

Overview

During the aftermath of the 1997 economic crisis, the country's political structure has undergone a series of change. In the late 1997, the new Constitution was in force and it emphasizes participatory democracy and decentralization to local-level administration, rights-based development, and transparency in the state system. The current Government has introduced several national social protection measures, including, for example, the Education for All scheme, the Universal Health Coverage scheme, and the Village Development Fund. Effective on 3 October 2002, the Bureaucratic Reform re-organized governmental offices: The former Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare was split into Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.

To ensure continued economy growth, the Government has identified the need to upgrade the Thai labour force and national competency towards a knowledge-based economy. The National Education Reform is underway. Meanwhile, national skills training programmes highlight entrepreneurship development for various target groups. For the rural poor, an emphasis is given to the One District, One Product Programme.

ILO Constituents

Government - As a result of the Bureaucratic Reform, labour issues and social welfare issues are covered by the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. The Ministry of Labour is, now, under the leadership of Minister Suwat Liptapanlop and is responsible for skills training, labour protection, employment services, and social security. The other ministry has the mandate to oversee issues affecting the disadvantaged populations namely, the elderly, the handicapped, women, children, and the indigenous.

The Ministry of Labour is working toward ensuring compliance of national labour laws with international labour standards. It is preparing for the expansion of labour protection to homeworkers, agricultural workers, and other informal-economy workers. National Occupational Safety and Health Laws are pending approval from the Cabinet. When available, a new draft of the Labour Relations Law is to be submitted for the review by the Parliament. Recently, the Cabinet has approved the implementation of the Unemployment Insurance scheme to take effect from January 2004 and recommended further tripartite consultation.

Employers - There are ten registered employers' confederations. The ILO's contacts are the Employers' Confederation of Thailand (ECOT) which is a member of the IOE and the Confederation of Thai Trade and Industry (ECONTHAI). ECOT has been very active in addressing development issues such as HIV/AIDS, corporate responsibility, and gender equality. Many small employers, SME owners, and up-country employers are not members of either ECOT or ECONTHAI.

Workers - There are nine trade union congresses, among which the Thai Trade Union Congress (TTUC) and the Labour Congress of Thailand (LCT) are affiliated with ICFTU; and, the National Congress of Thai Labour (NCTL), with WCL. The ILO's contacts are these three congresses and the State Enterprises Relations Congress (SERC).

ILO activities with unions seek to increase the visibility of women leadership and deal with a range of issues such as wages, social security (Unemployment Insurance Scheme), HIV/AIDS at work, collective bargaining, occupational safety and health, workers with disabilities, and strengthening unions' participation in policy issues.

Technical Cooperation

- IPEC Combating trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region
- Assessing the situation of children in the production, sale and trafficking of drugs
- Expansion of Employment Opportunities for Women
- Expansion of Social Security to the Informal Economy (partly funded by the Social Security Office).
- Application of Occupational Safety and Health Management System
- Occupational Safety and Health in Small and Medium Enterprises
- HIV/AIDS Prevention and Management Model Development
- ASIST (Labour-based construction technology)

International Labour Standards and Tripartism

Thailand has ratified 13 Conventions: four of them are core Conventions (C. 29 Forced Labour, 1930; C. 100 Equal Remuneration, 1951; C. 105 Abolition of Forced Labour, 1955; and C. 182 Elimination of the Worst Form of Child Labour, 1999). The Government has indicated intention to ratify all core Conventions. The order of priority is as follows: C 138, C. 98, C. 111, and C. 87. Other conventions in the Government's ratification plan include C 155 and C 144. ILO is working closely with tripartite constituents on the promotion of these conventions through organization of national workshop and advocacy campaigns.

Beside governmental units mandated to manage labour-related issues and the application of labour-related laws, there exist other national bodies overseeing protection of workers' rights: the House of Representatives' Committee on Labour, the Senate's Committee on Labour, and the independent body, the National Commission on Human Rights.