

## **Responses to the implementation of the agreed conclusions on “women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”**

To promote gender equality in the world of work, a gender perspective is mainstreamed into the making of Thailand’s laws, policies and activities, consistent with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, CEDAW, La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth (2019-2030), and contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. Thailand has also strengthened the implementation of the relevant international instruments and standards, particularly those related to the promotion of gender equality at work. This includes, among others, the ILO Conventions No.100 on employment policy, No.111 on discrimination on employment and occupation and No.183 on maternity protection. Thailand has also furthered its work in order to meet the agreed conclusions in the following areas:

- 1) strengthening normative and legal frameworks;
- 2) strengthening education, training, and skill development;
- 3) implementing economic and social policies for women’s economic empowerment;
- 4) managing technological and digital change for women’s economic empowerment;
- 5) strengthening women collective voice, leadership, and decision-making; and
- 6) strengthening the role of private sector in women’s economic empowerment.

### **1. Strengthen normative and legal frameworks**

There are a number of laws and regulations in Thailand that have been implemented aiming to promote gender equality, respect the principle of equal pay for equal work and eliminate all forms of violence and harassment against women in the workplace, as follows:

1.1) To comply with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, relevant legislation including the Social Security Act B.E. 2533 (1990) and its amendments, and the Workers’ Compensation Act B.E. 2537 (1994) and its amendments, have been put into effect to provide social security and render protection to all insured persons under the Social Security and Workers’ Compensation Schemes, without discrimination, distinction, or preferential treatment on the basis of race, skin colour, sex, religion, political opinion, nationality or social status. This is to guarantee that women workers are entitled to their rights, the same treatment and protection as men, without any discrimination. Furthermore, the Labour Protection Act B.E. 2541 (1998), Section 15, also ensures gender equality in the world of work by stating that an employer shall treat male and female employees equally in employment, unless the descriptions or nature of work prevent such treatment.

1.2) To ensure the principle of “Equal Pay for Equal Work”, the Labour Protection Act (No 7), B.E. 2562 (2019), Article 53, states that it is required that male and female employees who perform work of the same type, quality, quantity, or work of equal value must receive equal compensation, which includes the equality in wages, overtime payments, payments for work performed on holidays, and overtime payments for work performed on holidays. This is in addition to the extension of maternity leave from 90 days to 98 days. This Act also introduces “work of equal value” as part of the new condition for equal pay.

1.3) To address the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace, the Labour Protection Act B.E. 2541 (1998), Section 16, stipulates details related to “the violence and sexual harassment in private sector’s workplace”. This law provides protection for workers by prohibiting employers, supervisors, or inspectors from harassing, threatening, or causing sexual nuisance to an employee.

1.4) The Gender Equality Act B.E. 2558 (2015) prevents gender discrimination in all aspects, including in the recruitment, retention and promotion of female workers.

- In addition, for state-owned enterprises, the State Enterprise Labour Relations Committee on Minimum Employment Standards in the State Enterprises, under the State Enterprise Labour Relations Act B.E. 2543 (2000), has announced minimum employment standards to protect the rights and welfare of female workers, including those who are pregnant.

- With regard to skill development for female workers, the Ministry of Labour has issued measures that requires a minimum proportion of women to comprise no less than 30 percent of those participating in every training for new recruits. For the development and promotion of independent professionals, the proportion must be no less than 40 percent. In addition, there have been latest

upgrades and improvements to provide more support to women workers such as building dormitories, renovation of educational and training buildings, and provision of additional training equipment.

#### 1.5) Violence against Women

On 16 June 2015, the Cabinet adopted measures to prevent and address the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace. Accordingly, government agencies are to develop internal guidelines to address sexual harassment including developing internal complaint procedures and awareness raising campaign on the issue. Results of the implementation are to be reported annually to the Committee for the Promotion of Gender Equality. The Cabinet further tasked the Ministry of Labour to work towards promoting the adoption and application of such measures in the private sector.

The Act on Family Development and Protection came into effect on 20 August 2019 replacing the Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act B.E. 2550 (2007). The Act aims to prevent and reduce domestic violence through preventive measures, social measures on family development and welfare protection, remedy, and rehabilitation. The Act also provides for criminal prosecution and protection of female victims with Battered Woman Syndrome (BWS).

#### 1.6) Adolescent Pregnancy

The Prevention and Solution of the Adolescent Pregnancy Problem Act B.E. 2559 (2016) was enacted in response to the challenge of increasing rates of adolescent pregnancy in the country. The Act guarantees the adolescent's right to make decisions based on the right to information and knowledge as well as the right to access necessary reproductive health services, among others. As adolescent pregnancy is a complex cross-cutting issue, the Act emphasizes the need for joint and synchronised efforts of all relevant government agencies, the private sector, and civil society organisations, with the core agencies, namely the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Health, taking the lead.

The Act is complemented by the National Strategy for Prevention and Solution of the Adolescent Problem 2017-2026 that has one of the main goals of reducing the rates of live-births to 0.5 per 1,000 population for girls between 10-14 years old and to 25 per 1,000 population for girls and women between 15-19 years old by the year 2026. With concerted efforts from relevant stakeholders, currently the rates are in decline from 1.8 live-births in 2012 to 1.3 in 2017 and from 53.4 live-births in 2012 to 39.6 in 2017 respectively.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education enacted a Ministerial Regulation requiring academic institutions at all levels to arrange an age-appropriate sex education as part of the curriculum and prohibit the expulsion of pregnant students. The academic institutions are also required to continuously provide education and services to pregnant students.

## **2. Strengthening education, training, and skills development**

The Ministry of Labour, through the Department of Skill Development, has put great efforts into providing skill training programmes to all groups of people in the country, regardless of their gender, age, race, and ethnicity. Women and men are equally encouraged to engage and participate in skill training programmes that are provided by the Department itself or the private sector. The Skill Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545 (2002) supports various enterprises to train a certain number of their workers by offering them benefits, such as corporate tax exemption and free access to productivity improvement programmes. In 2020, 47,603 women received training from the Department, which accounted for 44 percent of total number of public skill training programme participants.

Ensuring female workers' rights and equal access to skill training is one of the Ministry of Labour's priorities. Thailand continues to make constant progress in this regard. Thailand also benefited from the participation in the regional project focusing on safe migration and fair recruitment for migrant workers in the ASEAN region on "Safe and Fair: Realizing Women Migrant Workers' Rights and Opportunities in the ASEAN Region", particularly with the technical support from partners and international organisations, such as the EU, the ILO, and the UN Women. Furthermore, the training on quality assurance system under the Department of Skill Development also has the plan to integrate more gender dimension ranging from taking into account

the number of female trainers in the training institutes to promoting gender responsiveness in class arrangement and training facilities such as availability of breastfeeding corners. Training of trainers on gender responsiveness also aims to cultivate gender sensitivity among trainers and to instill such values in participants through skill training courses. It is expected that around 80 trainers under the Department of Skill Development will take the courses in early October 2021.

On compulsory education, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560 (2017) clearly stipulates that the Government shall provide all children with equal rights to have access to at least twelve years of comprehensive and quality education free of charge. Subsequently, the Equitable Education Fund Act B.E. 2561 (2018) was enacted to establish educational funds to help children living in poverty to equally have access to quality education and to upskill and increase the quality and capacity of the teachers. Overall, Thailand has made good progress on access to education for girls. According to the Thailand Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) on the situation of children and women 2015-2016, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) indicates that the primary school attendance ratio for boys and girls was at 1:1, meaning that there was no difference in primary school attendance between girls and boys. The attendance ratio for lower secondary level is at 1:10, meaning 10 times more girls participated in the classes than boys. In addition, Thailand also promotes lifelong learning by providing non-formal and informal education. Through eight Women and Family Development Learning Centers provided by the Government across the country, Thailand has strengthened women's vocational skills to enable, particularly, the underprivileged women, women living in poverty, women in rural areas, and women at risk of sexual exploitation and human trafficking, to earn sufficient income and to build the needed life skills.

Thailand has established the Skill Development Fund as a revolving fund to support skill development promotion, which is in line with the principles enshrined under the Skill Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545 (2002), the Social Security Act (No. 4) B.E. 2558 (2015) and the Workmen's Compensation Act B.E. 2561 (2018). It is essential to guarantee employment security, fair pay, welfare and social services to those in vulnerable situations or in need of assistance, and to ensure health and income security for all workers without discrimination.

In 2021, the Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development in cooperation with the King Prajadhipok's Institute launched a pilot curriculum "Good Governance to promote gender equality for Senior Executives" with an objective to integrate gender perspective into the work and management of senior officials. The curriculum provides knowledge on gender concepts, women's rights and relevant domestic and international legal frameworks on gender equality.

### **3. Implementing economic and social policies for women's economic empowerment**

Thailand has mechanisms and laws to facilitate promotion of women's entry, re-entry and advancement in the labour market. The job placement services, both online and in-person, operated by the Department of Employment, help everyone, regardless of gender and status, who seeks employment opportunities to find a job. Women and men have both benefited from the services so far. The Gender Equality Act B.E. 2558 (2015) also advocate for equal opportunities for women and men to get promoted in the workplace. Women are supported to gain equal access to economic opportunities and encouraged to play critical roles and participation in economic activities. According to Grant Thornton's Women in Business 2020 report, Thailand had a greater percentage of women in senior leadership positions than the Asia-Pacific region average as well as the global average.

### **4. Managing technological and digital change for women's economic empowerment**

It is undeniable that Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) skills have been in high demand in today's labour market as a result of disruptive technology and the fourth industrial revolution. Since 2018, the Ministry of Labour, through the Department of Skill Development in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), has launched the project called "Women in STEM Workforce Readiness and Development Programme in Thailand" aimed at providing STEM skills for low and semi-skilled female workers in 6 major provinces in Thailand (Nakhon Ratchasima, Samut Prakarn, Chonburi, Pathum Thani, Nonthaburi, Prachin Buri and Rayong). The project uses "Data Analytics and Visualization for Manufacturing" as a part of

the curriculum. There has been positive feedbacks from participating enterprises, that indicate higher productivity from their trained employees, and from the participating employees themselves, who are quite satisfied with the course as well as their potential career prospects. Until now, more than 1,600 female workers have been trained under this project.

Year	Implementing Site	Number of Workers
2019	Nakhon Ratchasima	986
2020	Samut Prakarn	350
	Chonburi	279
2021	Pathum Thani	Training has been postponed until May 2022 due to COVID-19
	Nonthaburi	
	Prachin Buri	
	Rayong	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,615</b>

Table 1: Total number of female workers trained under the Women in STEM Workforce Readiness and Development Programme in Thailand

### 5. Strengthening women collective voice, leadership, and decision-making

To empower women and promote women participation, the Ministry of Labour has continuously encouraged women to take part in tripartite committees and social dialogues such as the Committee of Occupational Safety, Health and Work Environment of the Workplace, the Labour Union Committee, the Employers' Confederation, and others. In addition, the Ministry also issued gender-neutral selection criteria and guidelines through a ministerial announcement, to ensure gender balance in the composition of the relevant committees and social dialogues.

### 6. Strengthening the role of the private sector in women's economic empowerment

For more than 26 years, the Ministry of Labour has regularly participated and launched the campaign on International Women's Day on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March every year in order to promote female workers' rights. The campaign aims to help raise awareness, in both public and private sectors of the importance of promoting and protecting women's rights, potential benefits of their empowerment, and the significant contributions they have in the society, economy, and the world of work.

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Sources: Ministry of Labour  
Ministry of Social Development and Human Security