

ABOUT UN WOMEN

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

SITUATION OF WOMEN – OVERVIEW

Thailand, a constitutional monarchy with a population of 69 million, has made significant progress in development over the last three decades. Strong economic growth has contributed to reduction of poverty incidence from 42% in 1988 to 8% in 2009. Significant improvements are evident in social development, i.e., education, health and social services.

The rapid growth masks socio-economic inequalities, a widening income gap, uneven development between urban and rural areas, and unequal access to resources and social services. Some women groups, such as Muslim women in the deep South, the hill tribe women in the North, HIV positive women, women with disabilities and migrant women workers, still face discrimination and rights violation.

Thailand ranks 92 out of 138 countries on the Gender Inequality Index. Policies relating to women have become a regular part of the government agenda, and Thailand's efforts to implement CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action have had a visible impact on progress towards gender equality.

In July 2011, Thailand elected its first female Prime Minister—Yingluck Shinawatra. Women's groups hope that this significant change will boost an environment for women's empowerment initiatives, particularly in regards to increasing women's representation in decision-making.

Legal Frameworks for Gender Equality – The 2007 Constitution of Thailand upholds equal rights and protection between women and men. Legislative amendments have been made to improve women's ability to claim their rights. In 2005 the *Name Act* was amended to allow women the right to choose a family name. In 2007, the *Penal Code* was amended to criminalize marital rape, and the *Civil Code* amended to provide women and men equal grounds for divorce. The *Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence Act* was passed in 2007, providing for protection and rehabilitation of victims, requiring members of the public to report alleged abuse, and obliging law enforcement officers to respond to reports of violence. The Prevention and Suppression of Human trafficking Act was passed in 2008. Drafts of the Promotion of Opportunity and Equality Act are being reviewed and pending submission for review by the Parliament.

Institutional Mechanism for Gender Equality -- The Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security coordinates the women on gender equality. The Office serves as the secretariat of the National Committee on the Policy and Strategy for the Advancement of Women, chaired by the Prime Minister. Currently underway is the *National Plan for the Advancement of Women (2012-2016)*. The Chief Gender Equality Officer and Gender Focal Point (GFP), currently in place in 131 government departments and agencies, serve as key gender mainstreaming mechanisms.

Leadership and participation in decision-making — Women's representation is low, and so is participation at a higher level of public administration and judiciary. In 2011, women made up 15% of MPs, 16% of senators, and 17% of senior civil service positions despite outnumbering men as civil servants. At the local level, in 2008, women constituted 9.4% of elected officials. The picture in the private sector is better: women made up 35.37% of members of the board of committee of companies registered with the Ministry of Commerce.

Violence against women — 44% of women in Thailand in 2005 reported having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner. More than 7 in 10 women in rural Thailand agreed that there are reasons that justify a man beating his wife. Only 20% of physically abused women in Bangkok and 10% in Nakhonsawan had ever turned to formal services (health, police, religious or local leaders, etc.) for help. Intimate partner transmission of HIV in Thailand is approximately 36% and women report limited power to negotiate safe sex and that the main reason for non-condom use is refusal by men. The One Stop Crisis Center for victims of violence in all provincial hospitals and in district hospitals is regarded as a good practice in service delivery. Despite existing response services, multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms remain a challenge.

Conflict — Intensified insurgency in the Muslim-majority southernmost provinces since 2004, with targeted killings and car-bombs, results in thousands of casualties. Women are both victims of violence, or left behind as heads of households when men are detained, killed or displaced—female-headed households in the South are poorer than male-headed households. Women are not adequately included in peace-building and conflict resolution processes. The strategy to promote women's participation in decision making outlined in the National Women's Development Plan 2012-2016 creates policy space for programming to support women's increased role in peace-building and recovery.

UN WOMEN IN THAILAND

Since 1994, UN Women has worked with government and civil society partners towards gender equality and women's empowerment through promotion of women's human rights and non-discrimination. These include:

Ending Violence against Women — Under the leadership of Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha as UN Women's Goodwill Ambassador, Thai activities to contribute to the UN Secretary General's UNiTE Campaign to End Violence Against Women, have been successful—3,123,679 signatures out of the globally collected 5 million signatures were collected from Thailand in support of the Say No to Violence Campaign in 2008, and 622,189 actions were collected in 2010 in support of UNiTE. UN Women has worked with national partners to promote relevant legislation and its implementation, notably the Domestic Violence legislation. On-going activities include development of the National Action Plan on Ending Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, development of the Thailand UNiTE Action Plan until 2015, and supporting implementation of activities towards the five UNiTE outcomes, i.e., legislation, National Action Plan, data, social mobilization working with youth and media, and sexual violence in conflict.

Promoting women's participation in decision-making processes — UN Women has supported initiatives, particularly at the local level, to raise awareness among candidates, political parties and voters of the importance of women's participation in public life. This includes training on campaigning and leadership skills to encourage women to run for local elections, and supporting nation-wide efforts to implement CEDAW Committee recommendations on the use of temporary special measures.

Promoting accountability to commitments on advancing gender equality — UN Women supports the national women's machinery (NWM) to prepare for CEDAW review sessions and to implement CEDAW Committee recommendations. Joint efforts are on-going in the development of National Action Plans in support of strategies outlined in the National Women's Development Plan 2012-2016 and in integration of these strategies into sectoral and local development plans.

Improving women's access to justice — This includes working with the National Human Rights Commission, National Law Reform Commission and other partners to build capacity judges and legal personnel on CEDAW and women's human rights and improving gender-sensitivity in the handling of cases. This has resulted in changes towards a more female-friendly judicial process in the Thonburi Criminal Court, which is now regarded as a model court.

Disaster preparedness and response that mainstreams gender — UN Women works with the NWM and women's groups to promote the gender-sensitive and community & rights-based approach to the 2011 flood crisis, to extract lessons learnt and develop models for future use of related organizations. The project promotes women's participation in disaster preparedness and response as well as ensures targeted and strategic response to women with particular vulnerabilities, such as women migrant workers, women in the informal sector, female heads of households, women with disabilities, elderly women and HIV positive women.

Women's Economic Empowerment — UN Women works through the UN Women-Global Compact Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) to build women's leadership and opportunities in the private sector. Two lead companies in Thailand have signed the WEPs, namely THAI Airways International and Central Retail Corporation. UN Women promotes women's access to social protection, productive resources and business development skills, particularly those in the informal sector and women migrant workers. UN Women also promotes mainstreaming gender into social protection and economic development policies.