

Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

a) The national policy on the gender equality and the empowerment of women

The Women's Development in the Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011) has been implemented. The plan seeks to focus on changing attitudes of Thai society towards gender equality, while continuing to build women's capacity to enable them to live to their full potential as both actors for and beneficiaries of national development. The objectives are 1) to achieve better respect of human integrity and gender equality among children, youth, women and men, 2) to increase the numbers of women in politics and administration, 3) to improve the

language and dialects to campaign women's political participation. As women's economic development is another way to develop women's potential. Thailand tries to encourage women's economic potential throughout projects and activities, for examples; Business Incubation Centre, Skills development for women labour and self- employed women, and ICT trainings for women entrepreneurs.

c) The main legislative and policy-making achievements in the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment over the past decade

The Act on the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence B.E. 2550 (2007) has been declared in the Royal Gazette on August 14, 2007, and enacted in Thailand since November 12, 2007. The act addresses domestic violence, which is defined as 'any action intended to inflict harm on a family member's physical, mental or health condition and any use of coercion or unethical domination to compel a family member to commit, omit or accept any unlawful act, except for that committed through negligence.' The act aims to protect family members, which include spouse, former spouse, ones who live and cohabit together or used to do so as husband and wife with out marriage registration, legitimate child, adopted child, family member/ any dependant one who has to live in the same household.

d) Gender-responsive budgeting

Gender budgeting in Thailand started in 2006. The Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development (OWAFD) and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung have jointly organized several workshops on gender budgeting as to promote knowledge creation and recognition of gender budgeting for Chief Gender Equality Officers (CGEOs), Gender Focal Points (GFPs), government officials, academics, women leaders and others who are interested in using gender budgeting in their organizations. The objectives of the workshops are 1) to promote knowledge creation and understanding on integrating gender perspective into the budgeting process; 2) to gather opinions and assess the possibility of applying the concept of gender budgeting in the Thai context; 3) to draft the guidelines for developing the work plan to promote gender budgeting, both in terms of researches, body of knowledge and campaign; 4) to create network of people working on gender budgeting.

e) The Millennium Development Goal (MDGs)

Thailand has already achieved most of the MDGs, and are very likely to achieve all before the year 2015 i.e the 1st, 3rd, 6th goals have already been achieved, the 2nd and 7th goals are enjoying good progress, while the 4th, 5th goals are not applicable to Thailand. As for the 8th goal, the government of Thailand is ready to cooperate, assist and to share our experiences and best practices with other countries who are our companions along the path of pursuing MDGs. Thailand's first MDG report has already been presented to the UN National Assembly in the year 2005. Perceiving MDGs as contributing to our national course of economic and social development and the enhancement of our people's life opportunity and human security, Thailand strives to do even better by setting more challenging goals, stately the 'MDG Plus' (MDG+) , as to make MDGs more corresponding to Thailand's context of development, and to express our firm commitment to improve the life quality of Thai people. The MDG+ concerning with women are 1) double the number of women's participation in the parliament, local administrative organizations and senior administrative positions in public offices. (MDG3+) and 2) reduce the number of maternal mortality by half, essentially in mountainous areas, some northern provinces and 3 southern border provinces (MDG5+).

f) The Thai government's major policy discussion and/ or parliamentary debates where gender perspectives and the concerns of women have been taken; recent major reforms that have been taken place; major problems that have been debated

Apart from the discussion and approval of the Act on the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence B.E. 2550 (2007) and the draft acts in concerned with the issues of women and gender equality already mentioned, the Cabinet has also discussed and approved the proposal from the Office of the Civil Service Commission on December 4, 2007 regarding the leave grant for female officials' religious practices. A leave of 3-month for religious practice per one government official

g) Women's involvement in armed conflict.

The role of Thai women in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution is not really an issue in Thailand. Nevertheless, female soldiers do currently serve in the Royal Thai Armed Forces. Some of these are stationed in military bases located in the various regions of Thailand. Up to now, their role have been more in regular security operations and not in conflict resolution. Women also involve in negotiation, mediation, and facilitation, for examples; women represent 54.55 % in the National Human Right Commission, while there are 10% in the National Reconciliation Commission.

h) The effect of globalization on women

Globalization and IT advancement has enabled the accesses to information and knowledge that are useful for the development of women's potentiality, as well as promoting women's roles. However, the IT advancement also facilitates the reproduction and spread of women's negative images, prejudice and negative attitude towards women. Also, the use of new technologies in factories instead of labor force, as well as lots of cheaper labour and products from overseas, notably agricultural products, have affected a notable number of women in labour and agricultural sector, whereas women entrepreneurs have to catch up with the rapid advancement of ICT may require a serious attempts to catch up, which could mean needs for developing various skills necessary for entering the global market.

i) The sector areas that have specific policies, strategies and action plan for the promotion of gender equality

Recognizing that women's participation in decision-making especially in politics is highly crucial for generate political will for the promotion of gender equality, Thailand has developed, and is currently implementing **The Memorandum of Understanding on the Campaign and Promotion of Women's Participation in Local Politics and the Protection of Women's Rights**. The units/ organizations participated in the MOU propose to promote and support the development of women's academic and practical potentiality in order to prepare them for participation in local politics, campaign and promote recognition among the local community regarding the significances and benefits of women's participation in local politics, promote and support women's participation in politics as voters, candidates, and efficient local executives as well as collect and analyze the results of elections of local administrative officers at all levels in order to illustrate the development of women's participation in politics, election and positions in public offices.

j) The partnerships with NGOs, the civil society, private sector and other stageholders in support the national efforts on gender equality and empowerment of women.

The 10th Women development plan of Thailand had emphasized the promotion of partnerships among stakeholders, which include the public, political and private sectors, local administrative organizations and the civil society in promoting women's participation in politics and decision-making. Political parties are encouraged to develop policy for women, and the promotion of women's participation in development at all level, as well as to nominate women for decision-making position in politics, the local administrative organization

k) The efforts to engage men and boys in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

As a part of the campaign on November as the Campaign Month for Ending Violence against Women, the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development and its partner organizations, including the media and the private sector has also launched the White Ribbon Campaign and the Gentlemen against VAW Campaign as to engage men and boys in addressing violence against women. The campaigns, which are regularly launched in November every year, include the collection of signatures, as well as the distribution of 'white ribbon' necktie pins for men and boys, notably public figures such as the prime minister, politicians and celebrities, to put on as a sign of commitment to end violence against women. The main message of the campaign is that men and boy can, and should play a part in the elimination of violence against women by 'Not Committing, Not Approving and Not Neglecting' should violence against women happens.

Part Two: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

A. Examples of successful policies, legislative change and programmes and projects

Successful actions, and specific commitment of Thailand in relation to the critical areas of concern in the Platform of Action are as the following:

☒ Women and Poverty

Economic and income development always remain top priorities in Thailand's national agenda. The government of Thailand has been continuously attempted to implement policies and measures to tackle the problems of poverty, while urging for cooperation from concerned partners such as the private sectors, NGOs and financial institution. Though the Thai government do not have specific policies to address the problem of women's poverty, many of their policies are useful for promoting women's accesses to resources

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healthcare as much as possible. Meanwhile, the current Thai government has the policy to promote healthcare development of people by means of providing universal healthcare coverage, promoting more and improved accesses to healthcare services, and reforming the public healthcare administration with regard to treatments, recovery, prevention of diseases and health promotion. Although these policies do not have specific objectives or goals on women, they ensure that women shall not be denied accesses to healthcare services and benefits provided by the government.

☒ **Violence against women**

Realizing that violence against women severely violates women's human rights, as well as undermine their well-being, livelihood and life quality as a whole, the issue has been set among the top priorities of Thailand's national agendas. The Constitution of Thailand B.E. 2550 (2007) includes the provisions with regard to the protection of women's rights, and especially to cases of violence against women as the following:

Article 4 Human dignity, rights, freedom and equality of people must be protected.

Article 40 (6) Children, youth, elderly and persons with disability must be properly treated in legal cases whereby sexual violence is concerned.

Additionally, **The Act on the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence B.E. 2550 (2007)**, which is a specific law on violence against women, has been declared in the Royal Gazette on August 14, 2007, and enacted in Thailand since November 12, 2007. The act addresses domestic violence, which is defined as 'any action intended to inflict harm on a family member's physical, mental or health condition and any use of coercion or unethical domination to compel a family

and assistance. An OSCC usually assumes multifunctional roles i.e. as a call centre to receive reported cases of VAW, a coordinating centre with other units, e.g. police station, the court or the ministry, if needed, and a centre for VAW information, mental supports and advice along with the physical treatments.

sectors (61.8%) and education (59.3%); 54.3% of women work in production sectors, while 33% are in public administration. Apart from the formal sector, women also contribute a valuable aspect to the informal i.e. caring economy by means of

be prohibited. Meanwhile, measures specified by the state to eliminate obstacles or promote certain groups of people to enjoy equal rights with the others shall not be considered as discrimination.

Apart from the Act on the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence B.E. 2550 (2007) which has been recently declared, another clear sign of progress on women's right in Thailand is the Act on Women's Titles B.E.... , which gives married women the rights to choose their own title either 'Miss' or 'Mrs.'. In addition, the penal code article 276 concerning the rape cases has already been amended to include penalty for marital rapes. Thailand is currently working on the next step to further promote women's equality and rights by means of proposing the draft law on gender equality.

☒ Women and the Media

Statistics from the Department of Public Relations show that the number of women working in the media has risen from 25.99% (229 women from the total number of 881 registered media) in the year 2002 to 41.04% (314 women from the total number of 818 registered media). The Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development is currently working with partner units/ organizations, especially through CEGOs/GFPs in related ministries/ organizations, in promoting trainings to create understanding on gender equality, gender roles, respect and non-violation of women's human rights, the appropriate representation of women in the media i.e. non-stereotypical and more diverse roles of women so that the society realize the potential and valuable contribution of women's equal participation. Also, the MediaMonitor campaign has been launched to monitor and attempt to decrease the representation of women the reproduces negative images of women or gender prejudice in all types of media. The campaign also proposes to promote cooperation, exchanges of opinions and experiences among the media rega

services, 45% of pregnancies are unwanted, while 16% of pregnancies end with abortion. Also, a research conducted on sexual behaviour of high school students reveals that only 23.3% of male students use condoms, whereas most women are either afraid or shy to ask or insist that their partners use condoms.

☒ Violence against Women

Despite the fact that in recent year, many policy interventions, mechanisms and services have been developed to tackle the problems of domestic violence and violence against women in following the implementation of the Act on the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence B.E. 2550 (2007), there have been very little attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of most of them. For most of the time, the evaluation is conducted by the initiator of the interventions and mechanisms or the service providers themselves i.e. the evaluation of the hotline service and the shelters provided by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security is done by the ministry itself, whereas the Ministry of Public Health also conducts its own evaluation of the OSCCs, etc. As a result, the attempts of evaluation are mostly quantitative, and thus do not reflect clearly the key challenges of implementation.

☒ Women and the Economy

Despite the fact that Thai women contribute greatly to the business/private sectors as labour and producers, the number of women in decision and policy in this field remains very small. The percentage of women participating as members of the board of committee in companies registered in the Stock Market is merely 22% (139 women from the total number of 642) , while the percentage of women member of the board of committee of companies registered with the Ministry of Commerce is 35.37% (413, 253 women from the total number of 1,168, 131)

☒ Women in Power and Decision Making

In contrast to Thailand's current policy and attempts to promote more women's participation in politics at all levels the number of women participating in local politics remain very modest e.g. the number of women who are presidents of the local councils, member of local administrative organizations, members of the provincial and district councils is 13,143 from the total number of 223,361 (5.88%)

Researches on the issue reveal the structural constraints for women's low political participation in

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C. Lessons learned

Ⓔ Main lesson learned

On the overall implementation of the critical issue areas of the BPFAs, the main lesson learned is that despite the achievements that have been done so far, there are still many rooms for improvement especially with regard to enhancing the capacity of the national gender equality mechanism, as well as other unit/ organization working on the issues, to participate more in the making of and influencing national policy and strategy development in each critical issue area, promoting officials' capacity development, promoting people and stake holders' participation, the developing effective monitoring system, and enhancing network cooperation with regard to gender equality and gender sensitization. These, however, would be subject to certain structural changes. That is to say, the concerns for gender issues and gender equality should be mainstreamed into the topmost level of national agenda, i.e. by means of the potential establishment of

- 4) Collect and analyze the results of elections of local administrative officers at all levels in order to illustrate the development of women's participation in politics, election and positions in public offices.
- 5) Promote protection of women's rights, prevention and ameliorations of violence against women and human trafficking both as parts of the units/organizations' missions, and among the risk groups.
- 6) Promote knowledge and understanding for people regarding the protection of women's rights, prevention and amelioration of violence against women and human trafficking.
- 7) Conduct systemic monitoring and reports of the information regarding the violation of women's rights.
- 8) Make the plan of action to promote concrete implementation of no. 1-7.

Part 3: Institutional Developments

a) National mechanism

The principle national mechanism for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Thailand is the **Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development (OWAFD)**, which is a departmental level unit under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. The core mandates of the OWAFD include 1) promoting the development of women's capacity, gender equality and the strength of family institution; 2) developing policies, measures and mechanisms to promote and support other units both in the public and private sectors to implement policies on the development of women's capacity, the protection of women's human rights; the promotion of gender equality and social justice; 3) promoting strength for family institution as to be the mechanism to promote the development of women and men's capacity,

OWAFD functions mainly to coordinate among them in certain occasions, such as the organization of national seminars, conferences or forums.

The 245 members of staff of the OWAFD may be classified into

treatment of women inmates, which may further serve as a road map and/or recommendations for the amendment of “**UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners**” (Bangkok Rules)

Part 4 :Remaining challenges and actions to address them

The earlier parts of the answer to the questionnaire have clearly illustrate many notable achievement and progress of Thailand with regard to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and outcome of the twenty-third session of the General Assembly. Nevertheless, it is worth nothing that the global situation, especially recent financial crisis that has had tremendous effects on countries all over the world, notably 3rd world countries, has presented us a great challenge. Potential impacts of financial crisis on women and girls, as already been felt in some parts of Thailand, notabl in the labour and small industry sectors, are that :

- 1) Many women working in manufacturing and exportation have lost their jobs because of the economic contraction.
- 2) Workers in informal sectors i.e. subcontractors in garment and food industries in , which are mostly women, are subject to no job security, and are most likely to be the first to get laid off.
- 3) Provision of micro-credits and small, unsecured loans are mostly suspended in the time of financial crisis, and women, who benefit most from these particular forms of loans, will be most affected because they often have little or no accesses to other forms of loans.
- 4) Financial crisis is likely to worsen the food crisis, and women, as the major food producers and providers of food for the household, are the first to be affected.
- 5) The government may have to spend a lot of money on other programmes/ projects to promote financial recovery, which may result in cutting budget on social programmes/ projects that benefit women, such as in healthcare, education and sanitation.

Although the figures, and the extent of how, and how many Thai women are affected by the 2008 global financial crisis are not yet available at the present moment , an NESDB research on the impacts of Thailand's 1997 financial crisis found that, though the unemployment rate of men was higher than women in the time of crisis, female labour tended to receive lower wages. Thus, it may be well assumed the wage gap between male and female labour is wider during the time of economic crisis. Also, A study on the impact of economic crisis on rural community found that community women felt that the economic crisis generated more family conflicts, rising thief cases and promoted more gambling. Also, women were most concerned for their children's education in the time of economic crisis.

Thus, the priority area that Thailand will pledge to improve the implementation in the next 5 years is the area of Women and the Economy, which would not only to help women coping with the changing world, but also aid the course of Thailand's economic development in the age of globalization and free trade. In this light some projects that have already been developed are:

- 1) Survey conducted by the Office of SME promotion and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as to promote Thai exports under JTEPA
- 2) e-Training courses developed by the Ministry of ICT to promote women entrepreneur's competitive capacity and access to information, including necessary rights and gender equality.
- 3) Thai women entrepreneur club – as a network to promote inspiration and development of Thai women's entrepreneurs' knowledge and knowledge management system.
- 4) Incubation center for Thai women entrepreneurs by the Office of SME promotion

