

Chapter 3

Health Policy and Strategy in Thailand

1. Rights to Health of the People

The 2007 Constitution of Thailand,¹ the highest ranked public law of the country, has provisions guaranteeing rights and freedom of the people in physical, mental, and social aspects which could not be violated by the State. The State has the duty to protect such rights and freedom including those related to health in five aspects (in seven Sections of the Constitution) as follows:

1. An equal right to receive standard public health services including the prevention and eradication of harmful communicable diseases **without charge in a thorough**, efficient and timely manner (Section 51).

2. The right to survive and to receive physical, mental and intellectual development for children and youths, potentially in the suitable environment with due regard to their participation (Section 52).

3. The right to access and utilize with dignity public welfare, public utilities, and appropriate aid from the State (Sections 53, 54 and 55).

4. The right to receive information and explanation and to express opinions if any government agency, state agency, state enterprise or local government organization implements any project or activity that may affect the quality of the environment, health, and life (Section 57).

5. The right to participate with the State and communities in the preservation and utilization of natural resources and biological diversity and in the protection of the quality of the environment in such a way that it is not hazardous to health (Section 67).

2. Fundamental State Policies on Health According to the Constitution

According to the 2007 Constitution, the fundamental state policies are prescribed with the intention for the State to provide basic services to the people and all governments are required to implement for national development. They are regarded as fundamental policies of the country, not of any particular government by formulating a plan for the administration of state affairs. The government has to report to the Parliament on what and when it will do in administering the country accordingly. Basically, the fundamental state policies are divided into 9 elements: (1) national security policy; (2) state administration policy; (3) religious, social, public health, education and culture policies; (4) law and justice policies; (5) foreign policies; (6) economic policy; (7) land use, natural resources and environment policies; (8) science, intellectual property and energy policies; and (9) public participation policy. The government is required to report on the implementation of the fundamental state policies to the Parliament once a year.

¹The 18th Constitution published in the Government Gazette and came into force on 25 August 2007.



Health policies are mainly under religious, social, public health, education and culture policies and some are also under another five elements of the state policies. Such health policies are considered to be the foundation for the State to improve Thai people's health status, covering six sections and classified as three groups as follows:

2.1 Policies on support for the protection and development of children and youths, provision of welfare for specific target groups, and health system development focusing on health promotion and support for learning, dissemination, treatment and development of local and Thai wisdom [Sections 80(1), (2), (6) and 86(2)].

Section 80(1) of the Constitution prescribes that the State shall “protect and develop children and youths, promoting childhood nourishment and education, promoting the equality between women and men, create and develop family integrity and the strength of communities, as well as provide aids and welfare to the elderly, the indigent, the disabled or handicapped and the destitute person for their better quality of life and ability to become self-reliant”. In this regard, the **MoPH is responsible for 10 indicators**: 4 related to the rearing and education of preschool children; 4 related to the solidarity of families and communities; and 2 related to the aid and welfare for the elderly, the indigent, and the disabled or handicapped.

Section 80(2) of the Constitution prescribes that the State shall “promote, support and develop health systems with due regard to the health promotion for sustainable health conditions of the public, provide and promote standards and efficient public health services thoroughly, and encourage the private sector and the communities to participate in health promotion and prove public health services, and the person having duty to provide such service whose act meets the requirements of professional and ethical standards shall be protected as provided by law”. **The MoPH is responsible for 28 indicators related to people's sustainable well-being.**

Section 80(6) of the Constitution prescribes that the State shall “encourage and raise the awareness of national unity and learning, and promote and disseminate the arts, tradition and culture of the nation as well as good values and local wisdom”. **The MoPH is responsible for 1 indicator related to the increase in the number of registered TTM practitioners.**

Section 86(2) of the Constitution prescribes that the State shall “support an invention or exploration of new wisdom, preserve and develop local wisdom and Thai wisdom, and protect intellectual properties”. **The MoPH is responsible for the protection of intellectual property.**

2.2 Policies on environmental protection for health. Section 85(5)

prescribes that the State shall “conduct the promotion, conservation and protection of the quality of the environment under the sustainable development principle, and control and eliminate pollution which may affect health, welfare and quality of life of the public by encouraging the general public, local communities and local governments to participate in the determination of the operation guidelines”. **The MoPH is responsible for 2 indicators** related to the morbidity rate of pollution-related illnesses and the decrease in the incidence of silicosis

compared with that for the previous year.

2.3 Policies on the protection of the monarchy and the promotion of sufficiency economy philosophy and public participation [Sections 77, 83 and 87(1)].

Section 77 of the Constitution prescribes that the State shall “protect and uphold the institution of kingship and the independence and integrity of its jurisdictions and shall arrange for the maintenance of necessary and adequate armed forces and ordnances as well as up-to-date technology for the protection and upholding of its independence, sovereignty, security of State, institution of kingship, national interests and the democratic regime of government with the King as Head of State, and for national development. **The MoPH is responsible for 1 indicator**, i.e. percentage of completed royal commemoration activities or ceremonies on various occasions.

Section 83 of the Constitution prescribes that the State shall “encourage and support the implementation of sufficiency economy philosophy”. **The MoPH is responsible for 3 indicators**, i.e. percentage of villages with health management actions; percentage of children and youths practising health behaviours according to the National Health Disciplines; and percentage of people with proper behaviour in consuming health products.

Section 87(1) of the Constitution prescribes that the State shall “encourage public participation in the determination of public policy and the formulation of economic and social development plans at both national and local levels”. **The MoPH is responsible for 1 indicator**, i.e. public benefits projects undertaken with public participation.

3. Statute on the National Health System, 2009

With reference to the movement towards health system reforms during the past decade, networks of participating organizations and members involved in the reform efforts have reached the consensus that, in order for the health system of the country to have a clear, correct, and forceful direction, covering all dimensions of health and involving active participation of people from all sectors, it is necessary to have in place a statute on the national health system that expresses the will and commitment of the society and serves as the framework and guidelines for all sectors concerned to formulate national health policies, strategies and action plans. So the 2007 National Health Act requires that **the 2009 Statute on the National Health System** be set up as a guide for national health system development. All relevant public and private agencies are required to take further actions under their responsibilities (as per Section 48 of the Statute). The Statute was enacted on 2 December 2009 and will be valid for the overall health system until 2020, containing 12 chapters as prescribed in Section 47 of the Act, namely:

Chapter 1 - Philosophy and basic concepts of the health system

Chapter 2 - Desirable characteristics and goals of the health system

Chapter 3 - Provision of health security and protection



Chapter 4 - Health Promotion

Chapter 5 - Prevention and control of diseases and health-threatening factors

Chapter 6 - Public health services and quality control

Chapter 7 - Promotion, support, use and development of local health wisdom, Thai traditional medicine, indigenous medicine, and other alternative medicines

Chapter 8 - Consumer protection

Chapter 9 - Generation and dissemination of a body of health knowledge

Chapter 10 - Dissemination of health information

Chapter 11 - Formation and development of public health personnel

Chapter 12 - Healthcare financing

Besides, the 2007 National Health Act prescribed that “**Health Assembly**” is the process in which the public and related state agencies exchange their knowledge and cordially learn from each other that leads to the recommendations of healthy public policy. The Act also adopts the “triangle that moves a mountain” strategy, emphasizing the three coordinated powers of knowledge generation, social mobilization and political support, as prescribed in Section 25(3) that the National Health Commission shall organize a National Health Assembly at least once a year (two sessions of NHA were held in 2008 and 2009) and also organize (specific locality or specific issue health assembly (see details in Chapter 10, Development of healthy public policy with public participation and the statute on the national health system).

4. The Tenth Health Development Plan

The 2007 Constitution of Thailand prescribes the directive principles for the development of Thai people’s health in Chapter 5, Part 4, on religious, social, public health, educational and cultural policies. In this regard, the MoPH, in coordination with all other relevant sectors, has translated such directive principles into the **Tenth National Health Development Plan, 2007-2011**, as briefly described below.

4.1 The concept and content of the plan

This is a strategic plan that signifies the importance of building up the concept and new approach of health imagination aimed at creating a unified health system in a more desirable and distinct manner. Overall, it intends to develop health in a holistic way, incorporating physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects as well as social mobilization for health promotion, based on the “sufficiency economy” philosophy which helps the system to move towards the good livelihood and health development in all dimensions, in all sectors at all levels, in accordance with the national development direction.

The Tenth National Health Development Plan establishes a sufficiency health system in a green and happiness-creating health culture, a medical and health service system satisfactory to clients with happy healthcare providers, and an immunity system for minimizing the impact of illnesses and health threats.

4.2 The image and desirable characteristics of the Thai health system

The sufficiency health system, according to the sufficiency economy philosophy, is a holistic development system linking to each other the economic, social, cultural and moral dimensions with the following characteristics:

- (1) Having a strong foundation as a result of having acquired health sufficiency at the family and community levels.
- (2) Having rational carefulness and estimation in health financing at all levels.
- (3) Using appropriate technologies with a thorough knowledge, emphasizing Thai wisdom and self-reliance principles.
- (4) Using an integrated approach for health promotion, disease prevention, medical treatment, rehabilitation, and consumer protection.
- (5) Having an immunity system that provides health security and protection.
- (6) Having morality and ethics, i.e. straightforwardness, non-greediness, and sufficiency.

4.3 Vision of the Thai Health System

Vision: *“Aiming for sufficiency health system in creating good health, good services, good society, and happy/sufficient livelihood.”*

4.4 Mission

The Tenth National Health Development Plan has laid down four development missions: creating thinking integrity, creating health consciousness, creating transparent management system, and creating participatory mechanism for development.

4.5 Objectives of the Tenth National Health Development Plan (2007 - 2011)

- (1) To promote **good health** as a lifestyle for all age groups, from “womb to tomb”, emphasizing health sufficiency at the family and community levels.
- (2) To create a **good healthcare** system, based on the humanized healthcare principle, with quality and friendship, paying attention to the suffering of patients and the delicacy of humanity.
- (3) To build a **good society, or a green and happiness** society, with health security for the people to feel warm and secure in normal, illness and critical situations.
- (4) To create a **sufficient and sustainable livelihood** that is peaceful with no exploitation for people to grow up in a learning society with cultures favourable for health, peace and development towards the highest potential of humanity.

4.6 Goals of the sufficiency health system development under the Tenth National Health Development Plan (2007-2011)

The ten major goals of the Thai health system development leading to sufficiency health system are as follows:



- (1) Unity and good governance in the management of a balanced and sustainable health system.
- (2) A proactive health promotion programme that is able to establish fundamental factors required for healthy livelihood.
- (3) Holistic health culture as well as happy and sufficiency lifestyle.
- (4) Strong community health system and primary care network.
- (5) Efficient medical and healthcare system, using technically justifiable and appropriate technology for the comfort of patients and the happiness of care providers.
- (6) Health security with equity, universal coverage, and high quality.
- (7) Protection and preparedness system for minimizing the impact of illnesses and health threats in a timely manner.
- (8) Diverse healthcare alternatives integrating Thai and international wisdom, based on all the facts and self-reliance principles.
- (9) Knowledge-based health system with knowledge management programmes in all aspects.
- (10) Society that does not neglect but cares for the indigent and underprivileged, paying respect to the human value and dignity.

4.7 Strategies for the development of Thai health system

To establish the sufficiency health system in a healthy and happy society, six development strategies are laid down as follows (Figure 3.2):

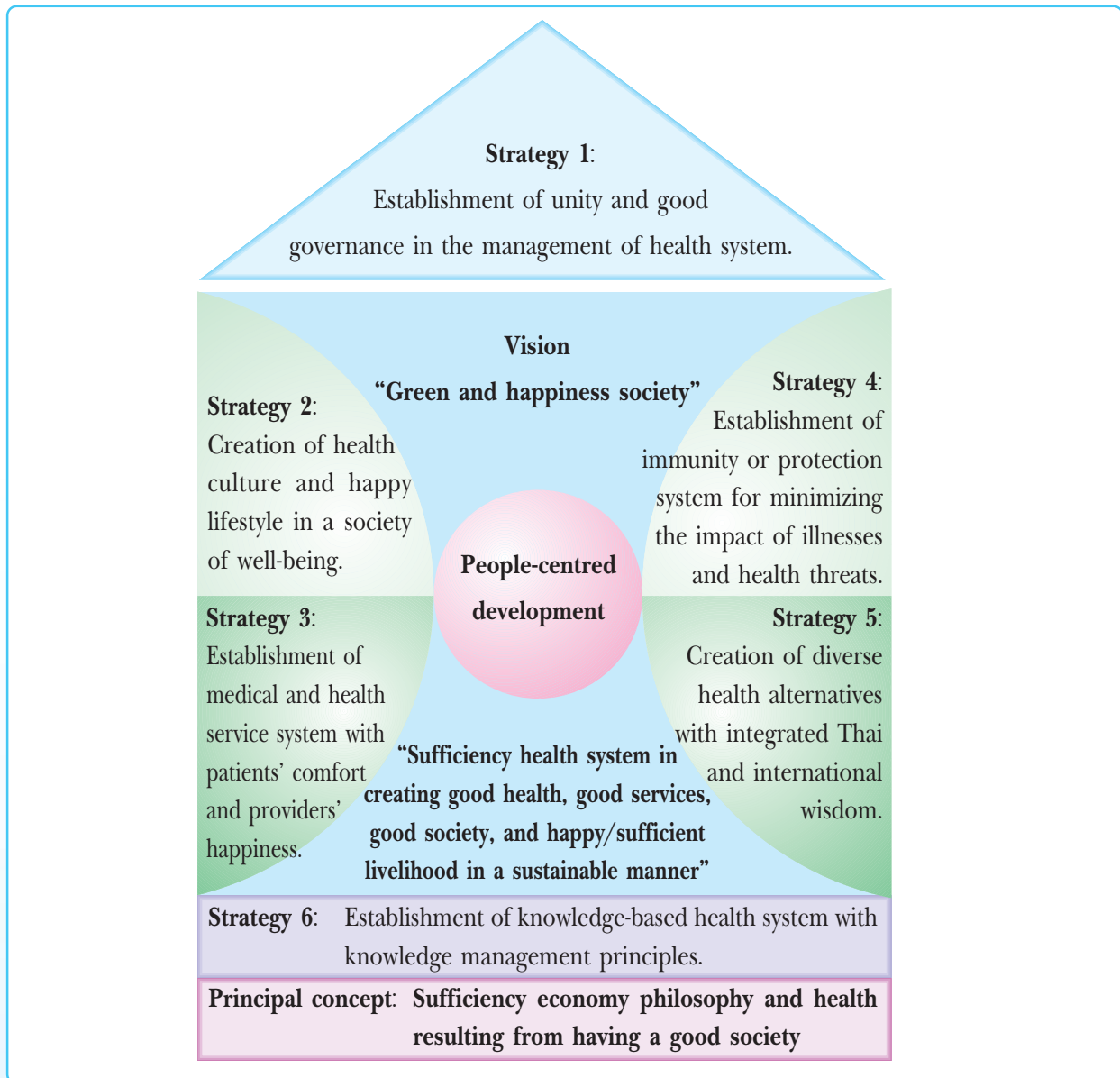
- Strategy 1: Establishment of unity and good governance in the management of health system.
- Strategy 2: Creation of health culture and happy lifestyle in a society of well-being.
- Strategy 3: Establishment of a medical and health service system with patients' comfort and providers' happiness.
- Strategy 4: Establishment of immunity or protection system for minimizing the impact of illnesses and health threats.
- Strategy 5: Creation of diverse health alternatives with integrated Thai and international wisdom.
- Strategy 6: Establishment of knowledge-based health system with knowledge management principles.

The strategies for the development of Thai health system have development tactics as follows:

| Strategy 1: Establishment of unity and good governance in the management of health system. | Strategy 2: Creation of health culture and happy lifestyle in a society of well-being. | Strategy 3: Establishment of a medical and health service system with patients' comfort and providers' happiness. | Strategy 4: Establishment of immunity or protection system for minimizing the impact of illnesses and health threats. | Strategy 5: Creation of diverse health alternatives with integrated Thai and international wisdom. | Strategy 6: Establishment of knowledge-based health system with knowledge management principles. |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build up the unity of health system - Promote and support the decentralization of health actions to local government organizations - Establish a good governance system and organizational culture of working - Promote health leadership at all levels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accelerate proactive health promotion activities - Expand voluntary work for health - Promote community health clubs or groups and civil society organizations - Conduct continuous campaigns to raise health awareness and culture - Promote spiritual and intellectual well-being | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accelerate community health development and a primary care system in a proactive manner - Strengthen efforts for development of service quality - Reduce conflicts that lead to litigation by improving communications - Adjust the administrative and working system for boosting morale and incentives of operational staff - Promote innovations in health financing - Raise the service quality in all health security systems - Enhance the quality of emergency medical services and tertiary care - Promote the ideology of health professions in the educational system and in the workplace | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance the efficiency of emergency medical service system - Develop a preparedness plan on medical and health care at all levels - Create a mechanism and process of healthy public policy - Build up the capacity for the surveillance, prevention, control and treatment of emerging and re-emerging diseases | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accelerate the development of herbal medicines for use efficaciously and adequately - Promote the integration of alternative health care into the national health security system - Promote local wisdom and community health system for self-healthcare by establishing learning centres of indigenous and alternative medicine, medicinal herbs and fragrant plants gardens and community centres for chronic patient care, and campaigning on consumption of healthy foods - Support research and development for creating knowledge about alternative health care - Establish a system for medical technology assessment - Create several alternatives for the treatment of illnesses so as to reduce the use of medications and excessive/high-cost medical technologies - Improve educational systems and curriculums on Thai traditional medicine - Promote and support legal mechanisms for the protection and monitoring of the violation of Thai traditional medicine wisdom and Thai medicinal herbs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a system for examination, monitoring and evaluation - Create and support learning organizations and the application of the knowledge management concept in all health agencies - Support research and development - Improve health information systems so that they are up to date and reliable |



Figure 3.1 Relationship of concept, vision and strategies for health and national development



Source: Steering Committee on Tenth National Health Development Plan Formulation (2007-2011), May 2007.



5. Health Plan of Action under the National Administration Plan Four-Year Plan of Action (2009-2012), Ministry of Public Health

5.1 Concept and Content of the Plan

This is a strategic plan formulated only by the MoPH in accordance with the Royal Decree on Good Governance Principles and Procedures of 2003. The plan specifies responsible agencies and budget for use in preparing an annual work plan and an annual performance agreement/certification.

The plan focuses on the translation of policies, targets, indicators, tactics and operating procedures in the 2009-2011 National Administration Plan, especially item 3.2 related to MoPH, into the MoPH Plan of Action for 2009-2012. It is a budget plan, prepared as a rolling plan that has to be revised each year, based on the actual budget allocated and projected for the next three years, by all agencies under the ministry.

5.2 Vision of the MoPH

The MoPH is the core agency responsible for improving health systems with quality, efficiency and equality, through the participation of people, communities and society with health consciousness, for all Thais' healthy condition, according to the sufficiency economy philosophy in achieving the goal of green and happiness society.

5.3 MoPH Service Delivery Targets

In its Four-year Plan of Action for 2009-2012, MoPH sets five targets for services with indicators and strategies in its operations, which include 58 products/projects, with a total budget of 1.014 trillion baht, of which 81.9 billion baht is for investments in health.

6. The Millennium Declaration

6.1 Concept and content of the Millennium Declaration

In September 2000, leaders from 189 countries all over the world including Thailand adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration which is the mission of the world community in pursuing sustainable development emphasizing the fight against poverty, hunger, illiteracy, illness, gender inequality, and degradation of national resources and environment.

For Thailand, in addition to using the adopted declaration, the philosophy of sufficiency economy has been used as a guide for integrated national development.

6.2 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

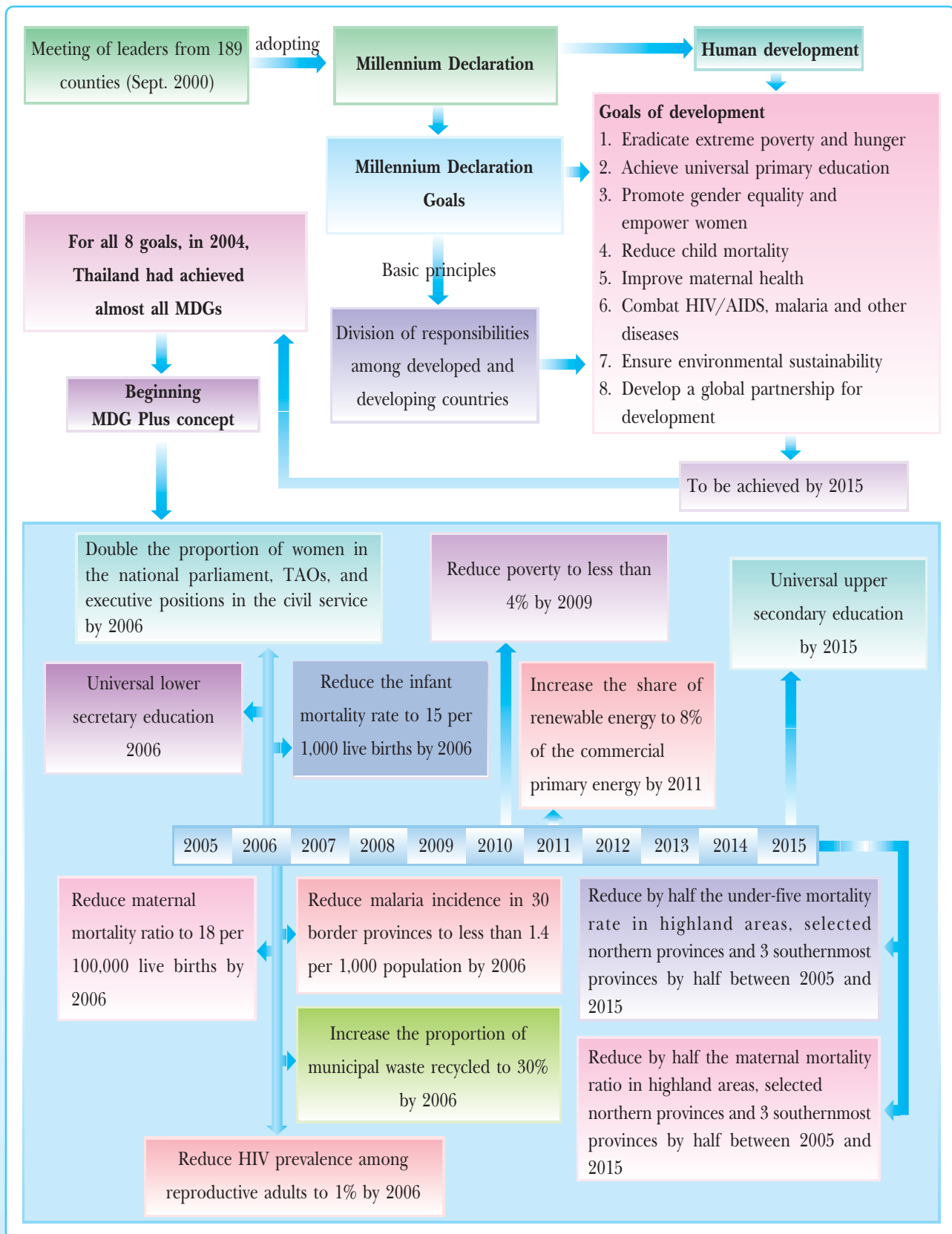
The MDGs are used for dividing the development responsibilities between developed and developing countries, between the United Nations as well as international development agencies and governments of countries, and between development partners in each country for ensuring that the goals are achieved. The goals include 8 major goals and 48 indicators to be achieved by the year 2015:



- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

In 2004, Thailand's report on the achievements of MDGs revealed that it had progressed and achieved almost all the goals, particularly those related poverty and hunger, gender inequality, HIV/AIDS and malaria, almost 10 years ahead of schedule. So additional targets and indicators so-called "MDG-Plus targets" were developed for use in the Thai context, including those directly and indirectly related to health development as shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Goals and timeline in achieving MDGs and MDG Plus



Source: Modified from Thailand Millennium Development Goals Report, 2004, p.10. Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board.

