Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution **Date:** July 06, 2026

Report Number: TH2026-0019

Report Name: Thais Help Thais - A Temporary Purchase Subsidy Program to Alleviate Rising Living Costs

Country: Thailand

Post: Bangkok

Report Category: Trade Policy Monitoring, Food Security, Policy and Program Announcements

Prepared By: Nitta Sae-lao

Approved By: Adam Branson

Report Highlights:

The Thai government approved a 4-month scheme to reduce the impact of the rise in energy prices in 2026 and the impact on citizens' purchasing power. The "Thais Help Thais" program valued at $5.4 billion provides participants with a monthly subsidy, which helps cover 60 percent of the price of eligible purchases, while the participants pay the remaining 40 percent. This report details the goals, implementation and initial feedback for this program.

Overview

On May 19, 2026, the Cabinet approved the Thais Help Thais Plus: 60/40 program with a budget of $5.4 billion (176 billion baht)[1]. The scheme is a relief program aimed at assisting citizens affected by the recent energy crisis stemming from 2026 conflict in the Middle East. The program seeks to ease the cost-of-living increases and safeguard the purchasing power of the population.

The program targets two beneficiary groups: vulnerable groups via the State Welfare Card[2] (13.2 million people), and the general public aged 18 and over who do not hold the Welfare card (30 million people). Under the co-payment framework, eligible non-welfare holders receive a monthly subsidy of $30.9 (1,000 baht) for four months to use toward covering 60 percent of their purchase costs. For welfare card holders, the Ministry of Finance raises the monthly allowance from $9.3 (300 baht) to $30.9 (1,000 baht) for the duration of the stimulus, which runs from June 1-September 30, 2026.

The Ministry of Finance plans to finance the Thais Help Thais program through a phased borrowing approach. A total of $5.4 billion (176 billion baht) will be raised via term loans and promissory notes at interest rates below 1.5 percent. While the borrowing would raise the public debt-to-GDP ratio to approximately 68 percent by the end of September, it remains within the government's official ceiling of 70 percent. The financing is part of a broader $12.4 billion (400 billion baht) loan decree designed to alleviate cost of living pressures and respond to the energy crisis. All the government's borrowing would be sourced from within Thailand.

Franchise convenience stores and businesses operating as sales agents are excluded. Eligible purchases cover food, beverages, general goods and public transport services. Excluded items include lottery tickets, alcoholic drinks, tobacco, vouchers, prepaid cards and advance-payment services. The scheme also excludes services, such as massages, spas, nail and hair services.

Large modern trade merchants, such as Tops, Big C, Lotus, as well as 7-Eleven, do not participate in the scheme. However, they do echo the government's broader objectives by offering selected items, primarily food & beverage (F&B) and household items, at discounted prices.

[1] The value reflects the official monthly exchange rate published by the Bank of Thailand. The average exchange rate in May 2026 was $1=31.35 baht.

[2] Introduced in 2017, the State Welfare Card, formerly known as the Pracharath Card, serves as a social assistance measure aimed at supporting low-income individuals with annual earnings below $3,091 (100,000 baht). The program sought to alleviate the cost-of-living burden among economically vulnerable populations. Under the scheme, beneficiaries generally received a monthly subsidy of $9.3 (300 baht), credited to their cards at the beginning of each month. However, the amount has been adjusted during periods when the government implemented special economic stimulus or relief measures in response to specific circumstances. For example, under the Thais Help Thais Plus scheme, the monthly subsidy was increased to $30.9 (1,000 baht) baht for a four-month period from June to September 2026. Unlike for the general public, the government fully subsidizes the purchases up to the monthly subsidy amount, and purchases can be made at modern trade channels that have joined the "Blue Flag" program, a network of government-subsidized retail stores.

Eligibility: General Public vs Merchant

<table>
<tr><th>General public</th><th>Merchant</th></tr>
<tr><td>

Must be aged 18 and over on the date of registration
Must hold a Thai national ID card and be a Thai national
Must not be a state welfare cardholder according to the Finance Ministry’s database as of May 18, 2026
Must not have had their rights suspended or been ordered to return money under the previous co-payment schemes Khon La Khrueng phases 1-5 or the Khon La Khrueng Plus scheme

</td><td>

Food and beverage outlets, and general consumer retailers (Thai-owned)

Non-juristic small retailers (e.g. food stalls, mom-and-pop shops)
Non-juristic “Thong Fah” or “Blue Flag” shops, except those operated by cooperatives
Stores operated by village funds, or community funds
State enterprise stores
Must not be operated under a franchise

Public transport operators (Thai-owned, and non-juristic)

Taxi meters, public passenger vans, three-wheeled vehicles (tuk-tuks), shared pick-up taxis (songtaews), and public motorcycle taxis
Rickshaws

Mass transit operators, including urban rail transit systems, railways, public bus operators, and public boat operators
Small legal entitles operating food and beverage outlets, selling general goods, or providing public transport with annual revenue below $55,642.6 (1.8 million baht).
Merchants must not have been suspended from participation or required to repay funds under previous copayment schemes.

</td></tr>
</table>

Registration process

- Registration for “citizens”

The period for registration ran from May 25-29, 2026, or until the quota for 30 million people was reached, whichever came first. At the time of writing this report in June 2026, the registration was still open.

The program is set up so that, the registration must be made through “*Pao Tung*”, a mobile application developed by the state-owned Krungthai Bank. Those who have enrolled in previous co-payment schemes, such as *Khon La Khrueng Plus* in 2025, can immediately enroll in the scheme by confirming eligibility, while new users must register and await SMS to confirm approval.

Holders of State Welfare cards, meanwhile, do not need to make new registration as benefits will be automatically credited to their accounts for purchases at participating “*Blue Flag*” low-priced stores. Holders will receive $30.9 (1,000 baht) each month, fully subsidized by the government.

- Registration for “merchants”

Merchants participating in the scheme are required to register through the "*Thung Ngeon*" mobile application, also developed by Krungthai Bank. This same application serves as the platform through which merchants receive payments processed via the "*Pao Tung*" system.

Previous participating shops from "*Khon La Khrueng*" can immediately confirm their participation via “*Thung Ngoen*” application from May 25-September 30, 2026. New shops can register from May 25-July 31, 2026 via “*Thung Ngoen*” application. Existing and new shops can link food delivery services from June 10-September 30, 2026

Usage

Eligible participants may use “*Pao Tung*” to make payment for everyday purchases with a maximum daily government subsidy of $6.2 (200 baht). The amount is limited to $30.9 (1,000 baht) each month, for 4 consecutive months running from June 1-September 30, 2026. Holders of State Welfare Cards are also entitled to this benefit of $30.9 (1,000 baht) during the period.

To participate in the scheme, citizens must top up their G-wallet within the *Pao Tung* app. When purchasing, users must scan the QR code generated by the merchant via the app, after which the system will automatically deduct 40 percent of the purchase price from user’s wallet. Any unused balance at the end of the month will not carry over to the following month. The payments can only be processed from 6:00 AM and 11:00 PM within the scheme’s period. Food delivery platforms may process food and beverage purchases from June 15 to September 30, between 6:00 AM and 9:00 PM. State Welfare Card holders are subject to a simplified process — they need only present their identification card at designated "*Blue Flag*" shops, where the government covers the full cost of eligible purchases on their behalf up to the available monthly limit.

The government publishes a directory of participating merchants and their locations, enabling users to easily identify and locate eligible establishments.

Feedback

Overall, both the public and merchants have responded positively to the co-payment scheme. Participation has been high from both the merchants and the public. Vendors have reported optimism that the stimulus will generate economic activities, while inclusion of public transport subsidies could help lower commuting costs, especially for urban workers. Nonetheless, as with many similar stimulus initiatives, stakeholders have raised questions about whether the program can generate a sustained and lasting economic impact, as well as concerns surrounding long-term debt management.

By June 7, 2026, approximately 26 million individuals had registered for the scheme, with 84 percent having already begun utilizing their benefits. As of 5:00 PM on June 6, 2026, program participants recorded approximately $433 million (14 billion baht) in total spending. On the merchant side, 997,573 vendors had enrolled in the program, of whom 13 percent were first-time participants in a government co-payment scheme.

Separately, there have been reports of fraud and scams, including the use of fake SMS messages and websites designed to steal personal identification. There have also been allegations of misuse involving merchants and beneficiaries, such as converting benefits into cash or conducting sham transactions in which customers make nominal purchases while receiving a portion of the subsidy as cash. In response, the government has since warned participants to register using official channels and reiterated that misuse or abuse of the system may face prosecution, up to 3 years in prison, a fine of up to $1,855 (60,000 baht), or both. In addition, there have been reports of merchants increasing their prices.

Attachments:

No Attachments.