

## Book Review on *Thailand's Sustainable Development Sourcebook, Second Edition*

Jitiya Purksametanan<sup>1</sup>

*Thailand's Sustainable Development Sourcebook*. Nicholas Grossman. Ed. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2017. EDITIONS DIDIER MILLET PTE LTD, 460 pages. ฿ 1,350 (Paperback) ISBN 9789814610629

It has been more than 70 years since the kingdom of Thailand joined the United Nations in 1946. Along the way, the country has followed a development path that mirrors that of many other nations; including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which have already celebrated their accomplishment in the year 2000, and the subsequent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Agreed by 193 countries in September 2015 at the United Nations, the 17 SDGs are now pursued in thousands of ways all over the world, with different levels of success.

The publication of Thailand's Sustainable Development Sourcebook, Second Edition, following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is highly relevant to countries across Asia-Pacific and beyond, as they are working to implement the agenda. This book explains how Thailand has read and translated the 17 SDGs into concrete actions, supported by detailed statistics, as well as an extensive range of lively experiences. The editors have clearly done comprehensive research, and have put it into a reader-friendly format, with infographics and beautiful maps and pictures of Thailand.

The stated objectives of this book are 'to support and track the progress of the movements to implement the SDGs in the kingdom.'<sup>2</sup> Building on the 1st edition released in 2015, this book includes a number of recent pioneering projects, updated facts and figures and entirely new content on critical topics, such as climate change and inequality. As Thailand continues to gain traction in certain areas and arguably loses its way in others, the book presents Thailand's commitment to the movement in a balanced and inspirational way.

The book is made up of 3 parts. The first, 'An Introduction to Sustainable Development', describes how the concept of sustainable development originated in the global context, the details of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, and its 17 goals. It also narrates how the concept of SDGs has been brought to Thailand, and how it is considered in line with the sufficiency economy philosophy of King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

The second part, 'Issues and Information', provides details on the distinct set of circumstances and unique challenges Thailand has to face in its path towards sustainable development. This section presents 31 topics that are considered the heart of Thailand's sustainable development. This includes energy resource and water security, labor and transportation, education and public participation. These are classified

<sup>1</sup> Division of Justice Policy and Planning Coordination, Office of Justice Affairs

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Grossman. Thailand's Sustainable Development Sourcebook. Ed. 2nd ed. 2017. EDITIONS DIDIER MILLET PTE LTD, p.13

into 4 chapters in following the 3 pillars of sustainable development: ‘environment’, ‘economy’ and ‘society’, together with ‘culture’, which is particularly important to the kingdom of Thailand. Each article provides a concise introduction, essential context, statistics and indicators, along with brief explanations of the reasons we should care in the first place. It also underlines the issues, trends and critical challenges we face, or as the book calls them ‘reality checks.’<sup>3</sup>

The third part, ‘Idea and Inspiration’, showcases the innovative practices, trends, solutions and people across Thailand that are making sustainable development a reality. It consists of 32 topics organized around the four key audiences or stakeholders who can make an impact; the individual, the community and the private and public sectors. This part consists of 4 sub-sections, namely the power of the individual, community spirit, private sector enterprise, and the role of government.

Apart from the main sections, the book also consists of small sectors titled ‘pioneers’, which highlight projects focused on alternative energy, environmental protection, green manufacturing and much more. While ‘groundbreakers’ sounds out the opinions of various experts which are often just as revealing. Additionally, it presents not only inspiring examples of Thailand, but also draws attention to other positive examples of sustainability from ‘around the world’ and the ‘eye opening’ literature and films inspiring urgencies and actions.

Overall, the book provides a great background for people who want to learn about SDGs and Thailand’s progress, as well as how the concept of sustainable

development has become deep-rooted in the Thai people’s way of life. I am particularly impressed by the way the book is divided into small sections, with maps, pictures, interesting infographics and easy-to follow timelines, which makes it much easier to digest for readers who are not familiar with the topics.

While all parts are rich in information, motivating examples, revealing guidance and encouragement for all who are tackling sustainable development challenges, part 3 ‘Idea and Inspiration’, certainly peaked my interest as it talks about a number of people, as well as their cooperation with each other, that have geared up the journey towards Thailand’s achievements in SDGs. Despite the fact that SDGs are viewed by most people in Thailand as the government’s commitment and responsibility to develop policies through funded projects, it is undeniable that, without the understanding and cooperation from the private sector, the community and, above all, the individuals who are aware of their roles and responsibilities for SDGs, Thailand’s achievements of the goals would not be possible.

I believe that this book is important reading for all policy makers and analysts, in the public, private, and civil society sectors, whose works are related to SDGs. This book will serve as a wonderful source of reference, and also provide inspirational ideas for developing projects. Meanwhile, students and those who are keen to learn about SDGs will benefit from the quick introduction, basic subtopics, easily understood infographics, maps, and series of key performance indicators and examples.

---

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 45.

I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to learn about the progress of Thailand's movement toward the achievement of SDGs, the reasons why we are lacking behind in certain areas, and what we can do to make things better. The knowledge, facts and inspiration acquired from reading this book will prove essential in a time when the world is facing numerous environmental and social challenges, and when people are calling for cooperation to make the world a better place for the generations to come.