

Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

Country reports on the LDS Church around the world from a landmark almanac. Includes detailedanalysis of history, context, culture, needs, challenges and opportunities for church growth.



Thailand

Population: 67.74 millions (#21 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 513,120 square km. One of the largest Southeast Asian nations, Thailand borders Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Myanmar (Burma). Most areas are subject to a warm, tropical climate with frequent rain. A southwest monsoon occurs from May to September, whereas a northeast monsoon with drier and cooler weather occurs from November to March. Southern Thailand consistently experiences a hot, humid climate. Northern Thailand is the most mountainous, whereas the middle of the country consists of low-lying plains well suited for agriculture. The Khorat Plateau is northeastern Thailand's most dominant feature. In southern Thailand, the Kra Isthmus straddles the Gulf of Thailand to the east and the Andaman Sea to the west. Rivers play an important part of the economy and agriculture, the foremost being the Chao Phraya and Mekong Rivers. Natural hazards include a falling water table around Bangkok and droughts. Pollution, deforestation, soil erosion, and poaching are environmental issues. Thailand is administratively divided into seventy-six provinces and one municipality.

Peoples

Thai (includes most ethnic minority groups native to Thailand): 97.5%

Burmese: 1.3%

Other: 1.1%

Unspecified: 0.1%

The Thai people are divided into the Central Thai, Northeastern Thai, Northern Thai, and Southern Thai subgroups. There are also a small number of mountain-dwelling tribes in the north, such as the Hmong and Karen. Approximately 14% of the population have Chinese ancestry. Burmese primarily consist of refugees.

Population: 68,615,858 (July 2018)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.29% (2018)

Fertility Rate: 1.52 children born per woman (2018)

Life Expectancy: 71.9 male, 78.5 female (2018)

Languages: Thai dialects (94.2%), Malay (2.1%), Chinese languages (1.5%), Burmese (1.2%), other/unspecified (1.0%). Thai is the official language. Seventy-three native languages are spoken in Thailand. Languages with over one million speakers include Thai dialects (63.4 million), Malay (1.5 million), and Chinese languages (1.06 million).

Literacy: 92.9% (2015)

History

Thailand, known as Siam until 1939, became a unified kingdom in the 1300s and was the only Southeast Asian nation to never come under foreign rule. A constitutional monarchy was established in 1932. Thailand allied with Japan in World War II and later with the United States following the war. The military intermittently ruled until the 1990s but has since reduced its influence on government. Civil unrest and political instability in the late 2000s threatened the integrity of the nation. Thousands have died from violence caused by Muslim Malay separatist movements in southern Thailand since the early 2000s. In the mid-2010s, the military and Constitutional Court removed Yinglak Chinnawat from power. Prayut Chan-ocha conducted a coup against the interim government and remained prime minister as of 2019.

Culture

In addition to native influences, Thai culture has been influenced by China, India and other Southeast Asian nations. Buddhism strongly influences daily life. Greeting others is highly regarded and based on a complex system of respect. Rice is the most important food staple. Media use is widespread even in less developed areas. Alcohol consumption is comparable to industrialized Asian nations, and cigarette consumption is similar to surrounding Southeast Asian nations. Soccer is the most popular sport. Marriage ceremonies often draw upon Buddhist practices. Prostitution, human trafficking, and the sex industry are widespread.

Economy

GDP per capita: $17,900 (2017) [30.0% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.755 (2017)

Corruption Index: 36 (2018)

Thailand has a developed economy that has seen rapid growth over the past several decades. In 2015, 7.2% of the population lived below the poverty line – a substantial decrease from previous decades. The economy is export driven and appeared healthy as of the late 2010s. Agriculture employs 31.8% of the workforce and produces 8.2% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 16.7% of the workforce and produces 36.2% of the GDP. Services account for 51.5% of the workforce and 55.6% of the GDP. Thailand experiences one of the lowest unemployment rates worldwide at 0.7% in 2017. However, underemployment is high. Primary agriculture products include rice, cassava and rubber. Tourism, textiles, and agricultural processing are the largest industries. Tin, rubber, natural gas, and tungsten are the most common natural resources. Primary trade partners include China, the United States, Japan, and Malaysia.

Thailand serves as a center for many illegal activities in Southeast Asia, such as human trafficking, prostitution, illegal drugs distribution, and poaching. Northern Thailand is part of the “Golden Triangle” which is a major opium production area. There has been little improvement in the reduction of perceived corruption in recent years.

Faiths

Buddhist: 94.6%

Muslim: 4.3%

Christian: 1.0%

Other: 0.1%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Evangelicals – 307,305

Roman Catholic – 240,000

Latter-day Saints – 22,691 – 43

Seventh Day Adventists – 14,408 – 129

Jehovah's Witnesses – 5,170 – 125

Religion

The population in Thailand is overwhelmingly Buddhist (94.6%). Muslims account for the second largest religious group (4.3%) and are concentrated in the south mainly among the Malay. There are also smaller Muslim groups such as the Cham people from Cambodia. Some Thais are also Muslims in the south. Christians make up 1.0% of the population.[1]

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. There is no state religion, but Buddhism receives greater favoritism and government funding. Both registered and unregistered religious groups function without opposition from government. Government limits the number of foreign missionaries, but the quota on foreign missionaries has increased in recent years to 1,357 Christian, 41 Sikh, 20 Hindu, and six Muslim missionaries. Many missionaries for unregistered groups proselyte freely without government interference. Registered missionaries do have additional benefits, such as obtaining a visa of longer duration. No laws restrict proselytism. Religious education is required in schools. Laws restrict freedom of speech, as it is illegal to insult Buddhism. Violence related to political insurgency in the "Deep South" of Thailand results in frequent deaths among Muslims and Buddhists.[2]

Largest Cities

Urban: 49.9% (2018)

Bangkok, Nonthaburi, Pak Kret, **Hat Yai**, **Chaophraya Surasak**, **Surat Thani**, Udon Thani, Chiang Mai, Nakhon Ratchasima, **Bang Pu**, **Pattaya**, Khon Kaen, **Nakhon Si Thammarat**, Bang Mueang.

Cities in **bold** have no LDS congregation.

Eight of the fourteen cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have a congregation. Eleven percent (11%) of the national population lives in the fourteen most populous cities.

Church History

The first missionaries to serve in Thailand arrived in 1854. Elder Elam Luddington served by himself for four months during which he was able to baptize the captain of a ship along with his wife. Informal Church meetings were held periodically in the 1950s and early 1960s until an English branch was organized in 1961. Elder Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated Thailand for missionary work in November 1966.[3] Missionary work was restarted in Thailand in 1968 when six missionaries were sent to the country from the Southern Far East Mission, which covered Hong Kong, Taiwan, and most southeastern Asia. Thailand was included in the Singapore Mission (then referred to as the Southeast Asia Mission) when it was created the following year. The first missionaries called to Thailand began to learn the Thai language in the Language Training Mission in Laie, Hawaii. Thailand was organized into its own mission, the Thailand Bangkok Mission, on August 1, 1973. The country's first meetinghouse was built and dedicated the following year. The Thai translation of the Book of Mormon was completed in the mid-1970s.

The Church announced its first temple in mainland Southeast Asia for Bangkok, Thailand in 2015. Auxiliary leaders for the Relief Society and Primary met with members in Thailand in 2017.[4] Church President Russell M. Nelson visited members in Bangkok in April 2018.[5] Thailand is currently assigned to the Asia Area.

Membership Growth

Church Membership: 22,691 (2018)

By 1976 there were 779 members, increasing to 2,800 by 1988. Membership steadily grew to 3,600 in 1990 to 5,300 in 1994. Convert baptisms numbered 599 in 1997, 547 in 1998, and 586 in 2000. At year-end 1999 there were 10,808 members. Membership reached 12,338 in 2001, 13,887 in 2004, and 15,108 in 2006. Annual membership growth rates steadily fell during the 2000s from a high of 8.2% in 2001 to a low of 2.3% in 2007 but typically ranged from 2% to 5%. In 2007, 875 of Thailand's 15,000 members lived within the Chiang Mai Thailand District's boundaries.[6] However, most members live in and around Bangkok or in the northeast.

Annual membership growth rates accelerated during the mid-2010s from 3-4% in the early 2010s to 5-9%. However, annual membership growth rates later returned to previous levels of 2-4%. Church membership totaled 16,331 in 2010, 19,665 in 2014, and 22,691 in 2018.

In 2018, one in 3,024 was nominally a Latter-day Saint.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 23 Branches: 20 Groups: 2+ (August 2019)

The Thailand District was organized in 1966.[7] Branches were organized in additional cities, including Kohn Kaen (1970), Korat (1969), and Chiang Mai (1971). By 1975, there were four districts and nine branches.[8] The Chiang Mai Thailand District was created in 1979. The Church organized its first branches in several additional cities in the late 1970s such as Lopburi (1979), Mahasarakham (1979), Phitsanulok (1979), Ubon (1978), and Udorn (1979). The Church organized its first branches in two additional cities the 1980s included Chiang Rai (1981) and Kumpawapi (1989). By 1988 there were seventeen branches in Thailand.

Two more districts were created in Khon Kaen in 1989 and Ubon in 1991. In late 1989, a goal was set to have the first stake created in Thailand in Bangkok within five years. The number of branches increased from sixteen to twenty-three between 1990 and 1994. The Church opened its first branches in several six cities during this time, all of which were located in northeastern Thailand, including Roi-Et (1990), Srisaket (1990), Yasothorn (1990), Sakhon Nakorn (1993), Surin (1993), and Kalasin (1994).

In June 1995, the first stake in Thailand was created in Bangkok. The Bangkok Thailand Stake was created from the Bangkok Thailand District and consisted of the Asoke, Bangkapi, Bangkhen, Bangnaa, and Thonburi Wards and the Bangkok (English), Chonburi, and Lopburi Branches. Another district was created in Thailand the following month in Udorn. The Pakkret Thailand District was created in 1999 – the same year the first branch in the city was organized. At year-end 1999 there were five wards and twenty-four branches.

Between 2000 and 2009 the number of congregations increased from twenty-eight to thirty-nine, most of which were branches. Most branches were created in the Bangkok area and in the northeast. The first branch in Ayutthaya was organized in 2001. Just across the river from Laos in northeastern Thailand, Nong Khai was reopened to missionary work and a branch was organized in 2004. One of the branches in the Bangkok Thailand Stake became a ward in 2001. In 2007, the English-speaking branch became a ward. There were seven wards and six branches in the stake in 2009. In the late 2010s, a group met in southern Thailand in Phuket only for sacrament meetings.

Significant progress for the Church occurred in the 2010s as evidenced by the organization of three new stakes, including the first stake outside of the Bangkok area. New stakes organized during this period included Bangkok North (2014), Ubon (2015), and Bangkok West (2016). The Khon Kaen Thailand District was closed in 2014, and branches in the former district were reassigned to the Ubon Thailand District to prepare for the creation of a stake. The number of congregations in Thailand increased from thirty-seven in 2010 to thirty-eight in 2012, thirty-nine in 2015, forty in 2016, forty-one in 2017, and forty-three in 2018. New official congregations organized during this period included the Chiang Mai 2nd Branch, Chiang Mai 3rd Branch, Chonburi Branch, Kamphaeng Phet Branch, Minburi Ward, and Phuket Branch. Cities in the 2010s where the Church organized its first branches, or reestablished a branch that used to operate, include Kamphaeng Phet (2016), Chonburi (2018), and Phuket (2018). In the late 2010s, local members also noted that at least two member groups also operated in Thailand in Nakhon Si Thammarat and Ratchaburi. Member groups also operated in multiple lesser-reached neighborhoods in Bangkok in the mid-2010s, but these groups closed shortly thereafter.

Activity and Retention

Inactivity problems occur in all areas the Church is established but appear most severe in Bangkok and the northeast. A large portion of the converts were not retained prior to 1997, and in 1997 approximately 17% of converts baptized were still attending church on at least a monthly basis. The average number of members per congregation increased from 407 in 2000 to 441 in 2010 and 476 in 2018. The Nong Khai Branch was one of the smaller branches and had around forty attending meetings on Sundays in early 2010. In 2006, sacrament attendance was approximately 3,000.[9] 964 were enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2007–2008 school year, or 6.1% of total membership.

Large meetings or conference have generally been well attended. President Hinckley spoke to around 2,000 people in 2000. Approximately 1,500 attended a special combined stake and district conference in Bangkok in 2013.[10] Over 3,000 Latter-day Saints attended the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the Church in Thailand in 2016.[11] More than 3,000 attended a special conference with Church President Russell M. Nelson in 2018.[12] Seven hundred members attended the groundbreaking for the Bangkok Thailand Temple in January 2019.[13]

Convert retention rates for new members one year after baptism was estimated by returned missionaries at 30-50% during the mid- to late 2010s. The Thailand Bangkok Mission appeared to baptize between 500 and 1,000 new members annually for most years during this time. Most wards have between 50 and 125 active members, whereas the number of active members per branch widely varies from as few as 10-20 to as many as over 100. Total active members in Thailand is estimated at 3,700, or 16% of total membership. The percentage of active members among total church membership in Thailand has remained relatively unchanged in the past decade despite a 43% increase in total membership during this period.

Language Materials

Languages with Latter-day Saint Scripture: Thai, Khmer, Malay, Lao, Chinese (traditional and simplified characters)

All Church scriptures are available in Thai, Khmer, Malay, and Chinese (traditional and simplified characters). A large number of unit, temple, leadership, priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, teaching, young women, primary, missionary, audio/visual, family history, and institute manuals are available in Thai, Khmer, and Chinese. A fewer number of these materials are available in Lao and Malay. The Church announced in 2017 plans to translate the Doctrine and Covenants and The Pearl of Great Price into Lao, and all Latter-day Saint scriptures into Burmese.[14] Both Thai and Chinese (traditional characters) have twelve issues a year of the Liahona, whereas Khmer and Chinese (simplified characters) has six.

Meetinghouses

In early 2010, congregations met in nineteen meetinghouses owned by the Church and eighteen rented buildings. At this time construction began on what is to be the largest chapel constructed by the Church in Thailand to serve as the headquarters for the Pakkret Thailand District.[15] There were thirty-three owned or leased meetinghouses in 2016.[16] In late 2019, there were at least thirty-five meetinghouses in Thailand.

Health and Safety

The percentage of those infected with HIV/AIDS is the highest in Asia at 1.1%. In Thailand, the spread of the disease has been propagated by illicit sexual relations and drug use. Other methods of infection include contaminated needles and HIV-positive mothers. Methamphetamine use has rapidly increased despite government opposition.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has conducted at least 238 humanitarian and development projects in Thailand since 1985, including clean water projects, community projects, emergency response, maternal and newborn care, refugee response, vision care, and wheelchair donations.[17] Twenty missionaries trained English teachers from 429 Bangkok-area schools how to more effectively teach the English language in 1997.[18] In 2000, youth from the Bangkok Thailand Stake gathered toys, clothing and other needed items for children in a needy neighborhood.[19] In 2001, humanitarian service missionaries worked on nearly two dozen projects aimed at reducing malnutrition among children. The missionaries helped schools become self-sufficient in feeding their students by planting gardens with nutritious foods.[20] Immediately following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Church donated food, water and body bags to southern Thailand.[21] Local members in Bangkok assembled aid relief to those affected.[22] Thirty missionaries served as translators for stranded tourists following the tsunami.[23] LDS Charities donated one hundred wheelchairs in 2010.[24] The Church provided flooding relief in northern Thailand in 2011.[25]

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church faces few legal challenges that restrict its activities in Thailand. Missionaries from outside the country have served regularly with few restrictions. Despite the lack of official recognition, the Church has a special quota of 200 missionaries that has been set by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Security Council.[26]

Cultural Issues

As missionaries were trained primarily to teach those with a Christian background, early missionaries found little success, as few Thais have a Christian background. Much of the early success was reported among the small Christian population. Buddhist families often oppose family members who desire to join the Church. Unlike many Buddhist countries where non-Christian faiths predominate, Thailand has overall demonstrated tolerance and cooperation with Christian groups. Many returned missionaries report that Thais are receptive to the Church's message albeit they are often noncommittal or uninterested in conversion. Moreover, there is also a common belief that all religions teach good among many Thais, which has a times challenged the relevance and uniqueness of the Latter-day Saint gospel message. There is a pressing need for Latter-day Saint teaching approaches that are tailored to the religious background of Buddhists. The rise in drug trafficking and the sex industry challenges the Church's growth and influence in areas where these activities are prominent.

National Outreach

Thirteen percent (13%) of the national population resides in cities with a ward, branch, or member group. The Church has operated inside Thailand continuously since the late 1960s, yet membership (both numerical and active) is very small compared to the national population. With the exception of the Phuket Branch and the Nakhon Si Thammarat Group, the Church has no presence in any of the cities or fifteen provinces south of Bangkok. Of the seventy-six administrative provinces, around twenty-nine have a congregation. Areas with the highest population density unreached by the Church include southern Thailand, coastal areas between Bangkok and Cambodia, and provinces between Bangkok and Phitsanulok. Few efforts to expand outreach into previously unreached areas have occurred in the past couple decades primarily due to a "centers of strength" focus on Bangkok and helping districts mature into stakes.

Almost all mission outreach occurs in urban areas, which account for a third of the national population, yet most cities with over 50,000 inhabitants have no congregation. Rural areas and smaller cities and towns are unlikely to be reached by full-time missionaries until additional large cities are assigned missionaries. Cottage meetings may be instrumental in not only introducing the Church to larger cities without a congregation with only a few members but also to small communities on the outskirts of cities with established congregations.

The Church has well-developed Internet resources to provide information about the Church in the Thai language. The main Church website is available in Thai at https://www.lds.or.th/. The Church's website for providing basic information about the Church, ComeuntoChrist.org, is is available in Thai at https://www.comeuntochrist.org/tha?lang=tha. The Church's newsroom site is also available in Thai at https://www.mormonnewsroom.in.th/. The meetinghouse locator is also available in Thai at https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/maps/meetinghouses/lang=tha. Use of these websites can provide outreach to Thai speakers despite constraints with the Church's limited national presence.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Problems with member activity have been apparent since the Church's early history in Thailand. However, these issues appear to worsened during the years of the most rapid membership growth in the 1990s. Low convert retention likely occurred from missionaries rushing investigators into baptism prior to developing a habit of weekly Church attendance. The Church experienced a jump in convert retention in the late 1990s under President Goodman from as low as 17% in 1997 to 72% in 2000. Progress in convert retention numbers were achieved due to emphasis on concentrating outreach on families and adults rather than individual children, as the percentage of family convert and adult baptisms was less than 10% in 1996 and 93% in 2000. Church attendance increased by 32% throughout Thailand between 1997 and 2000 due to a change in finding and teaching approaches. Convert comprehension of church doctrines and devotion to the Church are ongoing challenges due to past challenges providing adequate pre-baptismal teaching and cultural misunderstandings. Moreover, efforts to improve convert retention have born little fruit as evidenced by no increase in the member activity rate during the past decade.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Church's establishment in areas with a large Thai majority has resulted in few ethnic integration problems. The English and Khmer-speaking congregations in Bangkok were originally organized to address differing language needs of members. However, the Khmer-speaking branch was closed more than a decade ago. The Church may experience challenges in southern Thailand with Malay and Thai ethnic tensions, although to date little proselytism has occurred in predominately Muslim Malay regions, as in neighboring Malaysia.

Language Issues

The widespread use of the Thai language and high literacy simplifies the Church's mission outreach. A wide range of ecclesiastical materials are available for distribution, resulting in over 96% of the population able to obtain literature or scriptures in their native language.

The hill tribes use languages with few speakers and reside in remote locations. These communities will continue to be lesser-reached or unreached until members join the Church in cities with congregations and take the gospel message to their

homes. Additional language materials in for languages spoken by less than one million speakers appear unlikely for the foreseeable future.

Leadership

The first stake in Thailand was created when Church membership was approximately 6,000. Other Southeast Asian nations, like Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia, had more members before stakes were organized. Missionaries reported that the Bangkok Thailand Stake faced challenges developing local leadership in the 1990s and 2000s, especially for those who do not also work for the Church. When the Bangkok Thailand Stake was first organized, both counselors in the stake presidency were Church employees. In 2001, the stake presidency was reorganized and the stake president of the Bangkok Thailand Stake and his first counselor were both Church employees.[27] Local Church leaders who have also worked for the Church have performed maintenance, meetinghouse logistics, and translator services. Few Thai members also serve missions, and so there are few returned missionaries who the Church can draw upon for future leadership. No Thai members have appeared to have served as a mission president of General Authority Seventy. However, Wisit Khanakham from Bangkok was called as an area authority seventy in 2014.[28]

Significant improvements in local leadership development occurred in the 2010s as evidenced by the creation of three new stakes and few Church employees in top leadership positions. None of the stake presidency members in the reorganized Bangkok Thailand Stake presidency were Church employees in 2010.[29] One of the stake presidency members was a Church employee when the Bangkok Thailand Stake presidency was reorganized in 2014.[30] However, there were no Church employees among members of the stake presidency when the Ubon Thailand Stake was organized in 2015.[31] The first stake president of the new Bangkok Thailand West Stake in 2016 was the seminaries and institutes coordinator for the Church.[32]

Temple

The Bangkok Thailand Temple is currently under construction and appears likely to be completed in approximately 2022. The new temple is one of the largest ever built by the Church on the Afro-Eurasian landmass at approximately 44,000 square feet. Thailand is currently assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple district. In late 1989, 99% of Thai members of the Church had not been to the temple. President Eldredge of the mission encouraged members to attend the temple despite challenges. The following year, a temple trip was organized in the Manila Philippines Temple, where over 200 Thai members went through the temple for the first time.[33] Temple trips occur periodically, but many members have been unable to attend due to distance, time, and money constraints.

Comparative Growth

No other country in mainland Southeast Asia has as many congregations or members as Thailand, and few nations have had as long as a Church presence in the region. In 2018, the nation with the second largest Church membership was Cambodia with 14,700 members meeting in twenty-nine congregations. The Church has accomplished meaningful progress in Thailand despite the nation having one of the smallest percentages of Christians in Southeast Asia. Membership growth rates in Thailand have been lower than most nations in the region but higher than in Indonesia or Singapore. Activity rates are comparable to most Southeast Asian nations with a public Church presence. The percentage of Latter-day Saints in the population of Thailand is comparable to the percentage of Latter-day Saints in Malaysia.

Christians in Thailand make up a tiny minority estimated at less than 1%. Other Christian churches with a strong emphasis on proselytizing have seen slow, limited growth. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church reported 14,408 members in 129 congregations in 2018, with little growth in membership and congregations for the past decade. Jehovah's Witnesses have reported the most robust growth among proselytism-focused Christian groups during the past decade. The number of active Witnesses has doubled in the past decade, and there are 125 congregations nationwide. Both Adventists and Witnesses maintain a more widespread presence in Thailand than Latter-day Saints. For example, nearly all seventy-six administrative provinces in Thailand have at least one Witness congregation.

Future Prospects

The Church in Thailand has moderate prospects for intermediate-term growth. However, long-term problems with low convert retention and member activity rates pose significant challenges for long-term growth. The implementation of missionary programs developed in predominately Western Christian areas in non-Christian cultures and a rush to baptize inadequately prepared investigators who have not demonstrated sufficient personal understanding and life implementation of gospel teachings are major causes of high convert attrition in Thailand. Convert retention rates have experienced little improvement since the adoption of the Preach My Gospel program in 2004, as these key challenges remain largely unresolved. More consistent implementation of higher standards for baptism will be necessary if activity is ever to become the norm rather than the exception among Thai converts. Additional research, adaptations, and resources are needed to better convey the relevance and meaning of gospel teachings to the background and understanding of Buddhists and other non-Christians. Additional cities may open for missionary work, particularly nearby Bangkok, along coastal areas between Bangkok and Cambodia, and provincial capitals without current congregations. However, the focus of mission resource allocation will most likely continue to center on building and strengthening centers of strength, particularly in Bangkok and in the two remaining districts in Chiang Mai and Udon Thani. Due to Thailand's geographic size and large population, a second mission may be organized in coming years

to provide greater national outreach and support to other regions of the country.

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