

Social Welfare for Children and Women in Thailand

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Social Welfare Policy for Children and Women in Thailand

Introduction

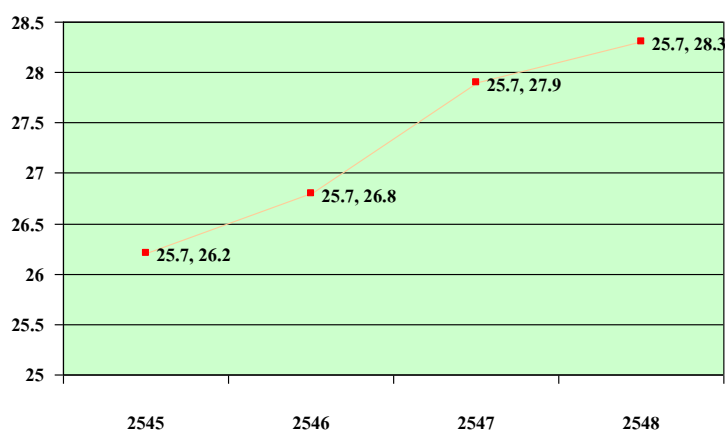
For Thailand, social welfare is defined in Article 80 of 1997 Constitution as the government's responsibility to protect and develop children and youth, promote gender equality, and strengthen family ties as well as community integrity. The government shall also help the elderly, disadvantaged groups, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable groups to uplift their quality of life and attain self-reliance.

Social welfare is recognized as one of the state's important duties so as to enable the Thai population to build life security. However, the government role has moved away from merely providing social welfare services to the one that focuses on mobilizing all sectors especially the civil society and the people themselves to actively be involved in the development process. In view of this, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) as the key agency in providing social work and social welfare services, has encouraged local authorities and local communities to play a key role and be involved in social protection and welfare systems to ensure a better coverage of services for the target groups as well as to enable them to lead a healthy life and become self-reliant.

General Situation

At present, the total number of population is about 65 million of which 32 million are male and 33 are female. Like many other developing countries, Thailand's rapid social and economic change due to its national development plus globalization has resulted in shifting once and long time rural/agricultural-based society to urban/industrial-based society. Despite its positive impact on economic growth, knowledge and technology; globalization also brings in higher competition most notably to urban areas and at the same time fades away sharing and caring society from rural communities. In general, both the father and mother seek employment outside the home. In rural area, the elderly and small children are often left as parents and young adults seek non-agricultural employment in big cities. This prevailing phenomenon affects the family as a whole. Traditional extended families both in urban and rural areas are being gradually replaced by nuclear families. A growing trend of single-parent families is noticeable. The proportion of female-headed households is also increasing. Moreover, family functions and women's traditional parental roles are now being replaced by specialized organizations such as nursery or child care centres. This has led to increasing problems for children especially for the underprivileged.

Figure 1
Percentage of female-headed households 2001-2005



Source: National Statistics Office

Children

According to the Ministry of Interior, in 2004, the number of children under 18 years living in Thailand was 17,034,175 million or 27 percent of the total population. The Ministry of Labour reported that there were 1,107,527 foreign children (from Myanmar, Lao and Cambodia) in the same year. There are also vulnerable groups of children which include migrant and stateless children, street children, orphaned children, children with disabilities, hill tribe children, child beggars, and children in disadvantaged geographic areas. The statistics on these groups of children are quite limited. However, there were estimated figures depicting the picture of some certain groups. There were believed to be approximately 20,000 street children in major urban centers. The number of children living outside family environment and separated from parents was more than 8,000. The population of children with disabilities who received assistance and services was about 50,000. In 2002, there were approximately more than 390,000 hill tribe children in Thailand.

Table 1
Number of children living outside family environment and separated from parents (2002-2005)

Types	2002	2003	2004	2005
Children in welfare homes	4,609	5,003	4,364	4,509
Children placed with fosters families	396	396	396	412
Children adopted domestically	3,740	4,064	3,395	3,884
Children adopted through inter-country adoption	538	594	586	504

Source: Department of Social Development and Welfare

Table 2
Number of children with disabilities under 18 years who received
assistance and services (2002-2005)

Types	2002	2003	2004	2005
Children in welfare homes	1,909	1,962	2,062	2,081
Children attending regular schools	N/A	N/A	10,597	26,541
Children attending special schools	3,740	4,064	3,395	3,884
Children in non-formal education	538	594	586	504

*Sources: Department of Social Development and Welfare.
Bureau of Policy and Strategy, Office of the Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Education.*

In terms of education, all children in Thailand are entitled to 9 years of compulsory education. The enrolment has continuously been in progress reflecting the universality and continuity of education. However, access to education for low income earners and disadvantaged groups has yet to be improved. In 2001, an extensive survey by the National Primary Education Commission identified 140,000 school-aged children, the majority of them highland children, as having difficulties enrolling and staying in school. Other groups experiencing these difficulties included children of seafarers, homeless children, migrant and stateless children, and children affected by AIDS. In response, in 2005 the cabinet adopted a resolution expanding education opportunities for children residing in temporary shelters for those fleeing armed conflicts.

Women

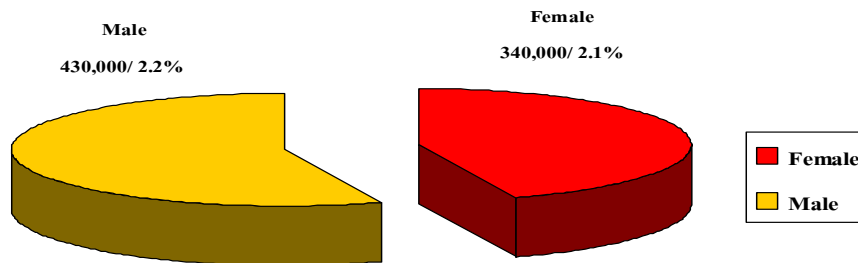
As mentioned earlier, the population of women constitutes about 50 percent of the total population. Thus women, as equal as men, are valuable force in the country's development and economic growth. Compared with women in many developing countries, Thai women perform relatively well in several aspects affecting their status. Thailand has achieved the Millennium Goal of eliminating the gender disparity in primary and secondary education. At the tertiary level, women even outnumbered men (except at the doctorate level). Women's access to health-care services has been improved through 30 baht for every disease scheme. The National Economic and Social Development Board indicates that life expectancy rate of women is higher than men's, 73 years versus 69 years. Participation rate of women in the workforce is relatively high. Unemployment rate of women is also slightly lower than men.

Table 3
Number of graduates from government universities in 1999

Educational level	Total students	No. of females	% of females
Bachelor degree	73,674	41,749	56.69
Graduate diploma	1,334	737	55.25
Master degree	18,069	9,182	50.82
Doctoral degree	171	83	48.54
Total	93,221	51,751	55.51

Source: Educational Report of Government Higher Education in the Year 2000, Ministry of University Affairs

Figure2 Unemployment Rate 2006
(January)



Source: National Statistics Office

On the negative side, however, some existing deeply-rooted stereotypes and traditional attitudes still impede the advancement of women in the country. Men customarily take on the dominant role regarding family, community, government and social leadership. Moreover family members often do not encourage women to participate in politics. Only a small percentage of women participate in political and public life, most notably at the high level. Data on the numbers of Executive Administrators in 2000, obtained from the Office of the Civil Service Commission, indicated that in the position of Inspector-General there were 87 men against 12 women (12%). Figures from the latest election in 2005 showed that only 53 women or 10.6 %, out of 500 members of parliaments, were elected. At present, 21 caretaker senates or 10.5%, out of the total 200, are women.

Violence against Women and Children

Violence against women and children is still a major problem. Many women and children suffer from physical, emotional and sexual abuse within the family, at home, in school, in the workplace and public place. Most offenders are family members or acquaintances of the victims. To make the matter worse, many victims particularly of domestic violence do not want to reveal the details of their ordeal to outsiders, partly due to the social perception regarding this kind of violence a family matter and outsiders should not get involve. Therefore, only reported cases might represent only a small fraction of the real big problem.

The following are statistics obtained from various agencies and organizations:

1. Court: There were 2,817 cases in 1990 and increasing to 5,840 in 1997.
2. The Royal Thai Police: In 2004 there were 5,041 reported rape cases with 1,860 arrests or only 36.9 % of reported cases.
3. Department of Public Welfare: In 2000, there were 97 cases of child abuse in Bangkok and 173 cases in rural areas. The cases included those children who were physically or sexually assaulted and those who were neglected. Most offenders were persons acquainted with the victims such as parents, guardians, neighbors and teachers.
4. The Foundation for Women: From January to December 2000, there were 97 cases of sexual violence, 84 cases of domestic violence and 50 cases of women who had been trafficked.
5. The Hotline Centre Foundation: From January to September 1999, They were 480 persons asking for advice about domestic violence, as well as 383 cases concerning rape.
6. Friends of Women Foundation: From January to December 1997, there were 1,057 requests for assistance and 1,000 in 1998, of which 80 % involved in domestic violence and sexual violence.

Trafficking in Women and Children

In Thailand, trafficking in women and children especially for prostitution is a serious problem. Thailand has been involved in human trafficking, particularly trafficking in women and children, in three situations: 1) a country of origin where women and children are sent to destination countries like Japan and Australia; 2) a country of transit used as a channel for sending women and children to countries like Malaysia and Hong Kong; and 3) a country of destination where women and children from neighboring countries such as Lao PDR, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and China (Yunnan Province) face exploitation and violation of their rights. Statistical data on cases of human trafficking have not been compiled and documented systematically due to the fact that victims do not want to disclose their identity and they are embarrassed or too scared to file charges against traffickers. The United Nations estimates that there are 700,000-1,000,000 trafficking victims of which 90 % are women and children. However, only a small number of foreign children and women were rescued during recent years.

Table 4
Number of foreign children and women rescued who received assistance from trafficking, classified by nationalities in 2002-2005

Nationality	2002	2003	2004	2005
Cambodian	134	128	152	159
Myanmar	113	220	66	38
Laotian	66	74	159	142
Chinese	11	11	2	3
Vietnamese	2	0	6	5
Other nationalities	1	2	6	0
Not identified	1	0	0	0
Total	328	435	391	347

Source: Department of Social Development and Welfare

Institution Framework

In Thailand, there is a number of ministries related to providing child and woman welfare, including the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour, and Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. Among these ministries, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security is the key agency responsible for providing social welfare services to women and children especially those who are less privileged. Its roles and responsibilities also include the following:

- To provide social work and social welfare services for the disadvantaged, the needy, the destitute and people who are socially distressed by developing an approach which involves 2 systems of services: institutional care system and referral system. The Ministry also promotes involvement of local communities and local authorities in provision of services to ensure a better coverage of services for the target groups
- To develop the potential of women, promote gender equality and strengthen family institution by formulating policies, measures and mechanisms that promote participation of the public and private sectors in the implementation of such policies. The aim is to increase the potential of women, to protect the rights and benefits that they are entitled to have and to promote social equity and justice as well as a strong and secure family institution contributing to the maximization of men and women's potential for development of communities and society as a whole.

In addition, there are three key Departments under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security responsible for enabling and empowering women and children, both at the family and community levels, to uplift their quality of life and become self-reliant. The three Departments are:

- 1) Department of Social Development and Welfare (DSDW), responsible for providing social welfare services and assistance for vulnerable people, needy people, and people with social problems. Services provided are in the forms of remedial, rehabilitative and developmental models. Additionally, institutional care is also provided with regards to encouraging target groups to have self-reliance and dignity. The other duties include: developing and standardizing models and methods of providing social work and welfare services and promoting social welfare services network.
- 2) Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development, responsible for developing women's potential, promoting gender equality, empowering family institution, and establishing of social equity and justice. The other duties include: promoting coordination for women rights protection according to the laws, conducting researches to develop body of knowledge for promoting women potential, gender equality and security of family institution.
- 3) Office of Welfare Promotion, Protection and Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups (OPP), responsible for protecting rights and promoting potential of various target groups including women and children. It also takes charge in formulating policy, measures and mechanisms for developing security and quality of life of the target groups as well as supporting coordination among GOs and NGOs.
- 4) Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) has its mandates in relation to promote the development of community organizations and civil

society by coordinating efforts of stakeholders involved in community development.

In order to achieve its roles and responsibilities in providing social welfare for women and children as well as empowering them to become self-reliant, the Ministry of Social and Development and Human Security has taken the rights-based approach through the fundamental concepts and provisions of related laws and MOUs as follows:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989- CRC
- Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979-CEDAW
- The Prostitution Prevention and Suppression Act 1996
- The Measures for the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Women and Children Act 1997
- Amendment to Penal Code Act (No. 14) 1997
- Amendment to Penal Code Procedure (No. 20) 1999
- Child Adoption Acts, 1979 and 1990
- 6 MOUs on Human Trafficking
- Child Protection Act 2003

Recent Activities and Problems

National Survey on the Situation of Children

The National Statistical Office together with the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP and the ILO, have collaborated in the appraisal of the situation of children in Thailand by using Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). MICS contains 93 indicators which are related to health and education of children and mothers. It is comprised of three questionnaires: a household questionnaire, a questionnaire for women aged 15-49, and a questionnaire for children under the age of five. The surveys have been conducted since mid-2005 and are expected to produce findings and conclusions by mid-2006.

Empowering Families

Family is considered the smallest but most important unit of society. Social problems are often rooted in families and are one of the factors affecting the status of women and children. The government, thus, has launched a project to encourage local communities to establish Family Development Centre in order to establish caring and strong families as a basis for economic recovery and to provide greater immunity to social problems. Activities include providing family information and services such as healthy family planning and the resolution of family problems. The centres will also act as surveillance network to help prevent domestic problems and violence. In 2005, there were 984 Centres nationwide.

Empowering Children

The Government launched projects to develop capacity of children and youth with three thrusts:

- 1) Establishment of Children and Youth Council at every province to involve children and youth in social development
- 2) Enforcement of Child Protection Act 2003 which came into effect on March 30, 2004. The Act is intended to provide protection for children from all forms of abuses, exploitation, violence and gross negligence by clearly stipulating that any child below the age of 18 is protected by the state. Recent developments are: establishing Child Protection Fund by allocating an annual budget of 30 million baht to be used for providing welfare assistance to children and their families; establishing centres for the protection of child rights and families in the Ministry of Education and 175 field offices; etc.
- 3) Provision of welfare and rehabilitation geared to child development at welfare centres and children and family shelters, with the objectives of rehabilitation, capacity building and preparation of life as productive members of society. Counseling is also provided through special P.O. Box and Call Center.

Empowering Women

- Promote all government agencies to appoint: 1) Chief Gender Equality Officer (CGEO), at both ministry and department levels. The major tasks of CGEOs are to promote gender equality in organizations, to integrate gender perspectives in policy and planning process, to develop master plan on gender equality promotion of their respective agencies; and 2) Gender Focal Point (GFP) as a coordinator on gender mainstreaming in all government agencies. Currently, there are CGEOs appointed in 129 agencies and 129 GFPs of every department in 19 ministries where 107 GFPs formulated a master plan of gender equality promotion and collected sex-disaggregated data.
- Enhance participation of women in politics and decision-making process by organizing trainings for female leaders on the Constitution and civil participation, training in politics/local administration for women preparing to be electoral candidates, training program for women in executive positions and support their networking
- Provide more access to education for disadvantage women, including encouraging women who cannot access the formal educational system to register in the programs of Non-Formal Education Department, which provide a variety of choices to fit individual needs and situations, giving educational loan fund students from low income families to pursue their studies up to the bachelor's degree level, and giving scholarships to girls from poor families living in areas where large number of girls enter the commercial sex industry.

Institutional Care

I. Social Work and Social Welfare Services for Children and Youth

1) Children and youth welfare, protection and development in residential homes, vocational centres, reception homes, welfare protection homes and shelters for children and families: services available are care, protection, rehabilitation and development of the target groups according to specific problems of each individuals:

- Children's homes: providing services for boys and girls from new born to 18 years old who are abandoned, or affected by HIV/AIDS, or whose parents are not able to give proper care. Services include basic necessities, physical and mental development, education, vocational training, family tracing, foster parents, etc. There are 20 children's homes nationwide. In 2005, the homes could accommodate 5,952 children.

- Welfare and Vocational Training Centre: providing education and vocational training for children and youth. At present, there is only one Centre with 150 children and youth attending the training courses in 2005.

- Reception homes and child welfare protection homes: receiving street children or children who behave improperly, children who are abused or exploited. Services include provision of basic necessities, education, vocational training, rehabilitation; to enable them to be ready for reintegrating into society. At present, there are 4 homes with 1,880 child residents.

- Shelters for children and families: established in 1994, providing 24-hour service for children and families who are in distress. Services include basic necessities, physical and mental rehabilitation, and referral to other concerned agencies. There are totally 24 shelters and could serve 6,591 persons in 2005.

2) Child and youth welfare, protection and development in families and communities: This form of service aims to enable children and youth to live happily with their families and communities, to have a better quality of life and to be provided with welfare protection. Periodic surveys have been carried out to find those who are not properly brought up by their families, children who are homeless, abandoned, abused or exploited, etc.

- Child welfare in families: enhancing the capacity of families on child rearing by giving counseling service for parents, scholarship for children, funds for starting a small business. In 2005, there were 140,036 children receiving services.

- Placement of children in foster or adoptive families: providing services for children who could not live with their natural families or those who live in state residential homes. Arrangements were made for placing them in new families where relatives would be given priority with approval from DSDW.

- Promotion, support and control of child care and child development centres: promoting and supporting private sector to build up child care and child development centres in the poor community. The centres will be provided with supplementary food and teaching facilities. In 2005, there were 1,656 centres accommodating 74,161 children.

- Welfare protection for children in families and communities: dispatching Child Welfare Protection Police Officer to monitor and give consultation to families and children in communities. Social Workers or psychiatrists are also sent out to accompany the police in child investigation in

conformity with the Amendment to Penal Code Procedure (No. 20) 1999. In 2005, the project could serve 15,538 children.

II. Social Work and Social Welfare Services for Women

- Rehabilitation and welfare protection services in reception homes and in occupational development centres, in conformity with the Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act 1996: rescuing women who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation, violence, other forms of human trafficking, and women with social problems. In 2005, a total of 2,051 women were provided with services by 4 reception homes

- Enhancing the potential of women in welfare and vocational training centres and in communities: 1) Vocational training in welfare and vocational training centres: providing vocational centres free of charge for women and young girls with low level of education, or having economic problems and unemployed; 2) Vocational training under the “Building New Life for Rural Women Project”: providing short training courses for rural women who wish to pursue higher education, women who were laid off, women in high-risk group. The main purpose is to prevent them from entering sex trade and enhancing their life skill. In 2005, there were 10,781 women attending vocational courses in 8 centres, and 7,500 rural women attending the Building New Life for Rural Women.

3) Social Work and Social Welfare Services relating to HIV/AIDS

- Child welfare in residential homes: providing welfare and residential care services for children infected with HIV/AIDS or children who become orphans or neglected because parents died of AIDS. In 2005, there were 434 children receiving the services.

- Welfare for women infected with HIV/AIDS: providing 5,000 baht as funds for occupation for women and families with HIV/AIDS. In 2005, there were 1,200 recipients.

National response to domestic violence

- Amendment of Criminal Law on interrogating persons 18 years of age who have been accused of, are victims of, or witnesses to sex-related crimes: The purpose of the amendment is to make the interrogation process more child-friendly and allow children to testify without enduring further hardship.

- the Draft law on Prevention and Resolution of Domestic Violence B.E...: The Draft was endorsed by the Cabinet in July 2005 and now is being considered by the State of Council. The purpose of this Draft is to serve as specific law covering measures to deal with domestic violence cases appropriately. The law can assist victims of violence, setting up an optional procedure to alter an offender’s behaviour through a court order instead of relying only on criminal punishment.

- Campaigns to raise society’s awareness and understanding of violence against women which include: declaring November as the month to campaign for the elimination of violence against women and children since 1999, campaigns for men to join in stopping violence against women and children. Participants wear a white ribbon to signify their commitment.

Measures against Trafficking in Women and Children

Anti human trafficking as a national agenda

As Thailand is one of the countries struck with human trafficking in three dimensions: as a country of origin, as a point of transit, and as a destination, the government has injected the highest level of political will in proclaiming human trafficking a national agenda since August 8, 2004 and determined to suppress the issue by assigning its relevant agencies at all levels to take the following actions:

- Capacity building for relevant personnel to enhance their understanding on the nature of the problem to ensure the efficiency of the officials
- Intelligence exchange among origin, transit and destination countries which can be achieved by the establishment of networks and cooperation
- Improvement and amendment of laws relevant to human trafficking to be more responsive to the present situation. Appropriated legislation against human trafficking must be enforced with transparency and training must be carried out for policemen and relevant personnel
- Campaign to increase public awareness of the problem and provision of assistance to groups at risk
- Remedy and rehabilitation with an initial fund of 500 million baht to assist victims of trafficking
- Change of discriminatory attitudes in the society that stigmatize victims of human trafficking to facilitate their reintegration

Laws and law enforcement

- At present, Thailand has no specific legislation against trafficking in persons. However, the government is committed to the enforcement of laws imposing severe penalties on people who are offenders of prostitution, exploitative labour, forced begging and other inhumane acts. Currently, the government is drafting the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act B.E...in conformity with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in persons, especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.
- The draft Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act B.E...provides a definition of human trafficking and determines penalty to offenders. The key elements of this Act include: 1) Thailand can prosecute every offender of human trafficking no matter where the offence is committed; 2) victims and witnesses shall be protected during the trials; 3) victims may claim compensation from the offender of any damages caused by human trafficking; and 4) victims shall be provided with shelter and other necessities including physical, psycho-social, legal education, and health care assistance. The draft Act is now being considered by the Council of State.
- The government is in the process of drafting a new extradition law that will replace the existing one which had been used since 1829. The new law will cover various extradition procedures including requests for voluntary extradition. Currently, Thailand has concluded treaties on extradition with the People's Republic of China, Lao PDR, and the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Other Measures

- Establishment of Operation Center on Protection and Suppression of Human Trafficking at national level and at provincial level in 2005. with the main functions to coordinate the concerned organizations among the public sector, the private sector and communities, to protect and assist victims of trafficking and develop the policy, campaign and information
- The Cabinet Resolution of 29 June 1999 declared that November is the month to campaign for elimination of violence against women and children
- On 14 June 2005, the Cabinet approved the criteria and conditions for government agencies to assist and protect non-Thai victims of trafficking outside the country on humanitarian basis.

Education, Training and Coordination of Social Workers and other Human Resources

Recently, a number of trainings and workshops have been developed and undertaken for officials, workers and other personnel to enhance their efficiency in dealing with social welfare for women and children such as:

- Training for social workers and other concerned personnel to ensure full compliance with the principles and provisions of Child Protection Act 2003
- Sensitization training on child protection laws to the general public
- Training on child care and activities for pre-school children for officials and officers concerned, in conformity with Child Protection Act 2003
- Training to enhance efficiency of officials from protection homes in assisting and supporting victims of human trafficking

Collaboration of social welfare and health and medical service

- On 9 September 2005, representatives of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and the Ministry of Public Health signed an agreement on development of quality of life of abandoned children from unwanted pregnancies.
- Coordinate with the Ministry of Public Health in supporting medical personnel and medical care for victims of human trafficking

Role-sharing between public and private sectors

- the government cooperates closely with NGOs with regard to the use of victims as witness in trafficking cases. One of the outcomes of this cooperation is legislation to protect witnesses and permit children under the age of 18 to give evidence via video linkage
- the government has close collaboration with the National Council for Child and Youth Development, an umbrella of around 65 Thai NGOs dedicating for child and youth development, the government gives financial support to NCYD every year for promoting the positive development of Thai children and youth
- supporting private organizations in Thailand and foreign countries to take children who could not live with their natural families under the authority of

residential homes, to live with foster families, both temporarily and permanently

- Thailand has been working closely with UN International Organizations such as UNICEF, UNIAP, IOM, ILO-IPEC, as well as private organizations such as World Vision, Asia Foundation, Save the Children (UK), etc. in regional initiatives to combat human trafficking

Collaboration between national and local governments

Local administrative organizations are the key players in social welfare for children and women in community. The Thai government has always attached great importance to promoting participation of local governments in social and economic development, including the well being of people and of disadvantaged groups in community. Significant progress related to the well being of women and children are:

- Social Watch: At sub-district level, Tambon Administrative Organization or TAO is instituted with the authority to direct and oversee development activities in their jurisdiction through their local offices. They can manage their own budget, partly derive from tax revenue, to be used for community infrastructure as well as social programmes for children and women in particular. Moreover, TAO has another duty that is to detect and identify social problems and other factors that may be detrimental to the well being and safety of its people.
- Article 24 of the Child Protection Act 2003 stipulates that heads of local administration organizations have the duty to protect the safety of children living in the areas under their jurisdiction, regardless of whether or not they have parents or guardians, and also have the authority and duty to supervise and inspect nurseries, remand homes; and shall consider the most appropriate ways and means of providing assistance as follows:
 - 1) to provide assistance and welfare to the child and his or her family or any person providing care for the child so as to enable them to take care of the child
 - 2) to submit the child into the care of an appropriate person who consents to provide care for the child for a period as deemed appropriate but not exceeding one month in the case where it is not possible to act according to clause 1)
 - 3) to facilitate the adoption of the child by a third person in accordance with the law on child adoption
 - 4) to send the child to be cared for by an appropriate foster family or nursery consenting to take the child into care
 - 5) to send the child to be cared for at a remand home
 - 6) to sent the child to be cared for at a welfare centre

Role of community and family

Community and family are ones of the most important social units that have direct effect to the safety and security of children and women. Therefore, community and family can play a key role in identifying their own problems and help each other to cope with such problems especially the ones that have

great impact to the well being of children, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Recent developments are:

- Community savings groups and cooperatives: Savings groups and cooperatives have been widely practiced by rural communities and proved to be successful in many areas. In some cases, the profits have been allocated to various kinds of social welfare and social protection.

- The one-baht-a-day welfare systems: Several communities have developed systems where community members contribute on baht a day for welfare. This means that each person puts in 30 baht a month into a communal pool, which can then be drawn on by people in need, according to systems of ceilings and benefits the community itself sets: some grants, some loans, etc. to take care of different kinds of welfare in the community. In some cases, the one-baht-a-day is not collected separately but subtracted from the savings group, and kept as a separate welfare fund.

- The government is paying particular attention to women's development in rural areas through the promotion of a self-sufficient economy, encouraging self-reliance within local communities and empowering village members. The Village and Urban Community Fund is on such mechanism through which community members and small scale entrepreneurs can gain access to needed capital to support supplementary occupations and increase income

Challenges and actions for future

Current situation of rapid globalization imposes an impact on Thai society to a greater extent. It is well understood that globalization brings about both threat and opportunity to people. The future challenge is, therefore, to maximize its positive impact on the advancement of welfare for human development and minimizing its negative impact. The most important task of the government is to empower its people to become self-reliant, to be more resilient, and to be able to respond effectively to it. Social welfare management must gear towards community-based, rights-based and people-centered approach. This approach needs partnerships and involvement of all sectors concerned especially the community. Future actions shall cover the following:

- 1) Support local community, civil society and private sector to participate in the provision and management of community welfare
- 2) Promote campaigns to seek cooperation from the public in the strengthening of family and community institutions for prevention of social problems and promotion of social development
- 3) Support local government and local community to establish social surveillance system at the community level as a means to identify risks and threats to ensure that children and young girls will not become victims of human trafficking or other forms of exploitation.
- 4) Develop and strengthen social development networks participated by all sectors at all levels and increase their potential to perform task with full awareness and responsibility to ensure better coverage of services and activities.

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