

# Management and Strategy:

How AUN-HPN Became a Driving  
Force for Regional Health Promotion

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**Published by:**

ASEAN University Network  
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# Preface

This book is produced in recognition of ASEAN University Network Health Promotion Network's (AUN-HPN) ongoing efforts towards promoting health literacy throughout Southeast Asia. Ever since its establishment in 2014, AUN-HPN has played a vital role in setting a precedent for common health promotion standards that all universities can strive towards. Today, the work of AUN-HPN continues through a myriad of initiatives – especially the AUN Healthy University Framework and the Healthy University Rating System (HURS) – all for the common mission of reshaping ASEAN's health promotion landscape and guide ASEAN universities towards being health literate and implementing health promoting policies.

To best catalogue the thematic network's good management practices and strategies over the years, this book observes the work of Dr. Wiwat Rojanapithayakorn, former AUN-HPN Executive Director and currently Advisor to the network's Steering Committee, from his lifelong career in the field of health promotion to his leadership of the thematic network. Throughout the early years of AUN-HPN, Dr. Wiwat has been the trailblazer who shaped and formulated innovative strategies to foster the growth of the network, nurturing and sculpting it into one of ASEAN's current leading health promoting forces.

As a note to the reader, the first instalment of this book should not be taken as de facto on how to manage a thematic network of universities collaborating for a common cause, which – in this case – is regional health promotion. Rather, it serves as a beginning to the documenting and understanding of AUN-HPN's good practices in university network management and strategy at this point of its ongoing operation. The contents of this book are time-specific and subjected to further revision in line with AUN-HPN's continuous and expansive work in regional health promotion in ASEAN Higher Education and the society at large.

# Introduction



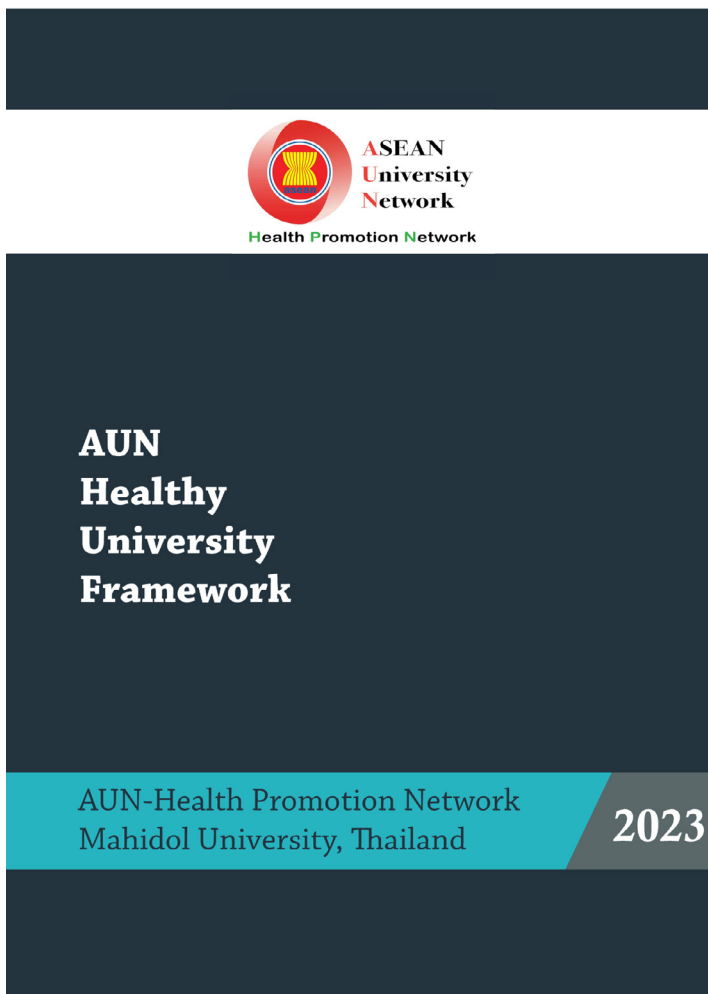
Dr. Wiwat Rojanapithayakorn

Dr. Wiwat Rojanapithayakorn, former Executive Director of AUN-HPN, once recalled a story of his time with a team of leading medical professors from Osaka University. He had once asked his Japanese colleagues why Japanese people tend to live longer and received a surprising response. Rather than crediting Japan's excellent healthcare system and medical resources, the answer was that Japanese people simply "knew how to stay healthy", that is to say, their society had been raised and educated to be health literate no matter what profession or background. This story informs much about Dr. Wiwat's rationale and vision for health promotion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Technological acceleration, innovations in medicine, and improved healthcare systems have raised living standards for many around the world, including Southeast Asia. The region itself has seen its fair share of novel public health solutions and issues over the past two decades, as demographic changes and greater socio-economic development in the region saw chronic non-communicable diseases, at least in urban areas, overtaking infectious diseases as the leading cause of mortality. However, rapid urbanisation, increased global mobility, and new diseases like the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 revealed the limits of even the best healthcare systems when preventative measures are ineffective. From this, Dr. Wiwat's experiences reveal the importance of health literacy and awareness even in an era of modernity.

In the face of these challenges, Dr. Wiwat led the ASEAN University Network - Health Promotion Network (AUN-HPN), which serves as a linchpin for health promotion in Southeast Asia since its establishment in 2014. Based in the prestigious Mahidol University of Thailand, AUN-HPN has spearheaded a myriad of initiatives. The "AUN Healthy University Framework" launched and adopted during the AUN Rectors' Meeting in July 2017 set a precedent for common health standards that all member universities can strive towards. The landmark "AUN Policy-Action Workshop on Health Promotion in Japan and ASEAN" in 2014 saw knowledge-sharing on health promotion initiatives between 18 universities. The new Healthy University Rating System aims to create a benchmark for institutions to monitor and evaluate their health promotion policies, not just in ASEAN but possibly beyond. These initiatives are uncharted territories that no organisation, apart from AUN-HPN, had ever threaded before.





**Figure 1** AUN Healthy University Framework

Indeed, one could go on about AUN-HPN's laundry list of accomplishments. While these accomplishments are causes for celebration, it is equally crucial to recognise the visions, capacities, investments, and contributions of the people behind AUN-HPN's continued success. Through interviews with key personnel from AUN-HPN and its collaborators, we shall share the concise yet effective management strategies that are responsible for the network's advancements.

The top half of the image features an abstract background composed of several overlapping rectangular blocks in various shades of blue, ranging from a deep navy to a lighter, muted blue. These blocks are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and geometric complexity.

**“The Doctor  
Who Changed  
the World”**

# “The Doctor Who Changed the World”

The best practices of AUN-HPN cannot be reduced to a series of annual reports or project summaries. Instead, they are a culmination of expert and tacit knowledge, as well as years of collective experience working alongside various stakeholders in public health. To get at the core of AUN-HPN, we need to first recognise the person behind it all: Dr. Wiwat Rojanapithayakorn.

As the founding Executive Director of AUN-HPN, Dr. Wiwat brought with him decades of experience working on the field, not to mention a reservoir of academic knowledge, having penned more than 110 publications in English and Thai. Dr. Wiwat’s actual claim to fame lies in his work in HIV/AIDs prevention, being awarded with the Prince Mahidol Award for Public Health in 2009 for his directorship at the Office of Communicable Disease Control Region 4, Ratchaburi, Thailand. There, he led a crusade against HIV/AIDS through collaborations with provincial governors, police authorities, and owners of commercial sex establishments to put the “100% Condom Use” programme into practice. Dr. Wiwat and his team faced a Herculean task, considering how difficult it was to broach the topic of Thailand’s sex industry to government agencies during the 1980s. Yet, his programme was met with roaring success. Within three years, condom use increased from 25% to 90%, while new annual sexually transmitted infections were reduced from 143,000 to 14,000 between 1991 and 2001. His programme was estimated to have prevented 8 million cases and 4 million deaths from HIV disease. Dr. Wiwat’s programme has been recognised internationally as one of the most successful HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns, serving as a shining model for similar campaigns in Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines, China, Myanmar, Mongolia, and Lao People’s Democratic Republic (World Health Organization, 2010).

From his regional office in Thailand, Dr. Wiwat has propelled himself to key positions on the world-stage. A sample of portfolios under his wing include appointments as head of the World Health Organization's country office in Mongolia, leader of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, and director of the Center of Health Policy and Management at Mahidol University. With such an impressive career, the title of his award-winning autobiography, *They Call Me, "The Doctor who Changed the World"*<sup>2</sup>, is rather unsurprising.

No doubt, Dr. Wiwat's experience, knowledge, and connections have been invaluable assets to a fledgling project like AUN-HPN. Prof. Surakit Nathisuwan from Mahidol University<sup>3</sup> mentioned that Dr. Wiwat's sprawling connections has reduced the "flirting period" between AUN-HPN and other stakeholders, therefore saving time and costs for projects. Dr. Wiwat's leadership also enhanced the professional credentials of AUN-HPN. Prof. Banchong Mahaisavariya, President of Mahidol University<sup>4</sup>, mentioned how the University had placed their full trust on AUN-HPN because they were assured of Dr. Wiwat's vision and capabilities in steering the network. It would not be an exaggeration to say that AUN-HPN was scaffolded by the talents of its director.

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<sup>1</sup> Thai title is *เขาเรียกผมว่า "คุณหมอผู้เปลี่ยนโลก"* *Khao riak pom wa "khun mor pu plian lok"* or *"They called me the doctor who change the world"*

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Pharmacy, Mahidol University.

<sup>3</sup> Valid as of 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Valid as of 2023.



# Stepping-stones towards Success

Even as Dr. Wiwat has left influential marks in defining AUN-HPN's horizons, the network has not solely rested on the laurels of its former director. In a region where public health issues are ever more complex and spurious, AUN-HPN has not been complacent. The paucity of verified information to the public about emerging diseases, health literacy and proper channels to disseminate health information were some challenges raised by Prof. Banchong. These issues were similarly echoed by Dr. Supreda Adulayanon, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth)<sup>5</sup>, who observed that health promotion in ASEAN was quite weak, particularly with respects to coordination. Dr. Supreda added that the lack of funds devoted to health promotion campaigns rendered them marginal.

Dr. Wiwat himself remained stoic about the obstacles faced by health facilitators, adding that “structural interventions” were needed to reform health promotion and acknowledge its significance across society.

How exactly has AUN-HPN tackled these seemingly insurmountable issues? The answer lies in the network's cogent combination of innovative management strategies, precise action plans, and attention to people. Two principles could be seen to underpin AUN-HPN's success: “polynodal collaboration” and “multipronged action”.

The first principle, “polynodal collaboration” relates to AUN-HPN's commitment to network-formation across a multitude of nodes in society. One of the driving missions of AUN-HPN is the creation of a platform for ASEAN Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to collaborate amongst themselves and with other relevant stakeholders, defined as policy makers, healthcare professionals, university students, communities and dialogue partners involved in health promotion activities. In discussing collaboration through multiple nodes, we will move from the local to the transnational, from AUN-HPN's collaboration in Mahidol University to cross-border projects.

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<sup>5</sup>Valid as of 2023.

On the other hand, the latter principle of “multipronged action” relates to AUN-HPN’s action- attitude towards tackling complex regional health challenges head on. As we will elaborate further, these courses of action are neither “top-down” nor “bottom-up” approaches. These courses of actions work hand-in-hand with change-makers across society. They are flexible, deliberate, and effective.

Stepping-stones towards success

# Polynodal Collaboration

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# Polynodal Collaboration

Working with people is one of the cornerstones of AUN-HPN's work. As Dr. Wiwat emphatically stated, the first stepping-stone for the success of AUN-HPN was the establishment of partnerships and collaborations with various nodes to expand health promotion's scope and delivery. In short, he calls it the "network expansion strategy". Prof. Surakit further elaborated on three ways to think about collaboration:

1. Beginning with the university and its policies to shape perceptions of health
2. Forming connections with valuable human capital, both within and beyond health-related sectors, to persuade the public on the importance of health.
3. Establishing a strong network between national and international bodies to expand change-making capacities.

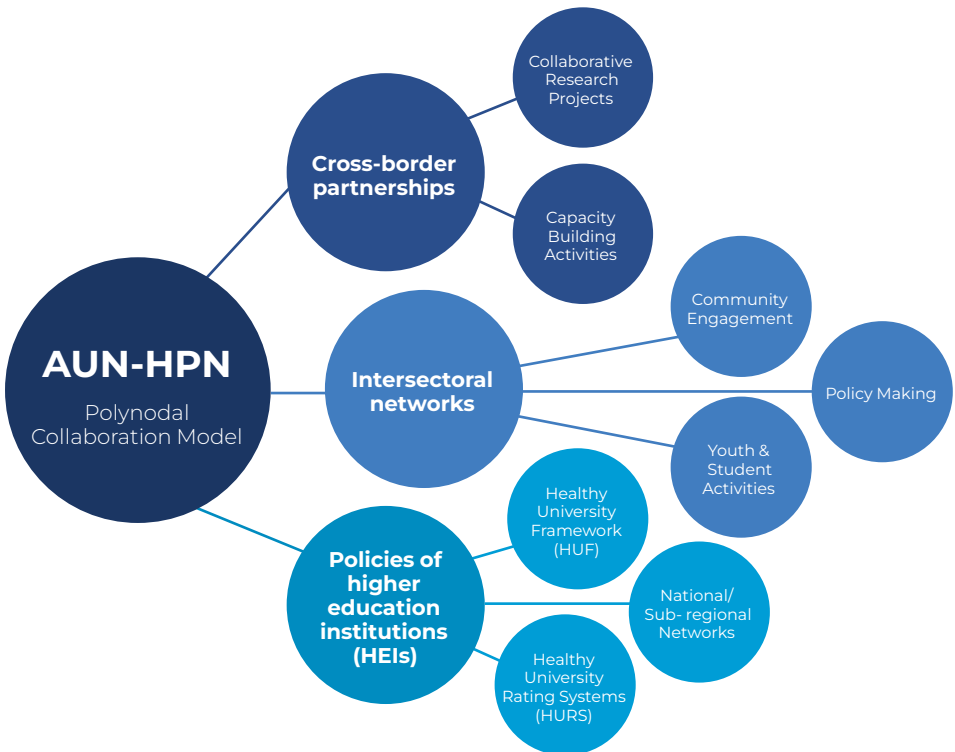


Figure 2 AUN-HPN Polynodal Collaboration Model

## Policies of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Dr. Wiwat observed that universities or HEIs in general have the capacity to become knowledge centres for health advocacy and to influence stakeholders. The Okanagan Charter (2015) and the AUN Healthy University Framework (2017) noted how HEIs are places where many spend a significant part of their lives, therefore playing a key role in the development of individuals, communities, societies, and cultures — both locally and globally. Furthermore, with its plethora of resources, scholars, and administrative capabilities, HEIs have the opportunity of providing a transformative education through engaging with student voices and leading by example. As centres of knowledge production, HEIs provide indefatigable support to policymakers in the process of public health reform.

At the centre of this joint-effort between universities is Mahidol University, where AUN-HPN is based. Founded in 1888 from the first modern hospital in Thailand, Mahidol University is a leading university with over 3,700 academics and 27,000 students, providing a wide spectrum of health-related professional programmes, from public health to medical technology. Mahidol University is a regional hub for health research, even entering the headlines for its role in implementing the first AIDS vaccine trial; as well as the development and implementation of the dengue vaccine. Acting President of Mahidol University, Prof. Banchong emphasised that the university has established itself as a “brand” in health, life science, and medical education. In fact, according to Prof. Banchong, the university was on its way to become a “Health Promoting University” (HPU). This makes it fitting that Mahidol University was chosen to host AUN-HPN in 2014, after submitting a bid to the AUN Board of Trustees during their meeting in Cebu, the Philippines.



**Figure 3** the 1<sup>st</sup> AUN-HPN International Advisory Committee (IAC) Meeting on 1 December 2015 at Mahidol University, Salaya, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

Indeed, Mahidol University has been a trailblazer for health promotion within HEIs, especially with the three-year long Mahidol University Health Promotion Campaign meant to raise awareness of the AUN-HPN Healthy University Framework (HUF) across all faculties and institutes in the university. Developed in 2017, HUF is a reference guide for universities to build health promoting policies through 22 areas focused on systems and infrastructure, as well as thematic areas of zero tolerance and health promotion. Member universities and associate members of AUN-HPN can now look to a common health standard, allowing for a more pragmatic direction compared to vague goals and statements.



### Systems and Infrastructure

1. Healthy university policies
2. Safe buildings and safe, clean environment, green environments
3. Health promotion services, counseling and advisory support
4. Equal opportunities including disability friendly
5. Health promotion curriculum and co-curriculum
6. Capacity building on health promotion
7. Health promotion research
8. University volunteerism
9. Budgetary support for healthy university programme

AUN-HPN Healthy University Framework

### Thematic Areas

#### a) Zero tolerance areas:

1. Smoking
2. Alcohol consumption
3. Illicit drug use
4. Gambling
5. Violence, bullying and sexual harassment
6. Road safety violations including helmet use

#### b) Health promotion areas:

1. Health literacy
2. Mental well-being
3. Social interaction (e.g. social activities such as student clubs)
4. Physical activity and active mobility
5. Healthy diet and balanced nutrition
6. Safe sexual behavior
7. Work life balance (integration) and healthy ageing



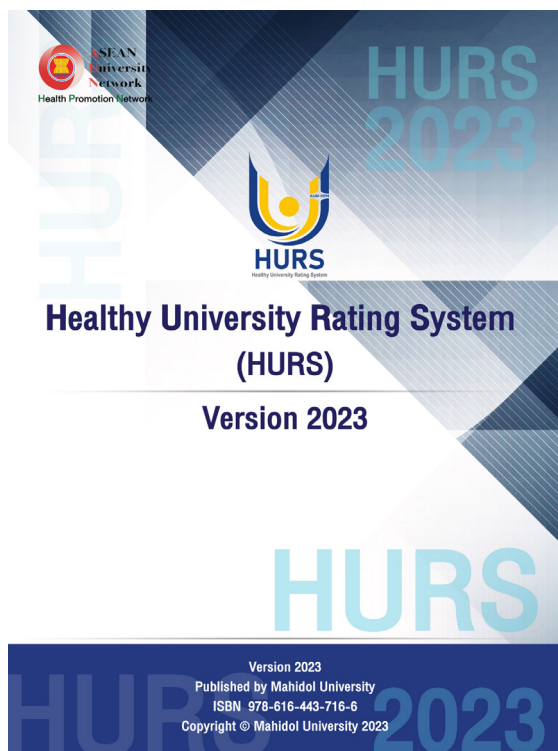
**Figure 4** the list of 22 HUF's areas of focus

Additionally, AUN-HPN had recently proposed the Healthy University Rating System (HURS), an evaluation benchmark meant to encourage universities to strive towards clear health goals and recognize healthy universities in the region. Initially called the Mahidol - ASEAN Rating on Healthy University (MARHU), work began after an AUN-HPN steering committee meeting in late 2018 recommended methods for monitoring and evaluating the progress of health promotion policies in HEIs. Shortly after, it was expanded to encompass ASEAN institutions and became the ASEAN Rating on Healthy University (ARHU). After further consultation, it was re-developed into an internal-external ratings system, where specific strengths of certain universities are emphasised rather than rankings that made general comparisons. With the new goal of expanding the benchmark into the global sphere, it was duly renamed to the Healthy University Rating System (HURS) to reflect this new vision.

<sup>6</sup>Valid as of 2020.

- **Healthy University Rating System (HURS)**

As one of the network's forefront initiatives, the Healthy University Rating System (HURS) is an evaluation benchmark meant to encourage universities to strive towards clear health goals and recognize healthy universities in the region. Based on HUF and inspired by the two well-known university ratings and rankings, Prof. Dr. Chartchalerm Isarankura-Na-Ayudhya, Chairman of the Committee on HURS Development and Dean of Faculty of Medical Technology, Mahidol University, initiated and developed the methodology of HURS by combining the concept from the QS star rating system with the scoring system from the UI GreenMetric.



**Figure 5** Healthy University Rating System (HURS) Manual

This new tool was presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> AUN-HPN International Advisory Committee Meeting in November 2020, receiving comments and consultation for the project. As of 2020, a trial version of the system was introduced to AUN-HPN member universities, who will self-evaluate their performance in early 2021. The outcome of the trial would be analysed for further improvement to the system before it was formally proposed for endorsement. External evaluators were trained under AUN-HPN to increase accountability for universities and build a culture of quality assurance throughout various institutions.

Eventually, HURS was presented and approved at the 12<sup>th</sup> AUN Rectors' Meeting and endorsed for official launch starting from August 2021. Accordingly, university members were invited to participate in the implementation of HURS and provide constructive feedback in order to improve the tool. In the long term, all AUN member universities will be encouraged to advocate the use of the tool with other universities within and outside the ASEAN region.

Today, HURS is striving to be among the world's global university ranking systems specialised in providing systematic feedback to universities' performance in health promotion related areas. While ranking systems worldwide often set the participation limit to only 100 to 500 universities, making it impractical for smaller or newer universities to gain visibility in the competitive rankings, HURS' philosophy focused more on providing individual evaluation for universities based on a criteria of performance areas related to the network's health promotion mission. In addition, there is no limit on the number of universities that can achieve the highest score overall or in a particular area.

HURS is accessible as a web-based online benchmarking tool for healthy university evaluation. The data entry period for HURS assessments open annually from mid-August to mid-November, during which participating universities are required to complete and submit a web-based questionnaire via HURS portal (<https://hurs.mahidol.ac.th/#/>). Upon the completion of each item, participating universities are asked to provide additional data, evidence or achievements to support their submitted answer.

This benchmarking tool enables universities to evaluate their own performance using a total score of 1,000 based on their level of achievement in all 22 areas divided into three categories—consisting of systems and infrastructure (SI), zero tolerance areas (ZT), and health promotion areas (HP). Similar to the hotel star-rating system, an overall composite score can be used to calibrate or compare with the preset rating criteria classified into 1–5 stars. Participating universities can use the scores to evaluate health promotion progress as well as to compare the healthy status among different faculties within the institution or with other universities.

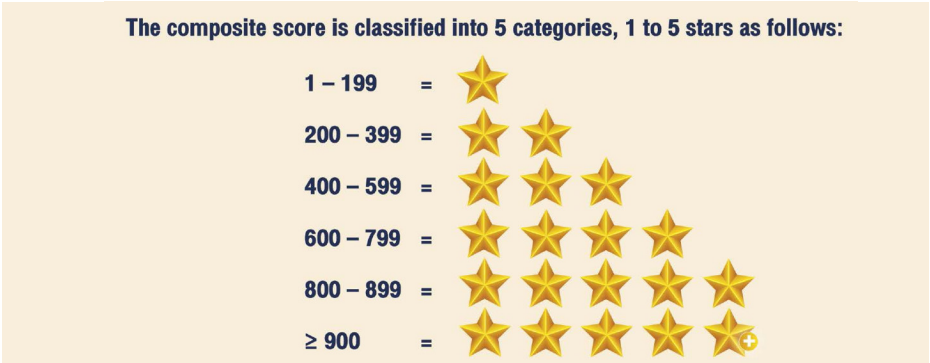


Figure 6 HURS five-star rating criteria

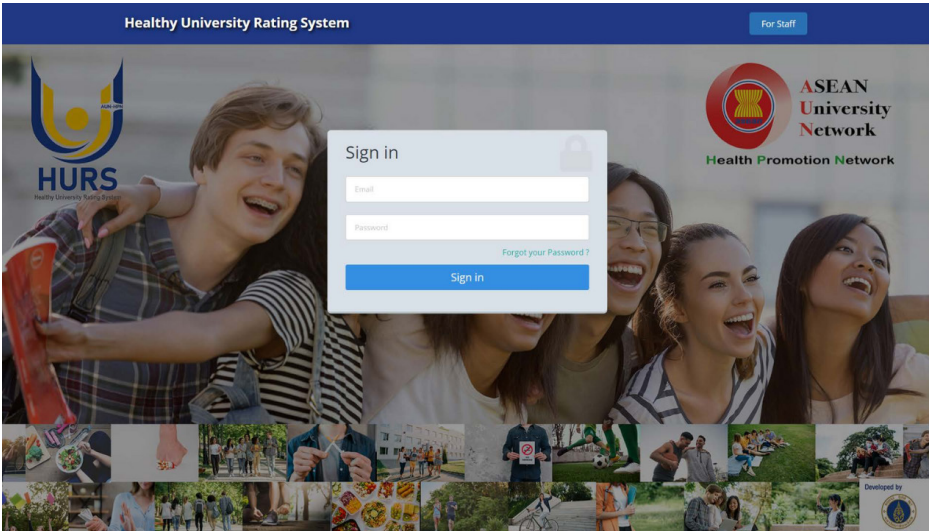


Figure 7 Healthy University Rating (HURS) Website



The rating system on healthy universities launched its first assessment period in August 2021 - November 2021 with the registration of a total of 11 universities from 5 countries (Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Cambodia). Within this number, 8 universities from 4 countries completed their submissions (Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines). The second version of HURS was then launched in August 2022, with ten more universities participating.



**Figure 8** MOU Signing Ceremony on the implementation of the Healthy University Rating System at the 3<sup>rd</sup> AUN International Health Promotion Conference on 20 January 2023 at Grand Richmond Hotel, Nonthaburi, Thailand

At the 14<sup>th</sup> AUN Rectors' Meeting on 5 July 2023, Prof. Dr. Chartchalerm was present to provide the latest updates from AUN-HPN with the Main Output and Outcomes of Workplan 2022 - 2023. Along with this update, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi was approved to be an associate member of the AUN-HPN network from the 14<sup>th</sup> steering committee of AUN-HPN meeting at Mahidol University on 22 June 2023.

All universities were also invited to take part in the latest HURS 2023 Version, with the submission process taking place from 16 August to 15 November 2023.





**Figure 9** Prof. Dr. Chartchalerm at the 14<sup>th</sup> AUN Rectors' Meeting in Kuala Lumpur presenting the Main Output and Outcomes of Workplan 2022 - 2023 of AUN-HPN

In addition to the continued implementation and development of HUF and HURS to promote healthy universities, AUN-HPN's collaboration with HEIs extends beyond Mahidol University itself. In 2017, AUN-HPN launched the Network Expansion plan. Phase 1 saw a series of seminars and health promotion campaigns with universities across the five regions of Thailand, forming a roster of partner universities that included: Burapha University, Chiang Mai University, Chulalongkorn University, Ubon Ratchathani University, and Prince of Songkla University. This expansion scheme between 2017 and 2018 saw tremendous success with the implementation of AUN-HPN pilot programmes in partner universities, while sparking interest in other HEIs. As of 2023, the network has expanded to thirty AUN member institutions, as well as twelve additional associate members in Thailand, the Philippines, and Japan.<sup>7</sup>

In Thailand, the expansion of the thematic network eventually culminated with the official formation of the Thai University Network for Health Promotion Network (TUN-HPN).

<sup>7</sup> Valid as of November 2023

## • Thai University Network for Health Promotion Network (TUN-HPN)

Funded by ThaiHealth, Thai University Network for Health Promotion Network (TUN-HPN) was geared to support universities in Thailand to develop their potential and become leaders in health promotion. The national network in health promotion had been active since 2016 and was officially appointed to further facilitate the network's domestic health promotion mission in the country and, by extension, the region.

The network's approach to promote the role of universities in health promotion is to encourage HEIs in the country to enhance the awareness in health promotion policies through the standard practice of guideline promotion during and throughout related inter-institutional collaborations. The expected outcome from this strategy would be a solid foundation to build up health-related research, transferability of health promotion innovations into policies and practices. More importantly, the success of TUN-HPN would contribute towards the common goal of the AUN-HPN in region-wide health promotion in ASEAN.

Truly reflective to the overarching concept of polynodal collaboration in this section, TUN-HPN consists of 6 regional universities or nodes, namely Chulalongkorn University (representing Central region), Chiang Mai University (representing Northern region), Burapha University (representing Eastern region), Prince of Songkla University (representing Southern region), Khon Kaen University (representing North-eastern region) and Mahidol University. The mission of each TUN-HPN node is to expand the healthy university network in its own region, and to organise national academic conferences and learning exchange discussions.



**Figure 10** TUN-HPN “Polynodal” Model of Collaboration

With this TUN-HPN model, the six leading universities in Thailand have been working, driving health promotion policies and growing together through the project implementation in three main areas:

1. Regional network expansion
2. Joint research projects on topics of mutual interest
3. Organization of the tri-monthly TUN-HPN meetings, along with national academic conferences to share health promotion initiatives and best practices once a year.

Furthermore, TUN-HPN also encourages their sub-regional network to adopt the concept of AUN Healthy University Framework and join the Healthy University Rating System.



**Figure 11** National Academic Conference “Health-Promoting Universities for Sustainable Development ”on September 2, 2022 in Pattaya, Thailand, co-hosted by AUN-HPN and Khon Kaen University as part of the 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Public Health among Greater Mekong Sub-Regional Countries.

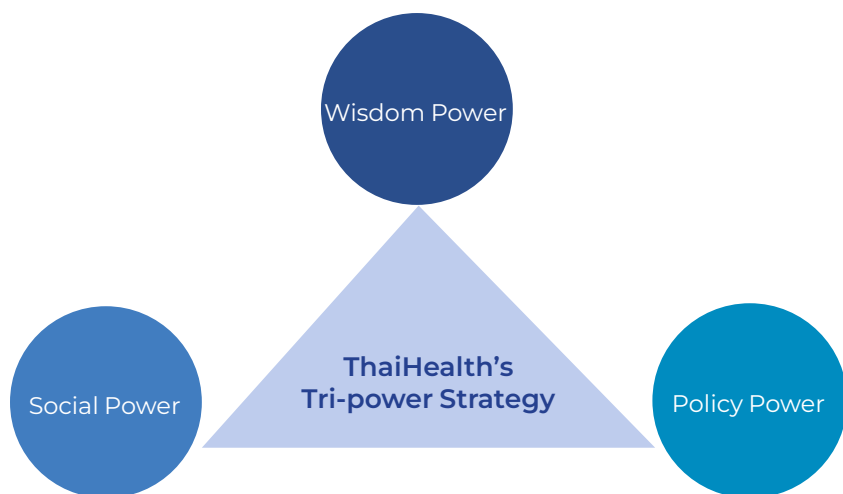


**Figure 12** the 1<sup>st</sup> Thai University Network for Health Promotion Network Committee Meeting at Mahidol University, Salaya, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

## Intersectoral Networks

Polynodal collaboration involves the formation of intersectoral networks. Most crucially, according to Dr. Wiwat, success lies in working together with government bodies, municipalities, and private organisations. Collaborations across sectors resonate with AUN-HPN's mission of bringing HEIs together in dialogue with public health stakeholders, enabling knowledge to transcend beyond the ivory tower of academia to benefit greater society. One of AUN-HPN's most significant intersectoral collaborations is with the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, also known as ThaiHealth.

ThaiHealth, an autonomous government agency established by the Health Promotion Foundation Act in 2001, has roots traced back to a research project by an Australian foundation to study tobacco issues and the increasing impacts of noncommunicable disease in Thailand. Today, ThaiHealth's mission resonates with those of AUN-HPN: "to inspire, motivate, coordinate, and empower individuals and organisations in all sectors for the enhancement of health promotive capability as well as a healthy society and environment to support health promotion movement in Thailand" (ThaiHealth). To do so, ThaiHealth has a "Tri-power Strategy", which includes the creation of knowledge, social mobilisation, and policy advocacy (ThaiHealth). Incidentally, this strategy is also based on the philosophy of intersectoral collaboration to tackle complex public health matters, symbolised by the structural integrity of the three interconnected angles in a triangle.



**Figure 13** ThaiHealth's "Tri-power" Strategy

Most certainly, the collaboration between AUN-HPN and ThaiHealth is a mutually symbiotic relationship. Both institutions benefit from mutual aid. On top of funding from Mahidol University and other partner universities, ThaiHealth also funded a number of AUN-HPN's activities. In Phase 2 of the AUN-HPN Network Expansion, the network has worked with ThaiHealth and partner universities to strengthen the dissemination of healthy lifestyle choices in regions of Thailand. Moreover, AUN-HPN has coordinated many collaborative research projects, such as the three-year long Children and Youth Physical Activity Study (CYPAS) led by Mahidol University and supported by ThaiHealth. As Dr. Supreda confidently predicted, AUN-HPN's expansion had the potential to push for regional public health laws.

According to Dr. Supreda Adulayanon, CEO of ThaiHealth, the strategic alliance with AUN-HPN and Mahidol University has been beneficial since they are well-respected institutions with expansive connections. These collaborations could potentially serve as a launching pad towards others, he added. Furthermore, working closely with AUN-HPN fulfils one of Dr. Supreda's strategy of involving academic sectors in the development of multidisciplinary research and the fostering of high-quality quantitative research that could impact policy-making.

## Cross-border Partnerships

Lastly, the icing on the cake to “polynodal collaboration” lies in the cross-border partnerships fostered by AUN-HPN, whether regional or international. AUN-HPN has established itself as a well-regarded health promotion platform for universities in the “ASEAN Plus Three” states (that is, the 10 ASEAN states including China, Japan, and Korea). One notable cross-border event was the 2014 AUN Policy-Action Workshop on Health Promotion in Japan and ASEAN, which saw the participation of 13 AUN member universities and five Japanese universities: Chiba University, Kumamoto University, Niigata University, Okayama University, and Nagasaki University. The joint-publication, AUN Health Promotion in ASEAN & Japan evinced the generous knowledge-sharing on best practices and success stories on health promotion implementation, which were documented through abstracts submitted by participating universities. While the collaboration was international and regional in ambition, the abstracts revealed that contexts remained local, covering aspects of health promotion in university settings or specific communities. In other words, these exchanges were not only trans-national, but trans-local.

Such cross-border activities also took place in the realm of collaborative research projects. One such case includes the AUN-HPN’s collaboration with Osaka University of Japan for a joint research project on non-communicable diseases (NCD), the primary objective being “to tackle the rise of NCDs by addressing key modifiable risk factors, including tobacco, alcohol, physical, diet, and mental health, for better health and wellbeing of Asian populations.” Indeed, all AUN-HPN members and collaborators saw health promotion as a global project and a necessity for forging international solidarities. Prof. Surakit complimented how AUN-HPN in its early stages already had one foot inside international public health networks under Dr. Wiwat’s leadership.



**Figure 14** AUN-HPN Membership Collaboration Map<sup>8</sup>

Over the past few years, AUN-HPN has taken a multi-scalar approach towards expanding its networks. Working simultaneously on the levels of the local, sectoral, national, regional, and international, these manifold alliances helped further the global movement towards healthy living. Undoubtedly, the network has made many advancements towards its mission as a health promotion platform that serves both HEIs and key stakeholders, encouraging the cross-fertilization of ideas, mutual learning across public health contexts, the formation of research collaboration, and deeper mutual understanding between public health stakeholders in the region and in Asia at large.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix A for the full list of AUN-HPN Membership





**Figure 15** the AUN-HPN team welcomed the visiting team from Center for Global Health, Osaka University at Mahidol University, Salaya, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand  
On 28 - 29 August 2023



**Figure 16** the 3<sup>rd</sup> AUN-HPN International Advisory Committee (IAC) Meeting on 22 February 2018 at Mahidol University, Salaya, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

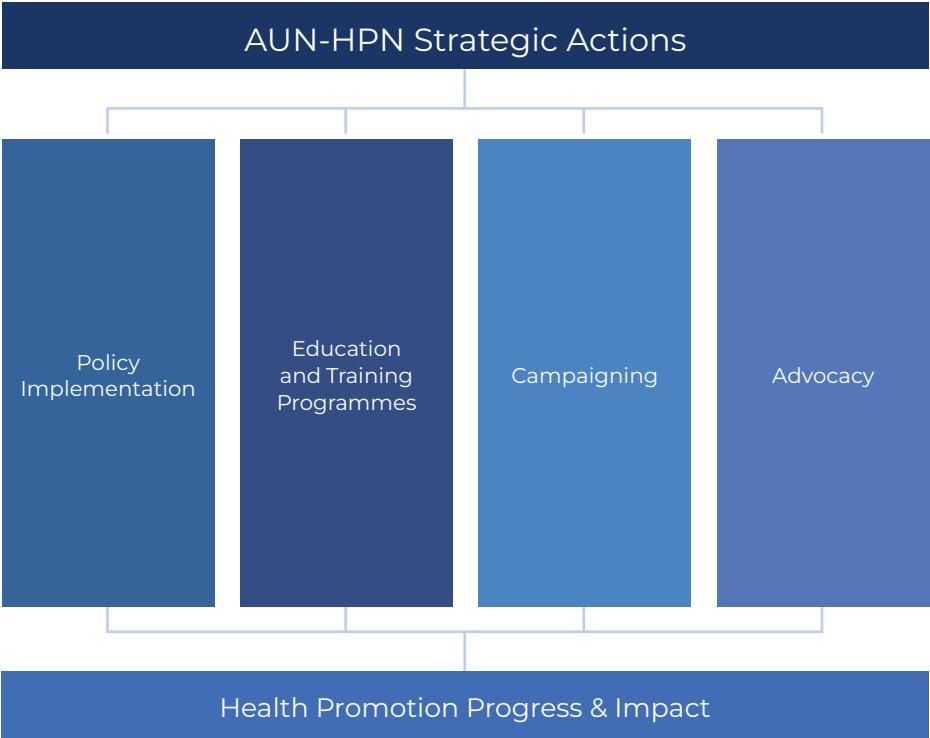
Stepping-stones towards success

# Multipronged Action

Two horizontal bars of different shades of blue, one slightly longer than the other, positioned below the main title.

# Multiprongend Action

AUN-HPN’s work on health promotion not only involves collaborating with nodes situated across various slices of society, but also various ways of working. Dr. Wiwat’s methods have always been dedicated to action, especially deliberate methods towards achieving public health goals. He himself mentioned how “structural interventions” are needed to reform the status quo of health promotion. Apart from collaboration, Dr. Wiwat’s activities in the past have included policy implementation, education and training programmes, lobbying, and advocacy. They each embody a specific methodology towards health promotion.



**Figure 17** AUN-HPN Multipronged Strategic Actions

The first course of action mentioned by Dr. Wiwat is policy implementation. AUN-HPN is underpinned by six charters and declarations, including the Declaration of Alma-Ata (1978), the Ottawa Charter on Health Promotion (1986), the Jakarta Declaration on Leading Health Promotion into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (1997), Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalised World (2005), and the Shanghai Declaration on Health Promotion (2016), each placing different emphasis on collaboration (1978), engagement (1986), participation (1997), and partnership and alliances (2005). While the backbone ethos of health promotion has remained unchanged throughout the years, the tone of each charter and declaration was formulated based on the changing contexts within which each document was written.

However, without a supportive political or cultural environment to take action on public health issues, charters and declarations would become mere pipe dreams. Hence, policy implementation is necessary to ensure that health promotion becomes successful on the ground. Dr. Wiwat suggested that collaboration with ministries could create a national agenda for health promotion. A “top-down” approach from the government to the people is often one of the more efficient methods towards health promotion. This approach was also explained in the Ottawa Charter (1986) as the first principle for making policy complementary to legislative, fiscal, and structural changes. Oftentimes, strong political will is needed for policy implementation and mechanism-setting, a process which could be facilitated by networks like AUN-HPN.

Secondly, Dr. Wiwat listed education and training as actions that could refine health promotion. Like many other public health commentators, he echoed the lack of health literacy in society, and an urgent need to remedy the lack of information and misinformation in the region. In an interview, he cited the recent COVID-19 epidemic as a clear depiction of this problem, where countries like the US and the UK with higher medical resources tremendously struggled to contain the pandemic compared to a country like Thailand, where factors including but not limited to societal health literacy made up for fewer resources.

Building this norm not only serves to protect people from infectious pandemics but also non-communicable diseases, promoting collective self-care and wellness. By educating, training, and developing a culture of health and safety at the university level, AUN-HPN seeks to foster such an attitude from the youth level.

As part of AUN-HPN's training efforts, they have started many capacity-building initiatives throughout the years to increase the institutional effectiveness of health promotion. These include the Research Capacity Building Workshop (2017), Leadership in Health Promotion Workshop (2018) and Monitoring and Evaluation in Health Promotion Workshop (2019), all held in Bangkok. Additionally, in connection to the Healthy University Rating System, the first and second HURS workshop events were held respectively in March and August 2022. Prof. Surakit also observed how the AUN Secretariat was already deeply involved in education-related projects as a bridge between HEIs in the region. With such privileged access into HEI networks, the network's strategic advantage towards health promotion and education is unparalleled. As the adage goes, “teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime”; education and training are indispensable methods towards enhancing health literacy and instilling self-motivated lifestyle changes.



**Figure 18** AUN-HPN Capacity Building Workshop on “Health Promotion Research” at the Aetas Lumpini Hotel, Bangkok on 24-26 July 2017

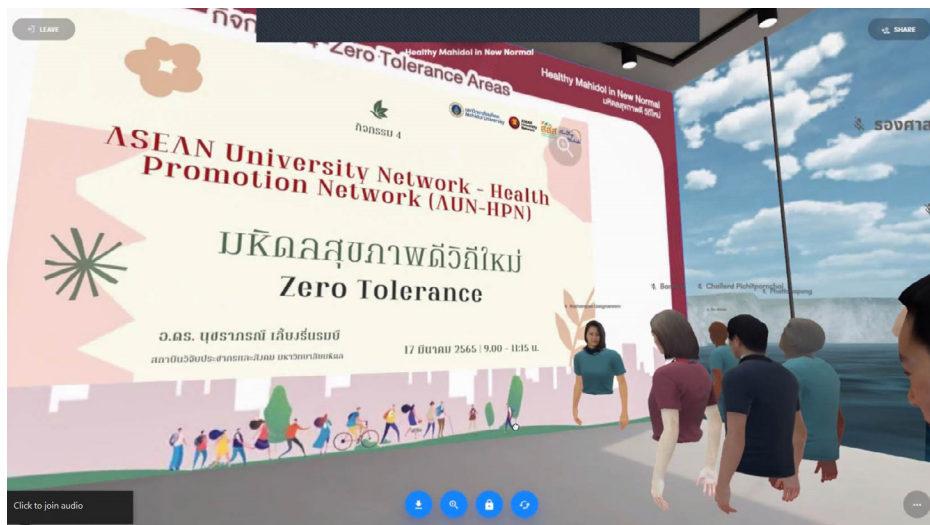


**Figure 19** AUN-HPN Capacity Building Workshop on “Leadership in Health Promotion” at the Ambassador Hotel, Bangkok on 7-8 May 2018

Another strategic action involves campaigning for support from the private sector and industry professionals towards the objectives of AUN-HPN. Experts, organisations, and businesses often command considerable influence and could promote health at a larger scale, especially within the professional world. Dr. Wiwat cautioned that policy-making and state intervention could also regulate campaigning, making the need to navigate through the dense web of stakeholders a tricky yet rewarding endeavour.

Dr. Wiwat’s final call to action is advocacy. His days of spearheading the “100% Condom Use” safe-sex campaign has taught him how advocacy is a powerful tool. It can transform strategic frameworks and policy papers into action and dialogue on the ground, through a process called, “social marketing”. Indeed, the advocacy of healthy lifestyles is not solely the domain of activists or health professionals, but a common ground where every individual in society can engage in. With the advent of social media platforms, as well as cutting-edge and highly accessible media tools, the face of health campaigns has changed dramatically, creating many opportunities for AUN-HPN to conceive innovative health promotion campaigns that will be impactful and memorable for the public.





**Figure 20** Mahidol University's Healthy University Day on March 17, 2022, organised in an innovative metaverse exhibition format

These courses of actions pinpoint to the various management strategies and methodologies that AUN-HPN had pursued or planned to pursue further to reach its health promotion objectives. These actions cannot be merely reduced to “top-down” or “bottom-up” approaches, but concrete attempts at tackling unwieldy public health issues in multi-directional ways. These approaches are adaptable and holistic, to say the least. Far from the passive documentation and declarations of methods past, Dr. Wiwat has pushed for real change and applied these lessons for tangible public benefit, keeping AUN-HPN moving in a spirit of self-reflexivity and foresight.



# Critical Reflections for the Future



In an age of acceleration, change is the only constant. Notwithstanding the network's path-breaking regional endeavours, AUN-HPN is not immune to change. Perhaps no one understands this more clearly than Dr. Wiwat himself. While he is optimistic about AUN-HPN's work, Dr. Wiwat is clear-eyed about the challenges ahead and the steps forward.

For many non-profit organisations, including AUN-HPN, funding remains a hurdle. Prof. Surakit observed that although such organisations do not receive any profit from their work, funding remains an important factor in initiating projects and making a difference. He added that prudent budgeting is the way to achieve financial control over projects, allowing AUN-HPN to reach its short and long-term strategic goals, as well as developing its reputation. Prof. Surakit also raised a concern that Mahidol University's financial support to the AUN-HPN is only sufficient in the short-term. Considering this reality, both Dr. Wiwat and Prof. Surakit emphasised the necessity of expanding the network for the sake of AUN-HPN's sustainability. Polynodal collaborations, or collaborating with stakeholders across various sectors, would present AUN-HPN with more varied funding sources as Dr. Wiwat observed. However, he also cautioned that while more collaborations entail more funding, the success rates of these collaborative projects often need more time to reveal themselves. With more exciting projects planned for the coming years, it will be crucial for AUN-HPN to strike a balance between expanding its budget and its capacity for delivery.

These challenges have not stopped AUN-HPN from continuing with their projects. In terms of the Healthy University Rating System, the new version of the benchmarking tool has recently been launched in connection to the annual assessment period of 2023, from August 15 - November 16, 2023. The outcomes of the assessments are expected to contribute to the sharing of best practices on various aspects among healthy universities. In the near future, AUN-HPN aims to increase the number of five-star healthy universities through consistent upgradation and application of the benchmarking tool, elevating HURS as a world-stage and multisectoral mechanism for worldwide health promotion.

In connection with the Thai University Network Health Promotion Network, AUN-HPN aims to deploy the TUN-HPN Model in different countries across the ASEAN region. This approach will consolidate the synergy of regional health promotion across the region as well as support the standards, projects and activities in health promotion by local HEIs.

Lastly, there has also been an increase in the thematic network's attendance and organisation of international policy dialogue platforms. In May 2023, AUN-HPN attended the International Health Promoting Universities & Colleges (IHPU&C): Steering Group Meeting – joining healthy universities steering groups from various countries and regions. The thematic network's self-organised meetings, including the AUN-HPN International Advisory Committee (IAC) Meeting and the recently returning AUN International Health Promotion Conference, play a vital role in promoting and developing health promotion policies and framework, as well as setting new directions for the network through the gathering of experts and top university players representing partnering universities from both inside and outside the ASEAN region.

The aforementioned growth in both partnerships and activities is a testament to AUN-HPN's strong foundation in funding and resource management. Such efficiency holds a promising outlook towards AUN-HPN's operations and enables the network to create new connections, initiate new projects and – in the process – further expands its resource pool of funders, academics and collaborators who are willing to share their resources and support the network's mission together.



**Figure 21** the panel of distinguished speakers at the 3<sup>rd</sup> AUN International Health Promotion Conference in Nonthaburi, Thailand under the theme “Mental Health and Well-being of ASEAN Universities during the Post-COVID-19 Period: Awareness and Actions”

In parallel to the network’s expansion, sustaining AUN-HPN projects remains a priority, something that Dr. Wiwat knows very well. In the past, he often found himself the only director of his project with the occasional temporary manager, with support but rarely substantial commitment from universities. Recognising this infeasibility, he sees the importance in ensuring that these projects are sustained even after his departure. His tireless effort at expanding the network at the regional, national, and tertiary academic level reflects his aim of institutionalising his projects, ensuring that they will be maintained by an organised team with accountability and responsibility to the task at all levels. The formation of the AUN-HPN contributes much to this objective, and sustaining the organisation remains as much a concern as their projects.

To this end, leadership succession remains a key aspect of sustaining AUN-HPN. While Dr. Wiwat's legacy in AUN-HPN would be large shoes to fill, the network has already begun to nurture a new generation of health promotion leaders. Capacity development and continuity within the network itself follows AUN-HPN's ethos of education. As mentioned by Prof. Banchong, Mahidol University has placed its full confidence on AUN-HPN because the Secretariat Office of AUN-HPN is transferred from the temporary office at Faculty of Medicine Ramathibodi Hospital to the ASEAN Institute for Health Development (AIHD), a faculty-level institution with a mandate to promote health in Thailand and the ASEAN. Over the years following Dr. Wiwat's tenure as the network's executive director, management has been gradually transferring to other capable persons, such as Dr. Phudit Tejavataddhana, the AIHD's Director, or Dr. Viji Kasemsup, Dr. Sakda Arj-Ong Vallibhakara and Dr. Thunwadee Suksaroj, the three Deputy Directors. In 2023, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Chuthamanee Suthisang, Acting for Director of AIHD, is also Acting Executive Director of AUN-HPN, continuing the work and legacy of previous AUN-HPN leaders<sup>9</sup>. No doubt, AUN-HPN's intra-institutional stability offers confidence and security to its stakeholders, propelling the network towards greater heights.

Finally, Dr. Wiwat recognised the important role of the youth and university students in health promotion. As a medical student, he witnessed student societies starting their own initiatives to promote health in their campus and their local communities. He specifies self-help groups as one useful endeavour, since peer-to-peer guidance could prove to be more effective than top-down approaches. Dr. Wiwat therefore not only sees the role of AUN-HPN as central in promoting health to students, but to encourage them to play their own part in spreading awareness through their own channels as well.

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<sup>9</sup> Valid as of November 2023

Through this narrative of AUN-HPN's accomplishments and challenges, its management strategies, and philosophies, Dr. Wiwat, along with his team and successors, have devised sophisticated plans and procedures to push forward health promotion in the region and beyond. From unprecedented regional healthcare issues to funding, the circumstances that have confronted AUN-HPN did not always form a rosy picture. However, the fact that AUN-HPN has been overcoming these hurdles, whether through the deliberate principles of “polynodal collaboration” or “multipronged action”, has revealed the network's organisational resilience and deliberate manoeuvring towards its goals. With its foundation strategized and solidified while Dr. Wiwat was at the helm, AUN-HPN has distinguished itself as a platform for change-makers with a vision for a healthier, happier world.

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# List of AUN-HPN Membership<sup>10</sup>

## AUN-HPN Member Universities

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universiti Brunei Darussalam</li> </ul>
CAMBODIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Royal University of Phnom Penh</li> <li>• Royal University of Law and Economics</li> </ul>
INDONESIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universitas Airlangga</li> <li>• Universitas Gadjah Mada</li> <li>• Universitas Indonesia</li> <li>• Institut Teknologi Bandung</li> </ul>
LAOS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National University of Laos</li> </ul>
MALAYSIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia</li> <li>• Universiti Malaya</li> <li>• Universiti Putra Malaysia</li> <li>• Universiti Sains Malaysia</li> <li>• Universiti Utara Malaysia</li> </ul>
MYANMAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yangon University of Economics</li> <li>• University of Mandalay</li> <li>• University of Yangon</li> </ul>
THE PHILIPPINES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ateneo de Manila University</li> <li>• De La Salle University</li> <li>• University of the Philippines</li> </ul>
SINGAPORE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nanyang Technological University</li> <li>• National University of Singapore</li> <li>• Singapore Management University</li> </ul>
THAILAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chiang Mai University</li> <li>• Chulalongkorn University</li> <li>• Mahidol University</li> <li>• Prince of Songkla University</li> <li>• Burapha University</li> </ul>
VIETNAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can Tho University</li> <li>• Vietnam National University, Hanoi</li> <li>• Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City</li> </ul>

<sup>10</sup> Valid as of November 2023



## AUN-HPN Associate Members

JAPAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Osaka University</li> </ul>
THE PHILIPPINES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies</li> </ul>
THAILAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kalasin University*</li> <li>• King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok</li> <li>• King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi*</li> <li>• Khon Kaen University</li> <li>• Mahasarakham University</li> <li>• Naresuan University</li> <li>• Suranaree University of Technology*</li> <li>• Thammasat University</li> <li>• Ubon Ratchathani University</li> <li>• Walailak University</li> </ul>

\*New AUN-HPN Associate Member Universities as of November 2023



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