

# Thailand

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## Snapshot

### Area

Thailand is situated in South-East Asia, covering an area of nearly 513,115 square kilometers. It is roughly the size of France.

### Population

65,998,436 (2009 estimate)

### Official Language

Thai (including Isan), English (secondary language), Mandarin, Vietnamese, as well as other ethnic and regional languages and dialects.

### Ethnic Groups

Thai (including Lao, who make up about 1/3 of the Thai population) 75%, Chinese 14%, other 11%

### Median Age

33.3 years

### Children under 5

0-14 years: 20.8% (male 7,009,845/  
female 6,691,470)

### Sources

[http://www.thaiwebsites.com/  
thailandfacts.asp](http://www.thaiwebsites.com/thailandfacts.asp)

[http://www.indexmundi.com/  
thailand/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/thailand/demographics_profile.html)



**"True success is not in the learning, but in its application to the benefit of mankind."**

**– His Royal Highness Prince Mahidol of Songkla**

## Demographics

Thailand is a middle-income country ranking 74<sup>th</sup> on the UN Human Development Index and has a literacy rate of 96-98%.

More than 1 million children are thought to be in need of special protection, including orphaned children, children affected by HIV/AIDS, street children, children with disabilities, children in conflict with the law, child laborers and children without birth registration.

According to UNICEF, issues still facing children in Thailand include:

- Trafficking of children continues, both within Thailand and internationally.
- An estimated 1 million children of primary school age either do not go to primary school or enroll years later.
- Nearly 1 million children lack birth registration documents.
- Increased HIV infection rates among young and an estimated 290,000 children have been orphaned by the HIV epidemic and around 2,000 children are born with HIV each year.

Despite all these challenges, over the past 15 years there has been a 50% reduction in infant mortality, a rise in

immunization coverage (to above 90 percent) and massive reductions in the use of child labor with improved legislation to protect the rights of children.

There is currently focus in Thailand on:

- Strengthening families, communities and institutions to protect the most vulnerable children from violence, abuse and exploitation.
- Getting children into school and improving the quality of education including, but not limited to, improvement of quality and access in education, making schools 'child-friendly' and promoting early childhood care.
- Strengthening government, community and family-centered care in order to help children and empower families and communities.

Sources

<http://www.unicef.org/thailand/>

## Background Information

While there are a few music therapists working in Thailand that have trained at music therapy training programs outside of their country, there is currently no degree program available in Thailand. In 2008, Mahidol University College of Music offered a multi-day workshop entitled the "1<sup>st</sup> Thailand Music Therapy Forum", featuring faculty of the

University of Kansas Music Therapy program. Through a continued partnership with the University of Kansas, the College of Music has developed a Master's degree program in Music Therapy that will begin in June, 2011.

As the first degree of its kind offered in Southeast Asia, this program will focus on both clinical practice and research skills. Dr. Dena Register, visiting Associate Professor of Music Therapy offered courses and began establishing clinical programs beginning in June, 2009 through a Fulbright Teaching/Research Fellowship. In order to begin building a base of health and education-related professionals with a basic understanding and appreciation for clinical music therapy practice, Dr. Register established a certificate-training workshop entitled "Therapeutic Uses of Music" which provides both theoretical and clinical applications of music therapy. To date, more than 100 professionals in various disciplines (e.g., educators, physical therapists, occupational therapists, counselors, medical doctors, nurses, rehabilitation specialists and speech-language therapists) have completed the training and are beginning to use or request consultation with music therapists in their facility. Additionally, staff from the music therapy program office at Mahidol University continues to provide clinical services in two Bangkok-area hospitals where Dr. Register established clinical work. The program at the College of Music, Mahidol University also is host to music therapy students from the U.S.A. that enroll in the University of Kansas Study Abroad program.

## Common Approaches

Music Therapy is still defined quite broadly in Thailand. A large portion of the population considers music for relaxation or ambient music in a hospital waiting area as the primary focus for "music therapy." Through the educational offerings at Mahidol University, there is a great deal of advocacy occurring to help reshape these definitions to include the idea that various musical elements can be used to elicit response and change in patients or clients regardless of age or ability-level and that Music Therapy is a

tool that can be utilized to learn or rehabilitate skills or responses in all developmental domains.

The prominent method of practice is eclectic, including elements of Cognitive Behavioral Music Therapy, Improvisation and Neurological Rehabilitation. The primary areas of practice are currently in outpatient rehabilitation facilities that provide early intervention service for young children as well as in-patient and outpatient services for adults that have suffered a stroke, traumatic brain injury, or are being treated for other neurological impairments such as Parkinson's Disease or Alzheimer's/Dementia. There also are a few special educational settings that are able to provide music therapy services or adaptive music education for children with special needs.

Though Dr. Register and her students launched clinical programs in July, 2009, Thai music students and staff were trained in tandem and were able to take over and continue providing music therapy services on a weekly basis. These students and staff will be among the first to enroll in the Master's degree program at the University to continue their theoretical knowledge and advance their clinical skills. These individuals continue to consult with Dr. Register and co-treat with medical and rehabilitation staff in order to meet the needs of the patients and their families.

## Research Endeavors

Through government funded grant money totaling 18 million THB, the College of Music at Mahidol University will be able to begin music therapy research projects in medical settings beginning in 2011. Projects are planned in conjunction with the medical and nursing faculties at Mahidol University College of Medicine and College of Nursing as well as with the rehabilitation facilities where patients are currently being served.



## About the Author

Dena Register is an associate professor of music therapy at the University of Kansas. In Spring 2009, she was awarded a Council for International Exchange of Scholars Fulbright Scholar grant to teach and conduct research at Mahidol University, Thailand. Dr. Register established clinical music therapy programs at two Bangkok-area hospitals, which serve children with special needs as well as patients with neurological disorders. Additionally, she designed and implemented a "Therapeutic Uses of Music" training to provide continuing education for medical and educational professionals interested in music therapy. Dr. Register continues to consult on the establishment of the graduate music therapy program at the Mahidol College of Music. This program is the first of its kind in Southeast Asia. She was able to help secure \$500,000 of grant funding to establish research and clinical music therapy programs over the next five years.

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