

Brief History of Statistics in Thailand

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History of Statistics in Thailand dated back as early as 1915 when the Department of Statistics was established under the Ministry of Finance during the reign of H.M. King Rama VI. Very little was accomplished, however, due to lack of financial support. The annual budget allocated to this Department was just barely enough for salaries and fixed expenses, nothing left much for statistical projects of any kind. The only major project at that time was the publication of the Statistical Year Book of Thailand which made its debut in 1916 with 90 tables on basic statistics.

There were very little change in the years which followed. Eighteen years later, in 1933, it was decided that the status of the Department be reduced to that of a division, and was placed under the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Again two years later, in 1935, it became the Division of Statistical Compilation under the Prime Minister's office. The activities, however, remained as limited as before. There were neither money nor qualified statisticians to do the job, and the only major project still remained to be the Annual Statistical Year Book as it was in 1916.

In 1952 the Division of Statistics was transferred to the then newly established National Economic Council and was known as "The Central Statistical Office."

There was a great event which took place in 1955 which was most important to the development of Statistics in Thailand. During that year the United Nations sent a prominent statistician, Professor Philip M. Hauser on leave from the University of Chicago to help the Thai Government develop its statistical activities in response to the request from the Thai Government through UNTAB in New York. Professor Hauser took a hard look at the situation and in his usual frankness, advised the Thai Government that if there really was a serious desire to improve its statistics there must be enough budget support, or else the employees might just as well go fishing because nothing substantial could be accomplished without any money. At that time Professor Bundhit Kantabutra became Director of Central Statistical Office, succeeding Prince Athiponpong Kasemsri who retired in 1957. The Hauser Report was widely read among those high officials interested in Statistical development. It finally attracted the attention of the Government and adequate budget support was given to statistical projects for the first time making it possible for many projects to be completed, such as the 1960 Population Census, the Industrial and Agricultural Censuses, Labor Force Surveys etc. For the first time in the history of Statistics in Thailand, the development of statistics began to show real progress in many directions. Not long afterwards the status of the Central Statistical Office was raised to that of the Department and was given the new name of "National Statistical Office" still under the office of the Prime Minister. Professor Bundhit was its first Secretary General. The date was September 30, 1963.



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