1) Overview of women's situation in Thailand: issues, needs in relation to engagement in politics and governance

The problems of sexual inequality have been so common in Thai society since mode of production was still primary agriculture. With cultural aspect which brings Thai society to be a Patriarchy, exploitation of women can be seen from burden that women have to carry apart from cultivation that they assist their husbands, they also have to do domestic work such as house cleaning, look after the children, etc. Such burdens result from how Thai society has cast and set value judgement about gender role that good women must be at home. Even though if we consider sex roles, the only burdens that women should carry are only pregnancy, birthgiving and breastfeeding. Nature doesn’t determine that women have to do housework, take care of their children, but they are only gender roles which society shapes them from culture, belief and value. Apart from such burdens I mentioned, women are neglected as they are in capitalist economy, which does not value her work hours for domestic work. If we take a rough look, men play a vital role in agriculture, since it needs a lot of energies. But if we consider in a sense of work hours, women also do their best on cultivation as well, even though such work hours may slightly differ. But if we take her domestic work in accountability, women’s work hours will be a lot more than men’s.

After mode of production in Thailand has been shifted, by development of economy in a capitalist way, which mainly focus on industrialized economy, women still have to work for income earning for their survivorship of the families and still carry burden of domestic work and duty of admonishing their children as well. However even they carry such burden in stead of men, there are still imbalance in women recognition in their advancement of their career. In medium and large scale industry, there are clearly
gender inequality. In low level of workers, there are much more women than men, but in executive levels the numbers of men are more than women. And even in high level of executives, there are much more men than women. Such proportion can be seen in bureaucracy as well. However there is a better tendency especially in Labour sector that they are very keen to protest for their equal rights. The labour sector in Thailand is a good example of female movement for rights equality. While agricultural sector is left behind, since the farmers are much more influenced by traditional attitudes of Patriarchy.

Apart from such imbalance from Thai value itself, one significant factor is that the government sector has also been unaware of what have happened to women. The government just realized the matter of women when two National Economic and Social Development Plans had been implemented. The government just realized the problem of gender inequality when the third National Economic and Social Plan was implemented in the year 1961. Such awareness didn’t happen just because of truly awareness of gender inequality, but happened just because the government wanted to solve the problem of population and eager to implement formal population control policy. Such implementation of policy led to awareness of significance of women in families planning. However even there was an awareness of women’s significance, but the government’s policies and activities which implemented toward women displayed confusion of the government’s planners. For examples, the Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan, implemented in 1982-1986, stated the problem that women, at that time, were in inferior status comparing with men in social, economic and political aspects. However there were plans for rural women training with curriculum of training female youth to be traditional Thai ladies, which meant women should stay at home, do their domestic work, take care of their husbands and children. Such phenomenon emphasized on value that women should accept her inferior status compared to men and did not solve the problems of economic, social and political inequality at all. Furthermore such actions worsened the situation.
1.1) Women Issues in Thailand;

1.1.1. Social Inequality

One of the most important ways for achieving gender equality is schooling - and here too Thai women have had some notable achievements. Thailand first opened its education system to girls in 1901, when a number of schools for girls were endowed. However, accession to higher education came later. Chulalongkorn University admitted its first female student in 1927, ten years after it was established.

Still now, when a son is born, some parents often anticipate that he will grow up to be strong and capable, whereas for a girl they are more likely to anticipate that she will be beautiful and a responsible homemaker. This partly demonstrates that parents see their children as a potential economic contribution. In the rural areas, they may visualize boys helping in agriculture and thus boosting the family's cash income. Girls, on the other hand, might be seen as help in the home, performing household chores without bringing in any money, prestige and status. Ultimately, they assume that a girl will eventually marry and until then she will need to be brought up carefully if she is to bring in a substantial dowry.

For this reason, education was strongly biased towards boys. Often, this was a result of family circumstances. If parents could not afford to educate all their children, the daughters would be excluded from education. Indeed, even some well-off families were so bound by tradition that they would keep their daughters at home.

In recent years, however, girls are now enrolling at the primary level at much the same rate as boys. This is a result of the enforcement of compulsory education. Insofar as the upper and tertiary level are concerned, girls now seem to be enrolling at a higher rate than boys (see table 1). Gender disparities in literacy are now much narrower. Over the period 2000-2004 Thailand's overall adult literacy rate were 94.5 percent for men and 90.5 percent for women. The remaining is still significant because women in earlier generations have missed out on schooling.
Among the younger generation literacy rates are almost identical. Literacy rate for young adults (aged 15-24) is 98.1 percent for male and 97.8 percent for female.  

Table 1 Male and Female Education Enrolment, 2002/2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary gross enrolment ratio</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary net enrolment ratio</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower secondary gross enrolment ratio</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary gross enrolment ratio</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average years of primary and secondary schooling</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary gross enrolment ratio</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNESCO, 2005

Gender prejudice may result from Thai traditional belief which appears in the more traditional rural communities. Some people, for example, believe that garments that have been worn by women are in some way polluted, especially as a result of menstruation and that they can reduce male potency. As a result households may wash men’s and women’s clothes separately.

Buddhist beliefs also influence attitudes toward boys and girls. Parents may hope, for instance, that if they have a son he can become a monk and thus bring them merit. A girl, on the other hand, offers no such opportunities.

These and other biases place many Thai women into an inferior role – in which a female’s true destiny is marriage and motherhood rather than independence and a career. Even though women have to work outside home, which result economic necessity, it is considered as a second activity. Women are expected from the society to maintain household and take care of their family’s members. Such activities are rarely share by men equally. Working women in Thailand, as in other countries, thus

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carry a double burden – with both domestic and economic responsibility.

1.1.2. Economic Inequality

Sexual oppression is so common in our daily lives. From the socio-cultural aspect, gender inequality is widely found not only in modern capitalist society, but also in traditional agricultural society in peripheral countries as well. If we take a look at economic aspect, mainstream economics mentions market economy which focus on demand and supply of goods and services or invisible hand. In our daily lives, we can see women perform many kinds of economic activities, not less than men. But mainstream economics neglects the role of women for examples, overlooking production necessary to the existence of present labour force e.g. domestic work, or neglect household sector as a guarantee for future labour force i.e. reproduction of human beings or production of labourer for the future society. Women, in this sense, own significant factor of production i.e. a womb. Thus determination of household as a unit of economy interacting with market economy under the analytical framework that such interacting is a just exchange is an illusion. Because such economy conceals the truth of production in households. In addition to this, such interacting is not dynamism, because it is not aware of a dimension of changes which exist in the real world. For instance, the phenomena that women have to earn their living out of home. These are sex-blind analysis of mainstream economics that reflect Patriarchy hidden in mainstream economics.

Apart from the non-recognition of women work hours in housework, there are some issues which show the sexual inequality for female labourers which are as followed:

1. Inequality in revenue and earning:

There are many explanations for this. Somebody may say that the inequality in revenue occurs because women have less ability compare to men or women need to be pregnant, etc. Such reasons have been addressed by the society. Such phenomenon generally occurs even in Western advance industrialized countries. There are empirical data stating the unequal revenue between female and male labours.
Figure 1 Monthly wages of men and women (Bath), 2004

It can be seen from the chart that female labours earn less income than male labours.

**II. Inequality in employment opportunity:**

Economic growth in the last decade has been resulted from the expansion of export industry and tourism industry. From this reason, women are considered as the major factor behind success of Thai economy, since women are the major labour force in such industries. It is stated that in the mentioned industries, women labour consists of 80-90% of total labour force.

Despite the importance of women role which has contributed to Thailand economic growth, women are still lack of employment opportunity.
Figure 2 Male and Female Labour Force Participation Rates, 2004

Table 2 Employment Classified by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>18,400,919</td>
<td>14,420,830</td>
<td>32,821,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>18,731,121</td>
<td>14,724,992</td>
<td>33,456,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>19,127,998</td>
<td>15,655,478</td>
<td>34,783,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>19,099,141</td>
<td>15,531,648</td>
<td>34,630,789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>18,738,651</td>
<td>14,537,486</td>
<td>33,276,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>19,444,347</td>
<td>15,248,286</td>
<td>34,692,633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>19,562,041</td>
<td>15,952,253</td>
<td>35,514,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>19,535,287</td>
<td>15,945,744</td>
<td>35,481,031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>18,991,693</td>
<td>15,031,985</td>
<td>34,023,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>19,376,217</td>
<td>15,342,522</td>
<td>34,718,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>19,752,243</td>
<td>16,304,752</td>
<td>36,056,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>19,766,474</td>
<td>15,990,689</td>
<td>35,757,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>19,258,258</td>
<td>15,138,600</td>
<td>34,396,857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>19,720,676</td>
<td>15,565,030</td>
<td>35,285,706</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Includes employees working in unknown firm size.

Source: 1. National Statistical Office
2. Thailand Development Research Institute Foundation
In addition to this, most women are assigned to do office work e.g. administration or accounting which are considered as a boring job. This reflects the inequality in employment opportunity as well.

**III. Inequality in advancement of career path:**

In medium and large scale industry, there are more female labours than male, especially single female labours. However in executive level the existing data show that there are more male executives than female. Even though it is known that there are some female staffs in high level of executive, but the ratio of male executive are much higher than female.

Table 3 Male and Female jobs 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male workers %</th>
<th>Female workers %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Legislators, senior officials and managers</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Professionals</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Technicians</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Clerks</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Service workers and shop and market sales workers</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Skilled agricultural and fishery workers</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Craft and related trades workers</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Plant and machine operators and assemblers</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Elementary occupations</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: NSO, 2005*

Moreover there are too few top female civil servants. Although women make up more than two thirds of staff in the lower grades of the civil service, they are far fewer in the higher grades – a reflection of a consistent bias against women when choosing candidates for promotion.

Just as Thai women are less likely to be senior managers in the private sector, they are also less likely to occupy the top jobs in public administration. At first glance they seem to be doing well since overall around two thirds of civil servants are women. But this is only because there are many women in the lower grades: in 2004 in grades 1 to 7, 61.2 percent were women.
IV. The lack of top women bureaucrats

At the higher grades, however, the proportion of women starts to decline: of 14,722 civil servants at the grade 8 level, 5,944 (40.4 percent) were women and of the 496 high-ranking officers at the 9 to 11 levels only 20.2 percent were women. And the percentage gets steadily lower at the highest ranks: only 9.7 percent of grade 11 are women.

Table 4 Women in the civil service, 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil service grade</th>
<th>Number of men</th>
<th>Number of women</th>
<th>% of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grades 1 to 7</td>
<td>133,869</td>
<td>211,210</td>
<td>61.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>8,778</td>
<td>5,944</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total civil service</td>
<td>143,043</td>
<td>217,254</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OCS, 2015

Figure 3 Men and Women in grade 9-11 of the civil service, 1993-2004

Source: OCS, 2005

Women’s under-representation in the upper echelons of the civil service is matched by their absence at the top of many senior institutions. Ironically, although the 1997 Constitution mandates equal opportunities for males and females, this has been achieved even in the oversight institution, such as the National Audit Commission, the Ombudsman’s Office, the National Counter-Corruption Commission, and the Constitutional Courts and the Administrative Courts. This is illustrated in a selection of institutions in Table 5 which ranks the institutions stated above on the basis of their proportion of women. The statistics show that women have a reasonable representation only in the Human Rights Commission. Among the poorest performers are the Board of Investment and Thai Airways International. It is also disappointing to have on women on the Election Commission\(^3\). Of the total of 641 appointments in this table, only 68 – less than 11 percent - were women\(^4\).

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\(^3\) The current Election Commission has 1 woman out of 5.

Table 5 Ranking of government boards and committees by women's representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>% of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent public agencies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. National Human Rights Commission of Thailand</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. State Audit Commission</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Board of Governors, Stock Exchange of Thailand</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. National Economic and Social Advisory Council</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Court of Directors, Bank of Thailand</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Judiciary Commission</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Judicial Administration Commissioner</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ombudsman</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Election Commission of Thailand</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The National Telecommunication Commission</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. National Counter-Corruption Commission</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Securities and Exchange Commission of Thailand</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Office of the Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Board of National Electronics and Computer Technology Centre</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Civil Service Commissioners</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. National Reconciliation Commission</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. National Economic and Social Development Board</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Public Sector Development Commission</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Council of State</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Decentralization Committee</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boards in other ministries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. National Science and Technology Development Agency</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. National Research Council of Thailand</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Board of Investment, Ministry of Industry</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boards of state enterprises</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Tourism Authority of Thailand</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Board of Directors, Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. CAT Telecom (Public) Co., Ltd</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Bangkok Mass Transit Authority</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. National Olympic Committee of Thailand</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. MCOT (Public) Co., Ltd</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Thai Airways International</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Women's Democratic Development Foundation

Why so few senior women?

Despite the fact that in 1991 the Government ordered all government agencies to review their regulations so as to allow female civil servants to hold any position except those related to national security, Thailand still performs poor equality at appointing women administrators. Women are still often excluded from entering decision-making positions.
Likewise the regulations at local level has been amended by the Government to allow women to become district officers since 1993.

Furthermore, the Government has also made efforts to achieve gender equality in government appointments generally. Following the 1997 Constitution, the Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC) sent letters to all government agencies, emphasizing that appointments and promotion should be based on merit and that all agencies should pay particular attention to gender equality.  

In addition to this, the OCSC also issued guidelines for the promotion of gender equality in the civil service in the same year. These guidelines, however, emphasized on ensuring that the civil service as a whole respond to differences in roles, perspectives and needs of males and females rather than focused on the number of males and females who are employed.

Despite of the facts mentioned, women still encounter barriers when it comes to further promotion. In many respects this is the legacy of male domination. This results from a large number of male senior officials who dominate the recruitment committees and tend to bypass women candidates to reproduce the structure with which they are familiar, a structure in which men retain the power. In addition to this, male members of recruitment panels are also more likely to know the male candidates personally; having met them socially, at the golf course, for example or in other clubs, and prefer to appoint candidates from within their own social network – a network that can also offer them advantages for pursuing their own ambitions. This then perpetuates the status quo of male domination.

Men often work closely with women who are in the roles of assisting them, rather than with female colleagues who are at the same level as they are. Women in the role of assistants are often indispensable to the function of an office, but are not seen as an option for promotion. Khunying Thippavadee Meksawan, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Culture reflected that

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5 Ibid
The lack of women administrators is a denial of the rights of women who should have equal representation in all senior positions. It therefore also seriously undermines Thailand’s efforts to promote gender equality.

Women are not able to be empowered, if they are not represented at senior level. Having more women participate in the formulation of policy and in decision making would ensure that the best of the country’s human resources are included in leadership roles including decisions on the allocation of budgets. If the government has committed itself to empowering women, it should not encourage the continuation of practices that contradict this or relegate women to a few ministries that traditionally have been considered the most appropriate for them such as the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. The upper echelons of all ministries should have gender balance.

V. Informal Economy: The non-recognized economic sector

According to the survey of labour forces conducted by the National Statistical Office in 2006, there are 50.4 million people in labour force and 35.5 million people are employed. Among employed labour 19,433,500 or 54.7% are male and 16,068,800 or 45.3% are female. In addition to this, there are 13,687,100 labours or 38.5% in formal economy and 21,818,200 labours or 61.5% are in informal economy. Among labours in informal economy 11,942,800 or 33.6% are male and 9,875,400 or 27.8% are female.

Due to the fact mentioned, women in informal economy come from agricultural sector, not well educated and lack of skill. They, hence, become unskilled labour which lead to less opportunity for employment and income. For this result, they are restricted to be in informal economy, which allow them to join such sectors.

Informal economy, even though, seems to be small in scale and inefficient in a sense of contribution to Gross Domestic Product. However, in reality, such production in small scale
economy, considered as informal economy, has played a vital role in job creation and employment opportunity to the people who lack of a chance especially women in rural area and female urban poor. Furthermore goods and services produced in informal economy help reducing cost of living for the poor and enable them to buy goods, food and services in lower price led to their survivor in urban area.

However there are some disadvantages of women in informal economy, for example, lack of labour security system. The problems such women have to face are: instability of employment, and income especially when ones are unable to work because of sickness of their family’s member or themselves.

### 1.1.3. Political Inequality

Thailand has changed its political regime from an absolute monarchy to parliamentary democracy since 1932. Even though its democracy has continuously been obstructed by many military coup de’ tats which led to the cancellation of the old constitutions, up to now there have been 17 constitutions. There are, however, only 4 constitutions which clearly guaranteed the equality of men and women, which are:

1. the Act of Interim Constitution of Siam 1932.
2. the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 1974.
4. the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 1997.

The first constitution, called the Act of Interim Constitution of Siam 1932, guaranteed the equal rights of men and women in voting for members of parliaments and the equal right for applying for member of parliament candidate.

The second one, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 1974, which was drafted after the student uprising to oust the military regime of Marshall Thanom Kittikajorn on October 14th, 1973. It was the first constitution which granted equality rights of men and women in all aspects, not only in national politics. Such constitution was a significant mechanism in revolution the legal status of women.
The last one, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 1997, recognized as the people’s constitution since there was a process of public hearing which was held widely across the country during its drafting. In addition to this, the constitution has a provision of law which protect the people’s freedom and right further than any other constitution in Thai history. The mentioned provision of law resulted from the attempt of the Women and Constitution Network who pushed very hard to enact the following issues:

1. Men and Women shall enjoy equal protection under the Constitution and Laws without any discrimination regardless of their sexes (Article 5).

2. Measures determined by the State in order to eliminate obstacle to or to promote person’s ability to exercise their rights and liberties as other persons shall not be deemed as unjust discrimination. Because the mentioned people have been obstructed for a long time (Article 30, paragraph 3).

3. Determine that the State has to protect children, youth and members of families from violence and unjust action in order to protect violence in families which have been committed to wives and children.

4. Encourage women’s representatives to participate in the process of Bill consideration which concerns about themselves. Article 190 states that in considering a bill the substance of which is decided by the President of the House of Representatives to be concerned with children, women, the elderly, the disabled or handicapped, if the House of Representatives does not consider it by its full committee, the House of Representatives shall appoint an ad hoc committee consisting of representatives, from private organizations concerned with the respective types of persons, of not less than one-third of the total number of members of the committee.

In conclusion legal equality of women not just immediately happened, but has been gradually changed since the revolution in 1932 till now. The constitution considered as a main mechanism in such change, but alternation only in the Constitution is not sufficient. Other Laws amendment and revision of civil servants’ attitude to accept the principle of gender equality are needed as well.

Even though there is a provision of a law which guarantees equality for men and women in the Constitution, in
fact men and women are not equal especially in politics. Women elected as members of parliament made up only 10.6% in the general election in 2005. Even worse in the Senate where women made up only 10.5%. Moreover after the military coup de ‘tat, women currently make up only 8.7 percent of the interim National Legislative Assembly – one of the lowest rates in Asia. Only two Cabinet ministers are women, and only one provincial governor is a woman.

1. Thailand’s Missing Politician

Although, Thailand is the first country in Asia which granted the equal rights to men and women in voting and applying for members of parliament candidates, actually they were granted such right since Thailand changed its constitutional system in 1932 from an absolute monarchy to a parliamentary democracy, there are, however, very few female members of parliament compare to other countries in the world community. From the statistics in the year 2005, the overall average of female members of parliament in the world is 16% whereas female members of parliament in Thailand consisted only 10.4%. The average proportion of female senators in the world is 15% compared to Thailand with percentage of 10.5%.

Following the 1997 Constitution, the electoral system was changed so that while 400 people would be directly elected, 100 others would be appointed from party lists according to the proportion of people using their second vote to opt for that party. As Table 6 indicates, in 2001 and 2005 women actually represented a higher proportion of elected MPs than of party-list MPs: 11.5 percent compared with 6 percent6.

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6 Ibid
In this respect, there do not appear to be significant differences between the main parties. The four parties represented in parliament following the 2005 election had similar proportions of women among their candidates for direct election as well as on the party lists (Table 7). The Thai Rak Thai Party had a smaller proportion on the party list: it ranked the women at 19, 21, 48, 60, 65, 97, and 99 of whom the first five were appointed. The Democrat Party had 14 women on the list of whom the highest was ranked 7 – the only one appointed\(^7\).

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\(^7\) Ibid
The smaller proportions on the party lists – and the low positions they occupy on those lists – indicate the low priority that the parties accord to women. First, because it should be easier for parties to place women on party lists than to get them elected; if they deliberately place fewer women on the list, they are evidently not very committed to achieving gender parity. Second, because those they put on the party lists are the prime candidates for executive office since ministers are not allowed to have constituency responsibilities, a low proportion of women on the list indicates that women are not seen as likely candidates for high office.

Women’s low positions in the lists also reflect the fact that most have arrived on the political scene only recently. Status in Thai politics depends to a significant extent on seniority and few women have been around long enough to establish a strong position. As a result, there are too few women to build up a critical mass of power within the parties and until recently the parties have not had women’s wings or groups to bargain for positions in the nomination. Consequently, political party strategists have not been under much pressure to take gender issues into account.

Table 7 Men and women in parliamentary elections, by party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>% women listed</th>
<th>Number of women elected</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>% women listed</th>
<th>Number of women appointed</th>
<th>Total women MPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thai Rak Thai</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart Thai</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathachon</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,523</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NEC, 2005

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8 Ibid
9 Ibid
If we compare women’s participation in politics between Thailand and developed countries, Thailand’s participation of women in politics will be unfavorable. Political participation of women in many countries are much higher than in Thailand, for examples, in Sweden the female members of parliament made up of 45.3%, Denmark with a proportion of 38%, Finland with a proportion of 37.5. Even our neighbours has a considerably higher rate of women participation, for instance, Vietnam’s female members of parliament made up of 27.3%, Lao 22.9%, China 20.2%, the Philippines 15.3 and Indonesia 11.8\textsuperscript{10}

For the world as a whole the average of women in the lower houses of parliament is 16 % and in the upper houses is 15 % . For this reason, Thailand’s women participation in politics is ranked 113\textsuperscript{th} from 185 countries – worse than most countries in East and South-East Asia. (table 8)

\textsuperscript{10} http://www.ipu.org
Table 8 International ranking of women in lower houses of Parliament, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total number of seats</th>
<th>Total number of women</th>
<th>% of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*East and South-East Asian countries*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total number of seats</th>
<th>Total number of women</th>
<th>% of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Timor-Leste</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Lao People’s Democratic Rep.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2,985</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>2,36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86.</td>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113.</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118.</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126.</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139.</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: IPU, 2005*

2. Women senators

Until the 1997 Constitution, senators were not elected but appointed by the Government. The new Constitution, however, provided for elections to the Senate and in the 2000 elections for 200 senatorial positions the voter turnout was 70 percent – the highest figure in the Thai democracy’s 68-year history. Out of 115 female candidates 20 were elected (17 percent); of the 1,417 male candidates 180 (13 percent) were elected. This resulted in the highest ever proportion of women in the Senate, though still only 10 percent (*Figure 5*).
A number of these women have taken prominent roles since being elected. Ms. Maleerat Keawka, a senator from Sakon Nakhorn Province, provides a good example. Currently, she chairs the Thai Women Parliamentarian Caucus. Ms. Maleerat Keawka is a social activist and has been a strong advocate for the promotion of gender equality and women’s rights. She feels that although there are still too few women to form a critical mass, they have nevertheless been able to take a prominent role on a number of key issues. She herself, for example, has spoken out on the draft law on domestic violence and on the trafficking of women and children, and Ms. Malinee Sukhawejerak, a senator from Nakhon Sawan Province, has been prominent in national discussions on bird flu. Ms. Rabiabrat Pongpanit, another female senator from the Northeast is also a strong advocate on women’s rights. She argued for women to have a right to be ordained as Buddhist monks. These senators has ended their term in 2006. However, they would be able to play important parts in supporting women candidates in the next senatorial elections and in helping those who are elected\textsuperscript{11}.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure5.png}
\caption{Women in senators 1975 - 2000}
\end{figure}

\textit{Source: NEC 2005}

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid
3. Local Elections:

Not only in national election where inequality of men and women is found, but also in local level is even worse. In 2005, women were elected to be chief executives of the provincial administration organizations only 12%, only 9.6% are elected as Provincial Council Members, and only 12.7% of Municipality Council Members are female.

Even in Bangkok Metropolitan election, where figure of women’s participation in local election is better than any other local administrations, in 2002 election of the Bangkok Metropolitan Council (BMC) and Bangkok Sub-District Councils, women candidates made up of around 15 percent. However, only 16.7 percent and 11.5 percent were elected in BMC and Sub-District Council respectively.

Table 9 Local political election in Bangkok, by sex, 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th></th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Women (%)</td>
<td>Men (%)</td>
<td>total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Women (%)</td>
<td>Men (%)</td>
<td>total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42 (15.6)</td>
<td>227 (84.4)</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok Metropolitan Council</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (16.7)</td>
<td>50 (83.3)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok Sub-district Council</td>
<td>137 (14.7)</td>
<td>792 (85.3)</td>
<td>929</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30 (11.5)</td>
<td>230 (88.5)</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of Women’s Affairs and Family Development, 2004

Why there are so few female politicians?

Low level of female politicians reflects Thai traditional attitude toward women that they are expected to be responsible for household, whereas men as heads of a family are expected to take responsibility for external affairs of their families. In the past, such attitude might result from inferior opportunity of women to education. Nowadays, however, women’s standard of education is more or less equal to men’s. As a result of this, such excuse cannot be a barrier for women to participate in politics anymore.

12 [http://www.gdrif.org](http://www.gdrif.org)

13 Office of Women’s Affairs and Family Development, 2004

There are many reasons which block women from entering politics.

**General social attitudes**

Historic legacy and the cultural barriers may be the most influential factors hindering women from politics. There is stereotype toward women that women are weak, emotional, dependent, weak and less productive than men. Culturally some people prefer men to take important position and consider women as second class citizen. The mentioned attitude belongs not only to men, but also women in society as well.

Women’s potentiality is usually limited because of such attitudes. Society considers main responsibility of women as taking care of their families and women will be free to do what they want when they finish their duty in the families. When a woman tells members of her village that she would like to apply for a candidate in any local administration, they would ask her whether she has done her duty at home perfectly, or even ask her if she has been given permission from her husband. Moreover voters may ask others for the reasons they should vote for female candidate e.g. Why we have to vote for female candidate? Vote for women, for what?

Consequently, women are affected by such attitude. They consider themselves as followers after men, so they are not confident enough to be independent and discourage to be in politics.

**Unawareness and very few understanding of gender issues among political leaders**

Low level of women’s participation in politics reflects the unawareness and very few understanding of gender issues and importance in promotion of women to engage in politics among political leaders. Such difficulty appears not only in male mind, but also in female attitude as well.
Domination of capitalist economy is an obstacle to promote equality of women.

Such domination leads to attitude toward women as a good. Women have been valued from her beauty. Capitalism makes women to become its tools. Their values have been redefined as fashion consumers. Economy values women from their physical image.

Political culture is also a difficulty, since Thai political system arose from social structure that is Patriarchy. Thus when women enter into a political sphere, such structure of patriarchy remains. The mentioned structure led to inequality in recognition of women comparing with men in politics. Hence very few women want to participate in politics, or ones who join may easily quit because of such structure.

Other difficulties

Women are blocked from entering politics also because of their shortage of time. Their responsibility in household reduces their time to be involved in politics. In addition to this, a shortage of budget required in politics is also an obstacle for them to get involved in political sphere. Unlike men, who can easily find social network and pave a way to political sphere.

1.1.4. Legal Inequality

Despite the fact that, Thailand has acceded to the Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW, and the Constitution of 1997, recognized as the people’s constitution due to its process of the election of the drafters and the process of widely public hearing which gave a chance for the people all over the country to participate, enacted the guarantee of equality among men and women (Article 30), women are still determined as subordinates in the patriarchal state and they are still lack of opportunity in governance role. In additional to this, they are still lack of opportunity in political decision making and law enforcement is still a main problem in Thai society. Although there are many laws which protect the right of women, but what really happens is that women are seen as a weak sex.
Exploitation and discrimination against Thai women by the law has been appearing in long lasting history of Thailand, although legal status of women in the present days has been much improved days by days. Such discrimination in the Thai law reflects the social status and economic of Thai women.

The laws which are still enforced and I would like to raise for the remark of discrimination against women and reflect the attitude of the legislature are as followed:

**The Constitution Law of 1997**

Even though the mentioned constitution assured rights and freedom of the people than any other constitutions and women were given affirmative action or even a provision on protection from domestic violence. However the constitution has been torn by the military coup d’ e tat on 19th September 2006, and there is no provision in the Interim Constitution of 2006 to guarantee equal rights among men and women ,but women ‘s movement in Thailand are trying very hard to lobbying throughout the drafting process of the new constitution for the existence of provisions that guarantee such equality without any discrimination against person on the grounds of the difference in sex , which are section 30,53 and 80 in the constitution of 1997.

**The Family Law** ,which has been in force since 1976, was a result of provisions in the Constitution of 1974. Even though the mentioned Family Law was legislated encompassing the Constitution Law of 1974, there are some discriminate provisions against women e.g. engagement . The Provisions in the Family Law determine that engagement must be committed by only men and women , which considered as sexuality confinement of individuals and determination of society norms. In addition to this, there are some provisions which are considered as a prejudice.

For examples, **Article 1437** - a Man is a person who proposes engagement to a woman by giving her “engagement property” (seems like price estimation) , it determines that the engagement will be complete only if “engagement property” has been given to a woman to be an evidence for marriage. This means that women’s sexuality continues to be under the control of men. Such “engagement property” condition implies that she can
be bought by the man who wish to engage with her. Not only “engagement property”, but there is also “sin sod”, property to her parents or elder relatives in return for her agreeing to engage with him. Furthermore he is entitled to decline to marry her if she is raped or has consensual sexual affairs with another man, not vice versa. He can file for a divorce for a single act of extra marital affairs. But, the only divorce ground for her is to prove that he openly recognizes the other women as his wife and/or financially supports her. In addition, marital rape is not punishable and not deemed a ground for divorce.

Children have to carry the father’s last name unless the man is unknown.

**The Penal Code**
Marital rape: a rape by the administration of justice.
The Penal Code, Article 276: Anybody rapes a woman who is not his own wife with the mean of any threatening by committing an act of violence while a woman is in a condition of indefinable or by making a woman misunderstanding that he is another person will be imprisoned from four years to twenty years and fined from eight thousand to forty thousand bath.

The principle of consent is very significant in judicial proceedings whether the sexual intercourse was a rape or not, but in reality a lawsuit concerning raping mostly happens in a private place or in a out of sight place e.g. a room, a hotel, or in a forest, etc. As a result of this, it is very difficult to determine whether such sexual intercourse was a consent or a rape leads to a contradiction that a woman claims that she was raped, but a man claims that it was a consent.

A testimony to determine that such sexual intercourse is a rape not a consent usually depends on an evidence on women’s body or men’s body e.g. a bruise, a wound, etc. If there is a mentioned evidence, then it is a confirmation that it was not a consent. This leads to problems that a rape must be encompassing with violence and if a woman is not consensual there must be some evidence of fighting or resistance. Such principle leads to many verdicts that sexual intercourses in lawsuits are not rapes because there is no evidence of resistance and considered as
consents especially if happen in public sphere. Or in a case of rape, but a woman spends so much time thinking over whether to sue a man who commits such rape or not, even such evidence still exists, but just time pass by it may fade away.

**A woman who is not his own wife?**

In according to the Penal Code, a rape will be a crime if such rape is committed to a woman, who is not the man’s wife. Such provision in the penal Code defines forcible rape between spouse as a legal action. This reflects that once a woman becomes a wife of a man, she will have a duty to have sexual intercourse with her husband. Sexual intercourse is not her right that she can choose herself, but she has to response for her husband’s need. Hence even at the time she doesn’t want to have sex e.g. menstrual, tired from the workplace, if the man commits an act of violence to force his wife to have sex with him, it is not considered as rape in accordance with the Penal Code.

**2) needs in relation to engagement in politics and governance**

1. Women must unite to create their own power which may lead to distribution of resources and benefits to women, women are particularly needed to play role as political representatives in decision-making level. Political status of women will not change from the present status, if they have not been accepted to be political representatives or posted in decision-making level. They will be in a condition that men dominate political sphere, which means men will be the ones who make important decisions. This situation leads to hindering women from any benefits and legitimate participation and equal to men.

2. To create opportunity for amendment and development of the laws to enable women to gain equal rights with men. In addition to this, it will lead to advancement in career path of women especially in top bureaucrats and enable women to occupy high level of management both in political
sector and government sector as well as private sector.

3. Women will have their own representatives and gain equal rights with men in every level of their social lives. Having very few representatives not only denies the rights of women, but also hinder success of gender equality and makes women very disadvantageous.

4. Increasing of women’s representatives is the improvement of decision quality for benefit of men, women and children. In local governance while some local politicians want to have public investment which they are interested in for their organization, for examples construction of roads or other infrastructure, but women will very much pay attention to health and education of the children which means they usually focus on social problems. A study on success factors of poverty policy implementation shows that, in the case of the village revolving fund, the poor in a village where there are more than five women members on the village revolving fund committee are 1.6 times more likely to be able to borrow from the fund than in a village where there are less than five women members on the committee. Women also tend to more aware of gender issues, and of the ways in which public policies and decisions have different impacts on men than women.¹⁵

5. Women can manage limited budget and distribute resources to members of the society on legitimate manner. This maybe because of their own natural characters or the effect of what women are required from the society that they have to look after the living standard of their family member. As a result of this, women may not spend money only for their own benefit, but they are public-minded.

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6. A Man cannot think on behalf of a woman, because of his natural character and what he has been molded from the society or his perception. His attitudes and point of views, then differs from a woman’s. Women participation in politics, then guarantee that some problems which for a long time have been ignored by men will be looked after by women’s representatives.

7. Women tend have closer linkages than men with community networks. So women who are elected to local or national politics will tend to be better informed than men on the needs and priorities of their constituencies – and know where resources could best be allocated – and thus can play key roles in coordination and facilitation.

8. Women will play an important role in anti-corruption action. From a research by Research and Development Department, Rama VII Institute, the factor that will make Women to vote for a candidate is honesty, faithfulness and assistance that candidate gives to local community.

9. Women are elaborate and sensitive, which men are lack of such qualifications. Hence if women have more chance in political participation. Problems will be solved more elaborately.

10. Women care, love and are possessive in families, natural resources. Thus development with women participation will lead to more sustainability.

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17 Bureekul, Dr. Tawilwadee, *Thai women and politics after the implementation of the Thai Constitution of 1997*. Bangkok, Research and Development Department, King Prachadhipok’s Institute.
3. Issues and Organizations Working on Specific Issues

1.1.1. Social Inequality

**Violence against women:** the organizations which deal with protection of violence against women are as follows:

1. **Foundation for Women**

**Founded:** in 1984 when they established a Women's Information Centre, providing advice to Thai women who were to go abroad. **Objectives:** FFW implements activities by applying human rights principles aiming at respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of individual women and girl child.

While working for gender equality/equity and social justice, FFW encourages the participation of women and community in solving their problems and collaborating with authorities at all levels in shaping plans and policies that affect the lives of women and children.

**FFW** respects the right to self determination of individual women and aims to assist women to achieve equality and justice by providing information and support to enabling them to make informed decision and take control of their life. FFW produces educational material to publicize and promote the recognition of women's human rights.

While the services at FFW are available to everyone, FFW gives a special emphasis in their work to rural women, young women, women workers, women and children vulnerable to forced prostitution and international trafficking, victims of domestic and sexual violence.
At FFW, the activities are led by the following principles: The social position of women will be changed through the combined efforts of women and men but women will play decisive role in this transformation.

FFW’s work will attend to those women who are most disadvantaged and be based on equal participation and mutual learning.

FFW will cooperate with governmental and non-governmental groups nationally and internationally to achieve the best results.

**Current Activities**

Their current work builds on the experience gained from the early projects. FFW continues to provide direct services to women and girl child who are victims of structural and gender-based violence, and combine the social service with education, research and campaign activities.

**Direct Assistance**

**FFW** provides information, support and referral and emergency assistance to individual women affected from gender-based violence particularly in cases of domestic and sexual violence.
**FFW** provides social and legal assistance to Thai and non-Thai women and children who are victims of national and cross-borders trafficking.

**FFW** advocates for the rights of trafficked women and children, and cooperates with other organizations to defend their rights such as the rights to compensation and civil remedies.

**FFW** has a special interest in the plight of migrant women and children from other countries as they are vulnerable to be trafficked and to work in exploitative conditions. In order to access to these women and children, FFW works in the Immigration Detention Centre and the Public Welfare Home.

**FFW** co-operates with organizations in countries of destination in assisting women and children and preventing human trafficking.

![Image of children studying]

**Advocacy and campaign**

**FFW** conducts campaigns in order to improve the law enforcement and mechanisms for the protection and prevention of the rights of women.

**FFW** works with other organizations and local women's network to campaign for the criminalization of marital rape.

**FFW** promotes the role of civil society in enhancing the rights of women and girl child to economic security and freedom from violence and exploitation. FFW follows up the development plan and policies concerning women.
FFW produces newsletters, videos, posters and books for use in villages, and for national distribution in order to raise public concern and awareness on women's issues.

**Chairperson:** Mrs. Siriporn Sakrobanek  
**Key contact person:** Usa Lertsrisantad  

**Contact Details:**  
Foundation for Women  
PO Box 47 Bangkoknoi  
Bangkok 10700 Thailand  
**Tel.:** 66 2 433 5149  
**Fax.:** 66 2 434 6774  
**Email:** [FFW@mozart.inet.co.th](mailto:FFW@mozart.inet.co.th)  
**Website:** [www.womenthai.org](http://www.womenthai.org)

**2. Friends of Women Foundation:**  
**Founded:** in 1980  
**Objectives:** The main roles of the foundation are to protect the rights of women and assist women in crisis situations due to sexual abuse, unwanted pregnancy, domestic violence, abandonment, trafficking in the sex industry, unfair dismissal from work and discrimination. In an effort to solve these problems at the root, FOW disseminates information to both the public and governmental sectors in order to push for new policy formation and genuine change on issues concerning the protection of women's rights and the enhancement of women's quality of life.  

**Contact Details:** 386/61-62 Ratchadaphisek 42  
(Soi Chalermsuk), Ratchadaphisek Rd.,  
Lardyao, Chatuchak, Bangkok 10900  
**Tel.:** 66 2 513 1001  
**Fax.:** 66 2 513 1929  
**E-mail:** contact@friendsofwomen.net

**1.1.2. Economic Inequality**

**1. Women Workers' Unity Group**  
**Founded:** 1992  
**Objectives:**  
1. To serve and function as a center to engage in studies focusing on issues and problems most relevant to women workers.  
2. To disseminate and exchange data and information among women workers, as well as between women's groups and organizations genuinely active on labour issues.
3. To promote women workers’ status and their participatory role in the labour movement, as well as in the overall socio-economic and political development process.
4. To function as a center to safeguard the rights and benefits of women workers by providing counseling legal aid and other necessary services.
5. To participate in labour mobilization in a meaningful manners, taking active role in advocacy work to amend relevant labour laws, ministerial rules and regulations declined to be unjust to the cause of women workers in particular and the labour movement in general.

**Contact Details** : Women Workers’ Unity Group (WWUG)
Thai Labour Museum Office
503/20 Nikom Rodfai Road, Makkasan, Ratchathewi, Bangkok 10400 Thailand
Tel./Fax: +66 2 251 3173

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**2. Thai Labour Campaign**

**Founded** : February 2002

**Objectives**:  
1. Bring Thai workers into solidarity with international workers  
2. Help workers to win living wages and improved labour rights  
3. Pressure the government for meaningful labour protection standards and enforcement of those standards

**Roles:**

1. To research and collect information about all forms of labour violations in Thailand.
2. To publicize unjust practices and labour abuses to TLC's network of organizations at the national and international levels.
3. To provide documentation and information on Thai labour laws, international labour standards and related laws and practices such as codes of conduct.
4. To serve as a forum for discussion and education on labour conditions, labour laws, codes of conduct and labour standards.
5. To call for action and campaigning on labour issues in Thailand.
6. To campaign against manufacturers and transnational corporations which violates workers' rights
3. Thai Labour Solidarity Committee

Contact Details: Thai Labour Solidarity Committee
Thai Labour Museum
503/20 Nikom-Rodfai Makkasan Rd.
Ratchatehvi Bangkok 10400 Thailand

Tel: 66 2 654 7688 Fax: 66 2 654 7688
Contact: Mr. Sawit Kaewwan, Secretary
Mobile: 66 8 9314 4753 Email: sawit@uni-tlsc.org

1.1.3. Political Inequality

1. Legal Inequality
The organizations which deal with promoting equal rights of women and promote legal equality are as follows:

1. Foundation for Women, Law and Rural Development (FORWARD)

Founded: 2002

Objectives
1. To operate activities which promote researches and studies in the issue of sexual equality in economic, social, political, cultural, legal, and awareness of sustainably rural development.
2. Promotion and facilitation of usage of laws as an efficient tool for women in struggle for justice and equality.
3. To promote basic ideas of human rights which have been specified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and other relating international mechanisms.
4. To promote and facilitate the establishment and strengthening female organizations in all levels for development of gender in line
with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Thai constitution.  
5. To promote the potentiality of civil societies in women participation with equality, quality and creativity.  

**Activities:**
- Paralegal Training Project  
- Feminist Research Training Project  
- Seminars for personnel in administration of justice  
- Research and study scholarship in women’s studies  

**Base of Operations:** many provinces in Thailand and Asia-Pacific region  

**Contact details:** Project for Law Volunteer for Rural Women  
Building, Women’s Studies Center Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiangmai University, Huay Kaew Rd., Suthep, Muang Chiangmai 50202 Thailand  
Or P.O. Box 110 Chaingmai University 50202 Thailand  
Tel.: 66 53 943 592 - 3  Fax.: 66 53 892 464  
Email: forward_w@hotmail.com  
Chairperson: Dr. Wirada Somsawasdi  

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2. **Gender and Development Research Institute**  

**Foundation**  

**Objectives:**  
1. To reduce sexual discriminations which appear in laws, regulations and practice  
   2. To promote development of Thai democracy by facilitating equality of women participation in every level of decision-makings.  
   3. To create positive image for women.  
   4. To widen a basis and disseminate information, knowledge of gender and development and sexual equality.  

**Contact:** Sutheera Tompson Wichittranont (chairperson)
**Contact details:** 501/1 M. 3, Techatungka Rd., Tungsigan, Donmueng District, Bangkok 10210 Thailand  
**Tel:** 66 2 929 2088-9  
**Fax:** 66 2 929 2090  
**Email:** gdri@cscoms.com  
**Website:** http://www.gdrif.org

II. Political Inequality

The organizations which deal with political inequality and promote political equality for women are as follows:

1. **Women’s Movement in the Thai Political Reform (WeMove)**

   **Contact details:** Address: 122/2 Soi Thonglor 4, Sukhumvit 55, Klongton Neu, Wattana District, Bangkok 10110 Thailand  
   **Chairperson:** Professor Dr. Amara Pongsapitch  
   **Coordinator:** Mrs. Ratchadaporn Kaewsanit  
   **Email:** pu2495@thaimail.com  
   **Tel.:** 66 81 432 4487

   **Objectives:** WeMove aims to create participatory democracy from sectors of the society both from male and female, which power are from collective thinking, collective action and integration of thoughts on knowledge basis. Moreover representatives who pursue political power must be qualified in aspect of conducting themselves in a society on a basis of morality.

2. **Frontiers for the Advancement of Women**

   **Objectives:** 1. To be a united front for people’s organizations in women development.  
   2. To be a mechanism in monitoring and checking women development in government sector.

   **Coordinator:** Usa Lertsrisantad
5. Insights and Recommendations

Affirmative actions to promote women’s participation in politics and governance

1. Movement to support the existence of Party’s List system in the provision of the new Constitution is needed. Thus quota system to determine percentage of women in the party’s list can be used. Such quota system is not deemed as unjust discrimination. Moreover it has been used by many countries worldwide e.g. France, Scandinavian Countries, or even countries in Africa such as Rwanda where women consists of 54% in the parliament.

2. Promotion of just election administration which may lead to more participation from women. Many women want to participate in politics, but they worry about dirty election, which may lead to overspending for election campaign. Most women are aware of limited budget of their families, thus they will not want to risk their limited budget for such unjust election.

3. Attitude adjustment of the people in society is needed, that women can be in managerial level as well as an adjustment of women’s attitude themselves, to create their confidence. Women are so valuable, their values are from their abilities not from their beauty of physical characteristics that others see from their bodies.

4. Time limitation for amendment of the laws that are against the constitution must be applied. Hence any laws with provisions contradiction to the constitution, especially unjust and women discrimination laws will be amended.

5. Political parties must be aware of gender for instance, determination of women’s proportion in a party’s Board both national and sub-national level.
6. Regulations for determination of gender proportion in decision-making level e.g. National committees, National Energy Policy Committee, etc.

7. Preparation training for female candidates both in local governance e.g. municipalities, provincial administrative organizations, or even district administrative organizations and national level must be provided to female candidates. Such trainings have been given to female candidates by the Women’s Movement in the Thai Political Reform, WeMove.

8. Abrogation of a provision in the Constitution that determines qualification of senators and MPs must own Bachelor’s degree. Since there are many women who are talented and experienced, but don’t have any degree. The abrogation of such provision will surrender unjust discrimination and give more opportunity for women to participate in politics.

**Course syllabus for promotion of women participation in local governance**

1. Analysis of current political
2. Power relations
3. Roles of the people for development of the nation.
4. Roles of women in families and communities.
5. Human dignity and equality.
6. Decentralization and local governance
7. Roles of women in district administrative organization.

**Disadvantages of women organizations or women movement in Thailand.**

1. Lack of common strategies, leads to weakness of action or movement. There should be a common strategies determination among various women organizations. Thus the action or movement will be more influential toward society. In addition to this, common strategies may lead to easiness of public’s understanding and the issues that women organizations raise will be public issues. Once the issues become public’s, cooperation of people in the society will arise then lead to success of movement or action. The lack of common strategies may result from different ideologies each organization believe in. For instance, some

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18 Invented by the Women’s Movement in the Thai political Reform, WeMove. The trainings have been given to female candidates in district administrative organizations since 1994.
organizations may follow feminist ideology, while others follow the idea of genderism. In addition to this, some organizations may have action in symbolic way, but others may act in concrete content. For example, WeMove focuses on increasing number of women in parliament, while Foundation for Women focuses on raising awareness of MPs on gender issues regardless of sex.

2. Lack of network organizations. Even though, there are a lot of women organizations in Thailand, but they mostly work separately. Network organizations lead to strength of the actions.

3. Should be more social movement activities to raise public awareness. Women organizations in Thailand have done a lot of hard work. However they should focus more on social movement e.g. protest, demonstration, etc. Thus may call for public awareness in gender issues and lead to cooperation from the people.

**Conclusion**

Even though the cooperation of women organizations in political issues has led to the changes in women status in progressive and concrete way for examples, amendment of laws to promote equal rights of women, more women enjoy their advancement and high level of positions both in politics and governance as well as private sectors. However political participation of women in civil sector does not have enough impact and influence to be powerful enough for political negotiation to push political parties or politicians to be aware of women’s needs. Thus promotion of women’s organizations is needed to organize civil sector in various areas as well as creation of social awareness in needs of women to participate in every level of decision-making. Such participation may lead to creativity in development of the country and response to needs of every group of people in the society.