

# Thailand



The Kingdom of Thailand, formerly called Siam is located in Southeast Asia. In land area, it is about three times the size of the state of Florida with roughly the same population. Most people live clustered near the capital city of Bangkok, or in the southeastern peninsula of the country. Thai people speak the Thai language. The country's form of government is a constitutional monarchy, which means they have a king, but he is mainly a figurehead.



Thailand is one of the world's largest exporters of rice.

Most people who live in Thailand—almost 95% - are Buddhists. This is not just their religion, but part of their culture as well. A little over 4% of all

Thai are Muslim. Only 1.17% of the country are Christian. Education is free and compulsory in Thailand. All students, whether in public or private school must wear a uniform. In the poorer, rural, northern regions of the country, the lack of affordable uniforms can keep children from attending school.

Credit Suisse, a large multi-national bank, has reported that Thailand has one of the largest "wealth gaps" in the world. The richest 10% of the Thai population controls 79% of the country's money. That leaves most people dependent on subsistence farming, low-paying jobs in the tourism industry, or social welfare programs.



This man works in a seaside shack near Rayong, Thailand, where he makes shoes for tourists.

## MCA in Thailand



Sister Jancy Selvaraj, is a Presentation Sister working in northern Thailand among tribal children. About 80,000 people of the Akha and Lahu tribes live in Thailand's northern provinces on the mountain slopes bordering

Myanmar. These indigenous hill tribes have fled civil wars in Myanmar and Laos. They live in remote villages in stilt houses made with natural materials.



There are very few schools in this area, and those that are nearest to the villages require uniforms and school fees. Sister Jancy and the Fang Catholic Mission Center are working to make sure as many tribal children as possible can attend school. With our help, they subsidize the cost of uniforms, meals, school fees, and transportation.

Sister Jancy, who is also a registered nurse, has worked in that part of Thailand for seven years. "Our main aim is to empower vulnerable tribal communities and improve their quality of life through Catholic Faith Formation, education, and skills training," she said.

Sister recently took part in a COVID19 awareness training session in her diocese. She helped pass out donated masks, hand sanitizer, and trained parishioners in proper health procedures.



During the weekends at the Mission Center, staff teach religious education and sponsor prayer groups. "Children enjoy regular recreation and learn music in their own tribal languages so that they can participate well in the liturgical celebrations in their village chapels with their families and village community," said Sister Jancy.

The Sisters also offer health and hygiene lessons to the children.



Sister Jancy indicated that many young "graduates" from Fang Catholic Mission Center have gone on to become teachers, nurses, and professionals. Others, like catechist Pinnappa Chayue, have returned to the Center to serve on staff.

When asked what she likes most about being a part of the Missionary Childhood Association, Sister Jancy responded, "It helps to connect people around the world to support those who are in need."

At last report, members of the Missionary Childhood Association worldwide sacrificed \$6,000 for the children of the Catholic Church of the Epiphany, where the Fang Mission Center is located.

Thai Missionary Childhood members donated \$30,768.15 so that other children in the missions could come to know how much God loves them, too.