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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN INDUSTRIALIZATION IN THAILAND *

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I. INTRODUCTION

Women make up approximately half of the total population of Thailand. The majority of the population engage in agricultural production. Approximately 12 per cent of the total population are employed female workers compared to 20 per cent of employed male workers (see Table 1).

The limited information available for use in the preparation of the present paper concerns mainly the role of women in national development in general. Specific information on the role of women in industrialization, if any, is not available. Being agricultural country, the studies undertaken about Thailand have almost always been in the agricultural sector. However, it is hoped that the present paper provides adequate information to indicate the relative magnitude of women's participation in industrialization in Thailand.

II. CURRENT CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN IN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

(a) The role of women in industrial development in Thailand.

Traditionally, women's role in development has always been in their contribution to the support of communities based on family production for subsistence. For Thailand agriculture is mainly a subsistence activity. The majority of the country's labour force, regardless of sex, is in the agricultural sector (see Table 1 & 2). Although the female population in the total labour force is considerably less than the male population (see Table 1), it is believed that, in many cases, women's total input is greater.

In Thailand, women began to take part in specialized production of goods and services at a relatively early stage of industrial development. In addition to participation in the development as wage and salary earners, women are, in many cases, small-scale producers and traders on their own account (see Table 3). Like in many other developing countries, women's participation in industrialization is high in small-scale home industries where it is possible to combine domestic duties and child care with professional non-domestic work. Important home industries which Thai women engage in are sewing, weaving, cooking, artificial flower making, etc. while important mechanized large-scale industries are textile industries and food processing.

(b) Institutional infrastructure and organizations.

One of the non-economic factors which is important for economic growth and development is the organization and improvement of public or private, governmental or non-governmental institutions which perform the duty of solving socio-economical problems. The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, which is the main national planning agency, has established the Social Project Division for such purposes. Included in the present Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1977-1981) are statements on policy and planning with regard to the status of women and their role in national development.

Other major institutional infrastructure and governmental organizations dealing with social research and/or development include:

- o The National Research Council's Social Research Division
- o Thailand Information Center, Chulalongkorn University (specializing in social sciences)

- o The Applied Scientific Research Corporation of Thailand (areas of specialization include socio-economic studies and industrial research and development)

Among the several non-governmental organizations active in this field are the following :

- o The National Council of Women of Thailand
- o Business and Professional Women Association
- o Girl Guide Association of Thailand
- o University Women Association of Thailand

Moreover, it should be mentioned that Her Majesty the Queen of Thailand has long been recognized as the leading figure in the promotion of women's participation in national development, particularly in rural industrial development.

Finally, it should be emphasized that one of the significant factors contributing to the success of the several industrial development projects carried out by women in Thailand is the cooperation and coordination between and among these organizations including particularly women organizations.

One specific example was the joint activity carried out by the National Council of Women of Thailand, the University Women Association and the Applied Scientific Research Corporation of Thailand, under the assistance of the Denver Research Institute of the United States of America. A one-week workshop was held to explore ways and means to effectively combine the research and development capability with the women organizations' ability, as effective transfer agents of new technology, for rural development.

III. MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

(a) National policy and planning

Following are excerpts from the present Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1977-1981) which will provide some indications as to the Government's policy and guidelines on the role of women in national development:

- o "... The status of women and youth will be strengthened so that they can play a more important role in national development".
- o "... In order to encourage women participation in the social and economic development process to the fullest extent, it is necessary to upgrade women skills and their status in society."

Measures and guidelines in the area of education, occupational promotion, revision and modification of certain laws are also provided. For implementation purposes, the Committee on Women and Child Development has been established to formulate the plan of action.

(b) Major constraints in achieving effective participation by women in industrialization.

1. At present, there is only a limited degree of participation by women in the formulation of policy and plan specifically for industrialization. If these policy and plans are going to be effective and successful, then women should actively participate in their formulation as well as in their execution.

2. Although legal discrimination is no longer the main obstacle to improvement in women's participation in industrialization, the traditional attitude concerning women's role in non-domestic areas of development still is. As a

result, men are in practice often given preference in employment, particularly in industry, over women.

3. Women in general are less qualified, educational and otherwise, than men in modern industrial sector employment. This is because, presumably, of the wide gap of literacy between male and female population (see Table 4). Consequently, very limited number of women are employed or able to rise to high-level positions (see Table 5).

4. Because of the widening gap of basic industry-supporting facilities such as water supply, electricity, communication and transportation, between rural and urban areas, the rural people are migrating into big cities looking for employment in industry. Often women are left behind in the village to care for the children and attend to domestic or their home industrial work.

IV. POTENTIAL ROLE OF WOMEN IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLICIES ON INDUSTRIALIZATION

(a) Policy and planning

In view of the policy stated in the present Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan, giving equal chances for promotion in the government service, opportunities exist for more and significant member of female staff in key positions, including those concerned with policy and plan formulation. In fact, the present heads of Social Project Division and Technology and Environment Planning Division of the National Economic and Social Development Board are both female. As stated earlier, women's participation is necessary in the formulation as well as in the implementation of policy and plan.

There is, in general, a need to increase women's role in all areas of development planning and implementation at all levels of management and administration, not only nationally but also regionally and internationally.

(b) Rural industrialization and restructuring of industry

It may be stated that the women's participation in rural, small-scale industrialization will continue for a long time to come. Home industries, such as weaving, where production can be carried out on their living premises, make it possible for the women to combine the production with child care and other necessary domestic chores. Improved agricultural technology, i.e. labour-saving machinery, will also give women more time to carry out non-agricultural, including industrial work. Expansion of production will, in many cases, necessitate the relocation to special premises away from home. This could deprive women of their traditional industrial work. On the other hand, it is felt that the restructuring of industry, by women, will be a gradual process considering their relatively traditional attitude.

(c) Management, training and entrepreneurship development

The entrepreneurial function may be basically regarded as an innovating and launching operation rather than a day-to-day managerial work. The 1974 government's survey of entrepreneurship revealed a relatively low number of female entrepreneurs i.e. about 10 per cent of the total labour force. According to the recent (1976) study by the Association of Business Professional Women in Thailand, it was concluded that, because of the traditional attitude of women towards being female leaders in society, the task of creating entrepreneurship in women would be rather difficult.

It has been our observation that, in many cases, the training provided to workers of female-dominated industries,

such as textiles, food processing and electronics, was of a limited nature providing these female workers with the skills just to do an isolated job. We do believe that women workers need specialized vocational training as well as other technical and management assistance to improve their capability for contribution to industrialization.

(d) Technological development

In general, it has been observed that technological development tends to benefit men more than women, often depriving the women of their traditional position as economic producers. This may, in part, be due to the wide gap of literacy between male and female population. In many cases, simple machineries/technologies such as cutters and grinders have been introduced to men instead, even though the work for which they are a substitute traditionally has been done by women. In other cases, such as the introduction of electricity, women benefit from longer working hours resulting in increase in production. For Thailand, development efforts have, for some time, paid attention to the impacts of technology on women, particularly those in rural areas. In this connection, women organizations have been particularly active.

It is felt that in the industries which are either operated solely by women, such as weaving, or those which are composed largely of female employees, such as food processing, direct technical assistance for women should be concentrated.

For women working in small-scale industries and handicrafts assistance, other than technical, is also essential. Some of the non-technical assistance provided to women in rural areas in Thailand have been:

- o Finding markets for their products - the National Council of Women of Thailand has, for example, established a handicraft center for such purpose.

- o Initiating them into clubs or cooperatives, thus providing them with opportunity to receive training, in technical as well as in management and organization.

V. PROPOSED FUTURE PLANS/PROGRAMMES

It is believed that at the national level, a special strategy to improve integration of women in national development, through industrialization, will have to be worked out individually for and by each country, based on the stage of development and, more importantly, the unique social, economic, and cultural conditions of that country. Through regional and international cooperation, experiences and information could be exchanged which will be helpful in the formulation and/or implementation of the policy and plan. On this basis, the following programmes are hereby proposed for consideration:

1. Establishment of Regional or Subregional (ASEAN) Network. (This is for the purpose of exchange of information and implementation of cooperative programmes)
2. Identification of Women-Dominated Industries. (To determine women's industries of common interest and their order of significance to national/regional development)
3. Identification of Specific Needs of Those Industries of Common Interest. (To determine what kind of assistance would be most beneficial)
4. Workshop/Training Courses in Management Development for Women Managers/Administrators (covering topics such as policy and plan formulation methodologies, evaluation etc.)
5. Preparation of Regional or International Directory of Women Experts in Industrialization.

Recent development to be noted is the recent Meeting, the first, of the ASEAN Committee on Social Development held in Bangkok in May, 1978. The Meeting recognized the potential

of women as an aid in national and regional development. It was also realized that there is very limited source within the region to draw upon which could identify the magnitude of women in the region who are contributing to the economic growth or industrial development. It was also found difficult to identify appropriately qualified women who could play an active role in these areas.

Realising that the process of women development in industrialisation is long and gradual for developing countries, particularly where traditional attitude is strong, it is therefore suggested a practical, easy-to-implement approach be taken.

Table 1.
Employed Population in Thailand

Area & Sex	Total	Persons in Labor Force									
		Employed Persons					Unemployed Persons				
		Total	In Agricultural Sector	In Other Sectors	Total	Not Previously	Ever	Total	Household Worker	Student	Others
Total	41,384,370	13,895,420	6,613,640	5,171,600	109,770	46,470	65,300	19,279,560	3,390,860	4,139,260	5,689,540
Male	20,614,000	6,497,120	3,464,090	3,033,030	87,448	26,030	61,610	4,786,810	299,600	2,285,710	2,201,500
Female	20,985,010	5,398,300	3,149,550	2,138,570	42,322	20,440	21,790	6,492,750	3,091,260	1,853,550	3,488,040
Municipal Area	3,617,210	2,103,300	75,640	2,027,660	40,760	10,370	30,390	2,082,130	688,730	1,109,740	263,660
Male	2,317,930	1,266,300	31,760	1,234,540	20,360	6,090	20,400	773,280	44,710	981,040	137,530
Female	2,989,280	681,700	25,000	756,920	12,400	2,380	9,890	1,288,850	644,050	518,700	126,150
Non Municipal Area	36,767,160	11,792,120	6,538,000	3,138,930	68,910	36,100	52,910	16,492,730	2,702,130	3,029,440	5,425,910
Male	17,763,070	7,230,600	3,409,330	1,821,270	59,130	17,640	41,130	4,013,530	251,890	1,694,670	2,053,970
Female	17,985,730	5,561,520	3,128,670	1,317,660	29,780	18,460	11,780	7,449,200	2,447,240	1,334,770	3,371,940

Source: Third Labor Force Survey (January-March) of the National Statistical Office, 1976, Page 1

Table 2. Civilian Non-Institutional Women by Employment Status 1976 (in Percentage)

Employment Status	Percentage of		
	Number	Percentage	Total Women Population
Persons in Labour Force	5,360,460	100.00	25.63
Agricultural Sector	3,182,750	59.37	15.22
Other Sectors	2,175,500	39.83	10.21
Unemployed Persons	42,130	0.80	0.20
Persons not in Labour Force including Home Workers, Students and Others	8,472,770		40.32
Persons age less than 11 years	7,121,780		34.05
Total	20,915,010		100.00

Source: Computed from the Whole Kingdom Labour Survey 1975.
National Statistica Office, P. 1.

Table 3. Employed Worker by Employment Status and Major Occupation.

Major Occupation	Ireland										Rural Area									
	Total Employed Population	Total	Employer	Government Employees	Private Employee	Own Account Worker	Family Worker	Total	Employer	Government Employees	Private Employee	Own Account Worker	Family Worker	Total	Employer	Government Employees	Private Employee	Own Account Worker	Family Worker	
Total	1,815,450	5,212,250	18,790	209,870	657,000	1,503,130	2,721,590	4,501,550	12,900	105,150	581,200	1,270,300	2,575,550	4,501,550	12,900	105,150	581,200	1,270,300	2,575,550	
Professional, Technical and Related Workers	359,870	(11.0)	(0.35)	(3.3)	(16.32)	(22.23)	(51.17)	(100.0)	(0.28)	(2.22)	(12.91)	(25.23)	(56.34)	(100.0)	(2.22)	(12.91)	(25.23)	(56.34)		
Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers	156,180	159,420	270	115,720	35,330	4,260	2,130	73,640	270	115,720	35,330	4,260	73,640	270	115,720	35,330	4,260	73,640		
clerical Workers	223,010	62,120	2,930	11,470	540	2,140	2,410	6,140	2,930	11,470	540	2,140	2,410	6,140	2,930	11,470	540	2,140		
sales Workers	1,451,410	81,050	2,360	130	32,300	396,310	382,360	144,730	2,360	130	32,300	396,310	144,730	2,360	130	32,300	396,310	144,730		
Agricultural, Fishermen, Hunters and Forestry	306,320	3,163,400	8,170	60	275,150	798,530	2,168,440	3,168,780	8,170	60	275,150	798,530	2,168,440	3,168,780	8,170	60	275,150	798,530		
Transportation Workers	389,900	11,870	30	3,630	1,970	2,570	3,620	6,690	30	3,630	1,970	2,570	3,620	6,690	3,630	1,970	2,570	3,620		
Trades, Reproduction Workers and Labourers	2,210,010	655,350	3,310	23,370	347,040	327,670	157,340	625,180	3,310	23,370	347,040	327,670	157,340	625,180	2,400	16,500	242,130	258,140		
Services, Sport and Other Entertainment Workers	401,140	183,350	1,430	16,790	137,460	28,610	7,580	52,010	1,430	16,790	137,460	28,610	7,580	52,010	300	3,910	38,150	7,490		

Source: Classified from January-March 1976 Labour Survey, National Statistical Office

Table 4. Number of Illiterate Population, by Sex, 1947, 1960, 1970.

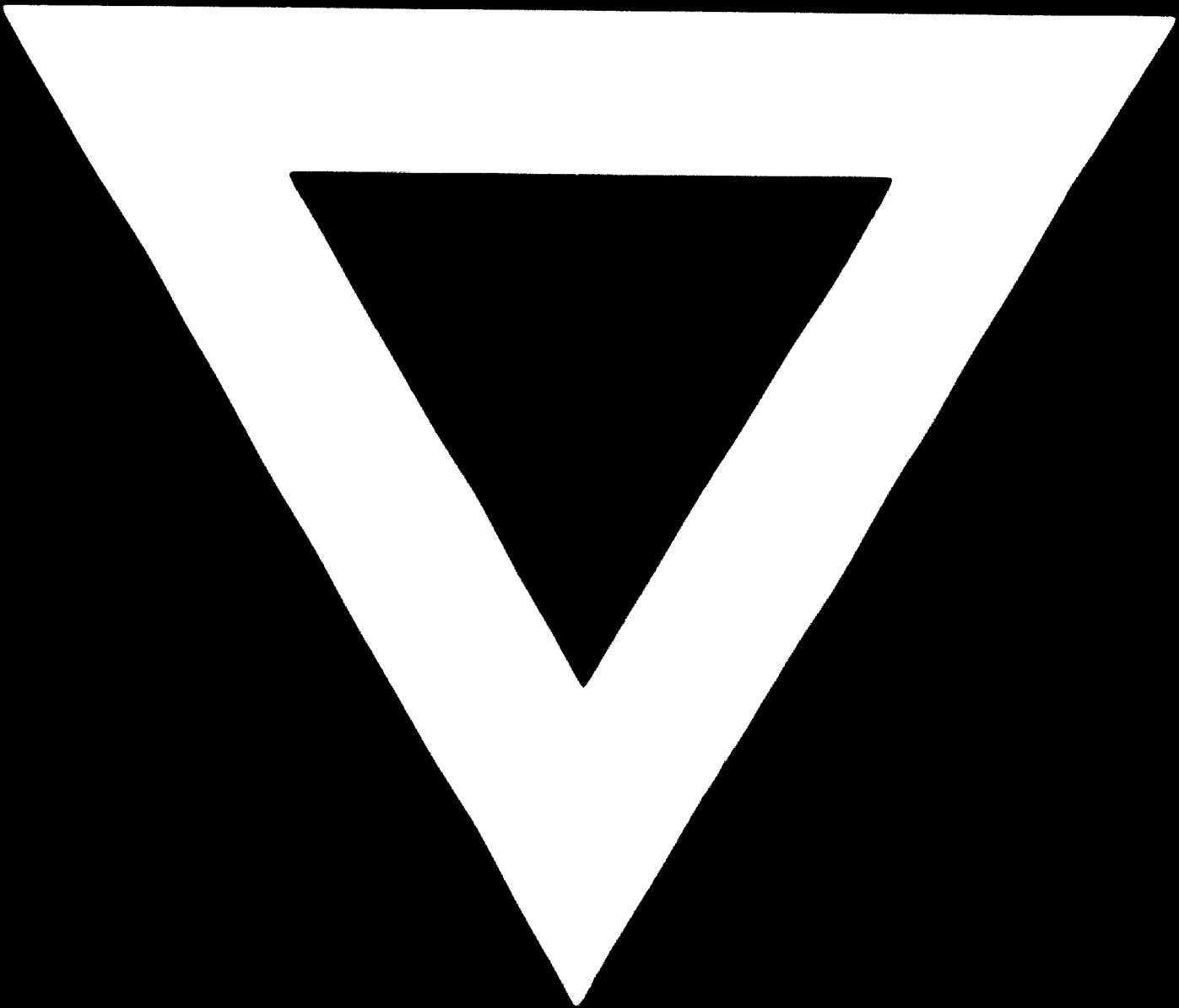
Year	Population			Illiterate			Percentage		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1947	12,327,386	6,143,460	6,183,926	5,705,269	2,002,942	3,702,327	46.3	32.6	59.9
1960	18,025,404	9,004,412	9,021,992	5,270,054	1,750,822	3,519,242	29.2	19.4	39.0
1970	23,453,313	11,581,756	11,871,557	4,265,424	1,281,880	2,983,544	18.2	11.1	25.2

Table 5. Level of Factory Worker in Bangkok Metropolitan by Sex.

Sex	Level										Total	
	Senior Executive		Junior Executive		Labourer		No Answer		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage				
Male	18	75	450	71.55	4452	41.56	364	45.61	5284	43.43		
Female	6	25	179	28.45	6262	58.44	434	54.39	6881	56.57		
Total	24	100	629	100	10714	100	798	100	12165	100		

Source: Survey of the Factories in Bangkok Metropolitan by Women Development Working Group. July 1978

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