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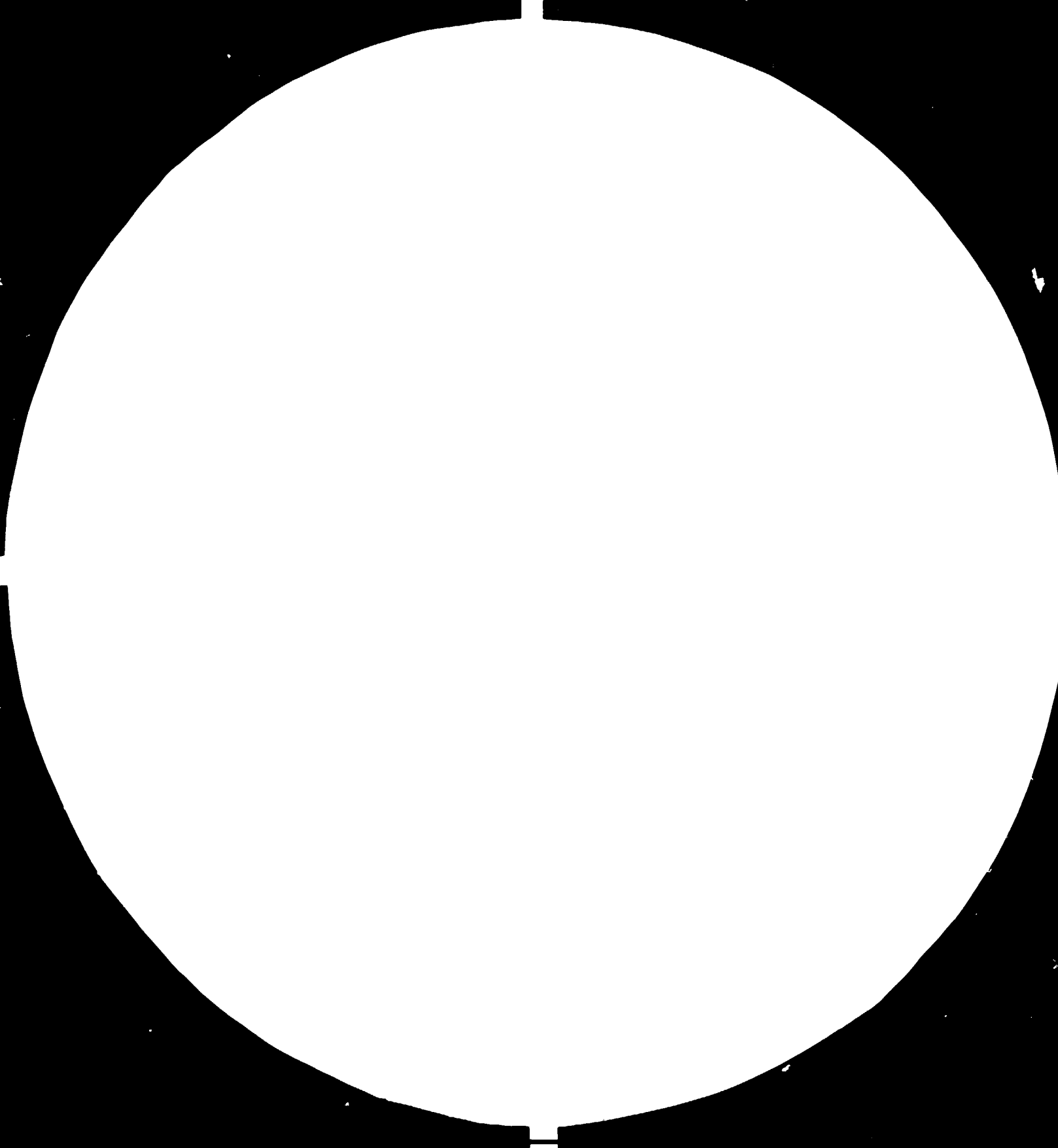
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Received 12/15/88; revised 1/10/89; accepted 1/10/89

Thai Industrial Standards Institute

Project THA/72/027

12638

REPORT OF THE CONSUMER AFFAIRS PROJECT.
THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF THAILAND

FINAL REPORT

19 May 1983

REPORT OF THE CONSUMER AFFAIRS PROJECT
THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF THAILAND
UNDER THE ROYAL PATRONAGE OF HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
TO
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Rationale

As a result of industrial development, growth in population and urbanization, Thailand as well as many other developing countries has been facing with problems of changes in mode of living and consumption habits.

Today, goods and services are consumed much more than in the past, thus trade practices give way to many problems such as adulteration, unsafe goods, misleading labels and advertising, sale of dangerous drug uncontrolled, short weights and measures, too many unnecessary imported goods, unhygienic handling and storing of food.

The poor of the developing countries, of which Thailand is one, especially those in rural and remote areas have greatest need for consumer protection so that their inadequate income is not further reduced by deceptive practices, and from arbitrary or artificial limitations of choice and other abuses of the market place including the exercise of monopolistic use of power to raise prices and to foist inferior products in developing countries, market and price manipulation and other unfair trade practices where these occur which further diminish the quality of life.

Consumer protection has therefore been increasingly needed. In fact there are Rules and Regulations stipulated by many government agencies to protect consumers, but the enforcement has

not been effective enough. Eventually malpractices in the market place still flourish.

Moreover, the absence of adequate legislation protecting the consumer or citizen interest in the country has been one of the magnetic attraction for multinationals.

Multinationals bring to Thailand many sophisticated commodities and marketing techniques they practice elsewhere in the western part of the world. The multinationals have certainly gone some way in exacerbating the poverty and orienting consumers to the western style and imported products to an extent that the foreign brand name of the local multinational product will invariably win over a competitive (possibly better) indigenous product.

For the poor, the trend toward wasteful or unnecessary could have been slowed down or even prevented if only it had not been the interests of the giant corporations to extend their markets to the grass-roots

Consumer movement which started in the developed countries in the thirties has attracted the attention of Thailand only in the sixties when the problems of false consumption was recognized. The National Council of Women of Thailand felt that it was appropriate to start the country wide social movement, a movement that is dedicated to fighting injustice in the market place that seeks only a fair deal for mankind. The movement, under the name Consumer Affairs Project, was accepted as one of several projects under the National Council of Women of Thailand, a non-governmental body under the patronage of H.M. the Queen of Thailand which has itself been in existence since 1956. The project is the first organization of its kind to be started in this country.

Background

It goes without saying that consumer movement in Thailand was initiated by the National Council of Women of Thailand (NCWT)

In 1972 upon the suggestion of Dr. Colston E. Warne, former president of Consumer Union of US, Inc. since its establishment in 1936, and president of IOCU from its foundation in 1960 to 1970 and Dr. Persia Campbell, of Consumers Union USA and IOCU Committee on Environment, during their visits to Bangkok, NCWT Board of Directors appointed a working group to study ways and means to initiate a consumer education service project for the benefit of member organizations.

In 1973, The Consumer Affairs Project (CAP) was launched with a chairman in charge. In the same year the secretary of the project was delegated to attend the Centre for Consumer Education for Asia and the Pacific (CCAP) held in Penang, Malaysia, as an observe. Following CCAP, NCWT/CAP was ready to carry on its activities to the concept of the International Organization of Consumers Unions (IOCU). CAP also applied for membership of IOCU and was accepted as a corresponding member in 1974.

CAP has been in contact with IOCU Regional Office in Penang ever since its establishment in 1974. Despite a modest annual budget and beginner's know-how, CAP has been carrying on its activities of creating critical awareness of Consumers and spreading consumer education to member organization of NCWT as well as general public. Government officials have been invited to join CAP's committee and CAP has relied on them for their expertise.

Objectives

1. To compile consumer protection information from various reliable sources

2. To disseminate consumer protection information and knowledge so that it reaches the people of all strata.
3. To develop and transfer experience and skills to consumer leaders.
4. To encourage the setting up of consumer protection groups and organizations at the regional level.
5. To cooperate with other consumer organizations having similar aims and objectives.
6. To give protection to vulnerable groups of society, such as, the children, the elderly, the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped who may not themselves be able to defend their human and legal rights, who obviously need effective protection against abuse.
7. To represent and participate in government agencies in issues relating to consumer protection such as the Institute of Standards, Food and Drug Administration, Ministry of Commerce, Consumer Protection board, to promote consumer protection.
8. To work in collaboration with IOCU in technical assistance and advisory work.

Activities

1. Consumer Education

- 1.1 Consumer education in schools and colleges: Talks delivered regularly to all levels of schools and colleges on such topics as; the need for consumer awareness, the young consumer, drugs, environment, misleading advertisement, malpractices in the market, the law and the consumer.

Pamphlets were distributed, slide shows and posters were shown

1.2 Consumer education to member organizations (107 organizations) of NCWT. In forms of Talks, discussions. Topics included childcare, nutrition, cosmetics, drug, advertisement, laws which they should know, the organization of new consumer groups, breast feeding etc.

For talks and discussions, emphasis was made on consumer rights, based on 3 principles of morality, safety and economy.

1.3 Consumer education through different media: knowledge and information on consumer protection were released to newspapers and journals for consumer columns

1.4 Consumer protection programme on radio and television:

- Television programme on channel 9, once a month
- Consumer protection programmes on 3 radio stations

Topics of current interest to consumers were: harmful additives (food dyes, artificial sweetener, M.S.G., borax, fish sauce, vinegar), harmful drugs (chloramphenicol, clioquinol, A.P.C., prednisolone, de dexamethasone, amphetamine) pesticide residue, potable water etc.

1.5 Organization^{of} seminars, workshops, discussions consultations, jointly with other consumer group or groups on topics as:

- Misleading advertisements
- Problems on drugs and Cosmetics
- Pollution
- Consumer education dissemination

1.6 Publications

- "Wise Consumer" magazine, 3 issues a year
- "Rawang" newspaper, 12 issues a year for 18 months during the UNDP assistance
- Handbooks for consumers
- Pamphlets.

All in Thai language

1.7 Poster Competition: A poster competition on consumer theme was held in 1980, about 120 posters were sent in for competition.

1.8 Research

Since CAP has no testing laboratory, it had to make use of government laboratories such as the laboratory of the Department of Science and the Department of Medical Science. Test results were obtained from them.

Surveys were made regularly on prices of essential commodities and cost of popular products, sales and use of drugs, food additives, hygienic conditions of food market and restaurants.

Samples of food in question were bought from the markets simple tests were made, sophisticated ones were sent to the aforementioned laboratories.

Results obtained were evaluated and disseminated to relevant channels.

2. Liason with government

CAP has been working in collaboration with different government agencies they are.

- Consumer Protection Board, Prime Minister's Office
- Department of Science, Ministry of Science, technology and Energy
- Food and Drug Administration, Ministry of Public Health
- Department of Commercial registration, Ministry of Commerce.
- Department of Business Economics, Ministry of Commerce
- Department of Pharmacy, Chulalongkorn University.
- Thai Industrial Standards Institute.
- Institute of Research and Development, Kasetsart University.
- Thai Medical Women Association.
- Department of Medical Science, Division of Nutrition, Ministry of Public Health
- National Statistic Office, Prime Minister's Office
- Thammasart University
- The Siamese Association of University Women.
- The National Institute of Development Administration.
- Home Economics Department, Kasetsart University.
- Mass Communication Organization of Thailand
- Saipanya Alumni Association.

Aside from funds and facilities, the administrative structure of Governmental agencies can provide the Consumer Organization with channel to reach different levels of community. Using their authority the consumer organization will be able to collect vast amount of data and dissemination important information to community members.

3. Participation in meetings at international level

- 3.1 The consultation on "The United Nations Community and Consumer Protection in Asia and the Pacific", held at ESCAP, Bangkok 5 January 1978.
- 3.2 The International Meeting of Heads of Standards. Institutions in the region, held at ESCAP, Bangkok from 3 - 7 November 1980.
- 3.3 The Regional Consultation on Consumer Protection held at ESCAP, Bangkok from 2 to 8 June 1981.
- 3.4 Consumer Protection Seminar, held at ESCAP Bangkok, in 20 November 1982.
- 3.5 Attending seminars on consumer protection in Singapore, Penang HongKong and Manila

4. Exchange of information

CAP is exchanging books and information with other consumer or relevant organizations both locally and internationally.

5. Cooperation with other consumer organization.

In order to achieve the Consumer Organizations objectives, 5 consumer groups in Bangkok often work jointly, they are:

- CAP/NCWT
- The Consumer Protection Association of Thailand
- Consumer Protection volunteer group
- Consumer group of Thailand
- Consumer Power group

6. Participation in government activities particularly in formulating policies/priorities and drafting of regulations/Standards.

- Thai Industrial Standards Institute, in drafting of consumer goods standards
- Consumer Protection Board, in controlling labels and advertisements.
- Food and Drug Administration in controlling food and drug advertisements

7. Committee Meeting

Regular meeting is held monthly. The committee consists of 25 members, they are from volunteer workers, non-governmental organizations and governmental organizations. Topics of current interest are discussed to help solve problems confronting the consumers as well as development of consumer activities.

Topics of interest and of much complained are such as: problem drugs, hazardous additives, short weights, pesticide residues in fruit and vegetable, dumping of banned drugs and pesticides from developed countries into the country, transportation, traffic, poverty, public services, flood in raining season, high cost of living.

8. Fairs and exhibitions

Fair and exhibition is held about once a year, jointly with other consumer organizations with the objectives of creating awareness of the people of their consumer rights, emphasizing 3 principles of morality, safety and economy, giving correct knowledge and information on consumer protection issues, promoting standardization and certification of consumer goods.

Important features of the fair are panel discussions on topics of interest to consumers, demonstration on food and maintenance of household equipment and exhibitions from different

government agencies. Posters on consumer protections are also centers of interest.

Achievements

Some of NCWT/CAP's outstanding achievements are as follows:

1. The promulgation of Consumer Protection Act 1979. In 1977 NCWT/CAP presented a Consumers's Charter to the Prime Minister urging him to consider drafting a Consumer Protection Bill for the purpose of giving consumer a fair deal and the full benefit of consumer rights.

The Government heard the plea. The consumer Protection Council consisting of 13 members was appointed by the government with the President of NCWT as a member, she was also appointed by the Council to chair the Sub-committee on Consumer Education and Public Relations. Thus, the cooperation of CAP and the government was established.

2. Organization of the first Consumer Education Seminar, in 1978, of 120 Administrative officers and instructors of 36 Teachers colleges and 5 Universities. As a result young consumer groups have been initiated in those institutions producing future consumer education workers.

3. CAP has been publishing a magazine called "Wise Consumer" with a circulation of 3,000 copies. In 1979 a new monthly magazine was put on in tabloid form, with a circulation of 5,000 copies, and financed by UNDP since June 1979. The UNDP grant also covers some crash courses of training of consumer education service workers.

4. In 1980 a team of the Sub-committee on Consumer education and Public relations with NCWT President as chairman conducted fieldtrips up country for the purpose of introducing the Consumer Protection Act 1979 and urging provincial leaders to organize consumer groups. With the cooperation of provincial authorities, these meetings were quite successful. An average of two hundred people attended each meeting consisting of leading government officials and local group leaders. Seventy two provinces in the whole Kingdom were covered.

5. In 1979 a campaign for food safety control was conducted in 264 market places in Greater Bangkok Metropolitan areas with the cooperation of Municipal Authority and 700 school teachers and university students. Our targets were cleanliness and safety in using food dyes.

6. Consumer Education Through radio and television programmes, panel discussions.

7. Consumer Protection Fairs held at the NCWT headquarter has been the highlight of the CAP.

Finance

CAP's income is derived from a small grant from the General Council of its parent organization which amount annually to 35,000 bath (1,750 US\$) However some funds have been derived from donations which help keep the activities going.

In 1978, The National Council of Women of Thailand requested the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme in order to pursue an active programme of consumer protection by the advice of Mr. Rohn Hopper, then, the Expert of Thai Industrial Standards Institute .

Following the request, the proposal was accepted, the assistance amounting to \$ 16,000 was granted to cover the period of 18 months which was from October 1978 to May 1981.

The expenditure was divided into categories as follows:

- 1) \$ 3,150 - 18 m/m for a local editor for "Wise Consumer," "Rawang" and other publications
- 2) \$ 6,200 - for printing and production cost of the magazines mentioned above
- 3) \$ 1,500 - for printing cost of leaflets
- 4) \$ 2,000 - for seminars in 5 regions: northeast, south, north, central and Bangkok.
- 5) \$ 600 - for lectures in several schools and Universities, also around the country.
- 6) \$ 2,000 - for teaching packs, slides, posters and pamphlets, not less than 5,000 sets.
- 7) \$ 300 - for samples of consumer goods to be tested at authorised (none commercial) laboratories such as Dept, of Science Service and Dept, of Medical Service.
- 8) \$ 250 - for the poster competition: instead of essay competition, which was revised to conform with the new policy, these posters have been in use since then.

Besides UNDP assistance, there was a CAP inputs amounting \$ 2,980 contribution to production cost of magazines and administrative expense for hiring one typist

Problems and Prospects.

The objectives of CAP/NCWT have been hampered by two major problems

- financing of major Training programmes
- shortage of trained service workers.

For future work, CAP expects to:

- urge the government to establish Small Claims Courts, one in each major city.
 - urge the government to establish a Consumer Research Institute, equipped with a modern laboratory for Comparative testing
 - to expand circulation of publications on a national basis.
 - to solicit technical assistance from foreign sources.
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