

Situations of Children and Youth Human Rights Defenders in Thailand



full report

Universal Periodic Review of Thailand - Fourth Cycle

This submission was developed by 38 children and young people representing 13 groups and organisations across Thailand, working as children and youth human rights defenders. They identified the issues of concern and designed a peer survey, which ran from 15 December 2025 to 8 February 2026 and yielded 89 responses, of which 63 were completed with full informed consent: 51 child activists under 18, aged 13 to 17, and 12 parents or caregivers. Respondents included indigenous, LGBTQIA+, migrant, low-income and rural children. These responses form the evidence base for the findings and recommendations below.

Since the third cycle, Thailand supported recommendations on corporal punishment and violence against children (Slovenia, Sweden, Angola, Paraguay) and on nationality and birth registration (Angola, Serbia, Kyrgyzstan). On children's participation it supported a single recommendation, limited to climate and disaster risk frameworks (Fiji). It also supported a recommendation on civic space and human rights defenders including youth (United Kingdom), while noting every recommendation referring expressly to children in the context of freedom of expression and assembly (Austria, Finland, Denmark, Mexico).

Significant developments include the amendment to the Civil and Commercial Code prohibiting violent punishment of children, in force since 25 March 2025, the withdrawal of the reservation to Article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 30 August 2024, and the enactment of the Ethnic Groups Protection and Promotion Act. Systemic challenges nevertheless remain across expression, participation, equality, school violence and legal identity.

Findings from the child-led UPR survey:

Expression & Assembly



- **52% state that expressing opinions or advocating for rights is difficult, and 61% face barriers to both assembly and association.**
- **45% have been restricted by adults from expressing views** on social or political issues; among those who reported being obstructed, 93% felt that speaking out was difficult or that no one listened, and 60% said the restriction stemmed from adults' concerns about consequences for their family or school.
- Sections 112 and 116 of the Criminal Code provide no exemption or mitigation for offenders who are children; the Computer Crime Act, the Public Assembly Act and three special security laws contain no child-specific safeguards, and the Child Protection Act is used in practice to exclude children from assemblies.

Meaningful Participation



- **62.5% have very limited or no opportunity to participate in decisions affecting their own lives**, and only 30% believe their views influence decision-making.
- **Participation falls from 82% at school to 44% in the community and 26% at district or provincial level**, where policy affecting children is set.
- **83% state that opportunities are equal while 63% simultaneously acknowledge they are insufficient**, evidence of tokenistic participation structures.

Equality & Non-discrimination



- **77% have experienced discrimination or know someone who has, and 69% say it occurs frequently; 76% report mockery or humiliating language.**
- 32.35% rank the State and its agencies last among actors able to assist them, indicating a crisis of confidence in state protection mechanisms.
- Thailand has no comprehensive anti-discrimination law; the Gender Equality Act permits exemptions on religious or security grounds, and central Thai remains the sole language of instruction.

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Violence & Bullying



- **54% sometimes feel unsafe at school and 46% have directly experienced bullying or violence; 28% consider bullying “normal”.**
- **Adults are involved in almost half of all reported cases: 47% name children and adults acting together and 5% name teachers or adults alone.**
- School complaint mechanisms are not independent of school management and offer no confidentiality; no specific law on bullying or cyberbullying is in force.

Nationality & Legal Identity



- **22% are uncertain of their own documentation status, a hidden population neither recorded by the system nor aware of its own status.**
- **81% face barriers to health services, 70% cannot enrol in further education or apply for work and are restricted in travel, and 68% have been denied access to education.**
- Nationality procedures take an average of 4.5 years; families report bribes at local level and an absence of interpretation in indigenous and ethnic languages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Review, amend or repeal legislation restricting freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association** within two years, and guarantee that no child is prosecuted for exercising these rights, online or offline; and review, amend or repeal the Martial Law Act, the Emergency Decree and the Internal Security Act within three years to bring them into conformity with international human rights obligations."
- **Enact a law protecting human rights defenders** with specific provision for children and youth, including penalties for harassment, intimidation and reprisals.
- **Guarantee meaningful participation** through legislation or a policy framework with institutional mechanisms across state agencies at all levels within two years, including participation in curriculum development, mandatory student consultation with published annual follow-up, and free, prior and informed consent processes that include children in projects affecting indigenous and ethnic communities.
- **Enact comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation** covering race, religion, gender, social status and nationality, and establish accessible, transparent, child-friendly complaints mechanisms staffed with child rights expertise.
- **Make human rights education compulsory at all levels of compulsory education** within two years, and provide human rights training; on children's assembly rights, participation, non-discrimination and child rights standards, to teachers, security agencies and officials, with annual assessment.
- **Establish school and community mechanisms** within two years to monitor enforcement of the prohibition of corporal punishment and violence, with annual public reporting of data disaggregated by type, sex and age, and sufficient mental health professionals in every school.
- **Enact specific legislation on bullying and cyberbullying** in educational institutions, with clear definitions, preventive measures and institutional accountability.
- **Make nationality and legal identity procedures accessible**, transparent and traceable, available in indigenous and ethnic languages at every stage with a guaranteed right to interpretation, and sanction corrupt officials through an independent oversight body receiving complaints from children.

Children and Youth Organizations that contribute to the submission include; (1)Children and Youth Council of Thailand, (2) Uttaradit Children and Youth Council,(3) Indigenous Youth Network (TKN),(4) Isaan Gender Diversity Network (IGDN),(5)Seed For Development, (6) Wanita for Change, (7)The Sea Walk, (8)Bad Student (นักเรียนเลว), (9)San Kamphaeng Civic Youth, (10)Mok Luang Rim Nam Group, (11)Students from Suankularb Wittayalai Nonthaburi School, (12)Youth from the "Weaving of Diversity" Indigenous and Ethnic Youth Promotion Project, (13)Youth from the TO BE NUMBER ONE Club, Pawong Community, Songkhla Province

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