

Thailand

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Dealing with an Unyielding Glass Ceiling

A Report on Thailand by Pawadee Tonguthai, Ph.D. and Supatra Putananusorn

BACKGROUND

The direction of the Thai government efforts towards promoting gender equality in Thailand relies partly on the national plan known as the “Five-Year Women’s Development Plan.” This plan was formulated within the framework of two major national documents: the Five-Year National Economic and Social Development Plan and the Long Term Perspective Policies and Planning for the Development of Women (1992-2011). After 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was also taken into consideration.

The two most recent national plans for women that are relevant to this report are those covering 1997-2001 and 2002-2006. They were considered an ‘indicative perspective plan,’ in short, a guide to provide direction for women’s advancement.

At the time of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995, Thailand had just been through several years of rapid export expansion, with economic growth reaching double-digit levels in the late 1980s. Although this growth slowed down a bit in the early 1990s, the effects of the boom period still remain. On the political front, the early 1990s saw active people’s movement toward democracy and decentralization of power.

A major overhaul of the constitution presented the hope for reforming Thai politics, giving the grassroots and civil society organizations more opportunities for participation. Thai civil society solidified its strength and pushed for a 1997 constitution that would clearly stipulate the promotion of equality. For example, Article 30 specified that ‘all persons are equal before the law and shall enjoy equal protection under the law. Men and women shall enjoy equal rights...’ It

subsequently became the basis for proposing new laws and amending existing ones on gender equality.

Five strategies have been formulated for the advancement of women in the 1997-2001 period:

- Development of women's potential and raising their quality of life
- Improving the environment to facilitate the advancement of women
- Elimination of discrimination against women
- Development of disadvantaged women
- Improvement of management systems for the advancement of women

A great deal has happened since 1995, notably the Asian financial crisis and the drafting of the new constitution. This is why, in addition to taking into consideration the long-term Women's Development Plan as was done for the previous plan, the concept of 'sufficiency economy' figured prominently in the plan for 2002-2006. Along with the 'people centered' development idea, the plan emphasized effective social security and the participation of all sectors of the economy. More importantly, the principle of gender equality stipulated in the 1997 constitution was integrated into the plan.

Five strategies were specified in this plan:

- Development of women's potential
- Participation of women at all levels of decision making process
- Promotion of equality and social protection
- Improvement of the mass media regarding women's issues
- Development of organizational mechanism and managerial administration regarding women's issues

The 1997 constitution has also led to a major attempt to promote gender equality. Every government agency was asked to assign high-ranking officials to formulate policies and monitor their continuous implementation. Focal points had the task of overall coordination including the drawing up of a Master Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and integrating this principle in projects and programs of all agencies.

In July 2001, the cabinet approved the proposal to appoint an executive administrator responsible for the promotion of gender equality, with the title of "Chief Gender Equality Officer (CGEO)" and to establish the coordination center serving every ministry and department. The person to assume the position of CGEO has to be a high level administrator (at least deputy head of each ministry and department), must believe in the potential and ability of human beings without sexual bias, and must undergo training in gender mainstreaming and advocacy.

WOMEN IN PUBLIC SERVICE AND POLITICS

Women in National Administration

In considering women's participation at the highest level of decision-making, this paper will concentrate on their role on the national level in the executive branch, civil service, judiciary, and public enterprises.

Cabinet ministers

In Thailand's seventy-two years (1939-2004) of experience of constitutional democracy, 16 women were appointed as cabinet ministers. Among them only 5 were fully in charge of ministries while the rest were in less coveted positions, either that of deputy ministers or ministers attached to the Prime Minister's Office. In 2004, there were two full ministers (Ministries of Public Health and Labor) and one deputy minister of Public Health.

The first woman minister gained her position more than four decades after her male counterparts did. In 1976, women were appointed to head the Ministries of Communication and University Affairs. This was followed by the appointment of just one woman in each of the five consecutive cabinets. The situation has improved in 1995 when the number of women ministers increased to three but it has remained at that level.

Table 1: Women's Participation in the Cabinet, 1995 and 2004

1995				2004			
Total	Women	Men	Women %	Total	Women	Men	Women %
49	3	46	6.1	36	3	33	8.3

Source: Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development, 2004

The comprehensive reform of the bureaucratic system, which began in October 2002, has posed new policy-making challenges to both women and men cabinet ministers. Many significant elements of the national administration no longer depend mainly on the ideas and plans of civil servants in the various ministries, government agencies and state enterprises as previously. Women ministers have to concentrate on fulfilling the duties in their ministries to prove themselves worthy of their appointments. None of them has made a point to explicitly promote women's issues, even as women's groups pressure them to do so, probably believing that, as female cabinet ministers, if they can show their capabilities in their jobs and show them comprehensively, they will become role models for other women as well as make it easier for men to accept women in higher decision-making positions.

Civil Service Administration

Civil service is one of the biggest areas that absorb female labor force. At first glance, the overall number of women and men civil servants does not seem to be significantly different, with women accounting for 48.47 % or 612,280 out of the total 1,263,169 civil servants. However, more detailed figures from the Office of Civil Service Commission (Table 2) show that women highly outnumber men in most of the 12 categories except in the police, attorney and judiciary where women's share were only 4.48%, 12.10% and 18.46% respectively.

Table 2: Women and Men in Civil Service by Category and Sex, 2001

Category	October 2000 – September 2001			
	Total	Women	Men	Women %
General Civil Servant	388,054	228,161	159,893	58.80
School Teacher	502,923	281,513	221,410	55.98
Civil Servant in University	49,657	33,036	16,621	66.53
General Parliamentary Officer	1,396	942	454	67.48
Independent Organization Officer	7,604	5,811	1,793	76.42
Judiciary	2,930	541	2,389	18.46
Attorney	1,736	210	1,526	12.10
Police	220,647	9,684	210,763	4.48
Bangkok Metropolitan Officer	29,955	20,788	9,167	69.40
General	17,263	11,277	5,986	65.32
School Teacher	12,692	9,511	3,181	74.94
Provincial Officer	4,770	2,976	1,794	62.39
Sub-district Employee	20,873	9,087	11,786	43.53
Municipality Employee	32,624	19,331	13,293	59.25
General	18,587	8,974	9,613	48.28
School Teacher	14,037	10,357	3,680	73.78
Total	1,263,169	612,280	650,889	48.47

Source: *Women and Men in Civil Service in 2000*, Office of Civil Service Commission, 2002: 2 cited in *Gender Perspective in Politics and Administration*, Gender and Development Research Institute, 2003, p. 24

As a result of men's traditional domination in police, attorney, judiciary and general parliamentary offices, when these categories are included in the category of independent organizations, comparison by ministry shows that women's share was lowest there at 8.24%. The second lowest share of women is found in the Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives at 31.16%, followed by the Ministries of Interior and Communication at 35.97 % and 37.45 % respectively (Table 3).

Table 3: Women and Men in Civil Service by Ministry and Sex, 2001

Category	October 2000 – September 2001		
	Women	Men	Women %
Central and Regional Administration	560,098	614,849	47.67
1. The Prime Minister's Office	5,759	4,594	55.63
2. Ministry of finance	17,715	10,698	62.35
3. Ministry of Foreign Affairs	692	694	49.93
4. Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives	15,418	34,056	31.16
5. Ministry of Communication	5,573	9,310	37.45
6. Ministry of Commerce	2,610	1,591	62.13
7. Ministry of Interior	23,127	41,169	35.97
8. Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare	6,503	4,006	61.88
9. Ministry of Justice	5,690	2,031	73.70
10. Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment	1,614	1,390	53.73
11. Ministry of Education (1)	298,188	229,056	56.65
12. Ministry of Health	122,132	38,217	76.17
13. Ministry of Industry	2,158	2,528	46.05
14. Ministry of University Affairs (2)	33,272	16,698	66.58
15. Independent Organizations (4)	19,647	218,811	8.24
Local Administration	52,182	36,040	59.15
Total	612,280	650,889	48.47

Note: (1) Includes school teachers
(2) Includes civil servants in the universities
(3) Includes judiciary, general parliamentary officers and police
(4) Includes judiciary, attorney, general parliamentary officers, police and independent organization officers

Source: *Women and Men in Civil Service in 2000*, Office of Civil Service Commission, 2002: 9,11,12,13.17. Cited in *Gender Perspective in Politics and Administration*, Gender and Development Research Institute, 2003, p. 25

The number of women is higher than men in general civil service, and rising over time, as shown in Table 4 and Table 5. The ranking in Thai civil service is divided into nine levels, from the lowest C1 to the highest of C11. Over 95 % of all women were in position below C8 level. Women represent a high proportion from level C1 to C5 - the lower rungs in government civil service, and their share at level C1-C2 is about twice that of men's.

Table 4: General Civil Servants by level and sex, 1995

Level	Oct. 1994–Sept. 1995		
	Women	Men	Women %
11	2	29	6.45
10	49	415	10.56
9	341	1,301	20.77
8	2,676	6,501	29.16
7	15,458	17,204	47.33
6	28,776	29,325	49.53
5	58,291	41,943	58.15
4	41,463	28,370	59.37
3	36,123	28,749	55.68
2	21,070	9,357	69.25
1	4,066	2,053	66.45
Total	208,315	165,247	55.76

Source: *Women on the Road to Power and Decision-Making, Gender Development and Research Institute, 1995*

Table 5: General Civil Servants by level and sex, 2002

Level	Oct. 2001–Sept. 2002		
	Women	Men	Women %
11	4	22	15.38
10	83	467	15.09
9	703	1,888	27.13
8	6,529	9,054	41.90
7	32,952	23,356	58.52
6	53,771	42,605	55.79
5	62,996	40,727	60.73
4	35,690	18,043	66.42
3	22,473	10,951	67.24
2	3,964	1,827	68.45
1	3,091	1,666	64.98
Total	222,256	150,606	59.61

Source: *Office of Civil Service Commission, The Prime Minister's Office, 2002*

The highest position for civil service, C11, is that of permanent secretary – one in each ministry. In 1998, a woman was appointed to the post of permanent secretary for the first time. The minister in charge at that time with the authority to decide on the appointment happened to be a woman, Khunying Supatra Masdit, who was the convener of the NGO Forum 1995.

Interestingly, two candidates interviewed for that position, a man and a woman, with comparable qualifications. The fact that the man only had a few more months until his retirement was a major factor influencing the minister's decision to select the woman so that the agency's work can continue uninterrupted. However, that well intended decision resulted in the immediate resignation of the person not selected.

Although that position was for the Prime Minister' Office, not a full ministry, the appointment is widely regarded as a landmark event. The 'glass ceiling' was broken. Since then, four more women have been appointed to the position

of permanent secretary in the following ministries: Education (2), Information, Communication and Technology (1), and Social Development and Human Security (1).

This may be contrasted with data of civil servants who work in state universities shown in Table 6. In 2001, women's share at C1 and C2 levels were 6 times and 2 times that of men, respectively. This situation is similar to what is found in most developing countries: the higher the government position, the lower the number of women appointed.

In general, the number of women in civil service declined drastically from level C8 upwards. This situation remained till 2002. However, a positive trend can be noted in the fact that the share of women at the middle level (C6–C8) up to the high executive level (C9–C11) was greater than that of 1995.

Table 6: Civil Servants in the Universities by Level and Sex, 2001

Level	Oct. 2000–Sept. 2001		
	Women	Men	Women %
11	5	36	12.20
10	96	172	38.52
9	2,062	1,811	53.24
8	3,800	2,305	62.24
7	3,445	2,577	57.25
6	6,521	2,577	71.68
5	6,005	2,768	68.45
4	6,938	2,733	71.75
3	2,877	1,306	68.78
2	901	276	76.81
1	386	65	85.59
Total	33,036	11,621	66.56

Source: *Gender Perspective in Politics and Administration*, Gender Development and Research Institute, 2003

Table 7 shows that among the government agencies applying the “Positional Classification” ranking system (C1–C11), there were only nine women out of the total 76 persons who attained the C11 level. Five of them were from the universities and three serve in the ministries.

For the positions ranking C9, the major share of women, at 53% were mainly from the universities while the lowest share of 25% were civil servants from the ministries. For the independent organizations established under the 1997 Constitution, there was not a single woman as head of such organizations. These organizations are mainly dealing with justice: the Administrative Court, the Ombudsman of Thailand, and the National Human Rights Commission.

Table 7: High Ranking Officers in the Government System by Level and Sex, 2000

Position	Level	Total	Women	Men	Women %
Civil Servant (2002 data)	11	29	3	26	10.34
	10	557	77	480	13.82
	9	2,510	629	1,881	25.06
Civil Servant in the Universities	11	41	5	36	12.20
	10	268	96	172	35.82
	9	3,873	2,062	1,811	53.24
General Parliamentarian Official	11	2	1	1	50.00
	10	6	2	4	33.33
	9	11	6	5	54.55
Independent Organization Official (established according to the Constitution)	11	3	-	3	-
	10	8	1	7	12.50
	9	45	20	25	44.44
Bangkok Metropolitan Official	11	1	-	1	-
	10	25	2	23	8.69
	9	109	38	71	34.86

Source: *Women and Men in Civil Service in 2000*, Office of Civil Service Commission, 2002: 9,11,12,13,17. Cited in *Gender Perspective in Politics and Administration, Gender and Development Research Institute, 2003*, p. 27

The distribution of high-level women civil servants has important implications for development policy-making and state capability to mobilize resources and opportunities for women's advancement.

Judiciary Branch

The judiciary plays a crucial role in interpreting and enforcing all aspects of the law since law making and law enforcement have political as much as legal elements. There are, however, no objective data that show women judges to have made "better judgement" on cases involving women's concerns so it cannot be suggested that if more women were represented in the judiciary, women's concerns will be appropriately addressed.

Though the comparative data of 1993 and 2003 in Table 8 show the small number of women's participation in this branch, it is clear that the number of female judges has steadily increased for all levels of judiciary system. The first Woman Supreme Court Justice was appointed to the Supreme Court in 1995 and 13 more appointments since then have favored women. The share of women in the Court of Appeals was 3 times higher than the Supreme Court. Women's participation as attorney has also increased quite remarkably from 7% to 13.8% (Table 9).

Table 8: Distribution of Judges by Type of Court and Sex, 1993 and 2003

Category	1993*			2003**		
	Women	Men	Women %	Women	Men	Women %
Supreme Court	0	65	0.00	14	159	8.09
Court of Appeal	13	200	6.10	91	378	19.40
Trial Court	134	603	18.18	512	1,847	21.70
Total	147	865	14.52	617	2,384	20.55

Source: * Ministry of Justice, 1994, cited in Thailand's Report on The Status of Women and Platform for Action, Thai National Commission on Women's Affairs, 1994

** Statistics on Women and Men, Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development, 2003

Table 9: Distribution of Attorney by Sex, 1993 and 2003

Category	1993*			2003**		
	Women	Men	Women %	Women	Men	Women %
Attorney	93	1,244	7	210	1,526	12

Source: * Thailand's Report on the Status of Women and Platform for Action, 1994

** Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development

As for the high ranking judiciary positions, data available point out that women's share was even less than 10% (Table 10). Gender equality has a long way to go in the judiciary.

National Committees

National Committees in various ministries play a significant role in influencing national directions and policies. A common practice in Thai bureaucracy is that major issues requiring technical details, long discussions and a wide range of opinions are assigned to 'national committees' comprising of senior ranking persons from concerned agencies plus 'national experts' which include academicians and members of civil society.

The results of their deliberations are then submitted to the ministry or to the cabinet. Many of these 'national committees' are therefore very influential and their proposals and decisions are normally treated with more credibility by the public than those done entirely by ministry's officials. Participation of women is crucial in these committees because it is the main route to mainstreaming gender into the high levels of policy making.

The study on Women and Men in the National Committees done by the National Commission on Women's Affairs from 1995-1996 found that among 62 national committees covering 14 areas of national concerns, only 10.62%

Table 10: High Level Officers in the Judiciary by Position and Sex, 2002

Position	October 2000 – September 2001			
	Total	Women	Men	% Women
Judiciary				
▪ Chair person of Judiciary	1	-	1	0.00
▪ Deputy-Chair person of Judiciary	5	-	5	0.00
Head of Judges for the Supreme Court	25	1	324	4.44
Director-General Judges of Appeal Courts	10	-	10	0.00
Director-General Judges of Appeal Courts	11	1	10	9.09
Attorney				
▪ Attorney-General	1	-	1	0.00
▪ Deputy Attorney-General	4	-	4	0.00
▪ Director-General Attorney	31	-	31	0.00

Source: *Women and Men in Civil Service in 2000*, Office of Civil Service Commission, 2002: 9,11,12,13,17. Cited in *Gender Perspective in Politics and Administration*, Gender and Development Research Institute, 2003, p. 28

out of 1,413 members was made up of women. It pointed out that women were left out in some national committees where women's participation is necessary such as the National Economic and Social Development Board. It further pointed out that in the areas related to education, culture, women, children and the elderly women as committee members constituted only 26.52% (National Commission on Women Affairs, 1997)

Another study in 2001 showed favorable progress: among 322 national committees with 6,338 members, women's participation increased to 15.94%. For 182 - more than half - of such national committees, experts were appointed as committee members and the majority (85.22%) were men. It was found that the national committees with not a woman expert accounted for 101 national committees. (National Commission on Women's Affairs, 2001)

State Enterprises

Likewise, in 60 state enterprises, women constituted only one-third of total employees including women high level administrators. Thus, the number of women as high level administrators would be less than that. (National Commission on Women's Affairs, 1999). For 52 state enterprises under the responsibility of various ministries, the percentage of women as high level administrators was only 13% out of 217 as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: High Level Executive* in State Enterprises by Ministry and Sex, 2002

State Enterprises under Ministry	Women	Men	% Women
Ministry of Science and Technology	3	3	50.00
Ministry of Health	1	1	50.00
Ministry of Commerce	1	1	50.00
Ministry of Defense	2	8	25.00
Ministry of Industry	2	8	20.00
Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives	3	19	13.63
Ministry of Interior	5	36	12.19
Ministry of Finance	5	37	11.90
Ministry of Communications	5	44	10.20
Office of the Prime Minister	2	19	9.52
Ministry of Education	-	7	0.00
Total	29	188	13.30

Note: * Director/Governor and Deputy Director/Governor

Source: Summarized from Gender Perspective in Politics and Administration, Gender Development Research Institute, 2002

Women in International Affairs

Women are still underrepresented in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs— Thailand's main agency responsible for international relations. The data of 1993 and 2002 in Table 12 shows that the number of women at level C9 has risen significantly, accounting for 26.86%. For level C10, however, which includes ambassadorial positions, the number of women dropped one-third. The head of the ministry is male, and this position has yet to be held by a woman.

Table 12: High Level Officers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Level and Sex, 1993 and 2002

Level	1993				2002			
	Total	Women	Men	Women %	Total	Women	Men	Women %
C9	17	2	15	11.76	67	18	49	26.86
C10	12	2	10	16.66	77	9	68	11.68
C11	1	0	1	0.00	1	0	1	0.00

Source: Office of Civil Service Commission, 1993 and 2002

Problems and Difficulties Experienced by Women in Public Service and in Official Positions

From earlier sections, it is clear that women do not have a disadvantage in joining the civil service. In fact, there are more women than men in it, with the proportion rising from 55.76% in 1995 to 59.61% in 2002. In terms of opportunity, however, the gender gap is quite apparent. In 1994, women accounted for only 15.71% in the top three levels (C9 – C11). There is an encouraging sign of the gradual increase in that proportion, to 22.31% in 1999.

Figures of women and men appointed to executive positions in the civil service also reveal gender differences. In 1996, women civil servants at C9 – C11 levels with executive positions represented 15.23% in 1996 and rose only slightly to 16.47% in 2001.

Promotion in the civil service is supposed to be based on merit, with strictly defined criteria, but the realities as reflected in the above figures is different. What are the main constraints keeping women from rising to the top as fast as men?

Some possible answers:

Family responsibility: in the civil service, opportunities for promotion often come with the requirement to relocate. It is rare for men to leave their jobs to accompany their wives but women seem to be expected to take long leaves or even quit their jobs to enable husbands to perform their roles more efficiently. The foreign ministry is a case in point, with 8 female ambassadors and 54 male ambassadors in 2004.

Image of women in leadership position: Having women as executive role models plays an important part in easing the way for the next women's wave. In the "typically male" government offices such as the Department of Mineral Resources, male executives hesitated answering when asked for their opinion on women's management capability whereas in the Foreign Trade Ministry where there has been a steady stream of women in the top positions for

some years, women's capability was never in doubt. (Vichitranonda and Bhongsvej, 2003)

Being female: In the current environment where men occupy a majority of top positions, both in the civil service and politics, women may be disadvantaged if social belief acts as barrier preventing them from working closely with male superiors. That may result in less opportunity for women to prove their capability to people who have the authority to promote them. And there might be unfortunate cases where male superiors simply dismiss capable women on the ground that their work schedule may be less flexible than their male counterparts.

A much-publicized case occurred in 1995, just one month after the Beijing conference where the Thai government committed itself to, among other things; ensure gender equality in decision-making positions. A female official in the ministry of commerce who was widely respected for her ability and was obviously the most qualified candidate for the top civil service post was denied promotion by the minister in charge at that time. She would have made history as Thailand's first female permanent secretary of a ministry. The minister in charge appointed a less senior man and nonchalantly told the press that he had a perfectly good reason for doing so, because "...being a woman, she would have difficulty if I need to hold an urgent meeting at night"

Although she felt no resentment towards the man who bypassed her, to serve a person with obvious less seniority would have been awkward and many people expected her to resign. Fortunately, it was prevented by a deputy prime minister who requested her transfer to a position at the Prime Minister's Office – a job of equal rank on the civil service ladder (C 11) although with much less authority.

As a result, whenever her case came up for discussion as blatant sex discrimination, the person concerned always emphasized that it was a specific case - although highly publicized - a result of one male politician's preference. For whatever reason he felt uncomfortable working with a woman. There are at the same time, other Thai men who did not like to see such 'discrimination' and would go out of their way to lessen the negative impact of the authority they have.

At that time, however, women advocates tried their best to see the appointment through. Newspapers run by women listed the qualification of the two candidates side by side, showing the obvious superior quality of the female candidate. On the day of the cabinet meeting to decide the promotion, a large number of women NGOs gathered outside the government house holding big banners supporting the woman.

The cabinet endorsed the name submitted by the minister without any debate. The Prime Minister's explanation was that such appointment is normally the prerogative of the minister concerned and it was his principle not to interfere. Most people did not see it that way but the Prime Minister later seemed to try to make amends when he subsequently appointed that female official to the senate.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP OF ORGANIZATIONS

Non-Governmental Organizations

Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) in Thailand have always been quite active in their involvement in the country's economic and social development. Their contributions are widely accepted and recognized both by the public and the government. Data on the participation of men and women in NGOs are very difficult to collect, partly because a large number of people who are involved do so on a voluntary basis while they have regular full time jobs.

Women's participation in these organizations is higher than men. The latest data in 2000 compiled by the National Commission on Women's Affairs showed that of 216 non-governmental organizations, both registered and non-registered working for the advancement of women in different areas of concern, as much as 65 % of the high level administrators were women. The percentage of women coordinators was even higher at 73%.

Labor Unions

Membership in labor unions and federations is another form of political participation. Data from 1988 and 2003 data on federations and unions in the Thai public and private sector showed that where the membership was composed of both women and men, men still outnumbered women in terms of participation.

Data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare also confirm the above notion. Among 839 labor unions in 1993, men accounted for 60% of the total numbers. (Thai National Commission on Women's Affairs, 1994:33) Data from the Department of Welfare and Labor Protection indicated that in 2003, out of 1,066 executive officers of state enterprises' unions, there were only 138 women (12%) while in the private sector's unions there were 4,143 women out of 12,215 executive officers (33.39%) (Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development, 2003:38).

However, the role of women executive members revolves around routine tasks such as treasurer while the men take on decision-making positions.

Educational Institutions

Figures of civil servants who work in educational institutions reported in section A showed a similar pattern as that in general civil service, that is, women far outnumber men in the lower level but the situation is completely reversed further up the ladder. The gap is even wider when decision-making positions are brought into consideration. Figures in Table 13 show that for the position of dean of the faculty, women's share was only 5 %. There is, however, a slight progress for the position of deputy dean where women's share has risen from 20.13% in 1996 to 25.55% in 2001.

As for the top administrative position in a university, the proportion of women in the position of rector in 1996, the latest year that the data is available, was one fourth. It is unlikely to have changed much in the past several years.

Women's Leadership in Cooperatives

Agricultural cooperatives are important local level organizations for decision-making in rural areas. Table 14 gives comparative data on women's participation as in executive committee of agricultural cooperatives. In the past 10 years, women's share in most cooperatives has increased 2-8 times except the Grocery Cooperatives where the proportion of women has dropped from one in five to less than one in ten.

Table 13: High Level Officers in State University by Sex, 1996-2001

Position	Total	1996*			2001**			
		Women	Men	Women %	Total	Women	Men	Women %
Dean	20	1	19	5.00	21	1	20	4.76
Deputy-Dean	148	30	119	20.13	177	47	130	25.55
Rector	203	49	154	24.14	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Total	372	80	292	21.51	198	48	150	24.24

Note: n.a. refers to data not available

Source: * Report on Government Workforce, Office of Civil Service Commission, 1996 cited in *Women on the Road of Power and Decision-making*, Gender Development Research Institute, 1998

** Report on Government Workforce, Office of Civil Service Commission, 2001

Table 14: Participation as Executive Committee in Cooperatives by Sex, 2004

Type of Cooperatives	1993			2004		
	Women %	Men %	Total	Women %	Men %	Total
Land Settlement Cooperatives	3	97	100	24	76	100
Agricultural Cooperatives	3	97	100	12	88	100
Fishery Cooperatives	8	92	100	26	74	100
Savings Cooperatives	15	85	100	28	72	100
Service Cooperatives	8	92	100	19	81	100
Grocery Cooperatives	20	80	100	9	91	100
Average	9	91	100	17	83	100

Source: Department of Cooperatives Promotion, 1993 and 2004

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

Women as Voters

Thai women have attained the right to vote and to stand in election for political office on an equal basis with men since 1932 – earlier than women in most western developed countries. However, the first female Member of Parliament was not elected until seventeen years later and women remain underrepresented both as candidates for and holders of public offices. After the International Women's Year in 1975 however, government and non-government agencies became more active in their efforts to promote women's political participation. As a result, more women have appeared in the political arena and gradually moved up the rank, although men still dominate high ranking political positions.

Sex disaggregated data were collected for the first time in the 1992 general elections, revealing that the percentage of women eligible voters has been moving steadily higher than that of men, increasing from 50.62% in 1992 to 50.84% in 1996 and 51.12% in 2000 (Table 15). This is a demographic consequence of the 5 years average longer lifespan of women (Vichitranonda and Bhongsvej, 2003: 42).

Among those eligible voters who actually go out and exercise their right to vote, the percentage of women has also been increasing from 50.82% in 1992 (approximately 400,000 more women than men) to 52.09% in 1996 (approximately 1 million more women than men).

This increasing tendency of women to participate in politics as voters may have resulted from women being more conscientious in fulfilling their civic duty than men as well as being more concerned about having a say in choosing the persons responsible for the future of their communities.

Unfortunately, sex disaggregated data were not available from the 2001 national elections to serve for further analysis of women's political participation. It was the first time that the administration of the election was under the control of the newly established National Election Commission in conforming with the 1997 Constitution and it inexplicably ignored the significance of sex disaggregated data.

Table15: Eligible Voters and Voters in National Electoral Politics by Sex, 1992, 1996 and 2000

	1992		1996		2000	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Eligible Voters	16,461,581 (50.62%)	16,015,506 (49.38%)	19,625,386 (50.84%)	18,939,450 (49.06%)	20,451,647 (51.12%)	19,521,185 (48.88%)
Actual Voters	9,768,924 (50.82%)	9,455,277 (49.18%)	12,539,547 (52.09%)	11,531,197 (47.91%)	n.a.	n.a.

Note: n.a. not available

Source: Gender Perspective in Political and Administration, GDRI, 2003

Women as Candidates

Women in National Politics

- Members of Parliament

Women's increased political participation occurred at both the national and local levels. For national politics, Table 16 shows an increase in the number of women candidates for the Lower House from 10.20% in 1995 to 15.58% in 1996. In the 2001 national election women's participation dropped slightly to 12%. Women's chance of having their names submitted as national candidates is already quite small but the chance of getting elected is even smaller.

However, from 1988 onward there has been a remarkable trend for women gaining seats in the National Parliament. The percentage of women elected gradually increased from 2.8% to 6.14% and 9.20% in 1988, 1995 and 2001

respectively. The number of female Members of Parliament in 2001 was 46 -- almost twice the highest number of the previous three decades.

The 1997 Constitution provides new opportunities for women and men to enter national politics. In addition to submitting a list of candidates for direct parliamentary election, each party is required to also propose a 'party list' of up to 100 persons. The chance of the candidates on that list to be selected as Member of Parliament is proportional to the number of candidates from that party who are successfully elected.

For the 37 parties taking part in the latest election, 147 women whose names were placed on the party list accounted for 18.15 % of the total. Only eight of them went on to become Members of Parliament in the party list category. The low number reflects the fact that most parties put women's names way down the list, the few women gaining their place among the top ten were either high profile political personalities or show business celebrities whose appearance during political rallies are expected to draw large audiences.

Whether or not the number of women willing to run as candidates is now higher than before is an interesting question but unfortunately it is hard to find data to support this claim. What is undisputable, however, is that more high profile women are now running, particularly from the show business sector. There are some obvious reasons: they are sought after by the political parties at least as 'crowd getters' for the campaign rallies and will add color to the other candidates.

- Senators

It took almost twenty years after Thailand became a constitutional democracy before the first woman was appointed to the Senate. The first two women senators were appointed in 1949 which coincidentally was also the year the first woman was elected to the parliament.

During the half century when senators were appointed (the last appointment was made in 1996), women's representation was very small, never rose above 9% and most of the time remained slightly above 1%. There were altogether only 69 women Senators with 28 appointed twice.

Senators were directly elected for the first time in 2000 under the 1997 Constitution. The number for the whole country was specified at 200, corresponding to the number of electoral districts which averaged about 307,330 persons per district. Among 115 women candidates, 20 women were elected, making their representation in the senate stand at 10% which is by far the all-time highest (Table 17).

Table 16: Candidates and Elected Members of Parliament by Sex, 1969-2002

No.	Date	Candidate			Elected		
		Women (%)	Men (%)	Total	Women (%)	Men (%)	Total
9	10 February 1969	27 (2.15)	1,226 (97.85)	1,253	5 (2.28)	214 (97.72)	219
13	18 April 1983	54 (2.87)	1,826 (97.13)	1,880	13 (4.01)	311 (95.99)	324
14	27 July 1986	362 (9.50)	3,449 (90.50)	3,811	12 (3.26)	335 (96.54)	347
15	24 July 1988	366 (10.13)	3,246 (89.87)	3,612	10 (2.80)	347 (97.20)	357
16	22 March 1992	212 (7.17)	2,742 (92.83)	2,954	12 (3.33)	348 (96.67)	360
17	13 September 1992	242 (10.01)	2,175 (89.99)	2,417	15 (4.17)	345 (95.83)	360
18	2 July 1995	242 (10.20)	2,130 (89.80)	2,372	24 (6.14)	367 (93.86)	391
19	17 November 1996	360 (15.58)	1,950 (84.42)	2,310	22 (5.60)	371 (94.40)	393
20	16 January 2001	347 (12.47)	2,435 (87.53)	2,782	46* (9.20)	454* (90.80)	500
					45** (9.00)	455** (91.00)	

Note: * Certified in 31 July 2002

** Certified in 3 April 2003 after additional election in 3 March 2003

Source: Gender Development Research Institute compiled from Local Administration Department, Ministry of Interior and the Office of Election Commission

Women in Local Politics and Administration

Local political participation in Thailand covers membership at different levels of administrative bodies: from Bangkok Metropolitan Council, provincial councils, to sub district administrative organizations. Local political/administrative positions such as mayor, sub district head and village head are also included.

Under the 1914 Local Administration Act, women were not allowed to run for local political positions. A reform was put into effect in 1982 and many women quickly stepped in to take advantage of the new opportunity. Since then, they have gradually gained ground but the fact that they their political participation started 68 years later than men means they still have to cover a lot of ground to catch up. Nevertheless, the rate of progress has been encouraging.

As in national politics, the pattern of male domination is clearly evident at all local level politics - as member of the councils and administrative bodies. Between 1995 and 2002 there has been little improvement in women's share for some positions (Table 18).

Table 17: Number of Senators by Sex, 1975 - 2001

Year	Women		Men		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
1975	9	9.00	91	91.00	100
1976	18	5.29	322	94.71	340
1977	10	2.78	350	97.22	360
1979	3	1.33	222	98.67	225
1981	3	1.33	222	98.67	225
1983	4	1.65	239	98.35	243
1985	5	2.06	238	97.94	243
1986	5	1.92	255	98.08	260
1987	5	1.92	255	98.08	260
1988	5	1.87	262	98.13	267
1989	6	2.25	261	97.75	267
1992	7	2.59	263	97.41	270
1996	21	8.08	239	91.92	260
2000	20*	10.00	180*	90.00	200

Note: * Certified in 31 July 2002

Source: Gender Development Research Institute compiled from the Local Administration Department, Ministry of Interior and the Office of Election Commission, 2003

The percentage of women's participation as members of provincial council increased from 4.9% to 6.9%. Out of the total of 7,245 sub district village heads, women's share increased from 1.79% to 2.1%.

The improvement mentioned above partly resulted from efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in capacity building programs and campaigns. They have helped increase awareness and enhance potentials of women in the provincial and rural areas offering wider opportunities in the political arena (NCWA, 1997).

Compared to the situation in the provinces, women's share in local government in Bangkok was higher. The percentage of women's participation in Bangkok Metropolitan Council and its district councils was 15% and 11% respectively. For the latest election in 2002, such percentages increased to 16.7% and 11.9% respectively while in the provinces women held less than 10% of political positions. (Table 19)

Women's Leadership in Political Parties

Figures in Table 20 show an increase in the number of women in decision-making positions of national political parties. However, the rise in number of women party leaders from one to four - representing 11.8 % of party leaders - during the five year period of 1998 to 2003 should be viewed with caution.

Table 18: Percentage of Women in Local Politics and Administration by Position, 1995 and 2002

Position	Percentage of Women	
	1995*	2002**
Member of Bangkok Metropolitan Council	n.a.	15.00
Member of Bangkok Municipality Council	n.a.	11.00
Member of Provincial Council	4.90	6.90
Member of Municipal Council	6.00	(2000) 6.00
Member of Sub-district Administration Organization	9.06	8.20
Sub-district Head	1.42	1.80
Village Head	1.79	2.10

Source: * *Women in Decision-Making Positions: Politics and Administration, GDRI, 2000*

** *Latest figures compiled by the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development, Pamphlet, 2003*

Table 19: Local Political Election in Bangkok by Sex, 2002

Election	Candidate			Elected		
	Women (%)	Men (%)	Total	Women (%)	Men (%)	Total
Bangkok Metropolitan Council	42 (15.6)	227 (84.4)	269	10 (16.7)	50 (83.3)	60
Bangkok Sub-district Councils	137 (14.6)	792 (85.4)	927	30 (11.9)	230 (88.1)	260

Source: *Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development, 2004*

The rise refers to rather obscure political parties, which are not among the main active political parties in Thai politics.

Overall, there seems to be a bright future for women's participation in national politics. This requires full support from the government, NGOs, international women's networks and particularly the political parties. Although relentless campaigns by both public and private organizations have begun to take effect, influencing political parties to promote women to political positions particularly cabinet ministers, there is as yet no clear policy of any political party to promote women's candidacy in national elections.

One female politician who is better known for her works in assisting women and children in distress has recently managed to become secretary general of a major party. Unfortunately, the change at the very top, the loss of the major party's seat in the coalition government, and subsequent upheavals has

Table 20: Leadership in Political Party by Position and Sex, 1998 and 2003

Position	1998			2003		
	Women	Men	Women %	Women	Men	Women %
Party Leader	1	23	4.2	4	30	11.8
Party Secretary General	2	22	8.3	5	26	16.1

Source: *Statistics on Women and Men, Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development, 2003*

currently put the party on a downward trend. Relying on her woman's media profile, the party is submitting her name as candidate in the race for Bangkok governor in mid 2004.

Women's participation in four political parties is shown in Table 21, which comes from a recent study on the political membership of major political parties. The proportion of women in the administrative committee of these top four parties range from 6.45% for Thai Rak Thai Party, to 14.28% for Chat Pattana Party. Considering political participation in the advisory capacity, the Democrat Party which is currently the leading opposition and the Chart Thai Party which joined Thai Rak Thai as a minor coalition partner, have no women on their advisory teams.

Difficulties Experienced by Women in their Participation in Electoral Politics

The same set of factors responsible for women's lower representation at the decision-making level in public service plays an even more important role here. For example, family responsibility is expected to be a major constraint because a career in politics is certain to take women away from their homes much more frequently and much farther away than other jobs.

For women to fully participate in politics, they have to break down the traditional stereotypes and attitudes, such as that men are more suitable for leadership role and participation in public affairs.

When Thailand's political system was under absolute monarchy, the most reliable way of bringing honor to the family was through service to the king, earning titles and their accompanying privileges. That role was assigned almost exclusively to men while women were expected to take care of the family well being both physically and economically. That practice had led to Thai women being long accepted for their role in the economy. It will take a lot longer for women to be accepted in decision-making role and politics.

Table 21: Leadership in Major Political Parties, by Position and Sex, 2003

Party	Admin. Committee			Advisors			Head of Advisory team			Women %
	Women	Men	Women %	Women	Men	Women %	Women	Men	Women %	
Thai Rak Thai	2	29	6.45	1	26	3.70	2	32	5.88	5.43
Chat Thai	7	52	11.86	-	13	0	-	9	0	8.64
Chat Pattana	5	30	14.28	1	23	4.16	-	-	0	10.16
Democrat	4	43	8.69	-	6	0	-	-	0	7.54

Sources summarized from Thailand's Combined Fourth and Fifth CEDAW Report, Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development, 2003

Being female, the factor which has constrained women in their public life has gotten even worse in politics where quite often having a mentor can greatly help newcomers jump start their career. Unfortunately for women, such opportunity is often denied them. Almost all of the top people in politics are male and a mentor-protégé relationship between persons of opposite sex in whatever area is certain to come under suspicious scrutiny.

Women who want to climb up the political ladder have to maintain a delicate balance between enjoying the advantage of "on the job training" with the most experienced persons and exposing themselves to sexual scandals.

In addition, there are reports of discrimination or even violence against women who make the effort to engage in political activities, becoming candidates or becoming members of local administration councils. Discrimination may involve threats, actual physical violence or spreading rumors to discredit them, particularly those involving sexual improprieties. Women who are awarded important positions are invariably assumed to have gained such favor through their special relationship with influential people in the political parties.

The printed media in particular enjoy creating and elaborating on those types of scandals seeing that those stories help them sell their papers. They are only too eager to spread rumors without bothering to check the facts. Most female politicians choose to ignore them rather than take the time and trouble suing the papers since it would damage their relationship with the media.

Should women sue, even if they win the case, the papers will be ordered to pay just a small fine or to put up an announcement of apology for a couple of days which is buried somewhere deep in the back pages where hardly anyone will notice, in contrast to the bold print on the front page when the juicy 'false stories' were originally published.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Affirmative Action for Women in Politics

Among the key enabling factors for the advancement of women, the 1997 Constitution is considered one of the most influential. Non-governmental agencies working on women's issues have joined forces and played a significant role throughout the drafting process, particularly in lobbying for the recognition of women's rights.

Women's keen interest in having their inputs into the constitution was clearly indicated by the fact that they comprised just over one third of the candidates for the drafting committee. Those who were elected to the committee received a great deal of inputs and assistance from women NGOs. Through their combined efforts, crucial gender concerns were integrated into the constitution, earning it the reputation as the first constitution that most closely reflects the people's interests.

Section 30 of the Constitution specified that men and women have equal rights, and unjust discrimination against a person on the grounds of sex is not permitted. Any measures to eliminate obstacles or to promote women's ability to exercise their rights and liberties is not considered as unjust discrimination. Section 80 also declared that the state must promote gender equality.

With these strong points, Section 30 and 80 have been utilized as justification to promote the status of women by most NGOs. Political leaders were lobbied and encouraged to enunciate their policies and opinions on gender equality, particularly regarding women in decision-making positions and as candidates in national elections.

The new electoral system that became effective in 1998 containing 'party list' category of candidates provided an excellent opportunity for NGOs to press the government to declare their intention. Major political parties made a point to highlight their intention to increase the number of women MPs and most importantly to include women on the party list

Although most political parties did not shy away from discussing the issues with representatives of women's organizations, none of them were willing to go as far as announcing their commitment to specific quota or measures to increase the number of women candidates for parliamentary election. One noticeable effort was to recruit nationally recognized names, movie stars, media personalities and to place them high on the party list, hopefully to use their popularity to attract more votes.

Once the election is over and the government assumes office, leaders are reminded to keep their campaign promises. Within the first month while policies are being drafted, leaders of coalition parties and persons expected to be in the drafting group receive letters identifying women's concerns. Most government leaders in recent years have included women's issues in their government policy statement. The first one on record was in 1992 which specified intention to "amend laws that discriminate against women in occupation, eliminate child prostitution and solve the problem of child labor."

The first policy statement that included issues of women in power and decision-making occurred in 1995. It was announced at the end of July, less than two months before the Beijing Conference. Undoubtedly the policy statement was influenced by the increasing awareness in Thailand of the issue of gender equality as a result of NGO activities during the previous two years in preparation for the Beijing Conference.

Banharn government's policy statement in 1995 included a section which specified that:

"... the government will promote women's participation in national development both in economics, social and politics as well as a role in determining the country's future direction..."

Subsequent governments have followed suit and included similar statements, for example:

Chaowalit government, 1996

"...promote women's role to participate in economic, social and economic development and all levels of administration including eliminate all forms of discrimination against women..."

Chuan Leekpai government, 1997

"...to promote gender equality by amending laws, regulations and rules to provide the opportunity for women and men to engage in a career or to have an administration and decision-making role both in the public and private sectors on equal terms in line with the Constitution..."

Thaksin government, 2001

"...aim to promote women's rights, role and status, develop women's capability to enable them to fully participate in community development – in economic, social and politics – and promote gender equality in government service."

Affirmative Action for Women in Government

Although there is no clear affirmative action to promote participation of women in high level government, there are several efforts in that direction such as that made by the National Commission on Women's Affairs in asking the cabinet to consider equitable appointment of women in national committees where major decisions are made.

Currently, only a small percentage of women are in national level committees. The reason is that most committees are comprised of members who were assigned a seat according to their official positions, not by personal merit. As seen in Section A, women constitute a much lower percentage than men in C9 – C11 levels and consequently have lower chances of being appointed.

After the 1997 constitution and the subsequent efforts by NGOs to create awareness in having equal representation, a few high profile national committees such as the Human Rights Commission have had roughly equal number of men and women (6 men and 5 women).

Gender Mainstreaming

After the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution, women in government have witnessed much progress the past seven years through the active role of the Office of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) which was headed by a woman. Closely coordinating with the national women's machinery, CSC started to influence human resources in civil service where inequality between women and men still exists.

A national committee was established to identify measures to promote gender equality in the civil service. It was chaired by the president of Thai Women Watch, an NGO monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The committee composed of heads of main government agencies, gender experts and several NGOs dealing with gender equality. Such composition indicates the Thai government's recognition of and respect for the hard work of women NGOs.

Based on the recommendations derived from the sub committee, the "Guidelines for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Personnel Administration of the Civil Service Agencies" was developed in 2000 and circulated to all civil service agencies.

Case Study: The Village and Urban Community Revolving Fund:

This is widely considered by women NGOs to be a breakthrough government policy on promoting gender equality in decision-making process. The Village and Urban Community Revolving Fund (Village Fund) is one of the main anti-poverty policies initiated by the current government headed by Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra which were implemented immediately after assuming office in January 2001.

Under this policy, a sum of one million baht was allocated to each of the more than 75,000 villages and urban communities throughout the country. A village fund committee was to be established to handle the disbursement of the fund.

Its purpose was to act as a micro credit scheme available to individuals and households in villages/communities for local initiatives, investment and supplementary vocations. The specified goals were to: 1) widen economic opportunities through building up people's learning process, problem-solving skills, self-reliance and initiatives, and 2) activate grassroots economy as an alternative means to restore the national economy during the economic downturn as a result of the 1997 economic crisis.

For implementation, a national level committee was established to be responsible for the overall policy and plan. At the local level, the fund is managed by the people themselves who are elected by each village or urban community. The regulation stipulates that the 15-member management committee in each community has to consist of an equal number of women and men. The management members are expected to set up the necessary conditions to ensure the effective management of loan, accounting, monitoring and repayment.

The 15-member committee was to be formed at a special meeting of household heads. A fact that was overlooked by many was that men comprise 98 % of village heads and 75 % of household heads. Consequently, the chance of women to be represented in the Village Fund Committee is very small.

To remedy the above situation, women's NGOs together with the national machinery for women initiated a nationwide lobbying campaign for gender equality in the Village Fund. Their campaign partners came from all sectors of the Thai society, including parliamentarians, senior citizen groups, NGOs working with community organizations, and the inner circle of the Prime Minister's staff.

Up until the morning of the inauguration ceremony of the Village Fund Program to be attended by the Prime Minister, it seemed the campaign would not achieve its goal. Despite words of assurance from the deputy PM who chaired the Village Fund National Committee responsible for overall policies and strategies that there would be no gender discrimination, there was no clear guideline and specification in the draft regulation of equal participation of women and men.

The decisive move that led to the success of this intensive campaign efforts was the personal lobbying with the Prime Minister himself, including a one page fax sent to him by a group of senators the night before the ceremony and the dramatic event when representatives of more than 50 women organizations submitted a letter to the Prime Minister minutes before his opening speech at the Fund inauguration.

The Prime Minister's speech boldly acknowledged an oversight on gender issues and announced an amendment to regulation No. 16 (the composition of the Village Fund), to have an equal representation of women and men in the committee to be set up in all the more than 75,000 villages and urban communities. It was the first time that a government regulation clearly and explicitly specified equal representation of the two sexes.

Currently, there are around 75,359 funds available for both rural and urban communities of which about 95 % are in the rural areas. The village fund committee has provided an important opportunity for women in rural and provincial areas to use their knowledge and experience for the benefit of the communities. It also helps create an awareness of gender equality among the general population as well as enables women to learn decision-making skills.

Although follow-up studies do not have sex-disaggregated statistics on those who have been elected, it could be inferred that women have been given much better control on the village or community funds. The recent statistics from the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development (OWAFD) -- the current national machinery for Women -- estimated that out of 75,359 funds around 3,803 funds or 5 % are under the leadership of women.

Women's active participation in the Village Fund has significant implication to the growth of the funds since women's concerns are often related to family and community well-being. During the past 4 to 5 decades since local administration has been decentralized, experiences from the Sub-district Administrative Organizations, the first rung of local administrative bodies, indicated that where fund management is dominated by men, a large part of the fund tend to be allocated for infrastructure projects and only a small part was spent for social purposes.

Such a success in advocacy has indicated that the road to get affirmation action should not be considered a dead end. The current effort of putting an equal number of women and men in the Sub-district Administrative organizations is thus ongoing. Although the process is tedious, it helps in building up an understanding on the affirmative action to get women in power.

The aims of the guidelines were to provide more gender sensitive recommendations in personnel administration by placing importance on the four areas: 1) task assignment; 2) human resource development particularly on scholarship to study abroad, training/study trip, and seminar/conference; 3) promotion to a higher rank; and 4) increase in salary. This was considered the first step for affirmative action for gender equality in the government.

The guidelines came into force in 2001 when the Cabinet approved in principle that all civil service agencies must appoint its high ranking executive as Chief Gender Equality Officer (CGEO) to be responsible for the promotion of gender integration in policy and implementation, and personnel administration of each agency at both ministerial and departmental levels.

In addition, a Coordinating team must be appointed to coordinate the implementation both within each department and at ministerial levels (Office of Civil Service Commission, 2003: 11-16). Such mechanism aims not only to promote gender equality within the department/ministry but also to link the line ministries and the national women's machinery

CSC prepared a Guide Book on Promotion of Gender Equality in Government and a Master Plan on Gender Equality in Government. This was disseminated to all agencies to facilitate the setting up of their master plans and to ensure gender sensitivity in the implementation of their policies and programs. The guidebook sets out six target achievement areas for the short, medium and long terms, covering policy, program implementation, personnel administration, budget management, and capacity building for the promotion of gender equality, women-friendly environments and welfare. An annual report from each agency to CSC is required.

Sexual Harassment Policy

Concerns over the issue of sexual harassment is clearly stated in the latest Labor Protection Act (1998) which introduced for the first time a provision to protect women workers from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment of women workers by employers, foremen, supervisors or inspectors is prohibited. That inclusion was the effort of women politicians, lawyers, academics, Ministry of Labor and the National Commission on Women's Affairs. The International Labor Organization also played a crucial role by providing technical assistance.

However, the Labor Protection Act does not extend to government officers. There is no expression of concern over sexual harassment issue in the rules and regulations of the civil service. The Director of CSC raised this fact in a national seminar to celebrate International Women's Day in 2002. The general feedback unfortunately indicated that in the government sector sexual harassment policy is hardly recognized as a 'problem' by high-ranking male officers.

Even for the general public, there is still little understanding of the seriousness of sexual harassment issue and the damage it could do to women in the workplace. It is seen as relatively minor especially compared to issues such as violence against women and trafficking - and even less significant compared to political and economic issues.

Case Study: Gender mainstreaming in the Ministry of Labor

As of May 2004, 102 CGEOs have been appointed in 19 ministries and 59 agencies have drafted their master plans. A major bureaucratic reform in 2002 has affected the organizational structure and personnel in several government departments resulting in delay in the appointment of CGEO in many departments and thus affected the overall policy and programs of those agencies.

Among the few ministries and departments that have made progress in gender mainstreaming activities is the Ministry of Labor, in particular the Department of Skills Development and Department of Workers' Welfare and Protection which have been working closely with the National Commission on Women's Affairs (and continues to do so after it became the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development).

It has to be recognized also that its close relationship with the International Labor Organization and the Asian Development Bank has a great deal to do with the Ministry's official ready acceptance of gender equality concerns.

Some examples of programs and projects implemented by the Ministry of Labor provided below illustrate its commitment to gender issues:

- Participate actively in the gender mainstreaming workshops for CGEO and Gender Focal Points conducted by the national women's machinery in collaboration with academic groups and NGOs with gender expertise to introduce gender mainstreaming and analytical tools to facilitate civil service operations.
- Provide capacity building through the training of trainers and training of middle level officers, organized under the support of ILO through the 2-year project on Enhancement of Employment Opportunity for Women.
- Conduct training courses on Women Workers' Counseling since 1995 to give advice to workers relating to their employment problems, labor legislation and health and safety in the workplace.
- Employer's seminars are also organized in different parts of the country to get employers more involved in workers' welfare and protection and to gain their full support for the counselors' activity.
- Establish a women friendly Skills Development Training Center in Chiang Mai in 1999 to be the center for enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of women workers and gender equality.

Given such situation, sexual harassment cases in government agencies need to be analyzed by using analytical tools available (Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development, 2002: 37-44). Measures to protect women in this sector from sexual harassment need to be developed and put into practice under the leadership of CGEO through the promotion of gender mainstreaming, gender advocacy, awareness rising, and media campaigns.

DISCRIMINATED GROUPS OF WOMEN

Indigenous/Tribal Women

For several decades, nine major hill tribe ethnic groups have settled in 20 provinces of Thailand's northern region and along the Thailand-Myanmar border. Although they have lived there long enough to be considered "indigenous people", the authority still view them as immigrants. A survey in 1997 showed the hill tribe population to be 991,122 (National Commission on Women's Affairs, 1999:4) and a subsequent survey in 2002 showed the number increased to 1,203,149. The proportion of women remained almost constant at 49.79% (Department of Public Welfare, 2002).

The Thai government recognized the hill tribes' long period of residence and continually granted them citizenship although the process is considered very slow. Presently the number of tribal people who were unable to get citizenship was estimated to be around 200,000 (excluding those officially identified as immigrants). When the Nationality Law was amended in 1992 under the renewed concern for national security, a number of hill tribe groups in remote highland who missed the citizen registration were labeled "aliens".

The revised law stated that those who were born in Thailand before 26 February 1992 but failed to obtain citizenship are considered to be "illegal immigrants". Some have no witness or document to help them trace back the date and year of their birth while others have no relative with citizenship for the DNA test requirement.

During the past two years, though 300,000 members of these ethnic minorities were allowed to register and receive special identity documents that permit them to reside and work in the country with restriction on their movement, they were still denied full citizenship rights (Human Rights Watch, 2004) in their own country only because of their race.

This resulted in the classification of these tribal people today as "aliens" in spite of the fact that some people have lived or were born in Thailand for a great length of time. Their children and descendants have been through the Thai education system and feel themselves part of Thai society.

Without citizenship, the status of the minority hill tribes in Thailand remains at the bottom of the society. They have no legal status and cannot move freely, cannot obtain passport or citizen identity card which situation leads to a host of other problems such as:

- 1) unequal access to education; they are allowed to enroll in the primary and secondary school but they cannot obtain any certificate necessary for continuing higher education
- 2) unequal access to employment; they are confined to informal sector jobs where no official documents are required and are further restricted to occupations reserved for Thai nationality only. Even in the informal sector, their "illegal" situation is often exploited by their employers. Women who face limited choices in their occupation are easily persuaded to enter the sex industry.

Women in Armed Conflict

Recent research on migrants in Thailand showed the Burmese to be the largest group of refugees from armed conflict in their countries and can be divided into three major groups: (Archavanichkul, Jarusomboon and Warangrat, 1997:44-45)

First, Burmese refugees who escape from armed conflict between the government and minority groups after the country turned to socialism in 1962. This group was granted permit from the Thai government to take employment within the controlled area.

Second, asylum seekers who left Myanmar during 1984 - 1991 fighting and more who came as a result of the clamp down on students and activists in 1988. The Thai government provides camps or temporary shelters for this group located around the border areas. These groups do not receive permission to work except within the shelters. Some, however, are allowed to leave the shelters during the day to work outside.

Third, migrants who were pushed out of their homeland by poverty, unemployment, and deprivation as a result of constant fighting. They are employed in the farms, shops, restaurants, fishing boats, and other establishments in the border provinces as well as in Bangkok and other provinces with labor shortage. They either come by themselves or through recruiting agents passing through the border pass including those that come on a daily basis. Together with other nationalities, there are at least one million of them.

Although the Thai government does not have a policy to permit illegal migrants to work, it has to accept the fact that so many of them are in the country and it is very difficult to prevent more arrivals. There is also pressure from employers in some industries facing labor shortage to relax the rule. The government finally relented and implemented a flexible policy allowing temporary work permits if employers bring them in for registration and post the bond money.

Among the eight types of jobs allowed (either because of labor shortage or supposedly shunned by Thais) in 43 provinces, two are dominated by women: manufacturing and domestic service. Among those who reported for registration in 2002, 81% were Burmese and 44% were women.

The government's policy of relaxation with emphasis on registration and control within a certain area, however, does not endorse the rights to enter the country which means women (almost half of this group) lack security and protection of their rights, and are vulnerable to exploitation. Most of them work in food processing, domestic service and sex work. Their income is low with long hours of work, unsafe or unhealthy environment. Female domestic servants often work more than 12 hours a day with wages much lower than other jobs. They are also subject to violence in various forms such as sexual harassment, rape, extortion and even murder by the employers, co-workers, and government officials.

Trafficking

Thailand is in the rather unusual position of being the origin, the transit point, as well as the destination of trafficking whose victims include women and children – Thai nationals, migrants, refugees and indigenous women.

Since 1996, the Thai government has tried to deal with the problem by introducing several new legislations on the prevention and suppression of trafficking, such as

1. The Prostitution Prevention and Suppression Act of 1996, aiming at heavy punishment for those responsible for procuring and benefiting from prostitution with specific focus on eliminating prostitution of women under 18 years while for those older than 18 years will be punishable only if it is conducted openly and in a shameful manner.
2. Measures in Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking Act of 1997 specified methods and procedures to assist victims of trafficking.
3. Money Laundering Act of 1999 gave the state authority to confiscate money and property suspected of having been obtained through trafficking.

At present, the Thai government is completing a draft of "Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking Act," which provides a clear definition of trafficking; specifies target groups, punishable acts for individuals, and more encompassing authority for government officials. This will replace the Measures in Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking Act, 1997 which has encountered a number of problems in implementation.

The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security is the main agency responsible for prevention, proposing legislation, rehabilitation and international cooperation, both bilaterally and regionally. In terms of international cooperation, since 1999, the government has initiated the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between government agencies and the private sector to be used as guideline in assisting women and children victims of trafficking including tribal women without nationality.

The most recent MOU was signed between Thailand and Cambodia in May 2003. These efforts have been praised as good examples of government-private sector coordination and there are definite plans for similar MOUs with Laos and Myanmar in the near future.

CONCLUSION

The past decade has seen several sectors in the Thai society devoting their efforts to mainstreaming gender issues. The Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development is the main government organization responsible for developing and implementing plans and projects regarding women's affairs in several areas including gender mainstreaming.

Implementation of gender mainstreaming will depend greatly on the effectiveness of the recently established Chief Gender Equality Officers (CGEOs) – the high ranking officials appointed in all government agencies at both ministry and department levels. Among the major tasks of these CGEOs are to promote gender equality in organizations, to integrate gender perspectives in policy and planning processes and to develop the Master Plan on Gender Equality Promotion of their respective agencies.

However, as of June 2004, only 64 out of 133 agencies have submitted such master plans. The ongoing bureaucratic reform which has led to reorganization and reshuffles in most government agencies may have played a role in this delay.

NGOs, women's groups and civil society have played a significant role in promoting gender equality in Thailand. Partnerships between government agencies and NGOs have been established at the policy, implementation and legislative levels. As this report shows, the rate of progress in gender equality relating to power relations and agency remain less than satisfactory. However, the relentless efforts and the continuing cooperation are very encouraging signs.

Stronger political will along with more budget allocations to gender mainstreaming could go a long way in speeding up the rate of progress. A team to monitor and provide support to all government agencies on their gender mainstreaming direction and efforts may be necessary and it will probably fall on the civil society to take on such responsibility.

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