by vulnerable groups to quality socioeconomic services and justice.

On social protection, Thailand has a relatively comprehensive system, with 44 non-contributory government welfare programmes that take care of people in all age ranges.  They are complemented by a comprehensive social insurance scheme managed by the Social Security Office, including several branches such as pension; invalidity; working injury; family, health, sickness and maternity benefits, universal health coverage, and the comprehensive pension system.  Nevertheless, the aging population, high informal workforce, and changing nature of work due to increasing automation are adding pressure on the current social protection system.

Building on the existing system, the social safety net can be strengthened via widening the coverage of the social protection for the aged population, informal sectors, migrant workers, and marginalized populations, tailoring the social protection programmes to better meet women's needs, and leveraging the insurance and risk finance tools to mitigate the impact of uncertainties on the people's wellbeing.  This will contribute directly to the National Economic and Social Development Plan in reducing inequalities, improving access to public services, promoting upward mobility and strengthening accountability between citizens and state.

Eliminating discrimination, a root cause of exclusion and human rights violations, requires addressing social norms and enhancing institutional capacity of state and non-state actors at national and subnational level. Public awareness on equity and diversity needs to be strengthened to increase understanding of the rights of vulnerable groups and to reduce stigma. Partnership between government and civil society will help mainstream social diversity in policies and programmes and ensure inclusion of vulnerable groups in decision-making processes.
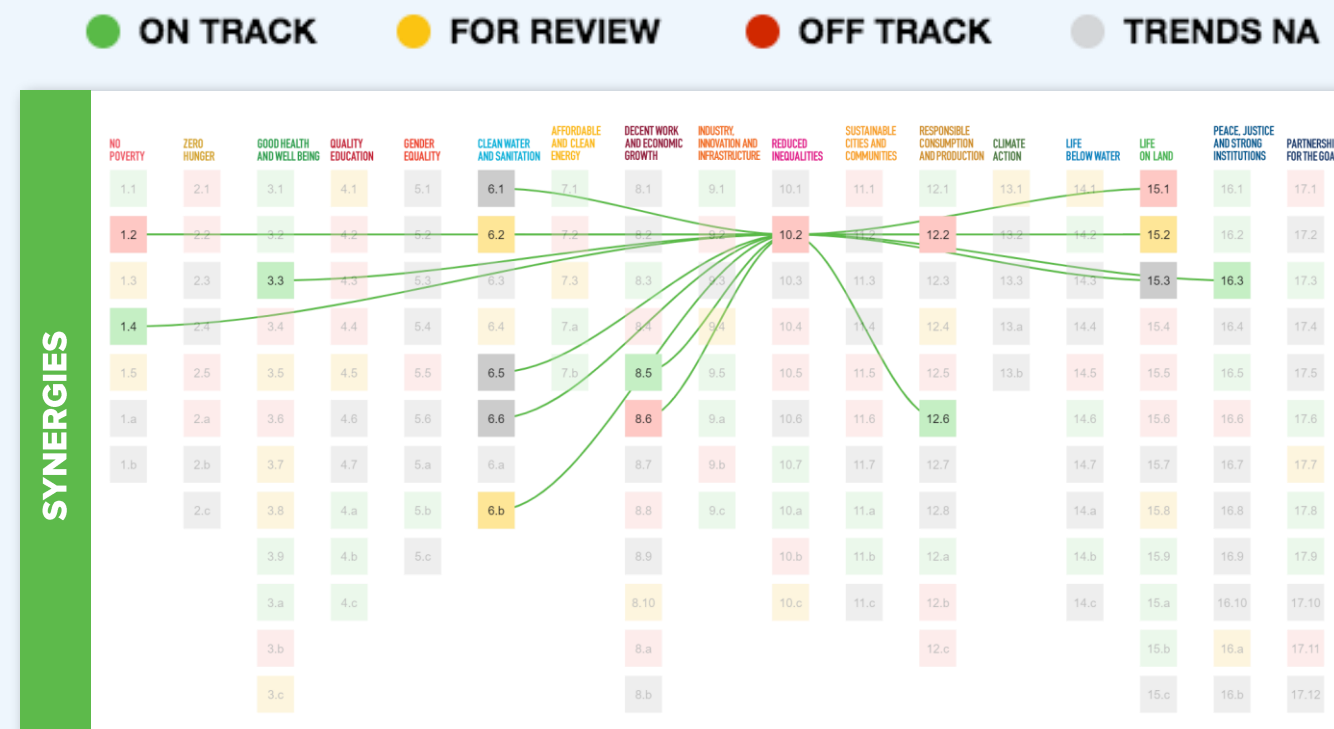
*References:*

*Social Protection Situation in Thailand*  https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/ShowCountryProfile.action?iso=TH

*The United Nations Socioeconomic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in Thailand (2021)*

**Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in Thailand | United Nations Development Programme (undp.org)**

**INTEGRATED SDG INSIGHTS - THAILAND**



*Explore the interlinkages at:*
*https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/THA/synergies-and-tradeoffs*

# SDG INTERLINKAGES

## 11.6: By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality, municipal and other waste management

Air Pollution is a transboundary and cross-sectoral challenge that requires collective efforts and co-creation of solutions. Air pollution is an important environmental risk factor of non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular disease and chronic respiratory disease. According to the State of Global Air Report for 2019, elevated PM 2.5 levels have caused 23, 800 deaths in Thailand.  Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Chiang Rai as well as surrounding provinces regularly suffer from  haze, smog, and ultra-fine dust. The Thai authorities identified agricultural burning and forest fires in rural areas, vehicular emissions and constructions in the cities, and industrial discharges in concentrated industrial zones as key contributors to poorer air quality (Pollution Control Department, 2019).  Mitigating air pollution, including PM 2.5, is part of the new government's agenda.

Managing solid waste remains a challenge for the terrestrial and marine ecosystems.  Thailand's Pollution Control Department (PCD) revealed that prior to the pandemic, Thailand generated an average of 2 million tons of plastic waste per year, or an average of 90 grams/person/day. At the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak, the amount of plastic waste increased by 45% compared to the pre-pandemic level, averaging 139 grams/person/day. In addition, landfill space needs to be better-managed, given that organic waste accounts for 60% of total solid waste in municipal areas.

SDG localization is Thailand's priority, as announced in 2019 by the National Committee on Sustainable Development.  As the 'SDGs integrator' within the UN system, UNDP in partnership with Thailand's Ministry of Interior, with the support from the European Union (EU), have jointly committed to promote a bottom-up approach to accelerating the SDG progress at subnational levels via strengthening the collaboration between national and local governments, communities, and stakeholders to formulate tailored strategies to be embedded in provincial development plans and budgets. Addressing air quality and waste management in different areas are integral parts of the SDG localization initiative, aiming to achieve the goals of sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), improving the quality of water and sanitation (SDG 6), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), climate action (SDG 13), and restoring ocean and marine resources (SDG 14), which will also generate positive impacts on other goals, such as no poverty (SDG 1) and good health and well-being (SDG 3).

*References:*

*State of  Global Air Report (2019)*
https://www.stateofglobalair.org/sites/default/files/soga_2019_report.pdf
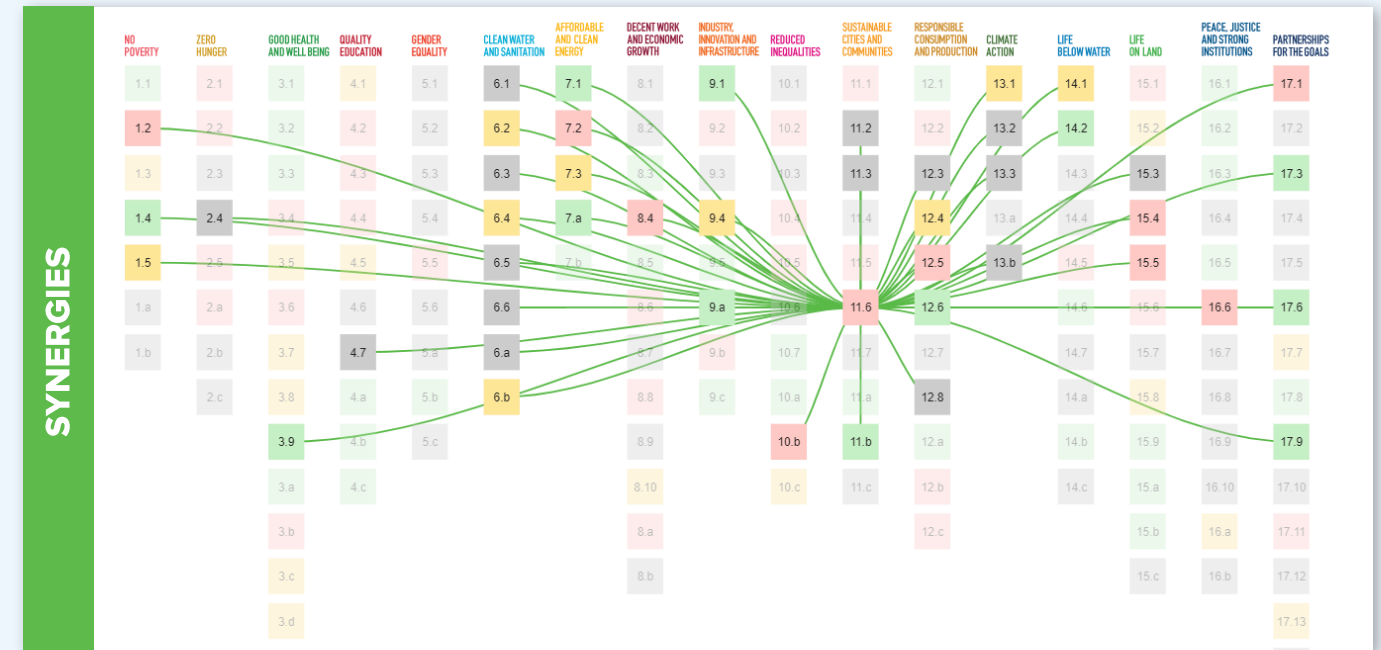*Clean Air Heroes Project*
Local Heroes for Clean Air: Portfolio Thinking at the Local Level? | United Nations Development Programme (undp.org)
**UNDP and the Government Savings Bank partner in innovative solutions for community solid waste management**
UNDP and the Government Savings Bank partner in innovative solutions for community solid waste management | United Nations Development Programme

**INTEGRATED SDG INSIGHTS - THAILAND**



*Explore the interlinkages at:*
*https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/THA/synergies-and-tradeoffs*

# THE SDG PUSH - FUTURES SCENARIOS

**Achieving the SDGs is possible.**

The 'SDG Push' is a futures scenario based on 48 integrated accelerators in the areas of Governance, Social Protection, Green Economy and Digital Disruption. It uses national data to explore the impact on human development in 2030 and to 2050 across key SDG indicators, extrapolating the latest economic growth trends and assuming a reduction in inequalities across time.

Incorporating 'SDG Push' accelerators into development interventions in Thailand can reduce the number of people living in poverty over time.

| People living in poverty | By 2030 | By 2050 |
|---|---|---|
| Without the SDG Push | 7k | 0 |
| With the SDG Push | 2k | 0 |



POVERTY <$1.90 PER DAY (NUMBER OF PEOPLE)

● Without SDG Push
● With SDG Push
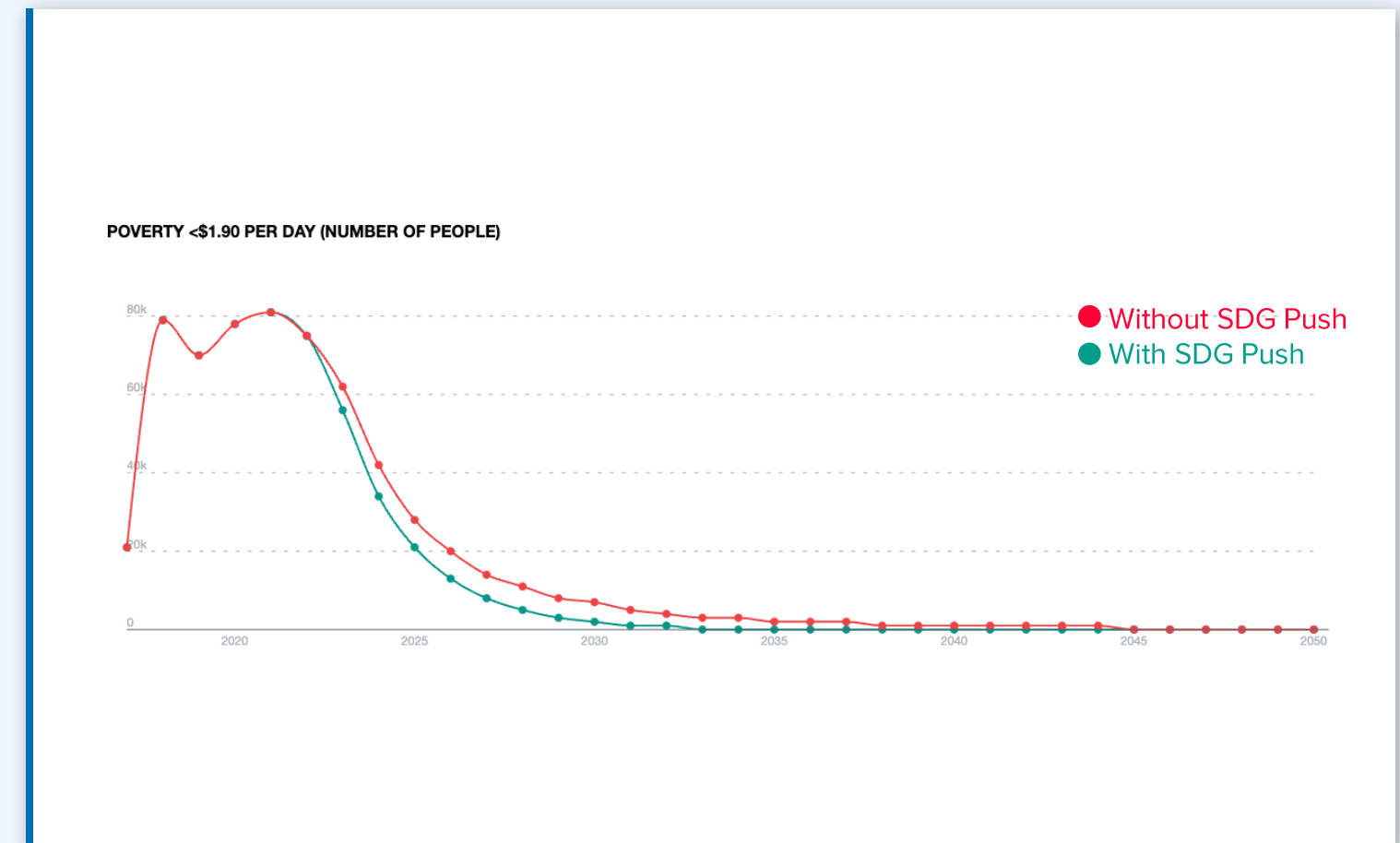
*Explore SDG Futures Scenarios at:*

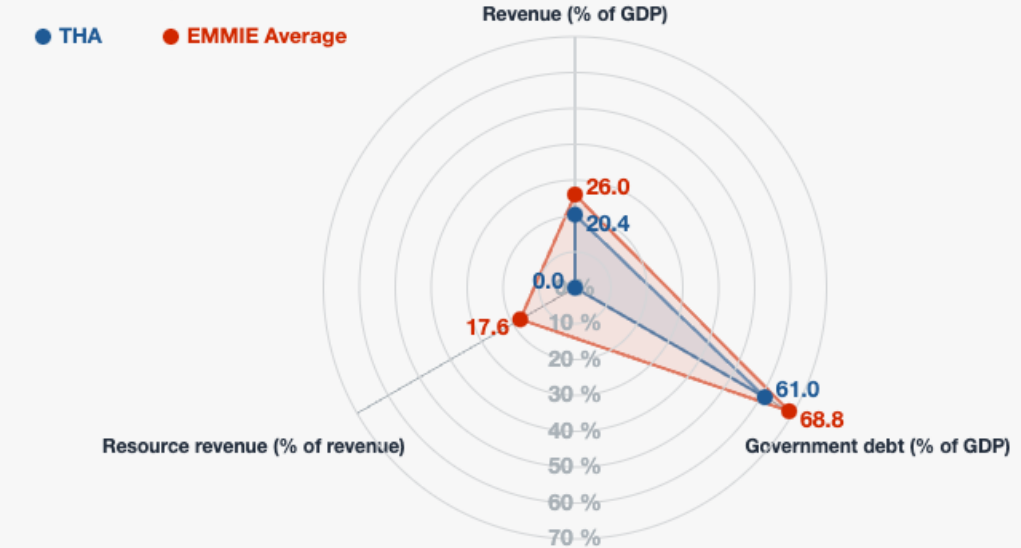*https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/THA/future-scenarios*

# FISCAL AND FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

The radar diagram shows low frequency data points linked to government revenue and debt as a proportion of GDP as well as the natural resource share of total revenue. The financial indicator graphs show external debt servicing relative to revenue as well as the country's sovereign credit rating and 10-year bond yield.
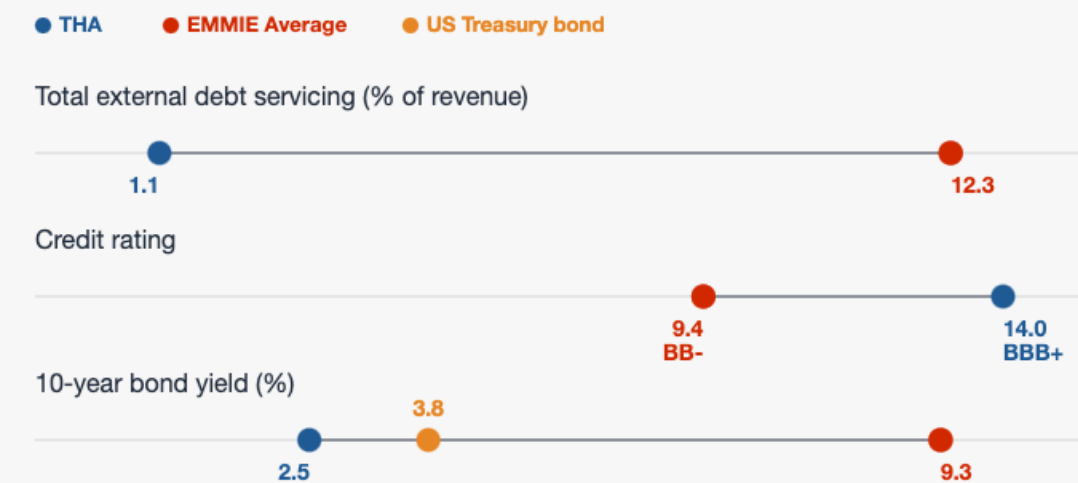
Thailand's gross government debt, expected at 61% of GDP in 2023, is 7.8 percentage points (pp) below the emerging market and middle-income economies (EMMIE) average of 68.8%. The country is expected to collect 20.4% of GDP in revenue this year, thus about a fifth less than the average EMMIE country at 26%.

Thailand's external debt servicing relative to revenue, at an expected 1.1% this year, is 11.2 pp below the EMMIE group's 12.3%. The country's credit rating is assessed as 'investment grade' and hence significantly above the EMMIE average of 'non-investment grade speculative'. Similarly, the country's 10-year bond yield is trading at 2.5% – 6.8 pp below the EMMIE average of 9.3%, thus suggesting high investor confidence – and 1.3 pp below a 10Y US Treasury bond.



**LOW-FREQUENCY INDICATORS**
● THA   ● EMMIE Average

Revenue (% of GDP)
26.0
20.4
0.0
17.6
61.0
68.8
Government debt (% of GDP)
Resource revenue (% of revenue)

**FINANCIAL INDICATORS**
● THA   ● EMMIE Average   ● US Treasury bond

Total external debt servicing (% of revenue)
1.1    12.3

Credit rating
9.4 BB-    14.0 BBB+

10-year bond yield (%)
2.5    3.8    9.3

**Notes:** External debt covers public and publicly guaranteed debt. The EMMIE average of resource revenue (% of revenue) includes the 60 economies that reported data for that indicator, that of 10-year bond yield (%) includes 30. The credit rating shows the numerical average of S&P's, Moodys', and FITCH's ratings, expressed in S&P's scale in brackets.

**Sources:** UNU-WIDER GRD (resource revenue, data from 2020), IMF WEO April 2023 (debt and revenue, forecasts for 2023), IDS (external debt, data from 2023), worldgovernmentbonds.com and Haver Analytics (yields as of 8 June 2023), S&P, Moodys and FITCH (credit ratings, data from 2023).

# SDG STIMULUS

Countries are facing reduced fiscal space and high debt levels, rising interest rates, and increasing exposure to climate-related shocks.  The acceleration pathways here identified need the appropriate means of implementation to move from aspiration to reality. The SG's SDG Stimulus plan lays out a blueprint to provide the means to implement them through four key actions:
- Provide liquidity to support recovery in the near term.
- Enhance debt relief for vulnerable countries.
- Better leverage lending
- Align financial flows with the SDGs and Paris Agreement, according to country-level priorities and needs, for example through the rollout of the INFFs

Given the projected fiscal and financial constraints, Thailand needs to improve the management and mobilization of public and private resources to finance SDG-aligned priorities at national and subnational levels. Building on the recommendations from the Development Finance Assessment (DFA), Thailand is on its way to develop the INFF, aiming to synergize tax, budget, public debt, incentives, and other financial instruments to bring SDG finance to scale:
- Strengthening the alignment of tax policies and instruments with the achievement of SDGs.
- Aligning public budget with the SDGs—including climate budgeting and gender-responsive budgeting
- Enhancing financing flows to SDG investments at subnational levels
- Mainstreaming SDGs and sustainability principles across private investment promotion strategy
- Utilizing the SDG Investor Map for developing SDG-aligned project pipelines
- Directing ODA towards catalytic investments, such as in low carbon technologies and decarbonization, with the aim to attract more investment from other sources
- Utilizing new financing instruments to mobilize private capital towards SDGs, such as green bonds, SDG bonds, and sustainability-linked bonds, as well as supporting strategic usage of blue bonds, transition bonds, and resilience bonds
- Enhancing the role of insurance to mitigate and transfer financial risks across development sectors

United Nations Secretary-General's SDG Stimulus to Deliver Agenda 2030

FEBRUARY 2023

United Nations