



## Chapter 3

# Health Policy and Strategy in Thailand

Health policy and strategy are key elements of the government for implementing activities aimed at making the people healthy involving all concerned, using the “all for health” approach. So a good understanding of health policy and strategy is essential as they will positively and negatively affect the health and well-being of all Thai people.

### 1. Rights to Health of the People

The 1997 Constitution of Thailand<sup>1</sup>, the highest ranked public law of the country, had provisions guaranteeing rights and freedom of the people in physical mental, and social aspects which could not be violet. The state has the duty to project such rights and freedom. The constitution specified the people’s rights related to health in six aspects as follows:

1. Right to know about the impact on human health, environment and quality of life (Section 59).
2. Right to express opinions about the impact on health, environment and quality of life (Section 59).
3. Right to take part in decision-making, to benefit from, to protect/promote natural resources and the environment that will have an impact on human health and quality of life (Section 56).
4. Right for at least 50,000 eligible voters to collectively sign a proposition to legislate a law on health, according to the fundamental state policy, to the parliament for consideration (Section 170).
5. Right to receive health care in an equal, universal, and equitable manner (Sections 52 and 86).
6. Right to join in examining for health consumer protection purposes through an independent agency called “Consumer Protection Organization” (Section 57).

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<sup>1</sup> The 1997 Constitution was revoked by the Announcement of the Democratic Reform Council, dated 19 September 2006; and the 2006 Interim Constitution is currently in force. A new constitution is being drafted and expected to be finished in mid-2007.



## 2. Fundamental State Policies on Health According to the Constitution

According to the 1997 Constitution, the fundamental state policies were provided 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. The government has to report to the Parliament on what it will do in administering the country accordingly. Basically, the fundamental state policies are divided into 4 elements: (1) public administration, justice, security and foreign affairs, (2) politics, administration, natural resources and environment, (3) social administration, and (4) economic development. The government is required to report on the implementation of the fundamental state policies to the Parliament once a year.

Health policies are mainly under the fundamental social state policies and some are also under another two 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 five sections and classified as two groups as follows:

### 2.1 Policy on establishing a health service system that is accessible, efficient and of good standard (one section; i.e. Section 82)

Section 82 of the Constitution provides that "The State shall thoroughly provide and promote standard and efficient public health service". So 35 indicators have been developed: 16 for measuring the coverage of standard health services, 6 for measuring health security coverage, and 13 for measuring services related to the prevention and eradication of significant communicable and non-communicable diseases.

### 2.2 Policies on creating the environments that are conducive to healthy living and health promotion (4 sections, i.e. Sections 71, 79, 80 and 81)

1) Section 71 of the Constitution provides that "The State shall protect and uphold the institution of kingship and the independence and integrity of its territories". One significant indicator has been developed, i.e. the achievement of projects or activities for honouring the monarchy.

2) Section 79 of the Constitution provides that "The State shall promote and encourage public participation in preservation, maintenance and balanced exploitation of natural resources and biological diversity and in the promotion, maintenance and protection of the quality of the environment in accordance with the persistent development principle as well as the control and elimination of pollution affecting public health, sanitary conditions, welfare and quality of life". Five key indicators have been developed: two related to illnesses due to pollution, two related to health behaviours, and one related to the control of pollution affecting health.

3) Section 80 of the Constitution provides that "The State shall protect and develop



children and the youth, promote the equality between women and men, and create, reinforce and develop family integrity and the strength of communities. The State shall provide aids to the elderly, the indigent, the disabled or handicapped and the underprivileged for their good quality of life and ability to depend on themselves”. Altogether ten indicators have been developed for this section: seven related to the control, prevention and treatment of drug dependence, two related to the development of children and youth’s capacity, and one related the care for the elderly.

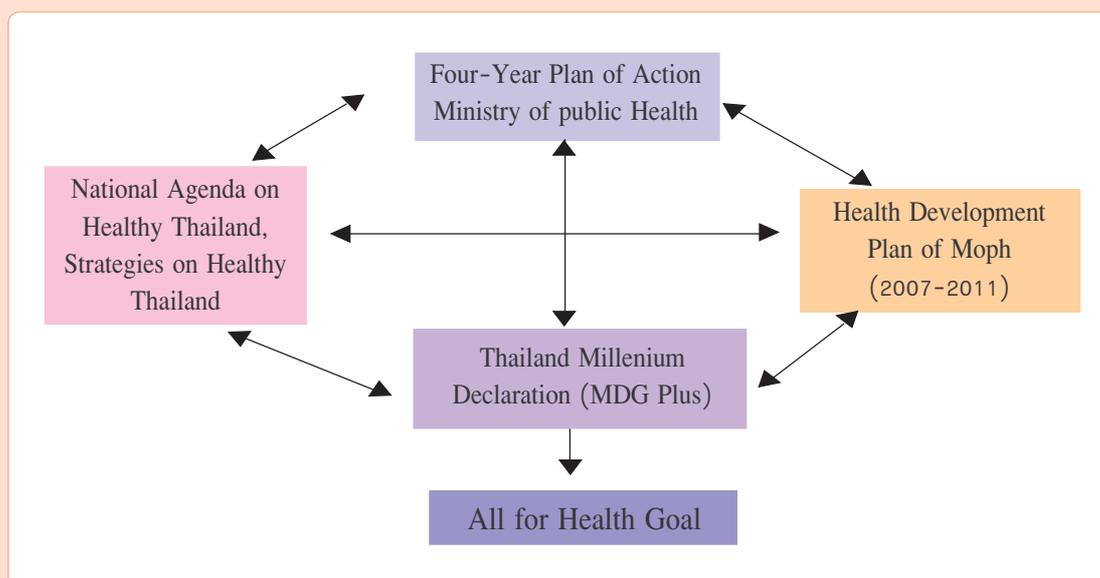
4) Section 81 of the Constitution provides that “The State shall provide and promote the private sector to provide education to achieve knowledge alongside morality, provide law relating to national education, improve education is harmony with economic and social change, create and strengthen knowledge and instill right awareness with regard to politics and a democratic regime of government with the King as Head of the State, support research in various fields of sciences, accelerate the development of science and technology for national development, develop the teaching profession, and promote local knowledge and national arts and culture”. One indicator has been developed, i.e. a larger number of registered Thai traditional practitioners.

### 3. Health Strategic Plan of Thailand

The 1997 Constitution of Thailand contains the framework for formulating health development policies and strategies of the country, with a linkage to the national development strategies. As a results, the National Health Development Plan has been formulated, while Thailand has cooperated with other countries worldwide in adopting the United Nations Millennium Declaration which has set up the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and Thailand has further developed the MDG Plus concept, all aiming to achieve “all for health” conditions.

The linkage of the Thai health policies and strategies is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1** The linkage of the Thai health policies and strategies



The five Thai Health Strategic Plans include the following:

### 3.1 Tenth Health Development Plan (1997-2001)

#### 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 will establish a sufficiency health system for social wellness by creating health culture, a medical and health service system satisfactory to clients, happy healthcare providers, and an immunity system for minimizing the impact of illness and health threats.

#### 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 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 integrative approach for health promotion, disease prevention, medical treatment, rehabilitation, and consumer protection.
- (5) Having a protection system that provides health security and protection.
- (6) Having morality and ethics, i.e. straightforwardness, non-greediness, and sufficiency.

#### 3) Vision of the Thai health System

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

#### 4) Mission

The Tenth National Health Development Plan has laid down six development missions:



creating thinking integrity, creating health culture, creating balanced and integrated development, creating health consciousness, creating creative leadership, and creating good governance in the health system.

### 5) Objectives of the Tenth National Health Development Plan

(1) To promote **good health** as a lifestyle for all age groups, from “womb to pyre”, emphasizing health sufficiency at the family and community levels.

(2) To create a **good healthcare** system, based on the human-being principle, with quality and friendly care, paying attention to the suffering of patients and the delicacy of human-being.

(3) To build a **good society** with wellness and 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 a culture that facilitates healthy lifestyle and leads to the attainment of the highest level of human potential.

### 6) Goals of the sufficiency health system development under the Tenth National Health Development Plan

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 actors 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 appropriate/rational technology for the comfort of patients and the happiness of care providers.

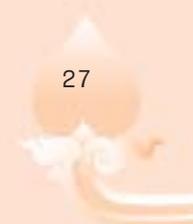
(6) Health security with equity, universal coverage, and high quality.

(7) Protection and preparedness system for minimizing the impact of illness 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 value and dignity of human being.



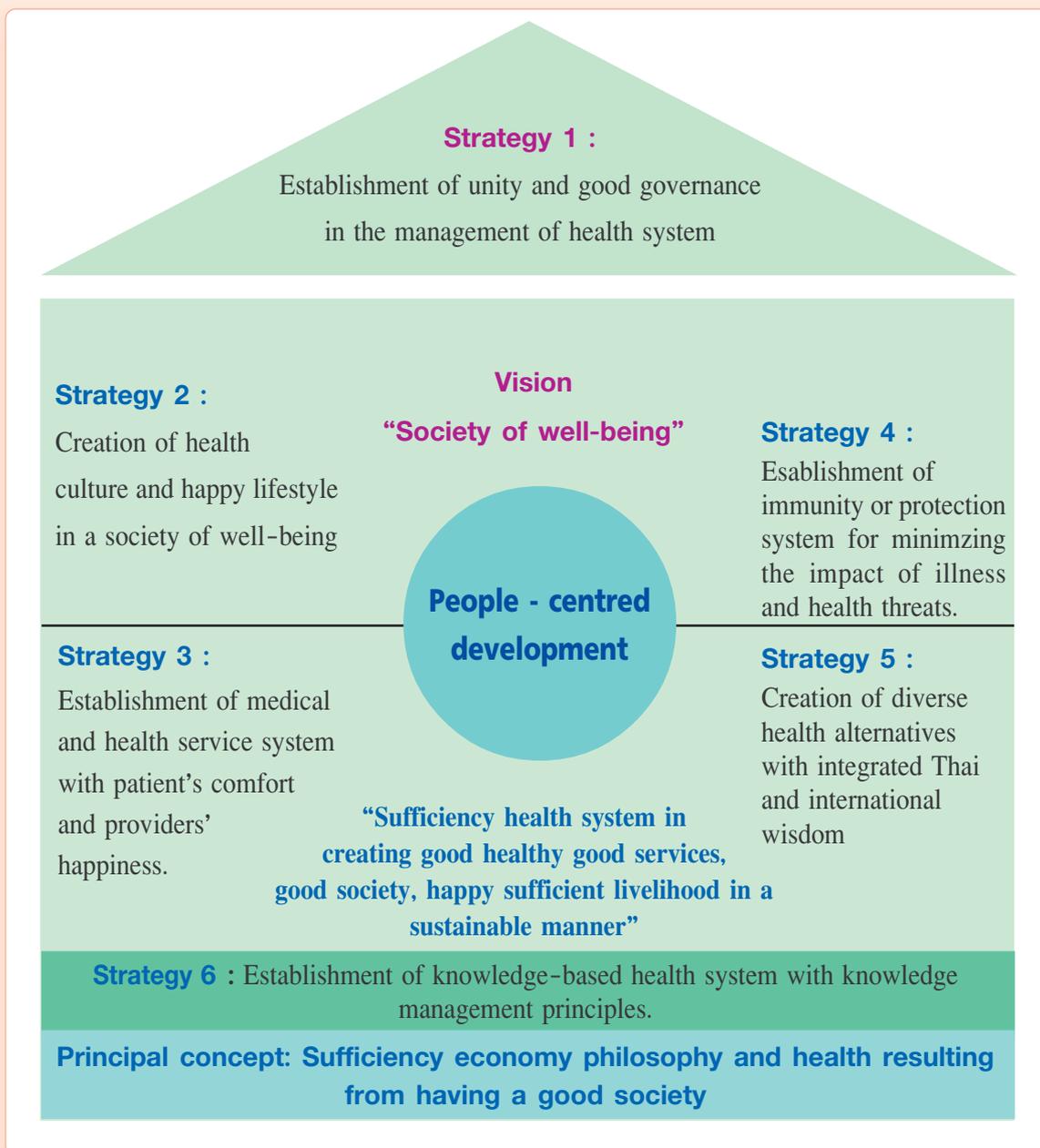
## 7) Strategies for the development of Thai health system

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 illness 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.



**Figure 3.2** Relationship of concept, vision and strategies for health and national development



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



## 8) Development Tactics

For each strategy the following tactics will be implemented:

### **Strategy 1: Establishment of unity and good governance in the management of health system.**

(1) Build up the unity of health system based on the diversity of health agencies for working together in an integrated manner.

(2) Promote and support the decentralization of health actions to local administration organizations so that they can develop their own health programmes according to local needs.

(3) Establish a good governance system and organizational culture that facilitates the work for public benefit.

(4) Promote health leadership at all levels for efficient cooperation among all relevant sectors.

### **Strategy 2: Creation of health culture and happy lifestyle in a society of well-being.**

(1) Accelerate the proactive health promotion focusing on fundamental factors for good health such as the safety of food and drug systems, the safety in environment and occupation, and the safety of health products.

(2) Expand voluntary work for health by developing different areas with different types of volunteers in the health system such as patient-care volunteers in hospitals, and volunteers caring for children, the elderly, the disabled, and patients with chronic illnesses.

(3) Promote community health clubs or groups and civil society through health activities for creating a culture of joint action with public conscience.

(4) Conduct continuous campaigns to raise health awareness and culture of public communication and learning in the formal and non-formal education systems.

(5) Promote spiritual and intellectual well-being for the development of good quality of life with a full potential for human being.

### **Strategy 3: Establishment of medical and health service system with patients comfort and providers happiness.**

(1) Accelerate community health development and a primary care system in a proactive manner that is of high quality and community confidence for reducing overcrowding in public hospitals.

(2) Strengthen efforts for development of service quality.

(3) Reduce conflicts that lead to litigation by improving proper communication channels, establishing a mechanism for mediation and peace-process learning.

(4) Adjust the administrative and working system for boosting morale and incentives of medical and health personnel to work happily, recognizing the value of work.

(5) Promote innovations in health financing for procurement and allocation of resources in accordance with the workload and needs for public services.

(6) Raise the service quality in all health security systems to the same level in response to the diverse demands of service recipients.

(7) Establish a tertiary emergency medical service system of high quality with an efficient referral system.

(8) Promote the ideology of health professions in the educational system and in workplaces by promoting social ideology, good-deed making, and pride in working value.

**Strategy 4: Establishment of immunity or protection system for minimizing the impact of illness and health threats.**

(1) Establish an efficient emergency medical service system with readiness to cope with any emergency situations that may arise.

(2) Develop a preparedness plan on medical and health care at all levels for coping with natural disasters and man-made calamities.

(3) Create a mechanism and process of healthy public policies in parallel with those for health impact assessment of various policies and programmes/projects in a sufficient and systematic manner.

(4) Build up the capacity for the surveillance, prevention, control and treatment of emerging and re-emerging diseases, control of health risk factors, and protection of consumers in health.

**Strategy 5: Creation of diverse health alternatives with integrated Thai and international wisdom.**

(1) Accelerate the development of herbal medicines, herbal plant strains and technology for manufacturing drugs, food and devices, supplementary food, cosmetics, and spa products, so that they are efficacious and sufficient for use at the family, community and national levels for self-reliance purposes.

(2) Promote the integration of Thai traditional medicine, indigenous or folk medicine as well as complementary and alternative medicine into the national health security system.

(3) 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.

(4) Develop medical sciences and medical technologies so that they are efficient, safe and worthwhile in a self-sustaining and sufficient manner, focusing on the research and development on medical equipment, product processing, traditional medicines, and knowledge of alternative medicine, promoting the utilization of results in a cost-effective manner, promoting the exchange of knowledge with other countries with expertise such as China and India, protecting intellectual property, and establishing networks.

(5) Establish a system for medical technology assessment in parallel with the planning on moderate and rational use of technology according to the philosophy of sufficiency economy; healthcare business to use the technologies that are technically correct, low-cost and appropriate for the locality and environment; use local medicinal herbs as production materials in a highly economical and efficient manner with a suitable scale of production and investment and a system for raw material management as well as risk management relating to raw material importation; and use indigenous and local wisdom.

(6) Create several alternatives for the treatment of illnesses so as to reduce the use of medications and excessive/high-cost medical technologies by promoting basic health care using medicinal herbs, eating healthy/nutritious diets, and promoting exercise, healthcare business and spa.

(7) Develop an educational system and curriculum on indigenous and alternative medicine of acceptable standard, and establish an information system for all aspects of Thai traditional medicine, indigenous medicine and alternative medicine, and partnerships, all in a systematic manner.

#### **Strategy 6: Establishment of knowledge-based health system with knowledge management principles.**

(1) Establish a system for examination, monitoring and evaluation of policies and administrative decision-making process to ensure that their implementation is based on the knowledge, prudence and carefulness, using technical principles for all steps of planning and implementation.

(2) Create and support learning organizations and the application of the knowledge management concept in all health agencies in creating a learning culture at all levels.

(3) Support research and development in the fields of medical sciences and technology, for the development of health management system, social and health behaviour, and information technology, for use in the development of a sufficiency health system in an appropriate and full-cycle manner.

(4) Develop a health information system so that it is modernized, reliable and accessible for actual application.

### **3.2 Four-Year Health Plan of Action<sup>2</sup> (2005-2008)**

#### **1) Concept and Content of the plan**

It is a strategic plan formulated in accordance with the Royal Decree on Good Governance Principles and Procedures of 2003 (B.E. 2546) with the aim of making the government administration systems consistent, integrative and liking to each other. With regard to health, the Ministry of Public Health cooperated with ten other relevant government agencies in formulating such a plan, clearly specifying responsible agencies and budget for implementation.

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<sup>2</sup> As this plan was developed in accordance with the Royal Decree on Good Governance Principles and Procedures of 2003, the formulation of such plan has been canceled for fiscal year 2007 until a new constitution is promulgated, setting a new framework for further operation.



The plan aims to promote good health among all Thai people by avoiding health-risk behaviours, improving the quality of the universal coverage of health care scheme, and reforming the medical and health service system in an efficient and full-cycle manner.

## 2) Goal of the plan

The people are healthy in all aspects and receive quality medical and health services.

## 3) Targets of the plan

The targets cover 53 indicators: 11 related to reduction of morbidity and mortality rates due to major illnesses, 6 related to quality and standard of health services, 13 related to disease prevention and health promotion, 8 related to labour protection and job security, 12 related to use of research findings for medical and health purposes, and 3 related to people's empowerment for health.

## 4) Strategy of the plan

The strategy is the creation of well-being for the people in a high-standard/quality and full-cycle manner, covering four stratagems as follows:

**Stratagem 1: Increase the quality of the universal coverage of health care scheme and reform the medical and health management systems** so that they are efficient and cover a full cycle of research and development, health promotion, disease prevention, emerging diseases, curative care, physical and mental rehabilitation, and consumer protection, for all age groups.

**Stratagem 2: Empower all Thai people** so that can avoid or give up unhealthy behaviours, by promoting exercise and self-care, using tax measures on products dangerous to health and measures for encouraging behaviour changes.

**Stratagem 3: Develop, transfer and protect the wisdom of Thai traditional medicine,** indigenous medicine, alternative medicine and medicinal herbs.

**Stratagem 4: Promote sports** to create an opportunity for youths to develop their sports skills for excellence, create sport-playing habits and proper spending of spare time.

### 3.3 Four-Year Plan of Action, Ministry of Public Health, 2005-2008<sup>3</sup>

#### 1) Concept and Content

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

<sup>3</sup> This plan is under the 4-year Health Plan of Action whose planning process was canceled in 2007; the process may resume after the new constitution is promulgated with a new framework.



The plan focuses on promoting good health of the people through programmes on health promotion, development of health service system of high quality/standard, research/development and transfer of modern medical knowledge, indigenous medicine, alternative medicine, Thai herbal medicine and wisdom, building up economic and social security, promoting/developing health-care business and prevention and treatment of drug dependence.

## **2) Vision of the MoPH**

**MoPH is the core agency responsible for health system development so that all Thai people will be healthy, leading to achieving the goal of healthy Thailand and becoming a leader in international health competition.**

## **3) Goals of the MoPH Plan of Action, 2005-2008**

**Goal 1:** Major health problems of the people are reduced and the people have access to health services and the universal coverage of healthcare.

**Goal 2:** The people have correct health behaviour with public participation and appropriate social measures.

**Goal 3:** The people are encouraged to appropriately participate in the transfer and protection of the wisdom of Thai traditional medicine, indigenous medicine, alternative medicine and herbal medicine.

**Goal 4:** The people including drug users and addicts receive drug dependence treatment, rehabilitation and development so that they are able to efficiently and sustainably prevent and resolve drug abuse problems.

**Goal 5:** Importance is given to enhancing national revenue generation through the support, promotion and development of healthcare business and health products of high quality and standard.

**Goal 6:** Public health laws are developed to keep abreast of changing situations; management systems and mechanism developed to facilitate efficient operation; and personnel and organizational capacity are developed up to an acceptable standard.

**Goal 7:** The people in southern border provinces, especially the three southern most provinces, are healthy.

## **4) Targets of Four-Year MoPH Plan of Action, 2005 - 2008**

The targets cover 28 indicators: 12 related to the reduction of morbidity and mortality rates due to major illnesses; 3 related to the quality and standard of health services; 2 related to health behaviour promotion and people's participation in health care; one related to the promotion, development transfer and protection of the wisdom of Thai traditional medicine, folk medicine, alternative medicine and herbal remedies; two related to the prevention and treatment of drug dependence; two related to the promotion and development of healthcare business; five related to the



development of health management system, and one related to the resolution of health problems in specific areas.

### 5) Strategies of the Four-Year MoPH Plan of Action, 2005 - 2008

**Strategy 1:** Healthy Thailand

**Strategy 2:** Promotion of people’s good health behaviours

**Strategy 3:** Development of Thai traditional medicine, indigenous medicine, alternative medicine, herbal medicine and Thai wisdom

**Strategy 4:** Building-up of life and social security

**Strategy 5:** Strong Thai economy

**Strategy 6:** Development of excellent management system

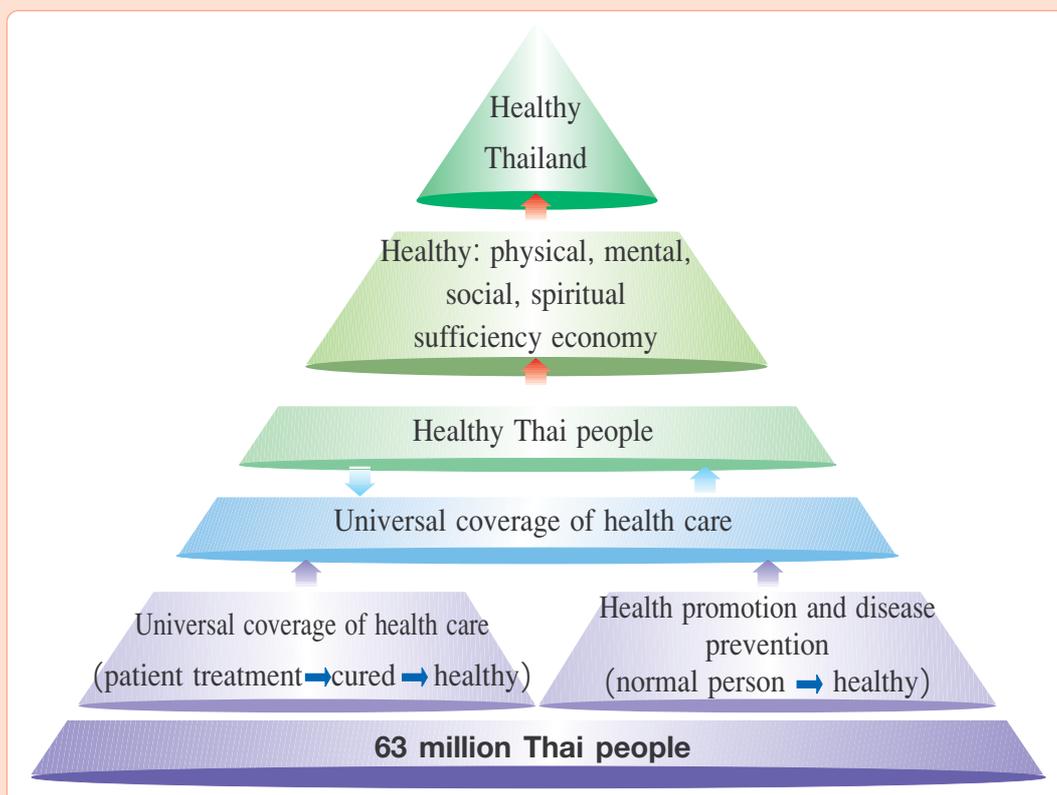
**Strategy 7:** Safeguard of national security

### 3.4 Healthy Thailand Strategy (2004 - 2015)

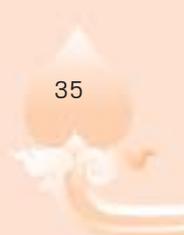
#### 1) Concept and content of healthy Thailand

For Thailand to become healthy or strong, Thai people have to be healthy basically in four dimensions: physical health, mental health, social health and spiritual health. The concept emphasizes six elements: exercise, nutrition, emotion, environmental health, non-illness and non-vices.

**Figure 3.3** The concept of Healthy Thailand



**Source:** Healthy Thailand Operational Guidelines, Ministry of Public Health, 2005.



## 2) Vision of Healthy Thailand

Thai people are physically, mentally, socially and spiritually healthy; have income; work with happiness; lead a life on the basis of moderation and reasonableness according to His Majesty the King's philosophy of sufficiency economy; have a warm and secure family in the environment that is good for health, life and property, in a society of learning and compassion; and live a long and healthy life.

## 3) Goal and targets of Healthy Thailand

There are 17 targets directly and indirectly related to health as follows:

### (3.1) Physical Health

(3.1.1) Thai people aged six years and over exercise regularly to be healthy in all villages, communities, agencies and workplaces.

(3.1.2) Thai people eat safe and nutritious diets adequate for bodily needs, from chemical-free sources, health-standard-certified markets, restaurants and foodstuffs; all food processing plants are certified according to the good manufacturing practices (GMP) criteria.

(3.1.3) Thai people have a long and healthy life expectancy with a significant reduction in morbidity and mortality rates due to top-leading causes of death, particularly HIV/AIDS, cancer, heart disease, hypertension, dengue haemorrhagic fever and diabetes.

(3.1.4) Thai people reduce alcohol and tobacco use.

(3.1.5) Thai people have lower rates of injuries and deaths due to accidents.

## 3.5 The Millennium Declaration

### 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, leading to the Millennium Development Goals.

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

### 2) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The MDGs are used for dividing the development responsibilities among the United Nations, international development agencies, governments and development partners in each country for ensuring that the goals are achieved. The goals include 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 reported on the achievements of MDGs which revealed that Thailand has progressed and achieved almost all the goals, particularly those related poverty and hunger, gender inequality, HIV/AIDS and malaria, almost ten 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 follows:

- Reduce poverty to below 4% by 2009.
- Achieve universal lower secondary education by 2006 and universal higher education by 2015.
- Double the proportion of women in the national parliament, local governments, and executive positions in civil service by 2006.
- Reduce infant mortality rate to 15 per 1,000 live births by 2006.
- Reduce by half, between 2005 and 2015, mortality rates of children under five in selected northern provinces and three southern most provinces.
- Reduce maternal mortality ratio to 18 per 100,000 live births by 2006.
- Reduce by half, between 2005 and 2015, maternal mortality ratios in selected northern provinces and three northernmost provinces.
- Reduce HIV prevalence among the population of reproductive age to 1% by 2006.
- Reduce malaria incidence in the 30 border provinces to 1.4 per 1,000 population by 2006.
- Increase the share of renewable energy in the commercial sector to 8% by 2011.
- Increase the proportion of solid waste reuse to 30% by 2006.

