

## **Thailand “Development King”**



In 26 May 2006, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan presented the first ever United Nations Development Programme Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand for his extraordinary contribution to human development on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of his accession to the throne.

Following is UN Secretary General Kofi Annan’s address to the High-Level Panel on His Majesty the King and Human Development in Bangkok:

“Later today, I will have the honour to present the United Nations Development Programme’s inaugural Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. I feel especially privileged to do so on the sixtieth anniversary of His Majesty’s accession to the throne.

For the United Nations, this ceremony has special significance for another reason, as well: it marks the very first time that we recognize outstanding contributions to development through this Award.

Human development, reduced to its essence, is a very simple concept: it is about empowering people. Not the few, not even the many, but all people. It is about empowering them through education, through opportunity, through health care and nutrition. It is about empowering individuals with choices so that they may live healthy, knowledgeable and creative lives.

Human development puts the individual at the centre of development. It emphasizes economic growth and sustainability, human rights and security, equity and political participation.

The United Nations prioritizes such development at the very centre of its agenda, and we put tremendous effort into promoting it. We do it through UNDP’s global and national *Human*

*Development Reports.* We do it through the development work of UN Country Teams in 166 countries across the world. And we do it through this Award.

After all, if human development is about putting people first, there can no better advocate for it than His Majesty.

At his coronation in 1946, His Majesty uttered the famous Oath of Accession: “We shall reign with righteousness, for the benefit and happiness of the Siamese people.” Ever since, His Majesty has lived this Oath, selflessly devoting his time and efforts to the well-being and welfare of the people of Thailand, regardless of their ethnicity, religion or legal status.

As the world’s “Development King”, His Majesty reached out to the poorest and the most vulnerable people of Thailand, listened to their problems, and empowered them to take their lives into their own hands.

His Majesty’s rural development projects have benefited millions of people across Thailand. They have prompted small-scale agriculture; appropriate farming technologies; sustainable use of water resources; conservation; and flood and drought mitigation.

In northern Thailand, His Majesty’s rural development initiatives have helped reduce opium harvests through crop substitution. At the same time, these projects have improved access to health care and education for the local population, and brought significant benefits to the ethnic groups living in the mountainous region along the Myanmar and Lao borders.

His Majesty’s active support for a wide range of social causes has proved crucial to their success. From promoting child health to combating iodine deficiency, from campaigning against disease to increasing access to education, programmes supported by His Majesty impact the every day lives of millions of his subjects.

At the same time, His Majesty’s visionary thinking has helped shape the global development dialogue.

His Majesty’s “Sufficiency Economy” philosophy -- emphasizing moderation, responsible consumption, and resilience to external shocks -- is of great relevance to communities everywhere during these times of rapid globalization. The philosophy’s “middle path” approach strongly reinforces the United Nations’ own advocacy of a people-centred and sustainable path towards human development.

His Majesty's development agenda and visionary thinking are an inspiration to his subjects, and to people everywhere.

With today's Award, we hope to further promote the ideas and experiences of His Majesty's work, and to help draw attention to their underlying thinking well beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Thailand.

For His Majesty's extraordinary achievements and deep and unwavering commitment to human development, this afternoon it will be my great honour to present to His Majesty the UNDP's first-ever Lifetime Achievement Award."

