Political Feminism and the Women's Movement in Thailand:

Actors, Debates and Strategies

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FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

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Executive Summary

■ Attempts to use public spaces to raise questions about power relationships relating to gender and sexual oppression started before the 1932 Revolution in Thailand that changed the country from an absolute monarchy to a democratic regime. Most attempts took place outside the formal political system, in social platforms used by women and men who sought to raise public awareness and demand social change. The platforms – for example, bringing together print media and literature, women's organizations, and coalitions – have included social movements that aimed to set the political agenda in order to push for new laws or amendments and to scrutinize government mechanisms, with the goal of advancing the status and rights of women.

■ Given that there is still what might be called "mystification" of society regarding gender relationships and feminism, the process of creating gender justice is ongoing. Women's organizations are developing their specific areas of expertise while expanding cooperation as networks in order to undertake actions for both structural and cultural change. New strategies are developed to facilitate change in social and cultural conditions and constraints. They are also moving forward to respond to new issues in order to create gender justice in conjunction with social justice.

■ In recent years, challenges caused by social and political conflicts and conflicts over natural resources and the environment have an impact on the lives and livelihoods of Thai women. These challenges have disproportionately affected women and created new pressures and difficulties in seeking gender equality, especially regarding women who do not have decision-making power and do not have access to resources and political policy-making. Women and women's organizations need to rise to meet these challenges and take concerted actions to protect their rights. The ideals of feminism are still necessary to tackle these challenges in the modern context, but they are no longer limited to solely being a tool for the realization of women's rights. Feminism needs to be developed further toward translating the demands and needs of women of various groups into social and political agendas, and making them powerful enough to engage in political negotiations. If this can be achieved, women and other groups of diverse sexual identities can live in society with dignity and without facing common forms of discrimination.

■ This paper proposes four areas that gender issues could be strategically politicized based on feminist principles and approaches. The four issues are: first, public communication through social media to deconstruct gender mystification. Second, educating the public to realize the intersectionality (e.g., involving gender, national origin and class) involved in care work from a feminist perspective, revealing the invisibility of the culturally-based social demands toward women in care work which are caused by the unequal power relationships between genders in combination with economic and political inequalities. Third, the push for the application of gender diversity as an analytical framework for sustainable national economic and social development policy-making. Finally, the creation of spaces for women's political participation and legitimizing women's political participation outside the formal political system, in order to ensure women's right to self-determination as dignified members of society.

ASIA

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List of Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CDA	Constitution Drafting Assembly of Thailand
CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CGEO	Chief Gender Equality Officer
CPWSD	Committee for Promotion of Women Status Development
DWF	Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDRI	Gender and Development Research Institute
GFP	Gender Focal Point
HIA	Health Impact Assessment
NCWT	National Council of Women of Thailand
NGO-COD	The NGO Coordinating Committee on Development
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OSCC	One Stop Crisis Center
PAOW	Peace Agenda of Women
R-SA	Referral system for Safe Abortion
SWING	Service Worker In Group
TLSC	Thai Labor Solidarity Committee
WCC	Women's Cultural Club
WCN	Women and Constitution Network
WeMove	Women's Movement in Thai Political Reform
WWUG	Women Workers' Unity Group

Foreword

"Feminism is theoretical and practical critique of gendered and other power relations with an emancipatory and transformation perspective. It is diverse in theoretical approaches, activism and movements with different roots and objectives, taking a variety of forms of multiple levels." **Christa Wichterich**

In Asian countries, as anywhere in the world, it is impossible to describe feminism as a single linear and progressive journey. Feminist movements in Asia show existing heterogeneous and varied approaches in a culturally and politically diverse region. Different feminist movements, focusing on different issues e.g. ecological, cultural, Islamic or queer, increasingly claim their own space. In addition, there is a growing number of feminist approaches that each wants its own voice to be heard. This leads to tensions between different generations, multiple identities as well as between different schools of thought and between feminist advocates in political institutions and grassroot activists. However, the demands and the worries are similar in nature: social security, living wages, healthier environment, child care for working families, equal economic and political participation and finally the dissolution of the patriarchic state.
Feminist, women's movements and other movements for social justice need to overcome thinking and acting in silos; instead, they must reconnect issues and actors. Coalitions between feminist movements and broader social justice movements should be seen as a step forward. If they form strategic alliances and new solidarities, they could regain legitimacy and strength. Therefore, it is time to bring these organisations, movements and actors together.

Against this background, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung has launched a project on Political Feminism to revive the debate on "the Political"; a debate about visions and ideas on how we want to shape a new and more progressive feminist discourse in Asia that is more "appealing" to other progressive actors and will help to reveal common causes. Thus, a coalition platform to bridge between established feminist activists and new-generation feminists, between organisations/

individuals from "micro" and "macro" feminism, and between staunch advocates of feminism and "non-converts", ranging from "elite feminists" to grassroots activists, is needed.

Within this framework, a series of country studies including Thailand serves as the first step. The studies aim to analyse the current feminist actors, organisations and debates around gender equality and feminist perspectives in order to create an overview of the status quo of feminist ideas and actors in Asia. FES Thailand in cooperation with the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (IHRP), Mahidol University and Social Watch Thailand, Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute have initiated a country study on *"Political Feminism and the Women's Movement in Thailand: Actors, Debates and Strategies"* authored by Dr. Duanghathai Buranajaroenkijat, to whom we are highly thankful.

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We hope that this study can contribute to a fruitful discussion related to political feminism in Thailand and provides valuable information and analysis for the way ahead.

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Introduction

This paper aims to survey the development over recent decades of political feminism and social movements, involving Thai women as well as men, that have helped the country move toward the goal of gender equality. A feminist approach is used in this study focusing on the life experiences of women, including those with gender identities that belong to social-political minorities. The study reviews experiences, ideas, incentives, efforts, and initiatives that bring forth women's voices, issues, demands and agendas to the public space both inside and outside the political system.

This study refers to main characteristics of feminism as outlined by Chaladchai Ramitanon (2012). He argues that feminism, in terms of theory, practice and political action, can be characterized as moving, mixed and plural thus making it hard to provide a simple and unchanging definition. However, many would agree that feminism is about integration, diversity and complexity, subject to time and changing contexts, and can be viewed as a response to a social organization that has resulted in unjust social relationships in terms of gender due to patriarchal or sexist ideologies rooted in society (ibid.). An inductive approach is used in this study so as to make visible the horizon of the efforts and diverse strategies of the struggles against injustices embodied in the social structure. The aim of these struggles is to alter the power relationships among genders, as well as the social, political and economic power relationships of all actors, in order to respond to gender issues that arise in correlation with social, economic, political and environmental changes in Thailand.

Methodologies used in the study include a review of literature and social media, and interviews with female and male social activists, women in grassroots feminist social movements, and academics. The study examines the conditions that create unjust and unequal gender relationships, also explores the development of efforts by different actors to change such unequal gender relationships.

The study begins with a review of how gender practices have changed over time from the late 19th century onward. The second part analyses the emergence of the actions and successes of the political movements of Thai women. The third part proposes potential catalysts for a process of social and political agenda-setting to encourage further thinking on strategies the feminist movement should take to achieve gender and social justice in the Thai context. The final section is the conclusion.

Overview of the development of changing gender practices in Thailand

Gender practice, referred in this study, is the gender interaction pattern or behavioral pattern that creates differences between masculinity and femininity. Whilst not a rigid social rule, it is the practical framework adopted by many people in their daily lives. Gender practices in Thai society have changed since the 1932 Revolution (from absolute monarchy to a democratic regime), resulting in debates on gender justice. The change in gender practice was instrumentalized to accelerate modernization, in line with attempts by Thai authorities to "modernize" in order to cope with the colonial incursions threatening the region from the late 19th century onwards (Surachet Sukhlabhkich, 2013).

Since the B.E. decade of the 2410s (A.D.1860s), during the reigns of King Rama IV up through King Rama VI, the dominant discourse of "modernization" was one that countries used to justify their missions during the colonial era. Even though Thailand was not directly colonized, the Thai response included a form "modernization" that drastically changed gender practices, challenging the patriarchy and disrupting family traditions. One such change was the adoption of monogamy, which was implemented among royal court servants. Such change inevitably led Thai society into debates on gender equality (Suwadee T. Patana, 1994). Traditional values ascribed having many wives as a manifestation of the wealth and power of the elite. Women from noble families were trained through literature such as "Krisana Son Nong", "Sawadiraksa" and "Supasit Son Ying" by Sunthorn Phu. These texts taught women how to please their husbands and the proper ways women ought to groom themselves in order to be sufficiently qualified as a royal concubine, in line with the popular practice of offering daughters to the King in exchange for his favor (Pranee Wongthet, 2016).

The process of "modernization" (moving toward a modern "civilized society") created the image and gender practice that confined the role of women to remaining primarily within the house or other forms of private (non-public) space, while the public space or political space belonged to men. This aspect will be explored later. However, it also triggered debates in Thai society that a woman is not a man's property, but an equal human being. The debates began with Amdaeng Muan, a common woman, who submitted her petition to King Rama IV. Her petition resulted in a law prohibiting the sale of one's own wife and daughter and the amendment of a law granting a woman who reaches legal maturity rights over her body and her future, thus allowing her to choose her own partner. The petition of Amdaeng Muan is the first well known case of a woman standing up for her rights. However, it is unlikely that common women of the time would be aware of the petition, or know of and understand the law to have been able to use it to protect their rights. King Rama IV himself granted the right for his concubines to leave the palace to live a life of freedom, either by returning to their own family or by remarrying, but most royal concubines were found to be reluctant to exercise this right (Nitaya Onozawa, 1999).

This process of "modernization" was reinforced by the national reform schemes in the reign of King Rama V. The King needed to educate people and prepare them for the modern national administration. Education reforms granted women from classes outside the elite the right to education for the first time, although the curriculum aimed primarily to prepare them to become good wives and mothers. Nitaya Onozawa (1999) is highly critical of curricula in the early phase of education reform, as they were not focused on developing women's capacity for jobs. Unlike men, who tended to receive preferential access to education, women were not trained to be human resources for national development. Previously, education had been arranged in temples. Girls were deprived of their right to education due to the traditional prohibition of closeness with male monks. Arranged education outside temples presented common girls with the opportunity to learn (ibid.). However, literature, stories and drama portrayed images and ideals of high-class women as loyal wives, good housekeepers and child caretakers, and common girls who received education took on these ideals and images (and this despite the fact that common women usually helped men in farming, unlike high class women who did not work) (Pranee Wongthet, 2016).

The image of the "Modern Women" was highlighted during the reign of King Rama VI. In his opinion, modern women must "hold the traditional qualities of Thai women, namely having good manners, maintaining good reputation and honor, managing household affairs, cooking well and dressing moderately and with good

taste. But at the same time, they must be educated, have moderate knowledge, be active in developing themselves and seek knowledge to catch up with current situations, be quick witted, be energetic, be oneself and be responsible" (Kanpirom Suwannanon, 1981 cited in Techin Cheypong, 2010, p. 1). King Rama VI ordered women's costumes to be designed as a combination of Thai and Western styles. He promoted the fashion by ordering the women in his royal court to adopt the new style. He encouraged his court servants to bring their partners to his parties to create a space in which they could learn the manners of socialization. He introduced family names as a symbol of civilization in 1913, which formally began the official and legal recognition of paternal family lineage.

The image of the ideal "Thai Woman" was created to serve a nationalist ideology, as part of attempts to strengthen the country's unity. After World War II, during the military government led by Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, his wife Thanphuying (Dame) La-iat Phibunsongkhram took the lead in creating such an ideal for women. She praised the image of "Flower of the Nation" which means beauty, humbleness, politeness and neat attire. The state created the image of "A Good Thai Woman" as a woman who maintains the values and traditions of the family and the country and fulfills the role of the good mother and wife. This image was reinforced by the overarching nationalist ideology through songs and books written by Thanphuying La-iat (Paweena Subhimaros, 2006). The result was the assumption of the right of society to control women's sexual behavior and image.

Variations in the power relationships between genders also involved an economic dimension, as women with better economic status tended to accumulate wealth and build economic power through informal gold and land trading businesses. Such businesses enjoyed a boom period after the Bowring Treaty was signed during the reign of King Rama IV (Onozawa, 1999). Not until, the first National Economic Development Plan was enacted in 1961, which fostered economic growth and opened the door for women to join the labor market. Women began to have a greater role in the economic public space, and were encouraged to take positions in the public sector and political institutions.[1]

Rural women also had a share in the control of land for agricultural production, and both women and men shared equally important roles as producers. The power relationships between genders, and the division of labor by gender, were therefore flexible. Pranee Wongthet (2016) stated that within Thai society equal importance is given to the kinship lines of both wife and husband. In the past, the family lineage was through the maternal side as evidenced by the tradition of the groom moving to live with the bride's family after marriage. M.R. Akin Rabhibhadhana and Nidhi Eoseewong argue that despite the belief that the husband was the head of the family, the woman was neither the dependent nor living on the man's money. They were both producers. In most Thai families, sons and daughters usually received equal inheritance (Elin Bjarnegard, 2009; M.R. Akin Rabhibhadhana and Nidhi Eoseewong, 2015).

Over time, however, the status of rural women worsened due to increased migration of labor from the agricultural sector to urban employment. Inequalities in power relationships between genders increased with the development of industrial capitalism and new policies led the country into an era of industrialization and urbanization (M.R. Akin Rabhibhadhana and Nidhi Eoseewong, 2015). Production bases moved from the household to the market, reducing the negotiating power of women and their role as co-producers. The household became primarily a private space, emphasizing activities related to consumption rather than production. The woman's role was then tied to the household space with a supplementary role in the production sector, which was overlooked in the first National Economic Development Plan in 1960. This was the case until eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan in 1997, in which women's rights were widely and comprehensively recognized as human rights (Foundation for Women et al., 2000).

From this quick summary of transitions, we can see that the change in gender practices in Thai society was influenced by both global and domestic political trends in which the state has been the key actor. The influence of discourse – the process of "modernization", nationalization and development – formalized gender practices in society. Such an understanding later became entrenched in the culture that defines gender roles and relationships in Thai society. Although the change could increasingly bring women into the public space, the power relationships between genders continued to value and give economic leadership to men over women, particularly in the context of production and income-earning.

Feminism and social movements for gender justice in Thailand

Platforms to promote women's rights and the advancement of the women

This section will discuss the various platforms that politicize issues and problems challenging women both in public spaces and the political system so as to liberate women from unequal gender relationships relating to political power. This study finds that in Thai society various platforms to promote women's rights and the advancement of women have been created in print media and literature, women's organizations, social movements, cooperative networks of women's organizations, international reference frameworks, and state mechanisms to promote the advancement of women. The details will be discussed hereafter.

Print media and literature in the 20th century

Print media and literature were the initial platforms through which women exchanged views on the roles and rights of women. Two women's magazines, *Kulsatree and Ying Thai*, will be examined with this in mind. *Kulsatree* was the first monthly magazine for women, which began in 1906 around the end of the reign of King Rama V. The magazine was supported by men, but its writers were both male and female (Scot Barmé, 2002, p. 26). The magazine published critical pieces on the culture of polygamy and the patriarchal society. The print media became a tool through which debates on gender and the rights of women in Thai society were conducted in an audience found beyond the circle of high and middle class women who were already educated. *Kulsatree* also became a mouthpiece for women in the labor and agricultural sectors. Another magazine, *Ying Thai*, criticized politics by applying the Marxist concept of class and called upon workers and rural women to form unions (Noomnuan Yuparat, 2006).

In the field of literature, Kulab Saipradit (a.k.a. Sriburapa) translated and rewrote a book in Thai called "The Origin of Human Family, Order and Human Society", based on a book written by Friedrich Engels in 1954. Before this, in 1952, he wrote an essay to analyze the status of women as it has been in the history. His argument was critical of the fact that economic pressure has been the origin of gender inequality. Kulab suggested that to create gender equality, both men and women must jointly control factors and forces of production. Gender inequality is not caused only by power relationships among genders, but rather it is inseparable from the issue of class (The Workers Democracy Group, 2003).

Another intellectual who influenced the study of women in Thai history is Jit Poumisak. In his study of "Past, Present and Future of Thai Women", he applied a Marxist approach to analyze the status of women in relation to the means of production, both of which have changed through time. He argued that since women came to have no economic power, law and politics became the sources of gender and class exploitation for women, because they were entirely dependent on men. He wrote a book in 1957 which was published and distributed widely in 1976, at a time when feminism came to hold great interest to students and intellectuals after the October 1973 Uprising (Sucheela Tanchainan, 2015). During this period discussions on rights and equality began to spread throughout the country. Later, the principle of gender equality – that "men and women have equal rights" – was recognized and enshrined in the 1974 Constitution.

Women's organizations during the formative years (late 19th and 20th centuries): from charity to women's rights promotion

The attempt to cope with the threats and global trends took women out of their homes and into the public space. It offered chances for women to form women's groups or organizations. Examples included the Red Unalom Society of Siam (which later became The Thai Red Cross Society)[2] and the Women Solidarity Association.[3] Later, women's organizations were established and expanded to provide different forms of support for women workers.[4] Women's professional organizations were also founded by business women, nurses and lawyers, among others. During the time of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, his wife Thanphuying La-iat encouraged women to undertake social work and to support national policies as a part of the anti-communism drive of the time by establishing the Women's Cultural Club (WCC) in 1943 (Tantiwiramanond & Pandey, 1991). Club members included wives of civil servants from the courts of justice, the army, the police,

and women teachers and lecturers. Subsequently, more women's organizations were established. In 1956, Thanphuying La-iat established the National Council of Women of Thailand (NCWT) to unite the women's organizations that were multiplying at that time and to facilitate them to work together for the society. The Council also aimed at becoming the representative of Thai women's organizations when interacting with international organizations with similar goals. During this period, there were not only organizations undertaking charity work and emphasizing the role of women as caretakers, but there were also organizations campaigning for women's rights, for example the Association of Women Lawyers of Thailand, which was founded in 1953. The Association encouraged women to be aware of their rights through advocacy for the amendment of laws in favor of gender equality. In addition, as Thailand ratified the Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1954, the law on family and inheritance was issued.

Social movements: student movements and labor movements
The success of the student movement in the October 1973 Uprising resulted in growing enthusiasm towards student activism and the political engagement of the public (Viroj Na Ranong, 1983). In 1974, female students of Thammasat University joined together to raise questions about social justice as well as the women's rights and status, such as women's participation in development, the relation between sex workers and capitalism, and women's beauty contests at that time (Giles Ungpakorn, 2006; Sunee Chaiyaros, 2011).[5]

Meanwhile, capitalist economic policies were adopted by the government with the aim of fostering national social and economic development. The focus of these policies was on supporting investment, while the protection of workers was largely ignored. Workers, most of whom were women (Sucheela Tanchainan, 2015), felt a great impact from capitalism and industrialization. Problems included exploitation, low wages, lack of welfare and worker protection schemes, long working hours (more than eight hours), and other concerns. The workers organized strikes to struggle for their rights. Thammasat University was the place that connected them while offering them legal advice and suggestions for their struggles. During 1975-1976, the students also joined together with workers, e.g., during the strikes of workers

in the Standard Garment Factory, the Bangkok Weaving Factory at Bang Son and the Hara Factory, and in other actions. These struggles demonstrated the strength of female workers in negotiating with capitalist powers (Somporn Chantrarachai, 2008).

The migration of workers from rural to urban areas continued throughout this period. Between 1992 and 1996, the Ministry of Labor reported a sharp increase in the number of female workers in Thai workplaces, outnumbering male workers by more than one million persons (cited in Chanida Chanyapet, 1999) due to the steady national economic growth before the economic crisis in 1997. According to Pasuk Phongpaichit (2011), the Thai Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth between 1950 and 1996 never slipped into the negatives, and on average the country's real GDP increased 7% year-on-year.

Regarding women's actions for rights by female workers, the push for a law to secure 90 days of maternity leave was successful in 1993. It highlighted the growing of strength of female workers in the industrial sector. It also demonstrated the power of actions by non-government organizations (NGOs) regarding workers by cooperating with labor unions, other NGOs, academics, civil society organizations and politicians. The fight to secure the law took three years (Jadet Chaovilai et al., 2013). At the same time, various worker unions jointly established the Women Workers' Unity Group (WWUG), with the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), as an avenue for female workers to take actions for women's rights. It rendered the success of the actions for specific issues according to gender needs (Prachathai, 2011), i.e., other workers' rights, such as child daycares in the workplace, safety and occupational health, and the use of International Women's Day (March 8th) as a platform to highlight problems, to create political agendas for female workers, and to push for the continued increase in participation of women from diverse groups of interests.[6]

Joining together as cooperative networks of women's organizations
The demands regarding gender issues did not have a formal voice in the official political system. To make women's voices strong enough to be heard, it was necessary to join together in cooperative networks. Women's cooperative networks became successful in pushing forward sensitive issues and making them topics for discussion in the

public arena. The networks had also demanded that the government provide social protection measures and improve the effectiveness of legal protection. One example that represented successful cooperation within a network is the case when the Foundation for Women and the Friends of Women Foundation, in cooperation with feminist scholars, set up a network of 60 organizations to campaign to prevent violence against women, domestic violence, sexual assault and trafficking.

The solidarity and strength of the networks of women's civil society organizations began after the May 1992 Political Crisis and continued until the 1997 Economic Crisis. At that time the government was weak while the civil society sector was strong. In 1996, the country was in the period of drafting a new Constitution. Women from women's organizations, the political, public and civil society sectors, and universities united as the Network of Women and Constitution. The network received support from international organizations to organize activities aimed at educating and raising public awareness about issues pertaining to women and the Constitution. They also undertook research and publications to justify and support women's issues, making them more persuasive when presenting them to the Constitution Drafting Assembly of Thailand (CDA), and sponsored members running for the election of the CDA as a way to participate in the drafting process and to motivate the people's political activeness and participation (Doneys, 2002).

The significant achievement of this Network was the push for the inclusion of Article 53, calling upon the state to protect family members from violence and unfair treatment in the B.E. 2540 Constitution (A.D. 1997). This Article changed the conception of domestic violence as a personal problem into a political issue that requires legal protection. Currently, this Network remains a platform to build pressure for relevant political agendas and to solicit cooperation among women organizations and others, such as in the academic, private and public sectors when working towards seeking social justice. This issue will be discussed later as part of the review of efforts that continue in the current period.

International reference framework
International agreements and multilateral treaties, for example, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Declaration of the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region, and ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the ASEAN Region provide the international frameworks that formalize the process of changing power relationships among genders, and institutionalize a political agenda toward which the government must pay attention. Such international obligations have become the reference framework for feminist movements in Thailand who have used them when demanding laws and measures necessary for structural change, for building gender equality, for protecting human dignity and for protecting the right to gender justice. However, there are still some loopholes in the laws and measures that need further improvement so as to bring them into compliance with the spirit of the Constitution and truly enforceable.[7] The civil society sector also participates in the process to scrutinize the related public mechanisms. It gives suggestions from the direct experiences of those working in the field through various channels so as to increase the effectiveness of the public-private joint work, e.g., by making shadow reports,[8] joining public appointed committees, communicating through mass media and regularly undertaking social actions.

The state's mechanisms to promote the advancement of women
It is the pressure from women who are close to the state establishment that has often encouraged the Thai government to support and create public policies and mechanisms to promote gender equality. Due to its ratification of the CEDAW, the Thai government is obliged to create a national mechanism to make policies on promoting gender equality and gender justice.[9] The mechanism, the Committee for Promotion of Women Status Development (CPWSD), is a permanent national committee which was established in 1989. In addition, mechanisms at ministerial and departmental levels were also founded, including Chief Gender Equality Officer (CGEO) and Gender Focal Point (GFP), to steer the process to promote gender equality. In 2002 some structural improvements were made. A National Committee on the Policy and Strategy for the Advancement of Women was established with the mission to propose policies, strategies and national plans of action that will be implemented by the CPWSD. The committee also receives recommendations from the CPWSD.

Based on interviews with those who follow state mechanisms and on evaluation meetings on the status promotion of women, there is evidence that these mechanisms are still ineffective.[10] This problem has long been a concern of women's organizations in Thailand. The Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development (DWF) under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, which is the major actor with the mission to promote the status of women and gender equality, is a government agency. It lacks flexibility and works in a typically bureaucratic manner, which is in contradiction to the nature of work on women's issues that require political will and a dynamic approach toward adopting and encouraging new thinking and fresh ideas (Foundation for Women et al., 2000). However, according to Ms. Ratana Sanyanithi, the DWF's Expert Officer in Women Issues, the DWF aims to amend laws to create gender justice and for the improvement of the agency's structure. In October 2016 the agency was upgraded to the departmental level, having previously been classified as an office. DWF confirms that it is ready to work and to network with women's organizations and international organizations and respond to the concerns and needs of women at present (report of UN Women, 2015).

In conclusion, there has been a multitude of approaches aimed at politicizing the concept of feminism and issues of women's rights and gender. Platforms to promote the rights and advancement of women have been undertaken by both male and female intellectuals. The early social platforms were print media and literature, which offered open spaces for debate and discussion. In politics, those who were close to state power tended to be educated and well-off women who used their soft power and influence to negotiate early mechanisms and laws that protected the dignity of women. Such changes were beneficial, as they advanced the position of feminist movements in Thailand and allowed them access to both domestic institutions such as Parliament to influence legislation, and international frameworks to improve the status of women. However, pushing the agenda through state institutions and the Thai political system is limited in its effectiveness, given that there is still insufficient open political space to continue to advance the women's agenda. For this reason, women's organizations and their networks also have to use the public spaces outside the formal political system, such as social media, social movements and the civil society sector, to push the

agenda and issues of women forward together with the people of all gender identities, so as to change the power relationship among gender and in society. The review of current efforts and initiatives of women's organization and women in social movements will be discussed in the next section.

A review of current efforts on gender justice and social justice

In May 2016 women's organizations, in cooperation with state agencies and civil society organizations, organized a meeting to review the progress, the limitations and the obstructions of the work on women's rights and gender justice in celebration of the 30th anniversary of partnership of CEDAW. An evaluation seminar was also held in September 2015 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration. From the discussions, implementation was identified as a major problem, despite both the public and people sectors having been working jointly to close the gap. In addition, changes in economics, politics and the environment, both at national and international levels, have resulted in new problems for women of various groups that the Thai women's movements must address – challenges such as economic globalization, global climate change crisis, political conflicts, armed conflicts, and security and peace. Therefore, focusing only on the representation and the decision-making power of women in political institutions and the legal system is insufficient to deal with current issues and contemporary challenges, which have become more complicated and in many cases will need to be addressed on a global scale. They are not confined only within the dimension of power relationships among genders, but also involve power relationships in social, political and economic dimensions. It is then necessary that women, including women facing other kinds of problems and not working specifically on the area of women's rights, and other organizations to cooperate and join forces in order to cope with the dynamics of recent problems.

This study has found that, women's organizations and women in social movements are aware of these contemporary challenges and are actively attempting to address them. Women and people with diverse gender identities also aim to push their voices, issues, demands and agenda into public spaces. Meanwhile, by utilizing various approaches, they try to set the political agenda

and engage in political negotiation both inside and outside the political system, aiming for participation in the process to set social and political agendas. This section will present a brief review of examples of current efforts being undertaken that have aimed at building gender justice and social justice in various dimensions, which initially included a number of efforts as noted below.

1. Responding to political agendas and governmental policies, The Women's Movement in Thai Political Reform (WeMove), a women's advocacy group founded in 2006, held a campaign on the reform of social and political structures. The movement also criticized the B.E. 2559 Draft Constitution (2016) in the areas of gender equality and the protection of rights to participate with the state and communities in environmental conservation. It also pointed out the missing element of community rights in the draft. In addition, women's rights defenders continue to demand a quota for female representatives in Parliament and political institutions. The WeMove movement represents a part of the Women and Constitution Network (WCN) founded in 1996. Before using the name "WeMove," it was known as the Women Network Reshaping Thailand, which consisted of female social activists, women organizations and academics who jointly monitored government policies, laws and constitutions to ensure that the issue of gender equality would not be ignored in the constitution and state mechanisms.

In 2012, the government of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra created the Thai Women Empowerment Fund with the aim of improving the quality of life and economic security for Thai women. The Women Coordination Network of the Friends of Women Foundation followed the performance of the Fund. The network invited committee members nationwide to meetings to develop proposals to ensure the sustainability of the Fund. The proposals included, for example, making a law regarding on a national fund for the development of roles and quality of life of women, and a mechanism to evaluate efficiency, transparency and fairness of the use of the fund to ensure genuine benefits to women of all groups.

2. Ending the violence against women: the leaders in this area of work include, for example, the Foundation for Women, the Friends of Women Foundation, the Women and Men Progressive Movement Foundation, the Association for the Promotion of the Status of Women

and the Social Equity Promotion Foundation. These non-governmental organizations have been continuously working with partners at the national level, international level and ASEAN regional level to end sexual violence and assault. Their efforts contributed to the passing of the Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act B.E. 2550. However, gender bias remains the major obstacle in enforcing the law, from the process of reporting cases to the police through to exercising aid-provision mechanisms (Angkana Chuaykamchu, 2012).

Long-term experience working together has enabled both public and private organizations to continue to collaborate to drive greater change. Examples are as follows: (1) Pushing for the appointment of female police investigators,[11] (2) development of an aid-provision system for women,[12] and (3) development of the system and the form of feminist counseling. Training programs were conducted for both male and female police investigators, and also for the counselors from both public and private sectors.[13] The work in the area of ending violence against women has therefore been aimed at creating measures to cope with violence simultaneously in three dimensions: direct violence (providing protection and rehabilitation from the impacts of physical violence), structural violence (system for aid provision and amendment of laws), and cultural violence (campaigns and education to reduce biases of officers, workers and the public).

3. Academic work and knowledge dissemination: in Thailand, two universities provide women's studies programs. The first is the Program on Women, Gender and Sexuality at College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Thammasat University. The second is the Department and Center for Women Studies at Faculty of Social Science, Chiangmai University, which provides a Female Lawyer Volunteers training program for community leaders and people who work on women's issues. The aim of these programs is to build knowledge and train expert graduates on laws related to women's rights.

Outside the university system, leaders in this area of work include the Women for Peace and Justice Project, the Health Action Plan on Women and Gender Justice and the Women's Health Advocacy Foundation. They employ the experiential learning approach based on the feminist concept of the understanding of sexual oppression that connects to social, economic, political

and cultural systems. This type of learning approach is used to cope with sexual violence, sexuality oppression and social oppression against people living with HIV/AIDS, and is also used to communicate information on sex and sex education. It is further developed into the following curricula: 1) Curriculum on counseling for capacity development: this curriculum employs the approach that criticizes the oppressive structure of society, not just individual causes alone. It makes both counselors and clients understand cultural and social structural contexts, and the power relationship between genders. 2) A comprehensive sex education curriculum: this curriculum supports the perspective that sex is a normal part of a healthy life. It also encourages the understanding of how a person, a family, a community and a society values sex, how sex should be understood comprehensively, and the knowledge to solve sexual problems.

In addition, networks of non-governmental organizations such as the Women's Network for Advancement and Peace in cooperation with Foundation for Women and the NGO Coordinating Committee on Development (NGO-COD) organize trainings on issues of peace, environment, human rights, migrant workers, and awareness of globalization and its impacts on women at the individual and community levels. The training exercises aim to enhance the capacity of women network leaders to enable them to monitor the policies and laws that impact women, e.g., the policies on development, economic system, globalization and environment, as well as other areas. These trained women leaders are able to analyze the impacts of such policies and to steer their work accordingly. Women in social movements dealing with environment, forest and land issues also had opportunities to attend training exercises organized by NGO networks in the north and the northeast regions, which focused on analyzing the power relationship among genders through a gender perspective.

4. Expanding networks of female workers: female worker leaders have been increasingly recognized. As an example, the position of chair of the Thai Labor Solidarity Committee (TLSC), which is a unified body of labor unions of state enterprises and private factories, has been held by a woman. However, even though a greater number of female workers have risen to executive or decision-making roles in the labor movements, they still recognize the need to maintain the association under the name

"Women Workers' Unity Group" (WWUG). WWUG is joining forces with other labor movements and continues to demand fair wages and welfare for women workers. It also uses the International Women's Day (March 8th) as a platform to present the problems faced by women workers and to present their policy recommendations to the government.

The expansion of neoliberalism calls for the state to withdraw from the economic system for the sake of efficiency and competition (Voravit Charoenlert, 2012). Globalization of labor also encourages competition for the lowest wage and the hiring of women workers. Such practices have enlarged the economic gap and injustice in Thai society. Formal work positions are substituted for informal workers with more employment flexibility, for the sake of lower costs. The "half employee, half self-employed" kind of subcontracted worker is thus created, with the number of self-employed workers and small entrepreneurs increasing. This form of employment removes workers from schemes and laws on labor protection. They lack access to social security programs (ibid.) and have a higher risk of occupational health hazards, due to the absence of adequate work safety measures.

In 2010, the Thai Parliament issued a law to protect home-based workers; however, the enforcement of this law has been very slow. The law created a mechanism, the Committee for Protection of Home Workers, which was expected to follow up and monitor the enforcement of the law, to issue the secondary laws and procedures, and to set wage standards for home-based workers. The Committee was not appointed until April 2015. One achievement of the network of informal workers and Home Net Thailand was its ability to politicize the home-based workers' agenda, and contribute to the passing of a law ensuring that home-based workers would receive a wage no less than that of those who do the same work but in a factory context (*Matichon*, 2016).

Another group of informal workers is sex workers. Previously, the sex industry tended to be comprised of only women, but not only has the number of men working in the sex industry increased, but people of diverse gender identities, ages and nationalities (i.e., not only Thai citizens) are prevalent in the industry in Thailand. Some workplaces have licenses, but many are unlicensed

workplaces which sell sexual services under the cover of seemingly legitimate business operations. More recently, sex workers have increasingly become self-employed. The major organizations that work to protect the rights of sex workers are the EMPOWER Foundation and the Service Worker In Group (SWING) Foundation. The role of these organizations and the networks aim toward strengthening the bargaining power of sex workers. The objectives are for them to protect both themselves and their clients, to reduce the discrimination, dehumanization and labeling against them, and to encourage the public to recognize that the sex industry is a sector that provides substantial income to the Thai economy. Organizations working in the area therefore demand that the government amend the laws relevant to the sex industry, focusing on protection rather than punishment. The legal changes they are advocating for would provide them a social position with dignity as well as equal access to public services.[14]

5. Coalition of organizations on women's rights to reproductive health: the Choices Network is an alliance of organizations from the public, private and academic sectors that joined forces to work on knowledge-based rights to reproductive health. The network aims to connect policies and practices together. The 68 members in the Choices Network are multidisciplinary organizations working on sex education, reproductive health and safe abortion. The network divides its work into four areas.

The first area is the prevention of unplanned pregnancies. The network provides a hotline for counseling, and has developed an aid and support system consisting of a team of multidisciplinary professionals, doctors, nurses, social workers and lawyers to assist with and to make available a range of family planning choices for women and families who require support with their unplanned pregnancy. A referral system has also been initiated for clients who choose to continue their pregnancies or those who decide to terminate their pregnancy according to the criteria of the Medical Council of Thailand. The network provides various communication channels: The One Stop Crisis Center (OSCC), Teenager Clinic, Hotline No. 1630 and 1300. Follow-up services, such as telephone calls and home visits, are also arranged to ensure the health of clients and good quality of life in society.

The second area is to provide alternative counseling. This is led by the Women's Health Advocacy Foundation.

Alternative counseling involves improving capacity development for counselors and other personnel in public and private sectors to provide alternative counseling about unplanned pregnancies based on the concept of feminism and holistic gender perspectives.

The third area is to provide shelter for women who decide to continue their pregnancy, led by Sahathai Foundation, with cooperation from public and private organizations in all provinces of Thailand. The Foundation provides shelters, pre-natal homes, foster families, support for single parents, and health care (such as antenatal care) for women who wish to continue their pregnancy.

The fourth area is referrals for safe abortions. The leader in the area, the Path2Health Foundation, provides alternative counseling service for women who decide to terminate their pregnancy. Clients are referred to safe service providers, e.g., The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Project or the volunteer medical doctor network of R-SA (Referral system for Safe Abortion). According to the Path2Health Foundation, in 2015 the network of the Referral System for Safe Abortion provided 56 service centers nationwide, split between 17 private and 37 public centers.[15]

Organizations that join the networks have proven specific expertise their relevant sectors. The cooperation between civil society organizations and the public organizations is based on mutually supportive knowledge and professions. They try to create constructive mechanisms and structures so that the work at the network level is holistic and responsive to the needs of women in various target groups to help provide women choices in the event of an unplanned pregnancy. Working as part of the network allows the referral process to be more flexible and effective. In a network with different levels, it possible for planning and implementation personnel to send direct and relevant feedback to the policy level. Policies then can undergo timely reviews and readjustments so as to meet specific needs and challenges. As a result, the incidence of dangerous and illegal abortions is reduced while more choices without constraints are made available for the women with unplanned pregnancies.[16]

At the same time, the Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health pushed for a law on prevention and solutions to teen pregnancy, which was enacted in 2016.

The objectives are to prevent unplanned pregnancies and to give holistic solutions to the problems and to facilitate cooperation among related agencies. The law is based on the protection of human rights of women and girls, i.e., the right to access to healthcare services with safety and protection. The content of the law was developed after long and continuous cooperation between the public sector and civil society organization networks.

6. Expansion of gender justice, from the women's rights to rights of gender diversity, and to men as target group: the multiplication of groups of people of diverse gender identities and the growth of social media has expanded the space for people of diverse genders, as can be seen from the growing acceptance of the classification of a "third gender". People of gender diversity have gained more attention and have more space in the news and media. There are also organizations that speak for them and protect their rights, such as the Anjaree Group and Thai Transgender Alliance. The popularity of social media enables diverse gender groups to effectively produce news content of their own. An increase in the number and diversity of channels and media can educate and raise the public awareness about people of gender diversity, and it has become easier for people of gender diversity to reveal their sexual identity now than in the past (Kritiya Archavanitkul, 2011).

There is also an initiative to apply the concept of feminism by offering rehabilitation programs to men who use violence. One example is the campaign to reduce alcohol consumption in the labor group, as drinking alcohol is a major factor contributing to the incidence of sexual assault against women. With this initiative, the Women and Men Progressive Movement Foundation is the only organization that works for gender justice with males as their target group. The foundation seeks cooperation from networks in the public sector, private sector and religious organizations. The foundation provides gender training to the target group after they give up alcohol consumption. The aims of the training are to change the power relationship between women and men in the community, and to encourage generosity and respect in humanity. The project participants are also trained to analyze and understand economic exploitation. Therefore, from beginning as a group that only encourages individuals to quit alcohol, the participants could move further to be a community development group for self-

reliance, and promote initiatives such as organic farming and other development projects. The initiative shifts the power relationship between genders in terms of social and economic dimensions of the labor force.[17]

7. Women's political activeness: recently, many more women have been engaging in social movements and civil society organizations with the goal of greater participation in public policy and politics. Although gender equality is not the leading agenda, rather women need the opportunity to participate in the government's decision and policymaking processes. They also need to be involved in finding a lasting solution to the crisis in the southern border provinces, which expanded from the deadly ethno-political conflict between the Royal Thai Government and the liberation movements. Meanwhile, throughout the country, a large number of women, especially those from the grassroots and the new middle class, do not have access to the formal political process. They tend to opt for social movements as an avenue to create political participation outside formal political institutions. Women get involved in politics because they encounter problems that impact their lives, and are aware that sovereignty is secured in the will of the people. They also want good governance and a high quality of political representation. Based on their interests, we can classify them into three main categories.

The first category is women who join social movements because they are directly affected by government policies, such as the declaration of national park areas or land expropriation. These kinds of policies deprive the women, especially those at the grassroots level, of economic freedom and economic security. Their ecological system is damaged or they are suddenly prohibited from access to the ecological systems that are the sources for their food and income.[18] Whereas men have more occupational mobility and can migrate away from their hometowns to find work, it is not so simple for women.[19] The significant question about the implementation of development policies is how it would respond to the different impacts according to gender. The number of women who are trained about gender and development is not insignificant; they are aware of gender equality, and they can criticize power relationships among genders in the social movements they join. They are also aware of the need to reflect on problems from a gender perspective and to push for women's participation in the whole

procedure of governmental development that affects the lives of women and men in the community.

The second category is women who join political movements and were involved in the color-coded political conflicts between 2006 and 2014. This conflict polarized Thai society into two separate camps, but at the same time provided chances for women to learn about and become involved in politics. Many women have changed their political roles from simply being "protestors" to becoming more constructive "political actors". The image of women in the social movements has shifted. Women struggling in the issue-based movements were seen as victims of development, but now that has changed to and women are seen as citizens who are part of the process of political decision-making with the awareness that public policy is significant and it is their right to participate in it (Buranajaroenkij et al, 2016).

The last category is women in the protracted political-ethnic conflicts and the armed conflicts in the southern border provinces since 2004. The conflicts encouraged 23 women's groups and organizations to work together as the Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW) on April 28, 2015. The aims of PAOW are to campaign for the protection of safe spaces (a.k.a. "Safety Zones") and for women's participation in peace process. PAOW has a firm position of resistance against violence and promotion of the women's role as "peace makers". PAOW is seen as a strong civil society organization and gets fair recognition from various parties in the working areas.

From this review, we can immediately note the following four observations about the development of the work for gender justice in Thailand.

The first observation is the increase in diverse actors in deciding and negotiating the agenda regarding gender, including intellectuals, academics, women's groups and the civil society sector. Decisions on issues and practical procedures based on gender have increasingly moved from the public authority to a more citizen-based approach. Previously, the state had been the sole actor that decides on social practices based on genders. This contributed to an unequal power relationship among genders. Later, the civil society sector has increasingly appeared in the negotiation arena to reduce inequalities and to create more spaces for participation in setting the agenda and issues on gender.

The second observation is that the women's organizations have developed their expertise and at the same time expanded their cooperation and networks. Coalitions between the public and people sectors have been created to tackles a variety of issues. Strategies for change are made focusing on cooperation among many parties, for example, professional organizations, divisions and departments in various ministries, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations. The organizations work in two parallel ways: responding to immediate situations and creating structural and cultural changes. That is, negotiation on the direction of social and political agenda is done at the policy level and following appropriate legal frameworks. Meanwhile, other means are used for creating and developing measures and mechanisms for gender justice.

The third observation is that there have been notable attempts to apply feminism to fit local contexts. Debates on women's rights started even before the 1932 Revolution and before the adoption of international frameworks for gender equality campaigns. Even though knowledge creation in academic institutions has not been appropriately supported by the state or other sectors, attempts to develop knowledge about gender equality has nevertheless been undertaken continuously. Knowledge in some areas is even made with the involvement of the civil society sector.

Furthermore, knowledge development has occurred outside of formal academic institutions, where concepts of feminism and gender are applied to deal with multi-dimensional problems that women and people of gender diversity have faced at various times. Moreover, academic and social activists do not automatically impose "Western" approaches to feminism without understanding the specific contexts of Thai society, as opposed to statements made by those who attack Thai feminists. This review has found that people who work on feminist issues have proactively modified and adjusted feminist concepts to try to match the local culture and beliefs, which is supported by the findings of Chalidaporn Songsamphan (2011) that feminism is interpreted and employed to work on particular issues in accordance with the norms and concepts relevant to Thai society.

The international reference frameworks are also adapted to fit the national context and the needs so as to reduce any possible resistance. Localization of the concepts leads to strategies and methodology that bring about constructive changes. From their long-term experiences, feminist movements are careful to adjust their strategies to be appropriate to social and cultural conditions, as well as to the available resources. They also in many cases expand their working horizons, integrating new issues and problems that are faced by various women's groups in order to establish both gender justice and social justice. Examples of this include efforts on the promotion of the roles of Muslim women in the southern border provinces, access to safe abortion, and communication about sex issues. Although there remains some confusion and lack of knowledge about these issues, the understanding of local contexts allows the women's networks to tailor their approaches in order to maximize their effectiveness and to give more choices to women.

The final observation is that women's organizations aiming toward the establishment of gender justice in Thailand usually apply the concepts of liberal feminism together with a rights-based approach. Labor movements used to apply Marxism as their analytical framework, but more recently it has been found that women with gender justice awareness – for example, the Liveourlives (a group of survivors from international human trafficking), women who are affected by the governmental development policies, or by armed violence – join social movements because of pressing problems. They do not start with a feminist awareness or demands for gender equality. Joining together provides them chances for interaction and learning to analyze their own conditions from a gender perspective. While many do not call themselves feminists, their work nevertheless contributes to the establishment of gender equality as their approaches often match or tie in with those of women's or gender justice movements. They are also interested in connecting academic knowledge on feminism and gender into their actions to create changes in both the power relationships among genders and broader structural power relationships. This is because they are aware that seeking solutions to their problems needs to simultaneously strive for gender justice.[20] Various women's groups are active in dealing with diverse issues, which represents opportunities for the revival of feminist political power toward greater social justice in the future. This category is therefore included in the paper. If we ignore women in the social movements struggling not primarily for gender justice and elimination of gender exploitation, the picture of the struggle for gender justice in Thailand will be incomplete. In addition, some scholars raise questions as to whether it is possible to clearly classify feminist movements in Thailand and whether women's groups and organizations are confident to clarify and outline which feminist ideas or approaches that they specifically use in their actions for social justice.[21]

From the above observations, we can see the ongoing progress of the work to establish gender justice and social justice in Thailand. But there are still some challenges that require further work and more resources to resolve. The new challenges will be discussed in the following section.

Challenges facing feminist movements in creating social justice in Thailand

Based on interviews and focus groups with women's networks, social activists, academics and women in social movements conducted for the study, some shared constraints of their work for feminism-based social justice should be noted in the following two areas.

The first constraint is about human resources. In Thailand, the number of feminist thinkers is still limited. Each of them has responsibilities for significant issues that require much of their intellectual power and time, while resources and support are inadequate. It is difficult for them to approach new problems that challenge women of all groups completely and thoroughly. It is remarkable that the expertise of Thai feminists includes rights regarding the body, rights to reproductive health, rights to sexuality and rights to political participation. However, many scholars agree that Thailand has a relatively small number of feminists with perspectives on environment, development and economics. Such perspectives are helpful for feminists to articulate the problems accompanying development, which can destroy traditional economic bases, disrupt the women's power and increase their burdens.[22] A lack of these perspectives then weakens their power to politicize the issues of women, environment and development. They also thus fail to articulate the connection between these issues and those of health and poverty, which are caused by the grabbing of food resources and other resources that are the economic bases for women. These perspectives are needed in order to propose recommendations about economic and social development from a gender

perspective. If successful alliances with other issue-based groups (e.g., social movements on environment or political movements with a large percentage of women membership) are not made, feminist ideas may gradually be removed from the thinking of women members in other social movements that struggle for social justice.[23]

The second constraint is the gap between academic theories and social movements. This challenge lies in the context of international and national challenges. The international challenges are neoliberalism, globalization, and global climate change. National challenges include protracted political and ethnic conflicts. Meanwhile, under the current military rule, the political participation through social action in the public space is limited. This situation mutes the voices of women and trivializes their needs. The problems that women are facing are not made into powerful political agendas that might otherwise have attracted enough attention from the powers-that-be and from the public to solve the problems. Women are still unable to access power, and to take part in a sustainable problem-solving process.

The future: creating a political agenda from feminist principles

This section will discuss issues that can be politicized or developed, using a feminist perspective, into a political agenda in the future with an aim to bring changes relevant to the needs and the context of Thai society. The paper will raise four issues, namely: 1) deconstruction of gender mystification, 2) understanding the problems of intersectionality of care (including such considerations as class and national origin as well as gender) from a feminist perspective, 3) policy-making with gender diversity as the focus of analysis, and 4) Legitimizing political participation of women outside the formal political system.

Deconstruction of gender mystification

Mystification surrounding gender – including gender-related assumptions, stereotypes and resulting prejudiced behavior – remains a major obstacle to solving problems of violence and discrimination and to developing mechanisms to protect the rights of women and people of diverse gender identities. A number of studies on law and gender equality demonstrate that building trust in law enforcement is a significant step toward building genuine gender equality.[24] However, these studies also demonstrate that officers do not effectively enforce the laws because of their negative attitudes regarding gender relationships (Angkana Chuaykamchoo, 2012). In addition, social values grant them power over women, meaning women give up defending their rights even though the law grants them the opportunity to do so.[25] Therefore, due to rigid gender norms, law enforcement remains a challenge for people working to eliminate violence and sexual discrimination.

Women's organizations are attempting to deconstruct gender norms by educating the public and raising their awareness of prejudice and sexism. Before the popularity of social media, women's organizations established effective channels for public communication through close relationships with journalists. These journalists supported their campaigns on gender justice, helped raise public awareness, and assisted them in putting pressure on policy and law-makers.

The achievement of raising public awareness on women's rights reflects significant changes in the experience of defending women's human rights. The actors defending gender rights are shifting from non-state actors, non-governmental organizations or educational institutes, toward groups and common individuals who reject and denounce the violation of women's human rights as no longer acceptable in society. This position triggers repercussions through both social media and mainstream mass media. An example is the case of a poster campaigning against drowsy driving during the 2016 Songkran Festival issued by the traffic police section of the Chiang Mai Provincial Police Station. The advertisement portrayed a male policeman sitting on a chair in a position of power, touching the head of women sitting below him at a lower level, implying an unequal gender relationship and subordination of the women. Another one is the establishment of a social media group that criticizes and opposes the romanticizing of rape in TV drama series.[26]

From interviews with academics, mass media journalists and female activists, one common view is that public communication remains a key to building gender justice. But although social media use is now widespread, many women's organizations still have problems with public communication. They neither do much of it, nor make use of social media for campaigning. The gap between feminist ideas and those of the public is partly due to a failure to make any adaption in communication, i.e., the inability to make content available for social media.[27] Another reason is the lack of social media communicators that are able to explain social phenomenon from a feminist point of view. In the digital age, as the popularity of print and other mass media dwindles, organizations must be able to produce their own social media content in order to successfully communicate with the public.[28] In Thailand, organizations working on gender diversity that are producing their own content and distribution channels are more successful at encouraging public acceptance of various gender identities than organizations working to promote gender equality in other dimensions. Continuous and strategic use of social media communication could also be helpful in eroding gender mystification. In addition to working with the public, it is also important to work

with those who are protecting and defending the rights of women and people of diverse gender identities in national social and political institutions. These institutions should be questioned about their understanding of the mystification of gender and how it is obstructing the work of ending gender injustice. Such questions will encourage them to review and improve their work to reduce obstacles originating from gender bias, and also to promote social justice.

The understanding of the intersectionality of care chains from a feminist perspective

Through working in the economic sector, educated women have a chance to get into decision-making positions. Economic self-reliance gives a number of women increased bargaining power within the family. This phenomenon overshadows debates about the economic disparity of gender relationships under capitalist domination by giving different values to unpaid domestic work and out-of-home paid jobs. The image of the advancement of women with economic power covers the issue of creating a just society in economic and gender-wise power relationship dimensions.

The advent of capitalism that comes with a new world order and technology takes more women from the home to the labor market, often turning them into cheap labor. The gender pay gap becomes a problem, especially among women workers in the industrial sector doing work in areas such as textiles, parts assembly, and packing. For many jobs are feminized, paying low wages, and classified as unskilled work while making use of the women's required attention to detail (Romanow, 2012).

In addition, social expectation ties women to the responsibility of taking care of family members. Domestic duties are considered to be roles primarily or exclusively for women. Women who work outside the home are usually questioned about the balance between their job and their responsibility as a wife and mother. On the contrary, married men doing out-of-home jobs are generally not subject to this question. The question becomes a factor when some women decide to prioritize family over the opportunity to seek job advancement.

As the image of women is tied to the role of mother and wife, both society and women themselves view women as the main caregivers, no matter what social status and

economic burden they carry. Therefore, the women who are economically successful and get to a decision-making level in their organizations in Thailand are generally the ones who benefit from the care chain because of a more secure and higher economic background.[29] Women in lower positions often provide domestic services for the more economically successful women so that those who work out of home would not feel guilty about neglecting their responsibility of women's domestic duties (Yeates, 2004). The women with higher incomes can thus answer the question of balancing responsibility for family and for workplace by using money to buy care from women of lower social status who become cheap labor for them. Later, the job of domestic duty and taking care of the elderly and children is gradually transferred to women from the neighboring countries of Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia. Meanwhile women from lower statuses are trading off their role as their own family care providers for economic returns and transferring care work to their immediate female family members.

The growth of the care chain in Thailand exposes multiple problems. At an individual level, it clearly demonstrates that attitudes toward gender roles remain fixed and gender equality at the family level has changed only minimally. In the case of some famous couples, when the husbands and wives swap roles they attract attention from mass media as they are deviating from normal practice. Swapping duties to meet the needs of the family occurs with relative rarity.

At a structural level, the situation reflects the fact that Thailand does not have family-friendly policies which facilitate women to earn an income and lighten their burden of family caregiving. For example, daycare centers for preschool children in the workplace or the community could help women to enter the labor market without concern. In Thailand, the number of daycare centers, both public and privately owned, is increasing. However, they are generally of low quality, inadequate and do not respond to the needs of clients who worry especially about quality and child safety. Therefore, the burden falls on trusted elderly family members who have to work without pay to sustain the current labor market. Otherwise women must accept low wages in exchange for time to take care of their family. Home-based women workers are a case in point. Their situation contributes to the growing economic gap between the rich and the

poor. The rich have more economic opportunities while the opportunities for the poor are limited. Therefore, justice in caregiving work is important. A system must be developed that supports large numbers of women, enabling them to fulfill their responsibilities and at the same time to upgrade their quality of life and of society at large.

One recommendation is to make the issue of care work a social agenda by politicizing it using a feminist analytical framework. This would draw public attention toward an understanding of the complexity and intersectionality of power relationships – e.g., involving class as well as gender – in the economic system and globalization through daily experiences at the household level and power relationships among genders. It is not only the issues between women and men; it is also the issues between women of a different class, age, national origin, social status and social connections. It is also about power relationships in terms of economic accessibility, and policies regarding women of different statuses and ethnicities.

If feminist ideas are developed as analytical tools used by general people to understand the complexity of gender exploitation as well as political and economic exploitation, this could stimulate the development of new perspectives and new behaviors. Roles could be swapped between genders both in private and public spaces and a higher value placed on raising children, helping take care of the elderly, and other related forms of unpaid work. This will help balance power relations between genders to be more mutually supportive. Realizing the interrelationships between social problems and using this to analyze power relationships is the starting point toward making society understand more clearly that power relationships cause social, economic and political inequality, and that people with less power are being exploited in the wider and more systematic way.

Policy-making using diverse gender identities as the focus of analysis

Women's organizations and people working on the issue of gender and development in Thailand are aware that policies which respond to different needs based on gender diversity are lacking. One measure that some women activists are campaigning for is to increase the number of women at decision-making levels. This idea has been around since the beginning of the Committee

for Promotion and Development of Women Status. Scholarships were granted to women for further education on women's studies in foreign countries. Capacity-building programs on engagement in local and national politics for women were arranged. Many campaigns were held and support was provided to encourage women to run for election to the Constitution Drafting Assembly. There are also ongoing attempts to propose a quota scheme to increase the number of women in Parliament.[30]

In Thailand the number of women in decision-making positions in government agencies is increasing. In 2011, Thailand elected its first female Prime Minister, Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra. As noted above, she launched the Thai Women Empowerment Fund, which marked the first time that the Thai Government offered a concrete policy on poverty elimination that directly benefits women. Women who do not have any property and cannot access either formal or informal loans now have the opportunity to establish themselves (Office of the Committee of Thai Women Empowerment Funds, 2014). However, one criticism of the funds is that they promote careers which fortify the traditional roles of women, thus reinforcing gendered roles in society. Moreover, some say that the fund often has not adequately supported women, ultimately leaving them in debt. According to Nongyao Naowarat's observation, feminist economic development can free women from the slavery of liberal capitalism. Schemes should focus on promoting production which relieves the burden of women, makes them self-reliant, and provide support for management of the household, which remains the domain of women.[31] This experience demonstrates that even when direct policies are made, it is still necessary to design them so as to respond to the different needs of various groups of people. This can be done by using gender as a key analytical framework to understand the needs of different genders, and then to issue measures and policies that comprehensively improve the quality of life of women and people of diverse gender identities.[32] In the following section, some examples of groups whose specific needs might be considered when making policies are given.

1. Women who become informal workers and home-based sub-contract workers: these women lack bargaining power for their wages and work long hours, sacrificing their leisure time. They do not have adequate access to occupational safety and health care systems. They have to

juggle the double burden of taking care of children with domestic duties. It has also been noted that the welfare scheme for pre-school child nursery services is below standard, and lacks safety and quality in pre-school child development.[33] Moreover, people who are sex workers, whether they are women, men or alternative gender, are still facing denouncement, even though this occupation is the economic refuge for a large number of people. At present, many women see an occupation in sex services as a temporary economic opportunity and a way to seek a new family life with foreign clients.[34]

2. Some types of individuals and families need more assistance: these include such examples as single fathers, single mothers, and women and men who live alone. Single parents are unable to secure dwellings appropriate for their children's safety. People of this category are often unable to access support for schooling in the neighborhood, transportation and childcare for pre-school children, and welfare schemes for the retired and elderly who live alone. There are also some women who give up a worldly life and choose to become ordained. Ordained women do not have clear social and political status, either on the secular or the religious side. They are deprived of some rights and are unable to access welfare schemes arranged by the state or the temple, either during working age or after retirement.

3. Women and men who are affected by capitalist development and unsustainable development: in these instances a country's economic development policies do not pay attention to the fair distribution of income distribution, economic growth, and social security. Wealth is concentrated within a small group of people (Pasuk Phongpaichit, 2011).

Where development brings about inequality, it is necessary to demand use of the gender diversity perspective as an analytical framework for making policies that respond seriously and intensively to specific needs. Gathering empirical information or gender-based statistics (including other indicators that show the intersectionality of problems, e.g., ethnicity, religion, economic status, occupation, physical disability, and other considerations) would support a knowledge-based gender budgeting process as written in the B.E. 2559 (2016) Constitution.

In addition to gender budgeting, a gender-based analytical framework can be employed to create participatory

and sustainable development. One example is the improvement of the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to evaluate the gender aspect of impacts. This gives a chance to involve women who are in social movements associated with environment, land and forests in the issue of power relationships among genders while taking action for social change. A gender-based analytical framework encourages people in social movements, many of them women, to see current power relationships and use their fieldwork experiences to propose policies which are in favor of gender equality and social justice at the same time.

Legitimizing political participation outside the formal political system for women

Despite continuing efforts pushing for the increase of women in political institutions, the political space remains a domain of power which is difficult for women to reach. Women were granted the right to vote at the same as men, after the 1932 Revolution, and the number of women entering politics is increasing. As in other countries, to enter into politics new politicians usually make use of personal connections within the political circle. Women who can reach positions at the executive level and as heads of government are usually from influential, politically active families. Such is the case of Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra (The Economist, 2011). For all civilian governments throughout Thailand's history, the highest ever proportion of women in Parliament was only 15%.

Thailand is in the midst of two conflicts: (i) Political conflict in Bangkok. This conflict is fueled by a political power relationship between the camp which supports the former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and its opponents, (ii) the conflict in the Southern border provinces. The latter is an ethno-political conflict between the separatist movement and Thai government, causing negative impacts including the loss of life and property. Nevertheless, being political phenomena of interest in the past decade, these conflicts have caused large numbers of women to actively engage in politics.

Political conflict in Bangkok: Joining political movements in the protest enlarged women's networks so they could create an alternative political space and monitor political administrations in their own areas. Some women leaders opened their houses to receive complaints and help solve conflicts and problems related to local development.

Muslim women in the Southern border provinces have also become politically active. They learned to negotiate for the expansion of their political space, which was previously restricted by local cultural practices. Even though success is not obvious, we can see increasing numbers of Muslim women who are interested in participating in politics. Moreover, they are gradually being accepted by villagers and especially by the religious leaders. The resistance against women's participation in politics began to erode, which provided women the opportunity to build more allies and fortify political participation opportunities for women. The study also found that during the past 10 years of protests, one woman leader from the Eastern part of the country was able to build and strengthen her supportive mass at a basic level while making connections with politicians and movement leaders. Consequently, she gained support from a political party which had never won an election in that constituency. When she decided to run for election, she got a historic victory in her province (Buranajaroenkij et al., 2016).

Conflicts in the Southern border provinces: During 2004-2015, there were 14,329 violent incidents, 6,543 people were injured and 11,919 were killed in these provinces. [35] 84.5% of those killed were male heads of the family (average age 45.9) with, on average, three children in their family.[36] The insurgency resulted in 2,000 widows and over 5,000 orphans. Women suffered the stress of this loss along with the increased burdens of having to support their family, their community and society.[37] The impacts on women from the conflicts between the Thai government and the separatist movement in local areas are obvious.[38] Women in areas of violence in the Southern border provinces are deprived of safety in daily life. They have to shoulder the burden of earning income to feed the family because men are no longer present, or often feel unsafe to go to work. The women have to take responsibility for care of the disabled. They and the children under their care cannot access healthcare services. They cannot access assistance when facing domestic violence or reproductive health problems. Such difficulties motivate many women who are directly and indirectly impacted by the violence in the Southern border provinces to rise up and make changes following mental, physical and economic rehabilitation. Once they have developed the capacity to work in the areas affected by conflict and violence, they change themselves from victims to social agents. They work with other sectors to help and rehabilitate other affected people and to create peace.

Consequently, women in the Southern border provinces are recognized for their roles as peacemakers and human rights defenders.

These two cases demonstrate the increasing desire for and demands coming from women for meaningful political participation. Is it time to consider different forms for promoting the roles and participation of women outside the official political space, together with campaigns to increase the number of women in political institutions? In the current political context, the military government limits and controls people's political participation and restricts the public space. Nevertheless, when the country returns to democratic rule, the space for political participation will be opened again. How can politically active women, who are increasing in number, adjust themselves? How do they reduce the dependency of political movements on various influential groups? How do they become more independent in their actions for the benefit of the majority? Are there any strategies to justify or institutionalize informal political participation of women as responsible citizens? How could they maximize their capacity to contribute to the democratization of society? These questions require the participation of women to be accepted by all parties in society, including political agencies.

In summary, this paper points out that "strict gender norms" remain a critical challenge to the extent that Thai feminist movements could not give up their focus on women's rights despite criticism that this focus is too individualistic. But what should be intensified at the same time is the politicization of feminism so that a gender perspective is integrated into thinking and analytical frameworks when making national economic and social development policies. Awareness of the interrelationships between social, economic and political forms of oppression against women, people of diverse gender identities, and people who belong to alternative groups or the margins of development is required to ensure that these individuals are not ignored or marginalized, and are entitled to a fair distribution of resources. Included also is the need to build infrastructures that respond to gender-based needs beyond the limitations of typical political structures where there is no place for women, so as to justify their political participation in the non-official political system and to grant women's legitimacy in a genuine political space for dignified self-determination and protection of rights without discrimination of any kind.

Conclusion

Debates on women's rights occurred in Thailand before the organization of feminist movements. When feminism was brought in, both as an ideology and a social movement, it brought about dramatic changes in the country. However, the word "feminism" or "feminist" is not popular with the general public, even those who are working directly for the goal of gender equality. In addition, the coalition of women social activists who apply feminist ideologies in their social justice work are not just confined within women's organizations with the mandate of promoting women's rights and gender justice, but it has expanded further towards even broader social and political issues.

The next challenge is to expand the horizon for work to achieve gender equality. This can progress on two parallel tracks. The first is to create understanding and acceptance of women's human rights by demolishing the mystification regarding the construction of gender in society. The second is to achieve greater access to resources and power by liberating women from the political and economic power relationships that have marginalized their participation and self-determination.

Intellectual power is still required to solve future questions and challenges. Feminist movements in Thailand have made great strides and learned valuable lessons for many decades, but more successes are required before equality is achieved. There are still key questions facing feminist movements in Thailand, including: how can we make use of available resources, including existing laws, women's activeness on human and community rights and women's activeness in political participation? How can women defend ways of life, protect the environment through sustainable development and achieve peace by utilizing a feminist ideology to explain the problems that women are facing individually and collectively, and leveraging active women for political change? How will strategies be developed that push for changes in society and politics that are dominated by systems and standards created from patriarchal values? How will these strategies be able to create a just society and address the deep challenges faced by women of various groups?

Depending on the way Thailand moves politically, we are likely to see a diverse range of strategies to address these issues. Whether a movement explicitly calls itself "feminist" or not is less important than women and men working together to achieve needed changes that include a fundamental concern with gender and social justice. In this way, we expect that political feminism, by whatever name, will continue to progress through all of these different forms of engagement with the social, economic, environmental and political systems in the country.

Notes

1   For example, the first female judge Ms. Chalorchit Chitttarudha was appointed in 1965. In 1967 the first female industrial engineer Ms. Nitaya Mahaphol was given a formal position. In 1969 Ms. Jintana Noppakhun was appointed the first female mayor of Photharam Municipality in Ratchaburi Province.

2   The Red Unalom Society was established in 1893 during the reign of King Rama the 5th. The objectives were to provide aid and relief to the injured and dead veterans from the Franco-Siamese War about the left bank of the Mekong River. The society was the initiative of Thanphuying (Dame) Plean Passakarawong and under the matronage of Queen Saovabha. In 1921 the society became a member of the League of Red Cross Societies and changed the name to the Thai Red Cross Society.

3   Raem Bhramobol founded in 1932. The Women Solidarity Association is the first organization of the educated middle class women of the country. The association worked to provide knowledge on household affairs for housewives and childcare.

4   Siriporn Skrobanek (1983), cited in Varunee Phurisinsit (2002).

5   Members of the Thammasat University Women Students Group include, for example, Kanchana Pisanrassamee, Jenjira Phaotrakul, Pairin Plaikaew, Yuwadee Sakulkhunsawat, Watcharee Phaoleungthong, Womol Wangkitiporn, Srilawan Chuacharnwong, Sunee Gotrakul, Orathai Vitoontherasan and Usa Saeheng. Their senior fellow students with active roles in the women's group are Supaporn Limsamphan and Sucheela Tanchainan, cited in Somporn Chantrachai (2008).

6   Sakdina Chatrakul Na Ayudhya and Preeda Sirisawad, interviewed on May 18, 2016.

7   See works on development and critics on laws about the women's rights, for example the works by Areewan Chatuthong and Supha Ponglopitsit (2012) and Matalak Orrungrot (2007).

8   See presentation by Usa Lerdsrisuntad, Director of Foundation for Women in the report of the workshop "Upgrading the Rights and Access to Justice for Thai women in the context of CEDAW", May 10, 2016, Bangkok.

9   The convention covers 12 issues of women and children, i.e., 1) poverty 2) education and training for women 3) health 4) violence against women 5) armed conflicts 6) economics 7) power and decision making 8) institutional mechanisms for the progress of women 9) women's rights 10) women and mass media 11) women and environment, and 12) girls. Five years after the implementation of the action plan, an evaluation was held. The member states agreed that the global situation was changing quickly and seven new issues were emerging that might impact gender equality, i.e., globalization, science and technology, labor mobility, aging society, spreading of HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, and division of work between women and men.

10 Women social activists interviewed on April 21, 2016; see also the report of the workshop "Upgrading the Rights and Access to Justice for Thai women in the context of CEDAW", May 10, 2016.

11 Cases about sexual violence and protection of rights and freedom of women and children are under legislation including the Children Protection Act B.E. 2546, Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act B.E. 2550, and the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act B.E. 2551.

12 This acts to give support to victims of social problems through an inter-ministerial cooperation scheme, consisting of Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (responsible for the issues of sexual violence, domestic violence against child, woman, the elderly and the disabled), Ministry of Public Health (teen unprepared pregnancy), Ministry of Labor (child labor) and the National Police Bureau (human trafficking).

13 Feminist Counseling is the core of the curriculum. The focus is on the deconstruction of gender bias and understanding of the social and cultural structures that pressure the women who are victims of violence and sexual problems. The objective is to avoid the additional pressure on clients but provide them with choices that grant rights and freedom to the clients to make their own informed decisions including resources and accessible aid.

14 See information about sex workers in United Nations Population Fund (2007), Prachathai (2016), Janvipa Apisuk Director of The Empower Foundation interviewed in Prachathai (2011).

15 See the gist of the 36th Meeting of the Choices Network on February 23, 2015.

16 Ibid.

17 Jadet Chaovilai, Director of Women and Men Progressive Movement Foundation, interviewed on May 26, 2016.

18 Women Fighting for Farmland Group, Jomthong District, Chiangmai Province, interviewed on April 5, 2016.

19 Assistant Professor Dr. Kanokwan Manorom, Dean of Faculty of Liberal Arts, interviewed on July 3, 2016.

20 Seminar on "Political Feminism and the Women's Movement in Thailand: Actors, Debates and Strategies" on November 11, 2016 at Novotel Hotel, Ploenchit, Bangkok, held by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), The Institute for Human Rights and Peace Studies of Mahidol University and Social Agenda Working Group, Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University.

21 Ibid.

22 Dr. Santita Ganjanapan, interviewed in Chiangmai University on April 5, 2016.

23 Assoc. Dr. Pinkaew Laungaramsri, interviewed in Chiangmai University on April 5, 2016.

24 See Angkana Chuaykamchoo (2012) and Matalak Oungrungrote (2007).

25 "Violations of women's rights are always found in Thai society. But sometimes people do not feel that it is the women's rights violation. This is caused by parenting, education or social rules and then becomes the social will. In addition, Thai women still have little knowledge about laws. Then Thai society does not usually pay attention to the issue of human dignity. As this becomes habit and there is less opportunity to see it, people do not want to defend or demand their rights. They do not feel that it is a violation of rights because Thai social values have constantly dominated women. Women face various kinds of rights violations. For example, violence against children and women, domestic violence, women workers are exploited by business owners or employers, especially women migrant workers, and some laws or regulations restrict the rights of the women." See page 2 of the brochure of Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development (2009).

26 There are attempts to deconstruct the mystification of sexual acts. For example, some blame the TV drama producers as one of the causes of sexual violence. The TV dramas usually have rape scenes and romanticize rape as involving or leading to love between the hero and the heroine of the drama. There are campaigns to oppose and to stop people thinking of it as normal and the producers are called upon to do the same. See Jon Fernquest (2014).

27 Interview and group discussion with Dr. Supaporn Phokaew, Ms. Supatra Putananusorn and Ms. Usa Lerdsrisuntad in Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, on April 22, 2016.

28 Interview with independent scholars in Bangkok April 22, 2016.

29   The care chain is derived from the concept of global care chain which was first used by Arlie Hochschild, seeing the relationship in transferring of care-taking work with the three elements: globalization, migration and care. The concept explains the phenomena of the transferring of domestic duty of women in the developed country to women in the developing country. Hiring a cheap migrant worker enables them to work outside home. The women who are hired for the domestic duty then depend on women in their own country to take care of their own children while working in other country. The latter might be the even cheaper labor or women in their own family, e.g., elder daughters or grandmothers who are still able to care for their grandchildren. The care chain usually ends at the unpaid work and the work that is taken and transferred among women (as cited in Yeates, 2004).

30   The main actor in the campaign for quota is the Gender and Development Research Institute (GDRI). Recently during the government of General Prayuth Chanocha, Mrs. Ticha Na Nakorn proposed the quota that at least 30% of seats in the Parliament must be allocated to women representatives.

31   Associate professor Dr. Nongyao Nawarat, interviewed in Chiangmai on April 6, 2016.

32   Associate professor Dr. Nongyao Nawarat, interviewed in Chiangmai, April 6, 2016 and Associate professor Dr. Chalidaporn Songsamphan, interviewed at Thammasat University, Bangkok. May 10, 2016.

33   Ranee Hassarungsee, interviewed in Bangkok, May 18, 2016.

34   Dr. Patcharin Lapanun, interviewed in Surin province, July 4, 2016.

35   The statistics between 2004-2015 are from Deep South Incident Database (DSID). See Srisompop Chitpiromsri and Supaporn Panatnachee (2016).

36   Statistics from a survey study on "Living condition and the way for healing victim's family from the violence in southern Thailand: Case study in Pattani Province". The survey was conducted by the PSU's Deep South Coordination Center during January – October 2007. Retrieved on June 20, 2016 from http://medipe2.psu.ac.th/~dscc/webold/download/abstract_eng_std_living.pdf.

37   A study found that widows in the South are often affected by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); see Wattana Prohmpetch, Supavan Pungrasamee, Piyathida Sinvutinon and Yaowanat Suwalak (2015).

38   Reference is made to the workshop "Upgrading the Rights and Access to Justice of Women in Thailand in the Context of CEDAW" held on May 10, 2016.

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Annex: Advancement of Thai Women

Year	Policies, laws, conventions, mechanisms and practices
1893	Establishment of the Red Unalom Society of Siam by Thanphuying (Dame) Plean Pasakarawong under the matronage of Queen Saovabha. Later it became a member of the International League of the Red Cross Society and then was renamed as the Thai Red Cross Society in 1921.
1906	Magazines that criticized patriarchal society and advocated for gender equality were published, e.g., Kulsatree, Satreenipon (1906) and Satreesarn (1914)
1932	Women received the right to vote at the same time as men, after the 1932 Revolution and the Regime Change.
1952	An article entitled, "Status of Women as it has been in History" (1952) and a book, "Origin of Human Family, Order and Human Society", were published in Thai by Kulab Saipradit (or Sriburapa) (1954), with the latter translated and revised from a book written by Friedrich Engels.
1953	Association of Women Lawyers of Thailand.
1954	Thailand became a partner of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women.
1956	The National Council of Women of Thailand (NCWT) was established.
1957	Historical work of Jit Poumisak published as "Past, Present and Future of Thai Women."
1961-1966	In the first National Economic and Social Development Plan, problems challenging women were not identified. The emphasis was on developing industries that recruited large numbers of women to be laborers in factories.
1972	The third National Economic and Social Development Plan (1972-1976) identified women as a target group for family planning, and focused on maternal and child health.
1974	The Constitution B.E. 2517 stipulates that "men and women have equal rights"
1975-1976	The United Nations declared 1975 as the "International Women's Year and the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace." This declaration highlighted and recognized the importance of women's rights and equality, and promoted and developed it on the international platform. It was endorsed by Thailand.
1977	The fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1977-1981) identified women as a target group for education, employment, vocational training and labor protection.
1979	The Long-Term Plan for Women Development (1979-2001) cited strategies for equal opportunities for women in capacity development and participation in decision-making at all levels.
1980	Origination of modern women's movements in the forms of non-governmental organizations, e.g., Friends of Women Group (1980), EMPOWER Foundation (1985) and Women News Center (1984).
1982	The 5th National Economic and Social Development Plan (1982-1986), in parallel with the Long-Term Plan for Women Development (1979-2001), announced women as the special target group for social development. This announcement was the foundation for regular Action Plans on Women, conducted in addition to the National Development Plan. The plan stipulated the establishment of a permanent nation body focused on women, which was later founded in 1989 as the National Committee on Women Promotion and Coordination.
1983	Appointment of the National Committee for Women Development with a mission to provide recommendations and give advice on women's affairs.

Year	Policies, laws, conventions, mechanisms and practices
1985	Thailand sent delegates to the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya. The delegates endorsed the Nairobi Strategies, which is the international master plan for comprehensive promotion of women's equality, and participation in development and peace making.
	Thailand became a partner in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
1989	Appointment of the National Committee on Women Promotion and Coordination permanent national committee under the Permanent Secretary of the Office of the Prime Minister.
	The first celebration of International Women's Day in Thailand.
1992	In the Policy and Long Term Master Plan on Women 1992-2011 (The 2nd Long Term Women Development Plan), an analysis of women's issues was made in connection to other areas such as family, environment, religions, and other issues. Measures and responsible organizations were also clearly specified.
	Amendment of the Nationality Act B.E. 2508 on the nationality of a child born with a Thai mother.
1993	The Cabinet Resolution to remove the prohibition of appointment of women as District Permanent Secretary and Provincial Governor.
	The Female Workers Integration Group was formed by uniting female workers from many unions and with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
1995	The Thai Government endorsed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and expressed the will and commitment to take the required action to ensure the advancement of women.
1996	A Cabinet Resolution issued a policy and action plan on the prevention of and solutions to problems in the sex industry. The Network of Women and Constitution was formed.
	A regulation was amended, allowing female civil servants and employees in the public sector to take 90 days off for childbirth without it being considered as taking annual leave.
	The Cabinet Resolution was made on the removal of quotas for male and female students in taking tertiary entrance exams under the Ministry of University Affairs, other state agencies and vocational colleges.
	The Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act B.E 2539 was issued with lighter punishments on sex workers and greater protections for youths aged under 18, following the principle that "prostitutes are not criminals but victims".
1997	The eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001) focused more on women's issues. It considered women's rights as human rights. It covered the issues of development and peace, which tied directly into the main objectives of international work on women development.
	The Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 guaranteed equality between women and men, and granted equal rights and legal protection to everyone without discrimination.
1998	The Labor Protection Act B.E. 2541 was issued stipulating equal opportunity for men and women in employment and labor welfare.
1999	The Cabinet Resolution on the Announcement of November as the Month for the Campaign to Stop Violence against Children and Women was issued.
2000	The Thai Government endorsed the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Year	Policies, laws, conventions, mechanisms and practices
2001	The Cabinet Resolution on appointment of executive officers in the position of deputy director or higher in government agencies as the Chief Gender Equality Officer (CGEO), appointment of government agencies of the division or bureau level as Gender Focal Points (GFP) and a goal to establish a master plan for promotion of equality between women and men.
2002	The Improvement of Ministries, Department and Division Act B.E. 2545 was issued. As a result, the mechanisms on women's affairs were moved to the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. A National Committee on Policy and Strategies for Development of Women's Status was established to propose policies, strategies and action plans at the national level on the promotion and coordination of woman affairs.
2005	The Individual Name Act was issued allowing women to choose the maiden name or their spouse's surname as their family name.
	The Criminal Code, Article 276 and 277 on rape and sexual assault. The Criminal Procedure Code, Article 246 and 247 on suspension of the execution of a sentence for pregnant women. The Civil Code Article 1445 on the claim for compensation from any person who has sexual intercourse with one's betrothed woman, Article 1446 on the claim for compensation from any person who rapes or commits sexual assault with one's betrothed woman. Article 1516 (1) on grounds of action for divorce.
2007	The Constitution B.E. 2550 Article 87, public participation among both women and men should be encouraged to promote socioeconomic development at all levels.
	Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act B.E. 2550 provides protection for the victims of domestic violence. The law emphasizes on the correction of the offender instead of punishment, providing a chance to change oneself and not to recommit the same crime.
2008	Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act B.E. 2551.
	Amendment of the Nationality Act. A Thai woman who is married to a foreigner can hold Thai nationality and the children can be granted Thai nationality.
	The Women Title Act B.E. 2551 is passed. Married women or women whose marriage has ended can choose the title of either Miss or Mrs.
	In a sexual offence, female investigating officers should be provided to interrogate the aggrieved person. However, a different arrangement could be made with the consent of the aggrieved person, or as required by other necessary circumstances. The Criminal Procedure Code, Article 132 (1) stipulates that searching the body of a woman must be undertaken by female officers.
2009	The Royal Police Cadet Academy accepted the first batch of 60 female students.
2011	Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra was elected the 28th Prime Minister and the first female Prime Minister (2011-2014).
2012	Thai Women Empowerment Funds established during the administration of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. The Fund was directly under the Office of Prime Minister, but in July 2014 the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) shifted it to the Community Development Department, Ministry of Interior.

Year	Policies, laws, conventions, mechanisms and practices
2015	The National Legislative Assembly passed the Gender Equality Act B.E. 2558.
2016	The Constitution B.E. 2559, Article 71 stipulates that in the allocation of budget, the state shall consider the different necessities and needs on the basis of sex, age and individual condition for the purpose of fairness.
	The Constitution B.E. 2559 provides for the protection of human dignity, as Article 27 stipulated that all people are equal before the law and enjoy equal rights, freedom and protection under the law. Men and women shall enjoy equal rights. Unjust discrimination against a person on the grounds of differences in origin, race, language, sex, age, disability, physical or health condition, personal status, economic or social standing, religious belief, education or political view that does not violate the provisions of the Constitution or any other grounds, shall be prohibited. It also provides opportunities to arrange special measures for equality, "measures determined by the State for the purpose of eliminating an obstacle or promoting ability of a person to exercise his or her rights or liberties as other persons, or for the purpose of protecting or facilitating children, women, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, or disadvantaged persons shall not be deemed as unjust discrimination under Paragraph Three."

About the author
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