Reconciling work and family: Issues and policies in Thailand

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Acknowledgements

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Preface

The ILO’s Conditions of Work and Employment Programme seeks to promote decent conditions of employment on the basis of international labour standards and the analysis of the policy experience in its member States. One of the key aspects of working conditions that this Programme addresses is the reconciliation of work and family life. On the one hand, how can working conditions be adapted to facilitate workers’ ability to fulfil their family responsibilities? And, on the other hand, how can the family responsibilities of men and women be lightened or made less incompatible with employment so that they are not a source of discrimination in the labour market?

Based in part on the recognition that the problems of workers with family responsibilities are part of wider issues regarding family and society and that family responsibilities can be a source of discrimination in employment, the International Labour Conference adopted a Convention on Workers with Family Responsibilities (No. 156) in 1981. The core of this Convention stipulates that the aim of national policies should be to enable persons with family responsibilities who are engaged or wish to engage in employment to exercise their right without being subject to discrimination and, to the extent possible, without conflict between their employment and their family responsibilities. The accompanying Recommendation on Workers with Family Responsibilities, 1981 (No. 165), provides guidance on how work-family issues can be addressed. Yet, while this standard outlines many important factors and issues for consideration, it is also necessary to examine how workers with family responsibilities actually experience work-family conflicts and how the issues are being addressed in different countries. What are countries doing to reduce conflicts between work and family? How are these measures compatible with increasing productivity in the face of global competition? What are the factors that worsen or reduce this conflict?

Although there is a considerable and growing body of literature on the nature of work-family conflicts and how they are being addressed in many western and industrialized countries, less is available on how these issues are being addressed in other countries around the world. As valuable lessons can be learned by examining these different experiences, this paper presents the example of Thailand. Thailand provides important lessons about the impact of rapid economic growth and industrialization followed by abrupt economic crisis on work patterns and family life. The paper provides case studies and reviews policies and practices relating to work and family responsibilities. It illustrates the problems faced by many as they strive to address these conflicting demands. The paper looks at data tracing recent trends in the life course of Thai families as well as trends related to the economy, migration, work patterns and social support. Based on an analysis of facts and trends, the paper provides an assessment of the current situation and suggests priorities for the future.

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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td>APEC</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation</td>
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<td>CAW</td>
<td>Committee for Asian Women</td>
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<td>ECONTHAI</td>
<td>Employers’ Confederation of Thai trade and industry</td>
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<td>ECOT</td>
<td>Employers’ Confederation of Thailand</td>
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<td>EGAT</td>
<td>Electrical Generation Authority of Thailand (presently EGAT Public Company Limited)</td>
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<td>ESCAP</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign direct investment</td>
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<td>FHH</td>
<td>Female-headed household</td>
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<td>FTA</td>
<td>Free trade agreement</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross domestic product</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>LFPR</td>
<td>Labour force participation rate</td>
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<td>MHH</td>
<td>Male-headed household</td>
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<td>MOL</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour</td>
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<td>NESDB</td>
<td>National Economic and Social Development Board</td>
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<td>NESDP</td>
<td>National Economic and Social Development Plan</td>
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<td>NFE</td>
<td>Non-formal education</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>NSO</td>
<td>National Statistical Office</td>
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<td>OECF</td>
<td>Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of Japan</td>
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<td>ONCWA</td>
<td>Office of the National Commission on Women’s Affairs</td>
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<td>OTOP</td>
<td>One Tambon One Product</td>
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<td>OWAFFD</td>
<td>Office of Women’s Affairs and Family Development</td>
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<td>RUDF</td>
<td>Regional Urban Development Fund</td>
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<td>SARS</td>
<td>Severe acute respiratory syndrome</td>
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<td>SIF</td>
<td>Social investment fund</td>
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<td>SIP</td>
<td>Social investment plan</td>
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<td>SMEs</td>
<td>Small and medium-sized enterprises</td>
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<td>STDs</td>
<td>Sexually transmitted diseases</td>
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<td>SVN</td>
<td>Social Venture Network Asia</td>
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<td>TDRI</td>
<td>Thailand Development Research Institute</td>
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<td>TNC</td>
<td>Transnational cooperation</td>
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<td>TOT</td>
<td>TOT Corporation Public Company Limited</td>
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<td>UEP</td>
<td>Unemployment</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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<td>WEF</td>
<td>World Economic Forum</td>
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Executive summary

This study, as part of a series of work-family studies organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO), examines the changing trend in families and work, and illustrates the key work-family issues, policies and practices in Thailand. The study is based largely on secondary data and interviews with key officials. The analysis is based on census, household surveys, labour force surveys and other statistics collected by the government. It reviewed past studies on the Thai economy, employment and family. A series of interviews were conducted with key officials within the government, employer and worker organizations, as well as NGOs and workers themselves.

Economic and employment context

Thailand has put in a lot of effort in industrializing its agrarian economy. Since the late 1950s, the Thai government has encouraged foreign direct investment, which was a major contributor to economic growth. Between 1986 and mid-1990, the Thai economy was one of the fastest growing economies in the world, experiencing double-digit growth. Since the 1960s, Thailand’s GDP growth never dropped below 4 per cent, until 1997, when growth plummeted as the country became a victim of the Asian economic crisis. The unemployment rate tripled in 1998 and further increased in 1999. This crisis affected low-income labourers the most, and women were among the first to be sacked.

Rapid industrialization and the spread of commercialism have also changed the way women and men work in the past five decades. The need to earn more resulted in women and men staying away from their families for longer periods, driven either by longer working hours or by rural-urban and international migration. This trend is further complicated by the spread of HIV/AIDS that has had an impact on family structure. In short, rapid economic growth and its abrupt end have changed the lives of both women and men, as well as their family lives.

Women and men workers were both affected by the economic crisis, but experienced it differently. There has been increasing casualization of labour in manufacturing, especially in female-dominated sectors. There has been a decrease in real wages, increasing debt and growing disparities between the poor and the rich.

Government programmes to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis were designed on the assumption that retrenched workers will go back to rural areas. That did not happen, and many urban workers continued to find employment in urban areas with little state support. Unemployment shock was basically expected to be absorbed by the family, putting greater strain on those responsible, mainly women, for care of the household members.

Family trends and work-family conflict

In the 9th National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP), alongside promotion of human quality and social security, there is a strong emphasis on the promotion of family strength. There is increasing concern over the changing structure and functions of families in Thailand. For the state, the important function of families is to improve the quality of life of family members and inculcate social values.
Demographic changes

There are various changes occurring among Thai families. There is an increase in the working age population migrating to Bangkok, and the ratio of female-headed households. In 1980, only 15.1 per cent of households were headed by females, which increased to 25.5 per cent in 2000. Family size is decreasing and the average household size in Bangkok peripheral region is only 2.66. The number of registered marriages is going down, while divorce is increasing. Both women and men are marrying later than before. Fertility is going down owing to the successful family planning policy of the government. In 1978, the fertility rate was 3.7, and is projected to drop to 1.81 by 2010. At the same time, HIV/AIDS is attacking the working age population, making dependents vulnerable to poverty. At the end of 2003, among the 570,000 people who are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 560,000 are adults aged 15-49. The changing demographic characteristics change the way people work, and arrange their care-related activities.

Care work and domestic tasks

Women on an average spend 2.6 hours on household maintenance, management and shopping for their own households, while men spend only 1.4 hours a day. Even with the demographic changes, women are still in charge of care work. Women spend on an average 2.7 hours per day on care work, while men spend only 1.6 hours. Changing working conditions for the young generation has intensified the role of grandparents in taking care of grandchildren. Grandparents have always played a large role in taking care of grandchildren, but now some parents leave the responsibilities of child care to grandparents for too long a time without financial and psychological support.

Working conditions and work-family conflict

Working hours are getting longer, and workers have no choice but to endure longer working hours because the minimum wage is not a living wage. Larger establishments are requiring longer hours from workers, and thus the work-family conflict can be stronger in larger establishments.

The minimum wage increase has been frozen since the economic crisis for three years. The minimum wage is often not enough to live on, and workers need to work overtime in order to earn a decent wage. The freeze in the minimum wage has decreased the real wages of workers. Moreover, many workers were not even paid minimum wages. Thirty per cent of employees were paid less than the minimum wage. The ratio was 56 per cent for small-sized establishments of one to four persons. Such stagnation in wages is detrimental to women in female-headed households, who are increasingly dependent on working as employees. The decrease in real wages and the increase in the price of goods have led to an increase in household debts. Since the economic crisis, household debts have more than doubled.

Working hours are getting longer. In 2001, 36.1 per cent of men and 29.1 per cent of women worked longer hours per week than what was stated in the law. In 2003, this rose to 37.9 per cent for men and 30.1 per cent for women. In terms of occupation, elementary occupation workers work the longest hours, and working hours are longer in larger establishments. Piecemakers in manufacturing, construction and social work are working the longest hours, and the working hours are also increasing for this group of workers. It is noted that these types of employment are on the increase, especially among women.
Work-family-related benefits

Currently, the paid maternity leave is 90 days. However, many women workers come back to work after 60 days. This is partly because they are requested by the workplace to come back in 60 days, and also because in the first 45 days, they will get full pay from the employer, while for the last 45 days they will be paid by the social security scheme, which gives them a lump sum.

Social security provides child allowances: 200 baht per child per month for a maximum of two children at one time. However, only around a quarter of registered workers are covered by social security.

Attitudes of managers to family responsibilities

Among the employers, work-family conflict is not considered to be a problem. There is very little recognition that family support will improve productivity, and thus would offset the cost of providing child-care services. Even today, pregnancy and child care is seen by employers as obstacles for workers’ productivity, and it is perceived that child care can be taken up by grandparents because that is “Thai culture”. However, some companies opt for such benefits. They considered that a happy workforce will contribute to improved productivity and loyalty, reduce turnover, and increase employee honesty and identity to the company.

Child-care support facilities

Child-care facilities/arrangements available in Thailand are as follows:

1. Child-care centres
   a. Government-supported day-care centres
   b. Private day-care centres
   c. Child-care centres in the workplace
   d. Child-care centres run by the community/NGOs

2. Grandparents and relatives
   a. Grandparents living together
   b. Grandparents in the province
   c. Other relatives living together
   d. Other relatives living separately

3. Privately hired child-care assistants
   a. Live-in assistants
   b. Day-time assistants
   c. Hire through private training company

Thirty per cent of Thai children are in day-care centres. However, many day-care centres do not meet the required standard, and those that meet the standard are said to be less than half the total number. The others have problems in terms of quality and quantity of caretakers, equipment and facilities, sanitary conditions and food. The low quality of day-care centres, which results in accidents and mistreatment of children, discourages parents to keep their children in day-care centres.

Moreover, there is hardly any nursery that accepts newborns, or operates 24 hours to accommodate the needs of workers on night shifts. Female-headed households with mothers working at night face difficulties if there is no one to look after the children at night. Such inconvenience in day-care centres makes parents believe that putting their children in the care of grandparents would be better, even if it means not living together with their children.
Assessment of current situation

The largest problem of work-family conflict in Thailand is that it is not perceived as a problem. The child-care issue is not seen as an important one compared to pay and security in jobs. There is a general understanding that parents can depend on grandparents in the provinces for child care, or it is assumed that women will somehow be able to manage the child-care arrangement.

In Thailand, work-family conflicts are in two main areas. One is on a daily basis, where balancing work and family commitments is a problem. This conflict occurs for those parents living with their own small children.

The other conflict is when the parents are not able to live together with their children. If the parents are not able to manage child care themselves, they decide to keep their children with their grandparents or other relatives. They live separately and — with long working hours, little holidays and low wages — it becomes difficult for parents to visit their children often or long enough to build bonds with them. The indirect consequence of this work-family conflict is the increased financial and care burden on grandparents.

Because of low recognition of the problem, there is less support for work-family conflict issues from both the government and the employers. Even unions hardly recognize the problem. This is partly due to the low number of women in decision-making committees in large unions. The government recognizes the problems arising from the changing structure of families, but its policy measures are more attuned to strengthening the “traditional” family values, without taking into consideration the fact that the working conditions and environment that the workers are put in have also changed. The government is advocating families to stay together. However, there are many workers who are not able to do so even if they want to.

With changing families and ways of work, this is not always a reliable option for many young parents. Or, if it is an option, then the burden on the elderly is becoming heavier, with not too many young people available to help them in child care, as well as the necessity of finding income-generating work to support the grandchildren when remittances are not reliable.

The neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies in Thailand have put a strain on women of all ages, who are expected to earn income as well as to take care of family members. The neo-liberal policy embraces market liberalization and competition, which, its proponents believe, will enhance economic efficiency and productivity. Both women and men are expected to work longer hours, making it increasingly difficult for them to manage their time between work and family. At the same time, their wages are suppressed as a whole, especially devaluing women’s wages. This is most evident for pieceworkers, who work the longest hours and are paid the least. It should be noted that this type of employment is now on the increase. On the other hand, the neo-conservative policy emphasizes family values and expects parents to fulfill this duty. Although it is not written anywhere that mothers should be the one to preserve family values, there is an unspoken understanding that women should be more responsible to keep the family from disintegrating.

With strengthening work-family conflict with little support, women are left to suffer alone. In order to realize more balance in work-family relationships, the following policy measures are recommended:

(1) The Government of Thailand should ratify the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No.156) and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No.183) in order to show its recognition and commitment to tackle work-family conflict.
(2) Child-care services should be improved, as well as access to services, especially at the worker level.
   a. The standards of existing day-care services need to be improved so that workers can access the services without worry.
   b. Fees for day-care services should be kept at an affordable level for workers.
   c. Government should provide incentives/subsidies to establish new day-care centres both in communities and in workplaces. There should be tax incentives and subsidies to establish day-care centres, especially for enterprises.
   d. There should be a requirement for industrial zones to provide spaces for day-care centres for a cluster of enterprises.
   e. There should be special incentives to provide services for infant care as well as providing services for female-headed households.
   f. Local government should play a larger role in providing day-care services in the communities. They should have an adequate budget and roles in supporting the community to establish child-care centres.
   g. Communities themselves need to be organized to arrange child-care services with financial/administrative support from the government.
   h. A coordinating body to implement these initiatives needs to be established. Currently, there are several ministries that are involved/should be involved in organizing and supervising child-care centres and services. There is a need to establish a coordinating body to bring about a concerted effort in promoting child-care services in the communities and in workplaces.

(3) Provide child allowances independent of employment and directly to the care provider. This has two merits. One is that many low-income workers often are not covered by social security because they tend to be engaged in temporary, casual and informal work. They will not be able to receive child allowances, but they are the ones who are most in need. The other merit is that this will provide support to grandparents who are providing child-care services in the rural areas for their grandchildren.

(4) Reduce working hours and provide a living wage as a minimum wage. It is noted that workers with the longest working hours are the least paid. It is important to enable workers to earn a living wage without working excessive hours, so that they will be able to have more time to balance their work and family duties. Labour inspection should be strengthened to avoid employment practices that pay less than the minimum wage or pay the minimum wage for an extended period of time. There has to be a system in place wherein the income of workers increases with the number of years of experience, so that there is less pressure to work overtime in order to earn enough to support their families. Gender wage differences should be paid extra attention, especially noting that female-headed households are more dependent on work as employees.

(5) Increase leave entitlements to balance work and family.
   a. Strengthen the implementation of 90 days’ maternity leave, especially for temporary workers.
   b. Promote the introduction and implementation of paternity leave.
   c. Extra sick leave can be introduced for parents who need to attend to sick children.
   d. These initiatives need to be taken by unions and employers’ confederations, with the supervision and cooperation from the Ministry of Labour.

(6) Promote sharing of household work between women and men, and men’s responsibilities in child care and childbirth.
   a. Promote the idea of sharing household work among husbands.
   b. Promote father’s responsibilities in childbearing and child care.
(7) Improve data collection to improve statistics on family and work.
   a. Improve data collection/presentation on family and labour statistics. Currently, most of the tabulated statistics are not gender disaggregated. At the same time, information collection/presentation related to family situations needs to be strengthened.
   b. Initiate research on family issues as well as work-family conflicts.
   c. This needs to be done by the National Statistical Office as well as OWAFD. The National Statistical Office not only works in improving its own statistics, but also advises other ministries in making their statistics gender disaggregated when they collect data on their own. Currently, OWAFD emphasizes strengthening of family as an institution, without actually addressing the dilemma that workers have in balancing work and family. Even when they want to spend more time with their family, it is not possible to do so under the current working environment. Through series of research on work-family conflicts by OWAFD, it is expected that the family policies of the government of Thailand will be more realistic in addressing the needs of poor workers.

(8) Promote debate on work-family conflict to raise public awareness on care work.
   a. Organize public debates on work-family conflict.
   b. Promote the inclusion of family support issues in the concept of corporate social responsibilities.
   c. This needs a concerted effort by the media, unions, employers’ confederations, academia as well as the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.
Part 1: Introduction and context

1.1 Introduction

Thailand has made a considerable effort to industrialize its agrarian economy. In the late 1950s, the government encouraged foreign direct investment (FDI), which largely contributed to economic growth (Unger, 1998). The Thai economy has grown rapidly since the 1960s, especially the manufacturing sector. Since the 1960s to 1997, Thailand’s GDP growth rate never fell below 4 per cent. From 1986 to mid-1990, Thailand was one of the world’s fastest growing economies, experiencing double-digit growth, although it slowed down in 1990-91 due to the Gulf Crisis. Thailand’s economic growth depended on foreign direct investment, tourism and private investment (Ogena et al., 1997) that hinged deeply on lending from overseas. This, together with the arbitrarily high interest rates and the high value of currency, made the Thai economy vulnerable to attacks from foreign capital. This vulnerability was exposed in 1997, when Thailand too became a victim of the Asian economic crisis (Chart 1.1). The unemployment rate tripled in 1998 and increased further in 1999. This crisis affected low-income labourers the most (Behrman, Deolalikar and Tinakorn, 2001), and women were among the first to be sacked.

Chart 1.1: Quarterly gross domestic product at 1988 prices (percentage change)

In the past five decades, rapid industrialization and the spread of commercialism have changed the way women and men work. Employment in Thailand is increasingly dependent on non-agriculture sectors (Table 1.1). The increased need to earn resulted in greater pressure on women and men to stay away from their families for longer periods, either as longer working hours or as rural-urban and international migration. This trend was further complicated by the spread of HIV/AIDS, which has had an impact on the
structure of family units. In short, rapid economic growth and the abrupt decline in growth due to the economic crisis have changed the working lives as well as family lives of both men and women. This study, as part of a series of work-family studies organized by International Labour Organization (ILO), examines these changes to identify major trends and illuminate key work-family issues, policies and practices. Specifically, it aims to:

1. give an overview of economic and employment changes in Thailand in the past decades;
2. identify trends in family: its structure, roles and compositions;
3. analyse how the changing nature of work is affecting family and creating work-family conflict, and its gendered impacts;
4. review policies and practices to reduce work-family conflict;
5. make recommendations for strategies for programmes on work-family issues.

Table 1.1: Employed persons by industry for Thailand, 2001-2004 (second quarter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>12,652.8</td>
<td>13,115.8</td>
<td>13,001.5</td>
<td>12,568.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, hunting and forestry</td>
<td>12,192.4</td>
<td>12,632.3</td>
<td>12,559.0</td>
<td>12,188.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries</td>
<td>460.4</td>
<td>483.6</td>
<td>442.2</td>
<td>380.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-agricultural</td>
<td>18,735.5</td>
<td>19,236.5</td>
<td>20,359.2</td>
<td>21,620.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and quarrying</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>5,013.6</td>
<td>5,088.6</td>
<td>5,384.1</td>
<td>5,704.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, gas and water supply</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>102.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1,815.0</td>
<td>1,982.6</td>
<td>2,101.8</td>
<td>2,302.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, and personal and household goods</td>
<td>4,730.4</td>
<td>4,944.1</td>
<td>5,232.5</td>
<td>5,672.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel and restaurants</td>
<td>1,915.3</td>
<td>2,056.3</td>
<td>2,198.7</td>
<td>2,258.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, storage and communication</td>
<td>997.2</td>
<td>978.9</td>
<td>1,030.0</td>
<td>1,095.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial intermediation</td>
<td>303.0</td>
<td>328.9</td>
<td>281.8</td>
<td>278.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real estate, renting and business activities</td>
<td>500.9</td>
<td>491.2</td>
<td>561.9</td>
<td>605.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration and defense, compulsory social security</td>
<td>978.8</td>
<td>973.9</td>
<td>961.0</td>
<td>991.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>951.4</td>
<td>938.5</td>
<td>954.2</td>
<td>1,002.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and social work</td>
<td>478.1</td>
<td>486.2</td>
<td>514.9</td>
<td>537.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other community, social and personal service activity</td>
<td>632.4</td>
<td>649.7</td>
<td>713.1</td>
<td>733.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private households with employed person</td>
<td>257.1</td>
<td>233.2</td>
<td>263.1</td>
<td>242.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-territorial organizations and bodies</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1.2 Methodology of the study

The study is largely based on secondary data and interviews with key informants. The analysis is based on census, household surveys, labour force surveys and other statistics collected by the government. It reviewed past studies on the Thai economy, employment and family. A series of interviews were conducted with key informants, who included officials from the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, as well as from employers’ and workers’ organizations. Non-governmental organizations working on labour and employment issues in Thailand were also interviewed. Interviews were conducted with people in child-care centres, both union-run and non-union-run, as well as some home-based workers and factory workers (see Appendix for list of key informants).
1.3 Economic and employment context

1.3.1 Economic crisis and recent economic trends

Thailand’s GDP has grown rapidly since the 1960s, led by strong growth in the manufacturing sector (Unger, 1998). Nevertheless, small enterprises have provided greater employment opportunities. As can be seen in Table 1.2, almost half of the employment is generated in establishments with less than 100 employees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of establishment</th>
<th>Number of employees</th>
<th>Cumulative percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4 persons</td>
<td>447,069</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 persons</td>
<td>584,942</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19 persons</td>
<td>758,026</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-49 persons</td>
<td>1,238,714</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99 persons</td>
<td>728,152</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-299 persons</td>
<td>1,510,348</td>
<td>61.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-499 persons</td>
<td>764,797</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-999 persons</td>
<td>894,187</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 persons and more</td>
<td>1,627,321</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Suehiro (2000) coined the term “developmentalism” to describe Thailand’s development pattern. Developmentalism “gives priority to the interest of the state and race above individual, family and community, and makes a heavy mobilization of material as well as human resource investment and control in order to serve a particular goal of the state, specifically the strengthening of national power through economic growth led by industrialization” (p. 112). It enabled the active involvement of the state in spurring economic growth and fostering labour relations in industries. The state invested considerably in education to improve the quality of human resources necessary for economic growth. The Thai government’s policies on export promotion and arbitrarily low interest rates, and its market-intervention measures, such as credit allocation to strategic industries, were praised by the World Bank in 1993 as one of the miraculous successes in Asia (Suehiro, 2000; Unger, 1998; Ogena et al.).

However, this emphasis on economic growth and sacrificing family, community and labour standards resulted in much hardship for women. Under the “developmentalism” model, women were mobilized to work in factories; and in rural areas, older women were saddled with child-care responsibilities. Although “developmentalism” enhanced the education levels of women and opened up greater employment opportunities for them, it did not necessarily lead to women having a greater say in the political and economic sphere. The economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s was underpinned by the labours of young women, which supported exports, and older women, who undertook child-care tasks.

But the economic collapse of 1997 appears to suggest that “developmentalism”, a model that earned kudos from the World Bank in 1993, has failed. The floating and the subsequent devaluation of the Thai baht triggered the 1997 crisis. As a consequence, many corporate entities that had borrowed money without hedging against currency risks were unable to repay their foreign debts. As a result, many companies were either forced to reduce their production and operations or go bankrupt. The Thai economy, including the agriculture sector, was very dependent on imports, so the devaluation of the baht affected all sectors. Many people lost their jobs and prices of goods went up. Economic growth, which was once in double digits and earned Thailand praise as one of the Asian Tigers, plummeted to negative growth. The sectors that were the hardest hit were construction and manufacturing, especially garment industries (Chart 1.2). The number of people who were
laid off during this time (Tables 1.3 and 1.4) shows this. Unemployment increased (Chart
1.3), and students dropped out of school. An ESCAP (2003) report mentioned a 10 per cent
decrease in school enrollment, and that 0.5 million children dropped out during the crisis.
The overall incidence of poverty also increased, especially in the north and northeast
regions (TDRI, 2002).

Chart 1.2: Quarterly gross domestic product at 1988 prices by sector (percentage change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Manufacturing</th>
<th>Construction</th>
<th>Wholesale and retail trade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994/1</td>
<td>-50</td>
<td>-40</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994/2</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994/3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994/4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/3</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/4</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/1</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/2</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/3</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/4</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/1</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/2</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/3</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/4</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/1</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/2</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/3</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/4</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1.3: Number of establishments, employees and lay-offs, 1997-1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of establishments</th>
<th>Number of employees</th>
<th>Number of lay-offs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Lay-off/temporary or closed down</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>339,001</td>
<td>4,941</td>
<td>7,690,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>331,425</td>
<td>5,827</td>
<td>6,250,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>337,088</td>
<td>4,484</td>
<td>6,451,833</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1.4: Number of lay-offs classified by sector and sex, 1997-1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number of establishments</th>
<th>Number of lay-offs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garment</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footwear and leather</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric and electronic</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spare parts, motorcycles</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real estate</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics collected from cases reported on labour disputes and from factory inspectors. Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, cited in ESCAP, 2003, p. 67.
The assessment of the impact of the financial crisis varies. The World Bank Social Monitor (2001, p. 44) noted that, although both women and men suffered from the crisis, the impact was far greater on men, since the sector that was worst hit (construction) was male dominated. The rate of increase in unemployment and the rate of wage decrease were higher for men. On the other hand, reports (Kelkar and Osawa, 1999; Angsuthanasombat et al., 2002; Maskey and Kusakabe, 2005) suggested that women were more affected than men. Women were more vulnerable to dismissal, and they increasingly went to work in the informal sector, where they need to work longer hours without any protection.

Let us look at both of these claims in detail. Immediately after the crisis, there was an increase in the unemployment rate for both women and men, but the rise was greater for men (Chart 1.3). In the first quarter of 1998, men’s unemployment rate was 4.68, while that of women was 4.49. However, it should be noted that, before the crisis, the unemployment rate for men has always been lower than that of women. For example, in the first quarter of 1996, men’s unemployment rate was 1.78, while that of women was 2.29. Thus, even though the men’s unemployment rate went up during the crisis, it reached the same level as that of women. A few years after the crisis, the men’s unemployment rate fell more sharply and eventually slipped below that for women, although in 2002, women’s unemployment rate dropped lower. By the end of 2003, men’s unemployment rate was 1.9, while that of women was 1.7.

Chart 1.3: Unemployment rate, 1988-2004

![Chart 1.3: Unemployment rate, 1988-2004](chart)

It is also true that the construction sector was one of the hardest hit, and that it is a male-dominated sector. More men have been retrenched from this sector compared to women. However, it is seen that, ratio-wise, women have been retrenched even more than men in this sector. After the crisis, the proportion of females in the construction sector has decreased (Table 1.5).
Table 1.5: Sex ratio in employed persons in the construction sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>84.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NSO labour force survey.

Bandit Penwiset of Friends of Women pointed out that, even though men have been unemployed more vis-à-vis women among the registered workforce, there was unrecorded unemployment among small enterprises (personal interview, 8 September 2005). Most of the enterprises that went bankrupt during the crisis were small (less than 200 employees, mostly around five to ten workers). These enterprises hire many women, and women lost jobs in greater numbers during the crisis. Women who were targeted for dismissal during the crisis were those in the age group of 35-55. Since older people are paid more and factories believe they have lower productivity, they were targeted for cost reduction. Instead of being fired, they were pressured to resign. These women have difficulty in readjusting within the society. They have spent so much time in the factory that they have lost their familial bonds. They also have not had any time to go to other places, and have not being able to adjust to life outside the factories.

In terms of impact on women, even though a large number of women were retrenched in the garment industry, the sector was already on the decline when the economic crisis hit Thailand. The crisis delivered the last blow to the sector, but the reduction of employees was already happening before the crisis (Charoenloet, undated).

Chart 1.4 shows that there was a decrease in formal sector employment (government and enterprise employees) immediately after the crisis in 1997, especially for men. Formal sector employment started to increase after 2000, with a steeper growth rate among men compared to women. In 2005, men’s employment in the formal and informal sectors has almost equaled for the first time in history. For women, informal employment is still larger than formal employment. In 2005, 55.4 per cent of women in non-agriculture employment were employed in the informal sector, which is down from 60.8 per cent in 1996. For men, the ratio was 51.1 per cent in 1996 and 50.2 per cent in 2005. The ratio of women and men in informal sector employment remains the same for the past decade, with 47 per cent of those in informal sector employment being women.

The growth in the formal sector in this classification does not necessarily mean that there are now more workers who enjoy protected and secure jobs. Among private employees, increasing casualization of workers has been seen. After the economic crisis, with pressure mounting to slash costs, many factories turned to dispatched workers.

1 National Statistical Office data show a significant increase in the number of homeworkers between 1996 and 2002. However, according to an interview with Homenet Thailand (6 September 2005), the first survey on homeworkers greatly underestimated their number. The second survey in 2002 was an improvement over the 1996 survey; thus, the number of homeworkers as a whole increased, not necessarily because the actual number went up, but because of the better methodology in collecting data. Homenet also noted that the increase may have something to do with the season in which the data were collected. Demand for home work is seasonal, and if the survey had been conducted in the peak season, they would have been able to find more homeworkers than during the lean season.

2 In Thailand, they are called sub-contract workers (rap mao kha reng). However, the system is actually labour supply, recruitment and dispatchment. Factories will order a sub-contract company to send them a specified number of workers, and the sub-contract company recruits and sends the workers to the factories. Although these workers work and assume exactly the same responsibilities
Somyot Phluksakasemsuk (2004) says that, in some places, 80 per cent of factory workers are now dispatched workers, especially among women. The extent of casualization is not known, since labour statistics are not able to capture such emerging employment patterns.

Chart 1.4: Formal and informal sector workers (excluding the agriculture sector)

The 1997 financial crisis resulted in a restructuring in the Thai domestic industry (Suehiro, 2000). Some debt-ridden companies were bought by foreign capital, and some conglomerates sold off part of their businesses to transnational corporations (see Chart 1.5 for increase in foreign direct investment). The strategies of TNCs are now impacting the Thai economy much more than before. Suehiro (2003) calls this growth in TNC influence as an “evolution of TNCs”, but also argues that the basic “developmentalism” policy — putting economic growth as an ultimate goal for the state and the economy — still remains in Thailand.

as the direct-hire workers of the factory, they are considered employees of the sub-contract companies; they, thus, receive different wages and benefits as well as employment security. These workers are usually paid on a daily basis.
1.3.2 Government responses to the crisis

In response to the economic crisis, the Thai government embarked on a series of programmes and social investment projects. Based on the conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Thai government reduced the budget deficit, implemented a tight monetary policy and raised interest rates. This led to a contraction of the economy, following which the Thai government reversed its monetary policy. In order to revive the economy, external funds were injected through the Miyazawa Plan (US$1.45 billion), World Bank (US$600 million), Japan Exim Bank (US$600 million) and OECF (US$250 million). A series of employment-creation measures were introduced, such as the Miyazawa Plan, the Social Investment Project (SIP, US$450 million in 1998), the Social Investment Fund (SIF), and the Regional Urban Development Fund (RUDF).

Other measures to mitigate unemployment shocks included (ESCAP, 2003; U.S. Embassy, 2003):

- Setting up a centre for assistance of laid-off workers in July 1997.
- Scholarship fund, computer training, labour market information, pre-school support, lunch and milk for disadvantaged children, and a community unemployment register (December 1998).
- “Thais help Thais” campaign: promoting Thai people to buy Thai goods, organizing caravans selling affordable consumer goods and setting up funds to assist the self-employed.
- Ministries adjusting their budgets to generate rural employment.
- Repatriation of illegal, foreign workers.
- Promotion of Thai labour emigration by providing loans for prospective migrants.
• Promotion of employment in the industrial sector with various measures, such as cost savings, marketing promotion, recruiting of laid-off persons, skills development for new technologies, investment opportunities in agriculture and promotion of self-employed businesses.
• Self-reliance and self-sufficiency in agriculture.
• Assistance to newly graduated students seeking employment and providing educational support to the unemployed.
• Encouraging the community and the unemployed to accept sub-contract works from the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority.
• Encouraging those with education to take up temporary employment under the aegis of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB).
• Farm-debt restructuring, under which debt repayment was suspended for three years for poor farmers. It allowed the farmers to restructure their farm products.
• The Village Fund: the committees, who were elected locally, would manage the micro credit for the communities.
• Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): The government promoted the development of SMEs in order to create more jobs and encourage self-reliance.
• People’s Bank: aimed to improve credit availability by allowing savings bank account holders with Government Savings Bank to apply for loans of up to 30,000 baht.
• One Tambon One Product Program (OTOP): aimed to help communities develop and market local products.

In January 2001, the Thaksin administration further introduced:

• 30 baht for all kind of illness;
• one-million-baht-per-village fund;
• U-Arthorn housing project.

These employment-creation projects have been effective to a certain extent. The decline in unemployment in 1999-2000 was attributed to the Miyazawa Plan and other social investment projects (Behrman, Deolalikar and Tinakorn, 2001). Most programmes assume that retrenched workers will go back to their agriculture base after losing their jobs in urban areas. However, Charoenloet and Thonchaisetawut (2001) pointed out in their study that those who have been unemployed after the crisis and have gone back to their native villages are mostly young people (51.5 per cent were between the ages of 21 to 30), and more men went back than women (60 per cent of those who went back were men). This might signify that the social investment projects have benefited men more than women. They also pointed out that, while the young went back to the rural areas, long-time residents of Bangkok were not able to do so, since they had already lost their base in the rural areas. Among those who lost their job after the crisis, more than 70 per cent said that they would not go back to their native villages. Even those who went back to the rural areas were not able to find jobs there. Among those who went back, 68.1 per cent replied that they will come back to urban areas to find work. It should also be noted that agriculture in Thailand is no longer labour intensive (Suehiro, 2000) and cannot absorb additional labour.

Some of the measures to support micro-enterprises, such as through the one million baht scheme and One Tambon One Product (OTOP), have benefited many women’s groups. However, only a few have been commercially viable and many remained as a source of secondary income for women who still require marketing subsidies from the government. Sangkaman (2002) evaluated the OTOP projects and pointed out that, even
though OTOP was to support marketing of the community products, many OTOP products still had difficulty in marketing.

On the labour front, the Thai government responded to labour demand shocks by:

- extending severance pay requirements from six months to ten months (for employees with more than ten years’ working experience) and establishing a fund to pay severance payments to workers whose firms had gone bankrupt;
- extending social security benefits to laid-off subscribers from six months to 12 months, and reducing the tripartite contribution rate for such benefits by one-third;
- launching major job-creation programmes in rural areas in March 1999, and continuing with those projects in 2000 in order to absorb returning migrants;
- launching training programmes to upgrade the skills of workers laid off during the crisis, through free short-term vocational and technical training with subsequent job placements.

Immediately after the crisis, there was a strong emphasis on the family and community as an institution that would provide a safety net (World Bank, 1999). The government expected the family and community to absorb the role of providing a safety net to fill in the gap of state support. The World Bank *Social Monitor* named this a unique Thai approach.

One of the labour protection measures that the government initiated was to increase severance pay, although less than 40 per cent of the workers could claim this benefit (Behrman, Deolalikar and Tinakorn, 2001). The severance pay seemed to be biased towards high-wage workers rather than low-wage ones.

At the same time, the same labour act put a limit on the responsibilities of the company, making it impossible for sub-contracted workers to demand accountability. For example, homeworkers could claim responsibility up to the first-tier sub-contractor, but not from the mother company. Dispatched workers could only claim accountability from the sub-contract company and not the mother company. In the end, what was expected to be a labour protection measure turned out to be a protection for large enterprises.
Since 2001, there has been a recovery in the Thai economy. The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) reported that, in 2001, the economy grew by 2.1 per cent, led by consumption and investments. In 2002, exports, private consumption and investments boosted Thailand’s economic stability. In 2003, the economy recovered from the crisis spawned by the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). The APEC 2003 conference in October 2003 in Thailand helped improve tourism, investment, real estate, business and exports. Domestic demand, especially consumption and investment, boosted economic growth. Production, finance, construction and agriculture continued to grow, but not restaurants, hotel business and tourism, which were affected by SARS. The unemployment situation improved and the unemployment rate decreased. The World Economic Forum (WEF) raised the rank of competitiveness of Thailand. Exports improved (Chart 1.6) and Thailand’s low interest rate enhanced consumption and investment in private sectors. Thailand also entered into free trade agreements (FTAs) with China and India (NESDB, 2004).

1.3.3 Earnings, income distribution and poverty levels

In July 2003, Thailand successfully repaid its debt to the IMF (U.S. Embassy, 2003). The economic indicators have improved, but the disparity between the rich and the poor seems to have increased, and low-income workers have become more vulnerable than before crisis.
The poverty level has gradually increased since the economic crisis until 2000 (Chart 1.7), and women are in the lower income group. According to the 1998 labour force survey, 61.7 per cent of women earned less than 3,000 baht per month, compared with 55.2 per cent of men. Similarly, 85.9 per cent of women were earning 6,000 baht or less per month, in comparison with 80.7 per cent of men.

Gender wage disparity diminished with the crisis and increased with the recovery (World Bank, 2000, p. 23). The male-female wage differential was 18 per cent in the pre-crisis period, narrowed to about 14 per cent during the crisis, but increased again to 19 per cent by the third quarter of 1999. However, TDRI data show that only women’s non-agriculture wages decreased immediately after the crisis (Chart 1.8). In 1998, women earned on average 4,737 baht per month, while men earned 5,972. In 2005, the gap diminished to 6,541 for women and 7,263 for men.

Wage differences are greater in larger enterprises. According to NSO’s 1998 survey of compensation in the private sector, in enterprises with 1,000 or more employees, women were earning 59 per cent that of men, while in enterprises with 100-299 workers, women were earning 65.5 per cent that of men.

Real wages declined by 9 per cent among employees of large establishments and by 5-7 per cent among employees of small and medium-sized establishments (World Bank, 2000, p. 32). This is because large establishments paid significantly lower wages to the new part-time contract workers they recruited during the crisis. Bonus and overtime payments, which constitute a much larger fraction of total compensation in large establishments, were cut during the recession.

3 The official poverty line for Thailand was 922 baht per capita per month in 2002. However, this calculation has been criticized as being too low from a policy point of view (Jitsuchon, 2000). With a proposed change in poverty line calculation done by NESDB in collaboration with TDRI, the poverty line will be 1,163 baht per capita per month (NESDB, undated).
Chart 1.7: Poverty incidence (headcount)


Chart 1.8: Average non-agriculture monthly wages by sex

NB. The income is for the first quarter of each year.

There is a huge difference in earnings between regular workers who are paid monthly and those who are working piece-rate (Chart 1.9). Between 2001 and 2003, there has been a slight increase in earnings of daily workers, and a slight decrease in monthly paid workers’ earnings. Noting that there are more permanent contract workers among monthly paid workers, this might show that the earnings of regular workers are being suppressed and are being replaced by daily and piece-rate paid workers. After the crisis, there are increasingly more women working under such sub-contracting arrangements, further depressing women’s earnings and widening the gender earnings gap.

Not only is there a large wage difference between regular and casual workers, in general, wages have not increased. As can be seen in Chart 1.10 on minimum wage increase, there has been hardly any rise in the minimum wage after the crisis. The rate of increase in minimum wages has been lower than the rate of increase in the consumer price index.
Moreover, there are many establishments that do not comply with the minimum wage. The wages of nearly 30 per cent of workers were still lower than the minimum wage (Table 1.6). In particular, those working in smaller firms were often not paid minimum wages. It is noted that there are many women, young workers and low-educated workers among smaller firms. Agricultural and construction sectors, especially in the north and northeast of the country, tended not to comply with the minimum wage requirement.

Table 1.6: Percentage of private employees by size and wage levels in Thailand, 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of establishment</th>
<th>Total number of employees</th>
<th>Paid below minimum wage (%)</th>
<th>Paid minimum wage (%)</th>
<th>Paid above minimum wage (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4 persons</td>
<td>1,005,996</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 persons</td>
<td>1,226,041</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19 persons</td>
<td>1,098,046</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-49 persons</td>
<td>965,315</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99 persons</td>
<td>632,797</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-199 persons</td>
<td>850,100</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 persons and over</td>
<td>2,503,594</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8,281,888</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Does not include sub-contracted dispatched workers. Does not include workers in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, as well as household private employees.

Source: Ministry of Labour, 2005.

Self-employed persons also suffered from the fall in income. Angsuthanasombat et al. (2002) identified that, during/after the economic crisis, self-employed workers in rural areas experienced (1) a decrease in demand for their products, (2) an increase in material costs and scarcity of raw materials, (3) lack of operational funds because it had become more difficult to borrow money, (4) inability to raise prices of their products despite rising costs in order to retain their market share and due to intensified competition. Home-based sub-contractors experienced (1) a decrease in work, (2) a reduction in wage per piece, (3)
delay in payments, (4) rising costs of materials, (5) higher competition, and (6) less attention to group activities.

This decline in earnings has led to an increase in debt. After the economic crisis, debt to informal moneylenders increased and household debt went up (Chart 1.11). It should be noted that the percentage in consumption debts among the poor is increasing.

**Chart 1.11: Household debt (socio-economic survey)**

![Chart 1.11: Household debt (socio-economic survey)](image)

Source: TDRI economic forecast.

### 1.3.4 Labour force participation rate (LFPR) and working patterns

The participation of women in the labour force has always been high, and married women continue to work throughout their lives. For both women and men, the LFPR was on the decline for some time before the crisis (1989-1999); from 71 per cent in 1989 to 62.5 per cent in 1999 for women, and 87.3 per cent to 80.9 per cent for men. This was because, due to the improvement in living standards, more children (aged 13-17) tended to stay in school for a longer period, and women tended to exit the labour force (aged 58 and above, and aged 18-27). This declining trend in LFPR ceased after the economic crisis (Chart 1.12).

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4 The chart shows that women’s labour force participation is more erratic than men’s. This is due to their engagement in agricultural work. When the seasonal agriculture work is over, women are seen as not working even if they are still tending small livestocks and backyard gardens, while men are seen as still working if they go to migrant work.
After the economic crisis, men moved into farming more than women (Chart 1.13), while women moved into sales, services and clerical work. In growing sectors such as automobile parts, there is higher growth of employment among men, while in textiles and food and beverages, women are being replaced by men. In food and beverages, there is an increase in the number of unpaid women workers. This might reflect that men are listed as employers (proprietors) and women as unpaid family workers.

Chart 1.12: Labour force participation rate, 1988-2004

Source: NSO labour force survey.
1.3.5 Education level

In terms of enrolment rate, there is hardly any gender difference in Thailand (Table 1.6). However, not many students go on to higher studies in general. Only 48 per cent of the young population enrolled in secondary school, which is lower than that in neighbouring countries in Asia (International Institute for Management Development, 2001, in National Education Committee, 2001). The ratio of teachers per students in elementary schools is, on average, 1:18; for secondary schools, this ratio is 1:20, similar to that in neighbouring countries.

More girls go to secondary schools (Table 1.7), and there are more women who go for tertiary education than men. However, having more women in tertiary education does not necessarily mean that women are better off in job markets. There is still a strong sex segregation among fields of study, with only 8.3 per cent of women university students studying engineering (Hossain and Kusakabe, 2005). This might also suggest that if women are not educated, it is difficult for them to earn a decent income, unlike men, who have the option of working as technicians, whose earnings go up with age and experience. In 1998, there were 658,597 women students at undergraduate level in public institutions, while there were 542,832 men. For formal vocational education under the Ministry of Education, there were 207,034 women in 1996 compared to 324,285 men.  

Table 1.7: Opportunity rate of students by education level and sex (academic years 1996 and 1998)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-elementary education</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary education</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower secondary education</td>
<td>80.5</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>79.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary education</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Opportunity rate is the rate of children who are going to school among the total number of children of that age group.

Source: NSO gender statistics.

The government offers non-formal education (NFE) courses in order to provide opportunities for those who have missed primary and secondary education. However, as the quality of the education in NFE is not standardized, the recognition from this degree is low. Illiteracy is still high among older women. Of the total population, 5.3 per cent was illiterate and older than 15 years old (International Institute for Management Development, in National Education Committee, 2001).

Upgrading education has been a strong focus of the government since the third National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP). Although the first and second NESDP plans emphasized economic growth, the third plan focused on human and social development. The Thai government made human resource the crucial national factor for development. In the sixth NESDP (1987-1991), education was focused to serve industrial development and its demand for labour. The government supported labour export, technology and science. Thailand had healthy economic growth and a high employment rate, but there were shortages in some types of labour. The seventh NESDP (1992-1996) aimed to expand basic education to nine years, encourage life-long learning, enlarge the scope of non-formal education, improve on-the-job training, and create medium and high-skilled workers by emphasizing both quality and quantity. Thus, in 1995, 19 per cent of the total national budget was allocated for education. It was hoped that human resource development would bring about sustainable development in the country. The eighth NESDP (1997-2001) envisioned an improvement in people’s quality of life, and aimed to cover compulsory education to 12 years, which is currently nine years. Thailand’s budget and expenditure in education was 4.4 per cent of GDP, which was higher than all its neighbours, except Malaysia (International Institute for Management Development, in National Education Committee, 2001).

However, the education budget was slashed during the 1997 economic crisis. Following the crisis, a 10 per cent decrease was seen in school enrollment, and 0.5 million children dropped out (ESCAP, 2003). Two-fifths of the schools surveyed in an Asian Development Bank (ADB) study reported budget cuts averaging 27 per cent.

1.4 Summary of economic and employment context

Thailand’s economic growth was led by industrialization supported by women and men coming to work in the urban areas. The high economic growth came to a halt in 1997 under the economic crisis, and although both women and men workers were affected, they experienced the crisis differently. There has been increasing casualization of labour in

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6 Part of the reasons for the persistent adult illiteracy rate in Thailand is because of the ethnic minority groups. Many adult women in these groups have not/could not attend Thai schools, thus cannot read and write Thai (personal discussion with Ms. Maki Hayashikawa, programme specialist in gender and quality basic education, UNESCO Bangkok, November 2005).
manufacturing, especially in those areas where the work is done mainly by women. There has been a fall in real wages, and an increase in debt and disparities between the poor and the rich.

Government programmes to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis were designed on the assumption that retrenched workers would go back to rural areas. That did not happen, and many urban workers continued to find employment in urban areas with little state support. Although some of the government programmes, such as the 30-baht health scheme, have helped improve the access of the poor to health services, the vulnerability of people with families and the aged have increased due to the low social security coverage, and lesser employment opportunities for less educated middle-aged and older people. The unemployment shock was basically expected to be absorbed by the family. This puts a great burden on women, who are the main managers and care-givers of the household.
Part 2: Family trends and work-family conflict

This part will provide an overview of recent trends in family composition and the roles of women and men in families. It will also examine how the state views family issues.

2.1 Trends in the family and family responsibilities

The Office of Women’s Affairs and Family Development opens its report on the Thai family situation with this sentence: “Family as a basic social institution is very significant in moulding and developing individuals which will further shape the quality of life in the wider social context”. In the 9th National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP), alongside promotion of human quality and social security, there is a strong emphasis on the promotion of family strength. There is increasing concern over the changing forms and functions of families in Thailand. In state policy, the important function of families is to develop the quality of life for family members and provide social values.

2.1.1 Cultural context of Thai families

Family has long been the economic and social insurance for its members. Four decades ago, in families in central, north-eastern and northern regions, married couples lived with their parents for a period of time before leaving to establish their own home. If the space allowed, the new couple would build a house nearby or within the same compound as their parents’ house. This has allowed children to be taken care of not only by their own parents, but also by many adults, including grandparents and aunts or uncles. It was usually the youngest daughter who still lived with her parents and inherited the house and land of the parents (OWAFD, undated-a, p. 7). In Thai custom, the groom needed to invite respected persons or his parents to ask his future bride’s parents or guardians for permission to marry his future bride. When there was an agreement, the groom needed to bring ring, cash, gold, food, flowers, jewellery, etc., upon being asked by the bride’s family, to the bride’s house during an engagement or marriage ceremony. In the kin system, the significance of relatives on the mother’s side is larger, and the bridegroom tends to move into the bride’s family after their marriage. “This is to make woman’s status stable and not to be exploited by the groom,” (OWAFD, undated-a, p. 8), and Yos Santasombat (1992, in OWAFD, undated-a, p. 18) said that the traditional laws and cultural practices have given strong assurances to women.

On one hand, the traditional practice of marriage and setting up a home has lent support to women and protected them from exploitation. On the other hand, such traditional practices have also put restrictions on women’s choices and behaviour. Important values that have been passed on in Thai families include:

- **Respect and obedience to seniors and authority** (*phu yai*): thus wives are expected to respect their husbands.
- **Gratitude, especially to parents** (*katanyu*). Children are expected to be the sources of old-age security. The expectation for daughters to show gratitude is stronger than for sons. Sons are expected to be ordained and help parents to have a better life in the next incarnation. This value imposed a heavier burden on women and, at the same time, gave the son a slight advantage, because a son could be ordained as well as be able to become the family’s successor. Women workers, even after they get married, still send remittances to their parents, while men workers stop sending money to their parents once they get married. It is not
that women are better than men, but families demand more from daughters than from sons.

- **Non-aggression.** Importance is given to avoiding conflict and discouraging confrontation.

- **Appropriate sexual behaviour** (OWAFD, undated-a). The expectation of appropriate sexual behaviour is higher on women than men. Thai culture values a woman’s virginity before marriage (Ratarasarn, 1990). The families supervised their daughters and female family members; if they lost their virginity before marriage, they would lose their honour since Thai men preferred to marry virgins. Women were socially trained to be polite. There are greater expectations, both from family and society, on women and girls to behave in keeping with traditional cultural values. They are also expected to be primarily responsible for maintaining cultural values (Kasemnet and Chuawonlee, 1981). In the past, women hardly had the opportunities for education, except women from a higher socio-economic strata. Men received education and went to work outside homes, while women managed the homes, raised children, and took care of the elderly and the sick.

Although women controlled the daily budget and finances of the household, this was more of a responsibility rather than providing them status in the household. Tonguthai (2002, p. 31) traced this to

> “... the historical system of conscripted labour (long since abolished) when peasant women found themselves taking care of small family farms for several months of the year. They were also entrusted with earning cash to support the family, as the men did not receive wages for work done for the King. However, the economic role was given less value than the honour-seeking role. This has been often interpreted as a major source of unequal gender relationships and discrimination against women in Thai society.”

In her study of urban slums, Torbek (1987) pointed out that a woman’s high status in the rural areas was linked to productive property – land. Since she was the one who had the property, she was able to maintain her status. However, with urbanization, women and men have both migrated to the urban areas and, detached from their land, women do not have the advantage over men anymore. On the contrary, the wage differences in urban areas, where men are preferred over women, have increased the disadvantage for women. Thus, with urbanization, the woman’s status in the family has declined.

### 2.1.2 Legal context of Thai families

The National Commission for Women’s Affairs under the Prime Minister’s Office defines family as

> A group of people who are bonded both emotionally and psychologically. They live together and depend on each other socio-economically. They have legal relationship with each other or have blood relationship. Some families might not have some of these features, but still can be considered as families.7

An engagement is valid when both a man and a woman have reached 17 years of age (Civil and Commercial Code, Article 1435). If either of them is younger than 17, the betrothal is not valid. A person who is 17, but younger than 20, can be betrothed only with

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the consent of the parents or the adopter (Civil and Commercial Code, Article 1436). One is considered legally married only after the marriage is registered.  

A wife is not allowed to independently take responsibility for the number of children she will bear by undergoing sterilization. A wife must obtain written consent from her husband before being sterilized. A male judge often gives child custody to the father, but in practice the woman ultimately is responsible for the child.  

Earlier, women were required by law to change their surname after marriage. This made several women reluctant to register their marriage. This law was changed in 2003, and women are now able to retain their maiden name after marriage. This change was the result of a long struggle by feminist advocates. However, there are still several legal issues on women and family to be addressed, both in terms of legal codes as well as their implementation. The Office of the National Commission on Women’s Affairs (ONCWA, 2000, pp. 8-9) listed some examples, such as:

- The Civil and Commercial Code on Family allows a spouse to ask for “immediate measures” under Section 1530, such as financial support, child custody and freezing of assets, while pursuing divorce proceedings. The provision is hardly ever used.
- Section 276 of the Criminal Law Code states that “Whoever has sexual intercourse with a woman who is not his wife, against her will, by threatening with any means whatsoever, by doing any act of violence, by taking advantage of the woman’s inability to resist, or by causing the woman to mistake him for another person is guilty of crime.” However the words “who is not his wife” is a loophole that allows violence at home by allowing men the right to rape their wives.
- Section 1516 of the Civil and Criminal Code allows a man to sue his wife on grounds of adultery, but a woman does not have the same right. She must prove that her husband publicly accepts another woman in the role of concubine.
- Section 1445 of the Civil and Commercial Code allows a man to claim compensation from any man who has had sexual intercourse with or has raped his wife or fiancée. A woman, however, does not have the same right to make a claim against another woman who had intercourse with her husband. “The law ignores women’s rights and perpetuates the perception of wives as commodities.” (ONCWA, 2000, p. 9).

A woman still needs to change her designation from “Miss” to “Mrs.” when she gets married. This is cumbersome for women, since the law states that in legal transactions, one needs to get consent from the spouse. In practice, only women are asked to provide a

8 Article 1452 of the Civil and Commercial Code states that: “A man or a woman cannot marry each other while one of them has a spouse”. Prior to 1 October 1935, polygamy was freely practiced in Thailand. The old family law (Law of husbands and wives, B.E. 1904) classified wives into three categories, according to the way they become wives: “Mia Gland Muang”, the official wife whom a man’s parents acquired for him; “Mia Glang Norng”, the minor wife whom the man acquired by himself after his official wife; and “Mia Glang Tasee”, slave wives whom the husband bought from the parents or their former owners. Monogamy was adopted into Thai family law from 1 October 1935 (Jamrarnwej, 2001).

spouse’s consent while it is not required for men. A pregnant woman who has not registered her marriage cannot change her designation from “Miss” to “Mrs.”, making her suffer from possible discrimination. Thai society negatively views women who have children out of wedlock, but men do not suffer the same fate. 10

Abortion is illegal in Thailand. Therefore, women need to depend on illegal abortion clinics, which do not always offer safe services.

2.1.3 Demographic trends

2.1.3.1 Population trend

In 1911, Thailand’s population was 8.1 million. Thirty-six years later, by 1947, it had doubled to 17.4 million people. By 1970, the population had further doubled to 35.6 million people due to the advances in health and medicine, which reduced the death rate while the birth rate remained nearly the same. In 1970, the Thai Government started implementing the family planning policy. The Thai population was still increasing, but at a slower rate. In 1980, the population was 46.9 million; in 1989, it was 55.8 million; and in 2000, it was 62.5 million. It is estimated that in 2010 and 2020, there will be 67.2 million and 70.5 million people, respectively (Tiantavon and Jiramahakun, undated).

In 2002, the population of Thailand was 63.39 million; among them, 65.7 per cent were in the working age group (age 15-59). As can be seen in Chart 2.1, the ratio of children in the population is decreasing, while that of the elderly is increasing.

The working age population is higher in urban areas (68.7 per cent) than in rural areas (64.2 per cent), and is the highest in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (73.9 per cent). This indicates that there is a rural-urban migration in the working age group, while children and the elderly are remaining in the rural areas.

10 ibid.
Chart 2.1: Population by age and sex

Source: http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbpyr.html

Chart 2.2: Population by age and region, 2002

Source: OWAFD (undated-b), based on NSO 2002 data.
During 1994 to 2002, the dependency ratio decreased from 58.1 to 52.3. This was due to a large drop in the population aged 0-14. The dependency ratio for this age group dropped from 47.4 to 38.0 during the same period. On the other hand, the dependency ratio for the population aged 60 and above was 10.7 in 1994 and went up to 14.3 (OWAFD, undated-b). Even though care of the elderly has not been perceived as a problem until now, it is increasingly become a contentious issue of discussion in Thailand. In 2000, among the total population of 61.9 million, 24.2 per cent were below the age of 14, while 9.9 per cent was over 60 years old. In 2025, it is projected that among the 70.5 million population, 17.5 per cent will be aged 0-14, while 20.7 per cent will be over 60. In 2050, those aged 0-14 will be 14.8 per cent and those over 60 will be 31.5 per cent among the 69.3 million population.\(^\text{11}\)

The number of households was 16,896,555 in 2002. Among them, 55.5 per cent were extended families. During the period between 1999 and 2002, the ratio of extended families increased, while the ratio for nuclear families decreased. Single-person households are also on the rise. When compared to 1970, there has been a slight increase in nuclear households in 1990, and extended households decreased in unrelated individuals (Table 2.1).\(^\text{12}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Nuclear household (%)</th>
<th>Extended household (%)</th>
<th>Single-person household (%)</th>
<th>Unrelated individuals (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Among the nuclear households, households with husband, wife and children are decreasing, while households with only husband and wife are increasing. Knodel and Saengtienchai (2005) pointed out that there is an increase in “skip generation households” in the rural areas; that is, rural persons aged 60 and older living with at least one grandchild, but no child or child-in-law. In 1994, 8.9 per cent of rural households were “skip generation households”, while in 2002, it increased to 10.3 per cent.

There is an increase in the ratio of female-headed households. In 1980, only 15.1 per cent were headed by women. This increased to 19.4 per cent in 1990, and 25.5 per cent in 2000. Most of the women heading households were married before. In 2000, unlike male-headed households, where 97.3 per cent are currently married, 60 per cent of female-headed households are either divorced, widowed or separated. Among female-headed households who are divorced, widowed or separated, 84.1 per cent live with others, in many cases with their children. The same is true for 74.4 per cent of male-headed households. If only the divorced and separated households are compared, more women in female-headed households live with others (82.5 per cent among those divorced or separated) than men in male-headed households (57.1 per cent). This shows the tendency of women to take over child care in case of divorce and separation.

Table 2.2 shows that female-headed households have lower income than male-headed households. Especially, there are large differences among professional, technical and administrative workers. These data are from 1996, but considering the generally lower

11 http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbagg.
12 http://web.nso.go.th.
wage level among women compared to men (Chart 1.8), there are few indications to suggest that the situation has improved after ten years.

Table 2.2: Average monthly income of households by socio-economic class, residence and sex of head of household, 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-economic class</th>
<th>Whole kingdom</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm operation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly owning land</td>
<td>6,381</td>
<td>6,749</td>
<td>51,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly renting land</td>
<td>5,133</td>
<td>7,667</td>
<td>5,477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own account</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs, trade and industry</td>
<td>19,593</td>
<td>15,572</td>
<td>32,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, technical and administrative workers</td>
<td>8,835</td>
<td>29,669</td>
<td>15,464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, technical and administrative workers</td>
<td>25,601</td>
<td>28,403</td>
<td>30,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm workers</td>
<td>4,420</td>
<td>4,912</td>
<td>8,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General workers</td>
<td>5,023</td>
<td>5,439</td>
<td>4,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical, sales and services workers</td>
<td>15,257</td>
<td>13,949</td>
<td>18,249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production workers</td>
<td>8,086</td>
<td>8,636</td>
<td>10,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically inactive</td>
<td>7,688</td>
<td>8,010</td>
<td>17,683</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


OWAFD (undated-a, p. 43) stated that:

“Obviously at present, one of the prominent trends of the Thai family situation is the single parent family and usually the single head parent is the mother. Under the changing family structure, relationships among family members vary accordingly.”

Although extended families are on the increase, family size is decreasing (Chart 2.3). This might indicate that the extended household also does not consist of as many people as in the past. As for regional differences, it was found that the peripheral region of Bangkok had the smallest household size (2.66), while the northeast region had the largest (4.61) in 1999.  

13 The northeast region has the largest family size (average 4.61 in 1999; 4.72 in 1997; 4.89 in 1995), followed by the southern region (4.05 in 1999), the western region (3.83 in 1999), the central region (3.76 in 1999), the northern region (3.66 in 1999), the eastern region (3.16 in 1999), the Bangkok Metropolis (3.02 in 1999), and Bangkok vicinity (2.66 in 1999) (OWAFD, undated-a).
Families are changing forms and some people form families with unrelated people. Most women factory workers stay in the dormitories, and are either divorced or single. They live with their friends, and even after they have been fired, continue to live with their friends.\textsuperscript{14} For these women workers, who spend a lot of time inside the factory, their bonds with other family members, even with their children, are weak. They develop stronger bonds with their friends. Mr. Bandit Penwiset of Friends of Women said that women workers feel that they are closer to their co-workers and that their family consists of their friends who work in the factory.

2.1.3.2 Marriage and divorce

The number of registered marriages is going down, while divorce is increasing (Chart 2.4.). An OWAFD report (undated-a) pointed out that the low rate of marriage registration was partly due to fewer couples getting married because of changing values and patterns of living, higher education of the population and a poor economic situation, resulting in late marriage. As can be seen in Table 2.3, both women and men are marrying later than previously.

\textsuperscript{14} Interview with Mr. Bandit Penwiset of Friends of Women, September 2005.
Another reason for the declining number of registered marriages is that many couples do not see the importance of registering their marriage. According to a study by the Population Studies College, Chulalongkorn University (Thanaradee Khamya, 2000, in OWAFD, undated-a, p. 51), the reasons given by women for registering or not their marriage are shown in Tables 2.4 and 2.5 respectively.

### Table 2.4: Reasons for registering a marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To legalize the marriage</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital stability (would like to establish a family of their own; to have children together; to have children use the father’s family name; to have children eligible for an inheritance; they are certain that they can live with marital partner; uncertain in their marital partner so they would like to have rights in the inheritance in case of divorce)</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For official purposes (using marriage license from registration as official document in contracting or when children enter school or when recruiting)</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become member of the bank of agriculture</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (i.e. for reimbursing welfare money from working place or for tax reductions)</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5: Reasons for not registering a marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not want to register (do not see necessity; live together for love; have lived together long before and have never bothered to register the marriage)</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty or inconvenience in registering (have no time; no money for transportation; do not have ID card or household registration card)</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenience if marriage is registered (afraid of problems when dealing with legal act; would like to get separated easily; do not want to use “Mrs.” in front of their name; want to prevent themselves from being caught up in property matters)</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not yet prepared to register (would like to wait for a more appropriate time; wait until baby is born; wait until children grow up or enter school; wait because they are not certain about the marriage)</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not possible to register (marital partner already has a marriage registered with another woman; husband does not want to register; parents do not like the partner; they do not have formal marriage)</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The reasons cited above show that, aside from people getting married at a later age or not marrying at all, for financially independent women, registering the marriage creates more burden, while for women who are financially dependent on their husbands, registering their marriage does provide a certain security. Once the woman registers her marriage, she needs the consent of her husband for financial transactions, such as borrowing money from banks or buying/selling land.

Since many marriages are not registered, it is difficult to get an exact figure of the number of marriages, which further affects the accuracy of statistics on household characteristics.

Percentage-wise, marriage registrations were the highest in the northeast (26.46 in 1999), while it was the lowest in the peripheral of the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (14.58); the divorce rate was highest in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (6.29 in 1999) and lowest in the south (2.75).

There were many single women found among factory workers. They do not have either the time or the opportunity to do other things due to the long time spent at work. At the same time, women are less expected to roam around compared to men. This again limits their contact with other people in society. At the same time, there are a number of couples who get involved in casual relationships. Men are often not responsible, and desert women once they become pregnant. There is a high incidence of abortion cases reported in clinics near industrial zones. Retrenchment can cause strain in marital relationship. A study by the Committee for Asian Women (2000) interviewed 74 labourers (67 women) who are or used to work in the garment, leather-wear and textile industries. Among the respondents, 70 per cent said that they were facing family problems, such as unreliable husbands who left the sole responsibility of the family up to their wives (p. 89). Some husbands had problems with drinking or drug addiction, had mistresses and resorted to violence.

2.1.3.3 Fertility rate

Since the 1970s, Thailand’s fertility rate declined due to effective family planning. During the years in which the Thai government implemented the family planning policy, there was a decline in the number of children born. In 1978, the fertility rate was 3.7 and in
1987, it was 2.6 per woman. However, it continued to drop even after family planning policy of the government, and it is projected to drop to 1.81 by 2010.\(^{16}\)

With the population growth under control, reproductive health policies in Thailand have changed their focus from fertility rate to improvement of quality of reproductive health care,\(^ {17}\) rights and women’s rights (Warakamin and Takrudtong, 1998).

Knodel, Chamrusritrongka and Teppavalaya (1987) listed the factors that influenced the drop in fertility rate as (1) rising cost of education for children. Although families still consider children as old-age security, they are now beginning to invest more money on fewer children rather than having many; and (2) support for family planning and birth control techniques from Thai culture/religion. Buddhism emphasizes the individuals’ responsibility. In Thailand, kinship usually does not have an influence on the decision of couples on the number of children, and according to Knodel, Chamrusritrongka and Teppavalaya (1987), Thai women can have the power to decide on the number of children to have. Women are also recognized as important financial contributors, and thus when women got education and opportunities for professional work, they preferred to stay on at work rather than have more children. Boonpratueng (1981) gives additional reasons for the reduced fertility rate: (1) less need for labour for agriculture; (2) lower infant mortality; (3) conflict between roles as mothers and workers; (4) availability of support systems.

Viboonsetta (1970) found that Thai women who married between the ages of 15 and 17 had an average of 7.6 children, while women who married when they were older than 30 years old had an average of 4.1 children. Additionally, Na Pattalung (1971) reported that in Thai rural areas, women who married young expressed the desire to have more children than women who married at a later age. She found that women who married before the age of 25 wanted to have an average of four children, while women who married after the age of 25 years wanted to have an average of three children. In 1996, the average age of a first birth was 22.8. In the Bangkok metropolis, the average was the highest with 24.1, while the lowest was the northern region with 22.0.\(^{18}\)

2.1.3.4 Migration

Migration, either domestic or international, has an impact on family composition. Because of the crowded living environment that migrant workers find when they come to the urban areas from rural areas, it is difficult for them to bring their children or parents to live together with them. Often, especially in construction work, accommodation is provided by the employer, which is not suitable for a family. The cost of living in urban areas is also high, and with their low earnings, it is difficult to support an urban life for the

\(^{16}\) http://web.nos.go.th.

\(^{17}\) There are ten components of reproductive health care in Thailand. (1) Family planning: this includes providing information, counseling, education and services; (2) maternal and child health: the education and service for pre-natal, delivery and post-natal care; (3) infertility: adequate prevention and treatment of infertility; (4) the prevention of an inadequate abortion: including coping with its outcomes; (5) reproductive tract infection: education and treatment of the reproductive tract infection are provided; (6) breast cancer and malignancy of the reproductive tract: education, diagnosis and treatment are offered; (7) adolescent reproductive health: adolescent reproductive health education and information are provided, including counseling and services as needed; (8) sexual education: education about sexuality to all in order to enhance reproductive health and prepare healthy parenthood; (9) HIV/AIDS and STDs: focuses on the prevention and the decrease of HIV/AIDS and STD infections; (10) post-menopausal age and old age: education and care for after menopause and old age are provided (Warakamin and Takrudtong, 1998).

\(^{18}\) http://web.nso.go.th.
whole family. The National Statistical Office’s 2002 migration study shows that 72.2 per cent of the migrants in Bangkok migrated there to look for work, while work-related migration in other regions were less than 9 per cent, except for the central region, where it was 20.5 per cent. In 1997, there were more men who migrated domestically compared to women in general. However, regarding rural to urban migration, there are more women who migrate from rural to urban areas than men (Table 2.6; see also Pejaranonda et al., 1995, in Clawen, 2002). This is because of the employment opportunities that women have in urban areas, such as in factories. There are more migrants who are currently married (Table 2.7). It is noted that most of the never-married migrants are women. This implies that there would be more women in urban areas who would face work-family conflict if they take their children with them to the urban areas, since they would not have any spouse to help in child care.

### Table 2.6: Distribution of population by sex, migration status and type, 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migration status and type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% distribution</th>
<th>% share among</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population &lt;1&gt;</td>
<td>60,748,538</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-migrants</td>
<td>57,589,469</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrants</td>
<td>3,159,069</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total migrants</td>
<td>3,159,069</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban-urban</td>
<td>226,510</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural-urban</td>
<td>424,844</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown &lt;2&gt;-urban</td>
<td>22,387</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural-rural</td>
<td>1,247,293</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban-rural</td>
<td>1,173,868</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown &lt;2&gt;-rural</td>
<td>64,167</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Excluding persons whose migration status is unknown.
2. Including persons who migrated from foreign countries.

### Table 2.7: Migrants aged 15 years and over by sex and marital status, 1994 and 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>1994</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Migrants</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,432,604</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>873,402</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently married</td>
<td>1,483,756</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>75,446</td>
<td>73.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>31,744</td>
<td>81.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>15,800</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>27,902</td>
<td>66.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In terms of international migration, fewer men are going abroad to work while the number of women is increasing, both among those who go on their own or through agents (Table 2.8). International migration entails an absence from the family over a longer period of time, which impacts on the relationships between family members.

### Table 2.8: Number of Thai migrant workers working overseas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>136,668</td>
<td>23,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>133,918</td>
<td>23,706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>122,698</td>
<td>25,071</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of Overseas Employment Administration, Department of Employment.
2.1.3.5 HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS has attacked the most productive age group, left many children orphaned, and thus changed the family structure in Thailand. Yearly, new HIV infections in Thailand have fallen drastically: from 143,000 in 1991 at the peak of the epidemic, to 19,000 in 2003. Nevertheless, over 600,000 people are still living with AIDS in Thailand (UNDP, 2004). The estimated number of people living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2003 was 570,000. Among them were 560,000 adults (aged 15-49), 200,000 women (aged 15-49), and 12,000 children (aged 0-15). The estimated prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS among adults at the end of 2003 was 1.5 per cent, and the estimated deaths were 58,000.19 These figures show that HIV/AIDS affects the working population the hardest, making the life of other dependents in the household difficult. HIV/AIDS is now the leading cause of death among young adults in Thailand, which amounts to more than twice the number of deaths due to traffic accidents (UNDP, 2004).

Orphans and children of infected persons were often cared for by their grandmothers (Insight Initiative Team, 2001). In northern Thailand, persons with AIDS usually moved back to live with their older parents, who provided care and financial support. Grandparents cared for their grandchildren after the death of their offspring and some faced stigma in the community (Knodel and Saengtienchai, 2002).

Extended families often offer the only safety net for AIDS patients, but there is a limit to the reliance on family in resource-poor households. A study found that with the illness and death of economically active household members from AIDS-related causes, the total income per capita and total consumption per capita decreased dramatically.20 Combined with stigmatization and discrimination, members of the household affected by the disease are likely to lose the support of their social networks. HIV/AIDS puts great strain on the care-related activity in families.

2.1.3.6 Violence against women and children

Court data indicate that the number of cases of violence against women is increasing. In 1990, there were 2,817 cases; that number more than doubled to 5,840 in 1997.21 A study by the Office of the National Commission on Women’s Affairs showed that up to 20 per cent of Thai husbands had beaten their wives at least once, but the actual rate is considered to be much higher because police, prosecutors, judges, society, and even families of the victim encourage women to suffer in silence (ONCWA, 2000). The Hotline Center Foundation, which provides counseling services, serves 30,000 clients a year, approximately 65 per cent of whom are women who suffer from abuse (ONCWA, 2000). Since the onset of the economic crisis, the abuse of women and children at home has increased.

The law is contradictory and allows marital rape. Society, including judges, believes that it is better to compromise in domestic violence cases. ONCWA (2000, p. 11) quoted Appeals Court Judge Jarun Pakdithanagoon, who — while expressing concern about


21 According to Thailand’s combined fourth and fifth report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women by the Office of Women’s Affairs and Family Development, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.
gender-based violence — said that sending husbands to jail did not help the marital relationship. He describes a societal fear that if domestic violence was treated as wrong, most cases were likely to end up in divorce. Some police believe that raising the legal issue only aggravates the situation (ONCWA, 2000, p. 11).

Most victims of domestic violence have few alternatives.

They worry that the children will resent them for sending their father to prison. They worry that society will see them as failures. Women are made to wait long hours when filing complaints and are often blamed or treated suspiciously. If the police don’t manage to take them out of it, their families might be convincing them that it is their responsibility to keep the marriage together. Often, the women only want to frighten their husbands and have them lectured by the police (ONCWA, 2000, p. 11).

Family matters are still considered to be a private matter where state/public intervention is considered unnecessary or even counter-productive.

2.1.4 Traditions related to child care and care of the sick/elderly and recent trends

In the time-use survey, it was found that the largest difference in women and men’s use of time was in the area of household maintenance, management, shopping, and care for children, the sick, elderly and disabled within their own household. There was little gender difference in time use in other activities. Women spent on average 2.7 hours per day for care-related work, while men spent only 1.6 hours. The difference was larger in rural areas (2.8 for women and 1.6 for men) than in urban areas (2.6 for women and 1.6 for men).

As was discussed in Section 2.1.1, in the past, elder daughters were entrusted with the care of their younger siblings. With industrialization and better opportunities for education and employment for girls as well as with a falling fertility rate, this role of elder daughters has eased to a certain extent (OWAFD, undated-a, p. 24). According to Phananiramai (1997), since the fertility rate had declined, parents had more resources to invest in fewer children. Older daughters and sons had less care-related work as the number of siblings declined. However, she also pointed out that, in general, women are still usually the main caretakers. It is not only the mothers, but also the grandmothers who always play a large role in child care. According to the Bangkok Institute for Child Study (conducted in 1966, 1967, 1969 and 1971), it was found that grandmothers played a more crucial role in rearing grandchildren and teaching cultural values than grandfathers (Kasemnet and Chuawonlee, 1981).

Yamane and Gakuin (2005) pointed out that Thailand was a double-income society and there were various supports and networks for child care. These include receiving help from grandparents, older children, school and hired care-givers. For factory workers with night shifts, husbands and wives take turns in looking after children. A recent trend (in urban areas) among some families is to contact private organizations whose business is to organize short course training for child-care assistants at home (OWAFD, undated-a, p. 13). However, because arranging child care is more expensive in urban areas, some lower-middle class women become full-time housewives to look after their children. Some highly educated women chose to be full-time housewives because they believe that they can raise their children well when they are at home (Hashimoto, 2005).

Grandparents, especially grandmothers, have traditionally played a large role in taking care of grandchildren. However, this role is now increasing with the migration of the younger generation to urban areas. Work, economy and modern lifestyle take away time and energy from family members (Lotrakul and Yatinchatchavan, 1999). Because of the difficulties or the unwillingness of some migrant workers to come back home or send
money regularly, the task of grandparents in child care is heavier than before. Leaving children in rural areas is socially acceptable as long as the parents do not delegate the responsibilities of bringing up children to their parents for too long and support them financially and psychologically. If they leave their parents with child-care responsibilities without providing any support and without keeping contact, it is not socially acceptable, and an OWAFD report (undated-a, p. 14) thinks that “[t]his should be one indicator of the present social condition of Thai society”. Grandparents, despite old age and poor health, still have to go out for petty jobs in order to earn a living with their grandchildren. Their important role in the past, as the ones who transmit socio-cultural values to children, is given less importance or is made impossible.

A larger role than grandparents taking care of children is also seen in the case of imprisoned mothers. There are over 300 women with young babies in prisons nationwide. Even though the number of cases is small, how the children of such mothers are cared for gives an insight into how common it is to resort to grandparents’ rather than fathers’ care. OWAFD (undated-b) noted that 65 per cent of the children stayed with grandparents, while only 6.13 per cent stayed with their fathers. The ratio of staying with fathers is extremely low compared to staying with uncles/aunts (11.24 per cent) and even staying alone (13.7 per cent).

For women, difficult working conditions and their absence for a long time from newborns leads to difficulty in arranging/continuing breastfeeding. In the past, the natural method of birth control was practiced, and young mothers would breastfeed their babies for an extended period of time in the belief that it would prevent the next pregnancy (OWAFD, undated-a). However, present working conditions make it difficult for women to breastfeed. Yim Yam’s (1997) study in Chiang Mai showed that women who worked fixed hours in the formal sector weaned after six months, but women who worked in the informal sector and had flexible hours weaned later. Thus, inflexible working hours, not employment, were the important factors affecting the duration of breastfeeding. In 1996, 95.7 per cent of women breastfed for an average 7.8 months. In the Bangkok Metropolis, they breastfed for the shortest period of time — on average five to six months — and 30 per cent breastfed for less than three months.

Although the burden on grandparents is increasing, when they are older, they are still taken care of by family members. More than 99 per cent of the elderly are taken care of by other family members as of 2003 (OWAFD, undated-b). Statistics show that there was an increase in the number of elderly and children who were deserted during the economic crisis compared to other years (OWAFD, undated-b). In 1998, there were 61 elderly who were deserted among 100,000, while the average during 1996 to 2001 (excluding 1998) was 52 (Ministry of Interior, in OWAFD, undated-b). As for deserted children, there were 60 among 100,000 in 1998, while the average for 1996 to 2001 (excluding 1998) was 57.4.

In cases where children are brought to welfare homes, it is the mother who brings them there. In 90 per cent of the cases, the mothers were abandoned by their husbands and could not raise their children, thus bringing them to welfare homes. If someone is able to take the child out from the welfare home, it is again the mother who does so. Child care is basically considered as a duty for the mothers.


24 Interview with the Bureau of Trafficking of Woman and Children.
An OWAFD report says that parents not living with children is a problem, and expresses concern on the lack of supervision from parents and the bringing up of children in “imperfect moulds”: “The crowding in urban areas and freedom from supervision makes labour age persons just seek friends and easily accept values from abroad such as cohabitation,” (OWAFD, undated-a, p. 10), which OWAFD analyses as partial causes of illegal abortion and abandoning of newborn babies.

Noting that the forms of family and care are changing, OWAFD (undated-a, p. 10) advocates development of “a new concept in supporting family as a real base of human resource development” and calls for “a real necessity to have fathers share the responsibility in taking care and socializing their children at every stage of development”. (p. 13).

As for the care for the sick, there were no significant differences in the time-use survey regarding the time women and men spend to accompany adults to receive personal care services. Access to health services have improved from before due to social security cards and 30-baht health schemes. However, hospitals dealing with these services, especially public hospitals, are always crowded, and patients and those who accompany the elderly have to spend a very long time waiting in hospitals. In the rural areas, men spent more time in accompanying adults to receive personal care services (1.6 hours per day) than women (1.2 hours per day). This might be because of the distance to health-care facilities.

A recent trend is that women who were expected to be care-givers in the family are suffering from health problems themselves. Extended working hours in factories are leading to a deterioration in women’s health and occupational health hazards are starting to emerge. Garment factories have been in Thailand for over 40 years, and workers who have been working in old factories are now suffering from lung diseases. In Lamphung, women workers have been affected by lead and already seven to eight people have died. 25 Due to a lack of doctors who specialize in occupational health, it is difficult to provide proof of the link between work and diseases.

### 2.1.5 Family work and domestic tasks

Women are generally more engaged in domestic tasks than men (Table 2.9). According to the NSO’s time-use survey, women spent on average 2.6 hours for household maintenance, management and shopping for their own household, while men spent only 1.4 hours a day. When compared between urban and rural areas, women spend more time cooking in rural areas, but in urban areas, they spend more time in cleaning, washing clothes, shopping and household management. In urban areas, especially in Bangkok, people eat out much more than in other areas. The street foods available in Bangkok and its periphery make it cheaper for some households to eat out than to cook at home (Yasmeen, 2001; Tinker, 1997).

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25 Interview with Friends of Women, September 2005.
Table 2.9: Average time of participants 15 years of age and over by main activity, marital status and sex, 2002*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Widowed</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
<th>Separated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household maintenance, management and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shopping for own household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care for children, the sick, elderly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and disabled for own household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment for establishments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Average time calculated from persons who participated in those activities.


There is no strict division of labour and no cultural restriction for men to take up household work. It is arranged in such a way that the work is tilted towards women. That is, domestic work is basically considered the task of women and as long as she is around at home or is seen to have control over time (as in the case of self-employment), she will be doing the domestic tasks. Once women are forced out of home for a certain time (like in the case of factory work), the work spills over and is shared by other members of the family, including husbands, to a certain extent without much grudge. One woman factory worker interviewed said that when she was self-employed, she was doing all the household work. Once she started working in the factory, her husband shared the domestic work.

Women who were more educated tend to do slightly less household and care work compared to those who are less educated, most probably because educated families have more means to hire domestic help. Women with less than elementary education spend 2.9 hours on household maintenance, while women with tertiary education spend 2.2 hours. Women with less than elementary education spend 2.7 hours for care work, while women with tertiary education spend 2.6 hours.

This shows that by getting married, both women and men spend more hours on household maintenance and care-related work, but the increase was higher for women than men. On the other hand, women who were separated needed to work more in establishments, and as a result spent less time on care work and household maintenance compared to when they were married; for men, the tendency is reversed. This shows that women, when they are married, need to spend more time for household and care work, intensifying the work-family conflict if they are working outside. At the same time, women who are separated can spare less time for household maintenance and care work, but because of their need to earn income, they need to spend more time to work outside the home, again intensifying their work-family conflict.

Household appliances have been found increasingly in Thai households in the past decade. In 1992, only half of the households owned electric cooking pots and refrigerators. In 2002, this increased to 82 per cent of households owning electric cooking pots, and 75 per cent owning refrigerators. Washing machines are owned by 25 per cent of households, air conditioners by 10 per cent and colour television by 92 per cent. Many of these appliances have eased the drudgery of household work.26

26 At the same time, middle-class households own more than one colour television set, which might indicate that families do not watch television together and most probably spend less time together.
Research by Rapipan Panthuratna (2000, in OWAFD, undated-a, p. 23) on participation of Thai males in household activities showed that (1) men in Bangkok participate in household activities more than other geographical regions; and (2) a husband’s participation in household activities is negatively related to the number of family members. If there are other members of the household, husbands can find excuses for not having to do household work. This research shows that changes in family structure may lead to changes in the husband’s role in the household.

2.2 Conclusions on family trends and work-family conflict

There are wider variations in family forms, with a rise in divorce and the number of small children who do not live with their parents. Although the number of children has decreased per couple, the child-care burden does not seem to be easier than before, and work-family conflict exists more than in the past. The burden of child care is now being shifted to the elderly in the rural areas. It should be noted that the demographic changes show an increase in the number of elderly and, in the future, care of the elderly can also be envisaged to be a problem. Both child care and elder care are a problem, but they are not yet seen as problems by the public. Instead of being taken care of, the elderly are burdened financially and emotionally support their grandchildren. The present solution of work-family conflict, i.e. putting the burden of child care onto the elderly, can be too strenuous for the elderly to handle in the long run.

Junya Yimprasert of the Thai Labour Campaign calls the present difficult working conditions, the pressure on women in maintaining a work-family balance, and a large number of women factory workers not getting married as a “patriarchy crisis”. The intensified working conditions leave women factory workers with few opportunities and time to look for mates, but the problem lies much deeper. The current division of labour requires women to shoulder a double and triple burden, which exhausts them. On the other hand, men are not as educated or aware of the changes required in their roles and relationships and do not change their roles and behaviour. With the intensified nature of employment, the burden on women is growing heavier under marriage, as can be seen also in the time-use survey. Seeing the sufferings of married women, other women decide not to get married.

Even though it is not discussed, child care is a problem, and women silently cope with work-family conflict. Some women workers want to keep their children with them, but they cannot find any day-care service. Some of them have no choice but to leave the children at home and lock them or constrain them so that they do not roam around.

Current government concerns lean not towards care work itself, but to the fact that “[t]he psychological bonds and mutual concern among family members are decreasing alarmingly and changed more readily into materialistic forms” (OWAFD, undated-a, p. 44). Family stress is seen as a problem associated with individual priorities, rather than one related to the state’s economic development policy of depriving families of their time and, instead, forcing the workers to contribute to economic growth. The Thai government, on the one hand, aims to go back to the “old-fashioned” Thai family; on the other hand, it wants to use family time to serve its industrialization policy.

According to an OWAFD report (undated-a, p. 16), factors affecting changes in Thai family structures are (1) changes in the population structure of Thailand; (2) the world

27 Interview with Mr. Bandit Penwiset, Friends of Women, September 2005.
economic recession and crisis, which lead to increased need for cash income and thus migration; (3) migration of family members; (4) the changing concept of women and status of women in the process of development; (5) globalization effects on values; and (6) socio-psychological factors, such as lack of self-esteem and a sense of being appreciated by other persons. Regarding the fourth point, the OWAFD report blames western pressure to accept standardized practices in family roles, including women’s role outside the family. This leads to children being taken care of by child assistants, which can be problematic if the assistants are not qualified. The report quotes an example where a child-care assistant takes a baby with her for begging while the parents are away, in order to earn some extra money. It argues that a new concept of having women to participate more actively in the development process needs to be developed. Regarding the fifth point, it regrets that appropriate sex-role behaviour is less emphasized than before; individualism is more emphasized: “Thai families may gradually lose more valuable things worthy of preserving”.

There is apparently a threat in women’s changing roles in the household and society. Women are taking up more roles in the economy, but men and the society are still expecting women to do their traditionally expected gender roles in the household and also to retain their lower status, as can be seen in the lenience for polygamy in men as well as a prevalence of domestic violence. Women, with so many expectations and duties, need to resort to abortion to balance their work-family conflict, which is again punishable by law.

What is problematic about the current family policy is that it does not take into serious consideration a woman’s situation in managing these conflicts, but advocates going back to the “old-fashioned” traditional Thai family, where harmony and cultural values are restored. However, the present government’s “developmentalism” economic policy does not allow women and men to spend more time with their family. Not only do we need to develop a new concept of family that can more effectively deal with the daily problems that women have, as the OWAFD report suggests, but we need changes in the whole socio-economic development policy.

Another problem that the OWAFD report (undated-a) has also identified is the lack of reliable statistics relating to family. This reflects the importance the government attaches to family development. Without reliable statistics, it is difficult to develop realistic policies and programmes for families.
Part 3: Working conditions and work-family conflict

This part will examine the working conditions and other work-related factors that affect the needs of workers with family responsibilities and lead to work-family conflicts. It examines whether there is any discrimination against workers with family responsibilities and the perception of management on work and family.

3.1 The industrial relations and labour law framework

Out of 11 million private sector employees, about 285,000 (or 2.6 per cent of employees) are trade union members (Charoenloet, Ativanichayapong and Wanabriboon, undated). State enterprises have a better unionization rate with 60.94 per cent among 271,645 employees being union members. This is the lowest in Southeast Asia.\(^{28}\) The law does not protect union leaders and they can be dismissed from the company. With further suppression from the government and companies, the Thai labour movement has not been able to expand coverage.

Even with these hurdles, some labour unions have been successful in negotiating benefits and wage increases with employers. Union activities became more difficult after the economic crisis, when companies preferred to use more sub-contract workers, as well as relocating factories and rehiring the total labour force. This made it more difficult for workers to claim their rights. The use of sub-contract workers, as well as homeworkers through a piece-rate system, make organizing and collective bargaining difficult. Some unions were able to bargain for sub-contract workers so that they could receive benefits as well, and strong unions were able to stop companies from casualizing the workforce. On the other hand, strong unions such as the Electrical Generation Authority of Thailand (EGAT), are not able to include sub-contract workers as their members. However, there is a hire freeze in these factories, again making unions weaker.

Reproductive issues, such as child care, are not normally on the priority agenda of labour unions. If there is no understanding from the leaders, this agenda will not be discussed. Unions focus on wages and benefits, and issues such as day care, health and menstruation leave are not included in the agenda.\(^ {29}\) The struggle for 90 days’ maternity leave was successful, but in the beginning, the male leaders of the unions were not supportive. Once they saw that there was a possibility of winning the case, they joined the effort. It is often explained that the lack of importance given to work-family conflict in the unions stems from lack of women members in the decision-making of the unions. As seen in Table 3.1, there are very few women committee members in unions. Charoenloet, Ativanichayapong and Wanabriboon (undated) showed that, among the 324 unions surveyed, nearly 80 per cent of the leaders and more than 70 per cent of vice-leaders were men.\(^ {30}\) EGAT, which is one of the strongest labour unions, has only one woman among its 35-member committee. Even though many women are seen during demonstrations and gatherings, they are not part of the decision-making apparatus.

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\(^{28}\) Interview with Ms. Junya Yimprasert, Thai Labour Campaign, September 2005.

\(^{29}\) Interview with Mr. Bandit Penwiset, Friends of Women, September 2005.

\(^{30}\) The survey showed that union members consisted of 37.35 per cent men and 34.55 per cent women; 28.1 per cent were not specified.
Table 3.1: Committee members of trade unions by sex, 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of trade union</th>
<th>Proportion of committee members (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Labour Council</td>
<td>28.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Union Federation</td>
<td>18.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Enterprise Union</td>
<td>13.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Area-based Union Group</td>
<td>31.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Charoenloet, Ativanichayapong and Wanabriboon (undated).

It is difficult to be a woman activist. Women labour activists are normally single. It is difficult for women activists to get married, while getting married is not a problem for men activists. Activism demands long working hours, and there are not many men who can accept such spillover of work into family life compared to women. It is difficult for women activists to deal not only with work-family conflicts, but also activism-work-family conflicts. Women leaders tend to be more sincere, since women leaders are mostly workers themselves, while men leaders are not. It is a vicious circle. Women, because of their family responsibilities, cannot be active in union activities. That is why they either do not become full-time activists or are not included in decision-making committees. And that is why the women’s agenda is not on the negotiation table, and women still continue to cope with work-family conflict alone, leaving them unable to participate in union activities.

3.2 Earnings

Income disparities in Thailand have expanded since 1975-1976 throughout the economic growth period until the 1990s. In Bangkok and its provinces in the vicinity, in 1975-76, the gini-coefficient was 0.260, which went up to 0.397 in 1992. It was 0.350 in 2000. Homenet (2002, p. 30) said that relative poverty is a structural problem of Thailand, which produces and reproduces structural violence as child labour, exploitation, prostitution and drugs. There is slightly wider disparity in the rural villages than municipal areas – the gini-coefficient in central Thailand in 2000, the municipal area/sanitary district, was 0.308, while it was 0.362 in the villages. This shows that rural villages absorb poverty in both rural and urban areas. Box 3.1 shows how unemployment and poverty in urban areas results in children being sent to rural areas since the parents cannot afford the cost of living in urban areas (based on a case study from Committee for Asian Women, 2000).

### Box 3.1

**May and Jan: How low earnings prevent parents staying with their children**

May and Jan took care of their children in the city without any help until they lost their jobs. After their termination, they had to rely on their husbands’ pay checks. However, the pay checks were never enough, and as a consequence, both women decided to send their children home to live with relatives. May’s 4-year-old son is now staying with his grandparents in Korat and she sends them 1,500 baht a month, which mainly comes from her husband’s pay check. Jan, whose two children are in school, had to send her kids to stay with their grandmother in Utaradit, and sends 3,000 baht each month for child support and for family support.

Both May and Jan said that they would prefer to take care of the children themselves and didn’t want them to stay with someone else, even though they were close relatives. However, their financial situation made it impossible, and they said they had no other option.


31 Interview with Thai Labour Campaign and Friends of Women.

32 Interview with Thai Labour Campaign.
As was seen in Chart 1.10 in section 1.3.3, the minimum wage increase has been frozen for three years since the economic crisis, and the consumer price index increase was higher than minimum wage increases. It is often said that the minimum wage is not enough to live on, and workers need to work overtime in order to earn a liveable wage. The freeze in such a low minimum wage has decreased the real wages of workers. Not only was the minimum wage increase less than the consumer price index increase, many workers were not even paid minimum wages.

When a comparison is made between different employment patterns, piece workers earn the least, followed by daily paid workers (see Chart 1.9 in section 1.3.3). Monthly paid workers are paid the most per month. The earnings of piece workers are the lowest, especially in small enterprises (Chart 3.1).

Chart 3.1: Average earnings of private employees by size and employed types, 2003

It is evident that an earnings gap increases by age between different education levels (Chart 3.2). There is hardly any increase in earnings by age for those with or lower than lower secondary education. Many of the retrenched women workers, after the economic crisis, were older workers, with low education, and they faced extreme difficulty in getting a new job after the retrenchment.
Such stagnation in wages is detrimental to female-headed households, who are increasingly dependent on working as employees (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Source of earnings by household heads (percentage of households for 1996, 1998 and 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female-headed households</th>
<th>Male-headed households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profits from business</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings from property</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-cash income</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The decrease in real wages and the increase in the price of goods led to an increase in household debts (Table 3.3). Household debts have more than doubled since the economic crisis.

It is not clear why those with diploma-level education maintain a significantly high increase in earnings after 60 years old. This pattern was also seen in 2001. However, it should be noted that not many people work/can work as an employee beyond age 60.
Table 3.3: Household income, expenditure and debt (1998-2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Income (baht)</th>
<th>Expenditure (baht)</th>
<th>Debt (baht)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>8,262</td>
<td>7,567</td>
<td>34,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>10,779</td>
<td>9,109</td>
<td>52,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>12,492</td>
<td>10,386</td>
<td>69,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>12,159</td>
<td>9,484</td>
<td>68,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>13,418</td>
<td>10,908</td>
<td>83,314</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OWAFD, undated-b.

3.2 Effects of sub-contracted homework on family health

Home-based work combined the workplace and the home. Does this make it easier for workers to take care of their children? It is true that homeworkers will be able to remain with the child. However, child care does take time away from work, which normally needs long hours in order to earn enough to make a living or meet the required quota. Home-based workers tend to work from nine to 15 hours per day, and their daily wages were 106 to 110 baht during 1997 to 1999 when the minimum wage in Bangkok was 162 baht per day (Homenet, 2002). Women formed the vast majority (91 per cent) of the respondents in Homenet’s study, and most of them are important or even the main income earners in their households.

The children and mothers are physically together, but this does not mean that work-family conflict of mothers is resolved or children are taken good care of. It might even increase the mother’s stress because she needs to give attention to both the child and her work. At the same time, with present earnings, there is no incentive for homeworkers to put their children in child-care centres where they need to pay. Homenet said that there were no homeworkers who sent their children/grandchildren to child-care centres. Even if there is a child-care centre in the community, they do not put them there. Homeworkers think that it is not necessary, because they are at home.

Homeworkers earn around 3,000 to 4,000 baht per month, depending on the demand. However, with such a low and unstable income, it is extremely difficult to make a living only through home-based work. They either need to have their husband’s income or need to have other jobs in areas such as agriculture or tailoring. Homeworkers are normally over 35 years of age. It is difficult for people over this age to find a factory job, and thus employment opportunities are limited.

Homenet said that homeworkers have their small children with them and do not send them back to the provinces. This does not mean that homeworkers have chosen to do homework for child care. Homenet said that homeworkers do not have other options, like working in factories, which is why they work at home. If they have a chance to work in a factory with better and more stable pay, they will leave their children in the care of their parents in the province.

At the same time, this does not mean that anyone can become a homeworker easily. Homeworking also needs connections in order to get work. Not all retrenched factory workers were able to turn to homeworking if they were not included in the network. If they cannot get work as homeworkers, they go for self-employment. It is not clear whether the number of homeworkers increased or not during and after the economic crisis (see section 1.3.1).

The health impact of home-based work depends on the type of work that homeworkers are engaged in. In Homenet’s study (2002), 80 per cent of urban garment home-based workers replied that they have work-related health problems, while only 14
per cent of artificial flower-making home-based workers said they have problems. The structure of urban poor households where many of the home-based workers are working can be problematic to their health. Homenet (2002, p. 76) describes:

Due to the differences in the community locations, those in urban areas worked in the confines of their small houses, whereas those in rural areas worked in a separate room or even outside their houses. It was observed that lighting, smells and noise levels were worse in the urban working sites. Aside from their small size, low-income urban housing had low ceilings, resulting in poor ventilation ... Most of the urban homeworkers' complaints had to do with poor light, dust and bad smells in their locations.

It should be noted that not only the workers, but also the workers’ children, live in the same premises and are thus exposed to similar health risks.

Children of homeworkers help their parents in their work, but normally they are not pulled out of school to work with their parents in doing home-based work. However, since the work/living premise is the same for homeworkers, depending on the type of industry, it can affect the health of the children.

3.4 Working time

Labour law says that the maximum working hours are eight hours a day, 48 hours a week. However, factory workers need to work overtime in order to make a living.

Table 3.4: Average hours of work per week by industry and employed type, 2001 and 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry and Employed Type</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Piece work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, hunting and forestry</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and quarrying</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing of food products and beverages</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing of wearing apparel, dressing and dyeing of fur</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing of rubber and plastic products</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing of radio, television and communications equipment and apparatus</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, gas and water supply</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles, and personal and household goods</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels and restaurants</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, storage and communications</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial intermediation</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real estate, renting and business activities</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and social work</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other community, social and personal service activities</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private households with employed persons</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Ministry of Labour considers that there has been no increase in working hours after the crisis. However, Table 3.4 shows that the hours of work for piece work in
manufacturing, construction and social work is the longest. Considering that there is a casualization in the labour force in Thailand after the crisis, especially in manufacturing, Table 3.4 indicates that many workers are now working more than before. Table 3.4 also shows that workers in manufacturing, construction and social work extended their working hours between 2001 and 2003 — especially among workers in the manufacturing of radio, television and communications equipment and apparatus and, among them, especially the piece workers. It should be noted that workers in the manufacturing sector of radio, television and communications equipment and apparatus are predominantly women, and piece workers have the lowest earnings (Chart 1.9); increasingly longer working hours would have implications on how they can balance family and work.

In 2001, 36.1 per cent of men and 29.1 per cent of women worked longer hours per week than what was stated in the law. In 2003, this rose to 37.9 per cent for men and 30.1 per cent for women, showing increasing hours of work for both women and men.

In terms of occupation, elementary occupation workers work the longest hours (Table 3.5). Between 2001 and 2003, service workers and shop and market sales workers extended their working hours much more than others, especially among daily and piece-rate workers. Working hours are longer in larger establishments (Table 3.6). It is noted that real wages declined by 9 per cent among employees of large establishments and by 5 to 7 per cent among employees of small and medium-sized establishments (World Bank, 2000, p. 32). The real wage decline was because large establishments paid significantly lower wages to the new part-time contract workers they recruited during the crisis, and because bonus and overtime payments, which constitute a much larger fraction of total compensation in large establishments, were cut during the recession. Table 3.6 also supports such cost-cutting tendencies of larger establishments – the workers are working longer hours, especially the daily waged workers and piece-rate workers.

Table 3.5: Average hours of work per week by occupation and employed type, 2001 and 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Piece rate</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technicians and associate professionals</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service workers and shop and market sales workers</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled agricultural and fishery workers</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft and related trades workers</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary occupations</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant and machine operators and assemblers</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3.6: Average hours of work per week by size and employed type, 2001 and 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Piece rate</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4 persons</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 persons</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 persons and over (10-19 persons)*</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-49 persons</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99 persons</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-199 persons</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 persons and over</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In short, working hours are getting longer, and workers have no choice but to endure longer working hours because the minimum wage is not a living wage. Larger establishments are requiring longer hours from workers, and thus the work-family conflict can be stronger in larger establishments.

Some establishments, such as the banking sector, adopt flexible working hours, but that is not the case in manufacturing. However, the aim of flexible working hours is not so much to accommodate work-family conflicts, but to avoid traffic jams.

3.5 Leave entitlements and their implementation

Currently, the paid maternity leave is 90 days (Labor Protection Act B.E. 2541). However, many women workers come back to work after 60 days. This is partly because they are requested by the workplace to come back in 60 days, but also because they will receive full pay the first 45 days, but will be paid by the social security scheme for the last 45 days, which gives them a lump sum. The workers will take the lump sum and go back to work.

Some companies provide more generous leave. For example, EGAT provides 150 days of parental leave; this is unpaid, but they are able to remain employees.

Dismissal on the basis of pregnancy is prohibited, but some workplaces pressure the workers to leave by either shifting their positions and making it more difficult for them to work and forcing them to resign. Among the recorded violations of labour law of all types detected by labour inspection, most were in the areas of provision of wages during maternity leave, periods of maternity leave and the nature of work (Tonguthai, 2002, p. 45).

Pregnancy is a serious problem for sex workers. Once a sex worker becomes pregnant, she will immediately lose her job. Until she delivers her baby and recovers enough to be able to work, she needs to live on her savings or has to incur debts. Some will go back to their parents, but since the parents are also dependent on them, it is not easy to rely on them.

Factory workers normally have only six days of annual leave. Annual leave and extended leaves are important for workers who are living separately from their families. However, the six days of annual leave, even when combined with public holidays, are definitely not enough to strengthen bonds with their children in the province. The bond becomes more of a relation through materials and gifts. In this situation, it makes it difficult for workers to go back home if they do not have anything to give. Many workers often buy souvenirs for their family back home on loan, making their financial situation even worse.

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34 It should be noted that the Maternity Protection Recommendation, 2000 (No. 191), recommends at least 18 weeks of maternity leave.

35 Tonguthai also noted that less then 10 per cent of registered establishments have been inspected due to lack of labour inspectors. If small, unregistered firms are also taken into consideration, there is a large number of establishments that are not inspected by the Ministry of Labour.

36 Interview with EMPOWER, September 2005.

37 Interview with Mr. Bandit Penwiset, Friends of Women, September 2005.
Paternity leave is still not taken seriously in Thailand. Many doubt whether fathers will really take care of their children when they take paternity leave. However, the unions are now demanding it, and some companies, such as Nakorn Luang Brassware, introduced four days of paternity leave, and there are workers who are actually taking the leave.\(^{38}\)

Some companies provide special leaves, such as compassionate leave, examination leave, marriage leave, ordination leave, etc. In Thailand, the law states that all workers are entitled to a sterilization leave.

### 3.6 Family support benefits

There are a few provisions to support the families of workers.

**Child allowances**

Social security provides child allowances: 200 baht per child per month for a maximum of two children at one time. However, out of 35 million registered workers in 2003, only 7 million are covered by social security. Self-employed persons and those who cannot identify employers (like homeworkers) need to pay a double share in order to be included in the social security system.

Some factories provide family allowances or child benefits, but these are very small. The normal benefits in factories are transportation, uniform, group outing, incentives (*bia kayan*), bonus, provident fund, housing and credit. Some places offered childbirth support, but now there is no place where they give this.

**Childbirth allowances**

As of December 2004, there were 7,831,463 members in social security. In 2003, the number of deliveries covered by social security was only 226,841. This means that only about 20 per cent of deliveries are covered by social security.

**Education allowance**

EGAT provides education benefits to their workers, without any limit to the level of education. In other companies, if they have education benefits at all, they often cover only up to the 12\(^{th}\) grade.

**Housing allowance**

A housing allowance is not directly a family support benefit, but it does help some workers to keep a house near the workplace to avoid long commuting hours or allows them to afford a larger place so that they can live with their families. Housing allowances are one of the most frequently found fringe benefits. Table 3.7 shows the most common fringe benefits and the average amount of support. Note that less than 20 per cent of private employees receive fringe benefits of some kind, and only 6.8 per cent of private employees receive housing benefits.

\(^{38}\) Interview with the union of Nakorn Luang Brassware, November 2005.
Table 3.7: Fringe benefits of private employees by occupation, 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In cash</th>
<th></th>
<th>In kind</th>
<th>(Unit = baht)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>Overtime</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>44,581.8</td>
<td>4,168.6</td>
<td>4,770.9</td>
<td>1,606.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>29,667.1</td>
<td>2,694.5</td>
<td>3,759.2</td>
<td>1,148.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technicians and associate professionals</td>
<td>18,581.8</td>
<td>2,583.1</td>
<td>3,395.9</td>
<td>790.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>13,831.1</td>
<td>1,847.1</td>
<td>1,244.2</td>
<td>757.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service workers and shop and market sales workers</td>
<td>8,651.7</td>
<td>1,577.9</td>
<td>1,850.2</td>
<td>1,110.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled agricultural and fishery workers</td>
<td>6,628.0</td>
<td>850.8</td>
<td>451.8</td>
<td>390.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft and related trades workers</td>
<td>8,829.5</td>
<td>1,636.4</td>
<td>628.6</td>
<td>754.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant and machine operators and assemblers</td>
<td>8,362.8</td>
<td>1,739.7</td>
<td>1,167.3</td>
<td>534.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary occupations</td>
<td>4,766.5</td>
<td>1,264.5</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>1,130.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13,880.0</td>
<td>1,745.5</td>
<td>1,615.2</td>
<td>844.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of private employees</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Bonus is baht/year. Other benefits are baht/month.

3.7 Attitudes of managers to family responsibilities

Employers do not consider the work-family conflict to be a problem.39 Some employers want to introduce child-care centres and asked their employees for their opinion. They did not introduce a child-care centre when they learned that employees did not feel the need for it. Sometimes, if the workplace is male dominated, such demands may not surface. However, because of the increasing attention to corporate social responsibility, some employers are interested in doing more for the society, community and their employees. Although corporate social responsibility currently focuses on business ethics, safety in the workplace and environmental concerns, there is an opportunity to bring the issue of work-family conflict more into prominence.

Tonguthai (2002, p. 50) noted that a number of Japanese firms operating in Thailand established child-care centres for their workers.

… following the Japanese model which puts great value on inspiring among the workers strong ties and identification with their firms. For other firms, the bottom line is that child-care centres will ultimately lead to better worker productivity. By establishing child-care centres, firms can avoid having their workers distracted by concern for their children’s well-being during the day, so that they can instead devote their full energies to their work. It also means workers will not have to take time off to take their children to the doctor or the hospital.

However, even now pregnancy and child care are seen by employers as obstacles to workers’ productivity, and they perceive that child care can be taken up by grandparents because that is the “Thai culture”.

Pregnancy is crucial if a woman has to get a job. Normally factories do not accept pregnant women. Most places do not allow women workers to get pregnant during the probation period or when they work as temporary workers. One manager said that once women become permanent workers, they feel relaxed and soon get pregnant. This kind of perception makes the employer less eager to upgrade women to permanent workers.

39 Interview with Employers’ Confederation of Thai Trade and Industry (ECONTHAI), September 2005.
There are still some cases where women are fired because they get pregnant.\textsuperscript{40} However, these workers do not demand or protest, since once they protest, they will be blacklisted by the human resource officers in the industrial zone, thus making it impossible to get another job. The women usually leave the company and, after delivery, try to find another job. Even though the law prohibits workers to be dismissed on the basis of pregnancy, it is not implemented. Workers with children are also harassed, such as being shifted to another section.

There is very low recognition that family support will improve productivity, and thus offset the cost of providing services. It is difficult for small companies to provide a child-care centre by themselves, either because their compound is too small or they have too little demand to make it cost efficient.\textsuperscript{41} It is especially difficult for a company with less than 200 workers to provide a day-care centre.\textsuperscript{42} Providing a day-care facility is costly – to secure a safe place for the centre, to hire skilled teachers, to provide medical services. However, some companies opt for such benefits, such as Jongsathit Textile and Pranda Jewelry (see below for the case profile). Jongsathit Textile has a workforce of 2,000 and was awarded the best workplace by the Ministry of Labour. The company felt that a happy workforce would contribute to improved productivity and loyalty. It started ten years ago, when the company made good profits and could spare costs for providing child care. Pranda Jewelry offers family support in order to reduce turnover and increase employee loyalty and honesty to the company, in which they have been successful. ECONTHAI suggested that it will be the best to pool resources to have a common child-care centre in industrial zones. In Navanakorn, there is a community child-care centre that is run by labour unions.

**Case study: Pranda Jewelry**

Pranda Jewelry was established 32 years ago and now operates five main factories in four countries with a total production capacity of 5.85 million pieces per annum and more than 4,500 artisans. Mr. Prida Tiasuwan, Chairman of Pranda Jewelry Pcl., is also a chairman of Social Venture Network Asia (SVN).\textsuperscript{43} Pranda has already signed the Global Compact Concept and has been picked by the United Nations as a showcase for business practices undertaken in accordance with the Global Compact Concept.\textsuperscript{44} The company embraced the philosophy of sufficient economy in doing business, not just maximizing profits, but also taking into consideration the balance of benefit return for customers, partners, employees and environmental society.

Its guiding principle of practices states that it aims to “… comply with the principles of good governance, particularly the principles of responsibility, transparency, honesty, righteousness and ethics, as well as the commitment for growth and prosperity, employees’ involvement and teamwork, and for social responsibility”. Due to such a strong focus on social responsibility and employee involvement, together with the nature of its business

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{40} Interview with Mr. Bandit Penwiset, Friends of Women, September 2005.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Interview with ECONTHAI, September 2005.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Interview with Employers’ Confederation of Thailand (ECOT), September 2005.
\item \textsuperscript{43} SVN is a global network of business leaders, entrepreneurs, managers and policy advisers, which aims to make business practice more sustainable and socially just.
\item \textsuperscript{44} The Global Compact asks companies to embrace, support and enact, within their sphere of influence, a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption.
\end{itemize}
that requires highly skilled workers to produce high value products, Pranda Jewelry provides considerable benefits to its employees.

“In the jewelry business, artisans are the king. We need to do everything for them to stay with us,” says Mr. Pramate Tiasuwan, vice president of Pranda Jewelry. It requires three years of training for artisans to become skilled enough to work on their own. During these first three years, workers receive a full salary and bonus as well as other benefits, except that they are not supposed to get pregnant during this time. After three years, they become permanent employees. The company recruits around 200 people per year. Since they entrust valuables to their workers, it is important that the workers are honest and loyal to the company. Mr. Pramate said that 90 per cent of the reasons for the closure of jewellery businesses in the United States are because of theft by workers. The challenge for the company is how to keep workers honest to the company. The other challenge that they face is to maintain artisans in order to produce high-quality products. It is not possible to compete with prices with China. In Thailand, companies need to be competitive in terms of design and quality. For this, experienced artisans are a must. There is high demand for experienced artisans, and retaining them in the company is another challenge. Earlier, artisans would leave the company if another company offered them 500 baht more as salary. Therefore, it is not effective to compete by wage. Due to the other benefits that Pranda provides, if another company does not provide their artisans with salaries at least 2,000 baht higher than Pranda’s, there will be no additional gain for the artisans. Due to this, Pranda enjoys a very low turnover rate – only 2 per cent. There are 2,500 people working in the Bangkok factory, of which around 70 per cent are women. All of them are permanent workers. Around 200 workers have been working for 20 years in the company.

According to Mr. Pramate Tiasuwan, the company wants workers to be part of the company. The company is a family company, and he wants everyone to be together like a family. Pranda provides accommodation to workers. There are three dormitories – one for single men, two for women and families - each accommodating 100 workers. They charge only 1,500 baht per room per month, while the market rate in this area is 3,500 baht. The company also provides non-formal education for its workers as well as extra-curricular learning for older children. The teachers are also from among the Pranda employees. There is a well-equipped training room where employees attend training and seminars.

Pranda emphasizes the togetherness of family – both parents and children as a family as well as company as a family – and considers that workers need to be able to work without worry. The type of work that artisans do in Pranda needs concentration as well as imagination, and thus it is important to create a working as well as family environment where they can concentrate on their work. They want workers to stay close with each other. Since there are both women workers and men workers, there will be couples. If there are couples, there will be children. Pranda considers that if the company wants the artisans to be with them for a long time, they have to take care of their whole life cycle. For this purpose, Pranda provides accommodation in the same compound as the factory and a child-care centre. The child-care centre started 15 years ago. It operates from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. The working hours of the company are from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. If the parents need to work overtime (up to 8 p.m.), the children can stay in the centre until 9 p.m. without any extra charge. Parents pay 15 baht a day for the service, and Pranda subsidizes about half of the operating costs. There are currently 30 children enrolled in the child-care centre, where children aged 1 to 6 are looked after. Newborns are not taken in, since the amount of care needed would be very high. Parents will leave the newborn with their parents in the provinces (90 per cent of the workers are from the province), then bring them back when they are old enough to go to the child-care centres.

In the past 15 years, around 300 children were enrolled in the child-care centre. School-age children will also come and play around the child-care centre (where there is a wide roofed space) until their parents come back from work.
Pranda workers normally join the company at the age of 15 to 17, not more than 22. With pro-family policies in Pranda, around 30 per cent of the workers are married couples with both of them working in Pranda.

Pranda has four more factories in Nakorn Ratchasima. In the Nakorn Rathasima factories, they provide accommodation, but no child-care centres, and the facilities that they provide are not as many as in Bangkok. This has to do with the competition over skilled artisans in the provinces. It is difficult to find and keep workers in Bangkok, while this is not the case in the provinces.
Part 4: Support facilities for workers with family responsibilities

This part looks at how workers with family responsibilities are able to find solutions to their child-care problems. It also considers the policy environment for the provision of care facilities.

4.1 Care facilities

Child-care facilities/arrangements available in Thailand are as follows:

(1) Child-care centres

a. Government supported day-care centres

There are four demonstration day-care centres in Bangkok and three outside Bangkok under the responsibility of the Department of Social Development and Welfare, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. They charge only 700-1,000 baht per month, and accept children from 3 months to 3 years. Fees for 3-month-olds are higher, around 1,500 baht per month. Operating hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., but the closing time is flexible. Sometimes parents pay teachers extra to take care of their children after 4:30 p.m.

Other government agencies, such as local governors and the Ministry of Public Health, also organize child-care centres.

b. Private day-care centres

Under the Department of Social Development and Welfare, there are 459 private registered child-care centres in Bangkok and 1,115 outside Bangkok. Private day-care centres that provide low-cost services receive a subsidy of 800 baht from the government, plus milk and teaching materials.

c. Child-care centres in the workplace

There are 67 child-care centres in workplaces all over Thailand, nine of them in state-owned enterprises. Some child-care centres are operated by the company (see the case study of Pranda Jewelry in Part 3), while others are run by the labour unions, such as Thai Kliang, Lucky Textile, Steel and Metal, Navanakorn, Soi Wat Koo Sang, and Telecom Union (see case studies of day-care centres in Soi Wat Koo Sang and in Telecom Union below).

d. Child-care centres run by the community/NGOs

45 Information provided by the Department of Social Development and Welfare, September 2005.

46 ibid.

47 Information provided by the Ministry of Labour, September 2005.
(2) Grandparents and relatives

a. Grandparents living together

b. Grandparents in the province

c. Other relatives living together

d. Other relatives living separately

(3) Private child-care assistant

a. Live-in assistants

b. Day-time assistants

c. Hire through private training company (who can be both live-in and day time).

There are also NGOs and religious groups that provide extra-curricular activities to children going to school. For example, Forward Foundation provides after-school activities for children of low-income families. This is not child care, but a way of reducing the burden of work-family conflict on parents by providing children with development opportunities while parents are at work.

According to the Ministry of Public Health, 30 per cent of Thai children are in day-care centres. However, day-care centres that meet the required standard are less than half of the total number. The others have problems in terms of quality and quantity of caretakers, equipment and facilities, sanitary conditions and food. The low quality of day-care centres, which results in accidents and mistreatment of children, as reported in newspapers, also discourages parents from sending their children there.

Moreover, there is hardly any nursery that accepts infants or operates 24 hours to accommodate the needs of workers on night shifts. Households headed by women and where mothers work at night face difficulties due to lack of night-care facilities for children. Due to these inconveniences, parents believe that leaving the children with their grandparents would be better, even if it means living away from the children.

With respect to child care, grandparents and relatives are the most preferred options for parents. Thais generally believe that it is the duty of grandparents to look after their grandchildren. However, recent trends suggest that the frequency of visits and support by parents are hardly enough to establish lasting bonds between parents and children, because of the increase in the number of working hours and the distance of the workplace from the provinces. The grandparents are often poor themselves and, in certain cases, parents even keep the children in the provinces because they are unable to afford the upkeep of the children in urban areas (see Box 3.1 in Part 3). Poverty is growing in the villages. If the grandparents are poor, it is a burden for them to support young children, which can create hardship for both. Knodel and Saengtienchai (2005) showed that some grandparents bore much of the child-care expenses themselves.


49 Interview with Mr. Bandit Penwiset, Friends of Women Foundation, and with OWAFD, September 2005. Knodel and Saengtienchai (2005) also noted that, although migrating workers visit parents and their children often if their home village is not very far from where they work, it is often a short visit, sometimes not even staying overnight.
Middle-class workers, and even low-income ones, rely on private child-care assistants. The OWAFD report (undated-a) pointed out two problems associated with this category of child-care providers. Firstly, child-care assistants can sometimes be under-qualified and mistreat children. Secondly, when the child-care assistant is well-qualified, some parents hand over the responsibility of looking after the children solely to the child-care assistant, leaving children with limited exposure to role models.

**Case study: Child-care centre at Soi Wat Koo Sang**

The child-care centre at Soi Wat Koo Sang was established in 2003. It was supported by the Ministry of Labour (MOL) during the first year. The centre is situated within an industrial area where many factories are located and many of the workers live in the vicinity. MOL initially paid the salaries of the teachers and the maintenance fees of 500-700 baht/month. In the beginning, there were 20 children and three teachers.

After the first year, MOL stopped its support, and the union took over the management of the centre. Currently, this child-care centre is supported by the union and the local government. They employed another teacher, who works both as a teacher and a staffer. Most of the teachers do not have a bachelor’s degree and their educational qualifications are not directly related to child development, except one teacher who received a B.A. in elementary education. There are currently two classrooms; one is for children aged 3-3½ years and the other is for children aged 3-5 years.

The centre opens from 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. from Monday to Saturday. If no one comes to pick up the children by 5 p.m., the teacher calls the parents. The teachers receive an extra 50 baht per hour per child if they need to stay late with the child. The fee is 700 baht per month for one child, which includes a morning snack, usually fruit, lunch and milk as an afternoon snack. Sometimes parents bring breakfast and snacks not only for their own children, but the others too. There is one housekeeper who cooks and cleans for everyone in the centre. The centre is closed on Sundays and holidays. At present, 49 children are enrolled in this child-care centre. Children can be enrolled any time during the year if there are vacancies. The demand is much greater, but the intake is restricted due to limitations of space.

According to one of the teachers, many children come from broken homes. Some children live with their parents, while others live only with mothers, cousins, aunts or grandmothers. In general, female members of the family, such as grandmothers and mothers, take the children to the centre, but there are also some fathers who come and pick up the children. The families of most teachers and children live in the neighbourhood, where many factories abound. Most parents work in the factories, but originally come from rural areas. Residents who are not factory workers, such as merchants or those selling products from their homes, usually raise their children with the help of relatives at home, and do not bring their children to the centre.

If there is no space available, the children are usually sent to the rural areas to be raised by their grandparents; some may hire caretakers or receive help from relatives. The cost of hiring child caretakers ranges from 100 baht per day to 3,000 baht per month. Since the workers are allowed to take maternity leave for only 90 days, infants will be breastfed for only a short time, and are fed with powdered milk after their mothers rejoin the workplace.

There is a parent-teacher conference every year. The high attendance rate at this conference shows that parents care about how their children perform at the centre. There are approximately less than ten parents among the 49 children who are absent.
As far as enrolment is concerned, children may be put on the waiting list; however, in very urgent cases, the child may be enrolled promptly. The minimum age for enrolment at the centre is 2½ years. Every April, some children leave the centre to join school, enabling it to take on more children.

The daily activities for children are singing the national anthem, praying, exercising, writing, reading and drawing. The centre tries to provide nutritious food to children. Teachers teach children to respect one another and learn to share. Boys and girls are taught to help one another.

The government provided teachers’ salaries, milk, toys and school items in the first year. The union representative urged the government to continue its support, but no assistance has been forthcoming to date. This child-care centre receives some private donations. One company gives rice every three to four months. Teachers’ salaries and operational expenses are met through fees from tuition. Teachers receive a salary of around 5,500 baht per month, social security insurance, and have lunch and milk with the children in the centre. Most teachers live in the area.

Case study: Child-care centre, Telecom Union, Bangkok

The child-care centre at Telecom Union’s main centre is a model one. It originated from the needs of employees who took their children to the workplace during the school break because there was no one to take care of them at home. The presence of children in the workplace can interrupt work and TOT Corporation Plc. (currently TOT PLC.) did not have any experience in running a child-care centre. Thus, the union stepped in to take charge and asked academics to help plan the nursery. In 1998, there were 20 children and two to three teachers. The fee was 3,800 to 4,000 baht/month. The union continues to develop the facility as a centre that will enhance child development in all areas. There are now approximately 60 children, four teachers and four staff. All teachers have obtained bachelor’s degrees in elementary school or related fields and wear uniforms given by the centre. The union pays the teachers’ salaries. The ratio of teachers to children is around one to seven. There are currently four classes: a class is for children aged 1½-2 years, a second class is for children aged 2-3 years, a third class is for children aged 3-4 years and a fourth class is for kindergarten kids who come to the centre during school vacations. The centre cannot offer its services to infants due to high costs and the need for more teachers to take care of newborns. The centre allows breastfeeding and visits from parents, but parents who work at TOT usually do not come to the centre during the break because they do not have enough time, and also since children have lunch around 11:00-11:30 a.m. and sleep around 12:00 noon.

The fee is now lower than before: it is 1,900 baht per month for children aged 1-2 years and 1,600 baht per month for children aged 2-4 years. If the fee is paid daily, it works out to 150 baht per day. Parents need to bring children’s clothes, blankets, diapers, milk, bottles of milk and water, powder, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and bags for dirty clothes to the centre. The centre operates from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. It provides breakfast, lunch and snacks; air-conditioned rooms; toys; activities; sleeping items; physical examination by physicians one day a week; a book of daily records; and child development activities and care from qualified teachers.

The daily routine is as follows:

- 7:30-8:30 a.m. Welcome, breakfast
- 8:30-9:00 a.m. Forming a line, singing the Thai national anthem, praying
- 9:00-9:30 a.m. Singing and learning
Parents begin to pick up their children at 4 p.m. After 5:30 p.m., the head teacher usually stays with the children and receives extra money for it. During the weekend, the staff takes turns to come in and clean the toys and the centre.

The employees who work in the area are usually the ones who pick up the children and take them to the centre. If the father works in the neighbourhood, it is he who sends the child to the centre, and the same duty is performed by the mother if she works in the area. Some parents prefer to send their children to private child-care centres, or hire caretakers or relatives to look after the children at home.

TOT provided the building for the centre, but it is located close to the parking lot, creating fears that air pollution would affect the children. There are approximately 8,000 TOT employees in the main unit located here. But the child-care centre has limited space and cannot take care of the needs of all TOT employees. There is demand for not only a day-care centre but also a kindergarten in the workplace. The union has already made a proposal to TOT to expand the child development centre. In the union, the ratio of male and female members is 3:2 and the ratio of male and female committee members is 4:1. The centre has also begun an e-nursery, through which parents (who are the employees of TOT) can watch the classroom via the Internet.

4.2 Government policies and measures

4.2.1 Policies and measures on family

The government of Thailand recognizes the changing forms of families and child care, and is concerned with the weakening of family institutions. It considers the family as the basic provider of a safety net to its population and as the basic institution to preserve and transfer Thai values and traditions.

The government expressed its intention to focus on family issues when it incorporated some important elements about family in its 8th National Economic and Social Development Plan. The drafting of policies and plans for the development of the family went ahead with the cooperation of various groups, namely government, private business and civil society, and a draft policy on the subject was presented to the National Assembly on the Family on 8 February 1994. With the UN celebrating the International Year of the Family in 1995, the Council of Ministers approved the policy draft and requested the National Committee on Women’s Affairs to monitor and evaluate it. Subsequently, Family Policies and Long Terms Plans 1995-2005 was prepared, with action plans 1997-2001 (OWAFD, undated -a).
The Family Policies and Long-Term Plans 1995-2005 spelled out the following: 50

1. Support the family in meeting responsibilities.
2. Enhance awareness of the role played by each family member (husband, wife, mother, father, child, grandchild and grandparent) so as to create better understanding among them.
3. Amend family-related laws and regulations to promote better family relationships, and encourage greater respect for the value and the rights of each, as well as to protect the rights of the child, women and the family.
4. Work towards ensuring family welfare and protection, as well as benefits and services to improve the well-being of the family.
5. Facilitate further research on issues related to the family.
6. Set up mechanisms for implementation, management, coordination, monitoring and evaluation for family development areas.
7. Promote and facilitate NGOs, private sector, community-based organizations and civil society including children, youth and people to continuously and intensively participate in family development.

It is evident from the policies and plans that work and family issues have not been taken into consideration. Although it has been recognized in the OWAFD report (undated-a) that one of the major causes of changes in the family set-up and weakening of family institutions is the long working hours of parents in distant locations, government policies do not see work-family conflict as a problem that needs attention. This lack of realization of the problem and the absence of will to improve the situation is also reflected in the fact that Thailand has not yet ratified the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) or the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183).

With little recognition of work-family conflict, family-related projects implemented are more focused on advocating the strengthening of relations within families, and not on reconciling work with family to enable working adults to both participate in the labour force and feel confident that their children and other dependents are adequately cared for. Currently, OWAFD has a project related to improving the quality of Thai family life, with an emphasis on stability and solidarity of families (undated-a, p. 37):

- **Project of building relations**: Interested adolescents participate as big brothers and sisters to orphans.
- **Project of happy life by communities of 75 provinces**: In each province, they go through a process of writing a handbook on happy families, based on the specific situation in that province.
- **Project on family relations camp** to strengthen the family set-up.
- **Working procedure project**, on the basis of children’s rights, for the protection and development of children.
- **Project on social policy analysis** and the follow-up of developmental goals.
- **Project on technical cooperation** among developing countries.

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50 Plans for development of family consist of plans for family development, legal plans, plans for protection and welfare, research plans, plan for development of mechanisms, community-based organizations, civil society, resource mobilization, and monitoring and evaluating success in the achievement of the plan. In addition, there are nine action plans 1997-2001: plan for community-based family well-being, plan for development of family studies, plan for family guidance and counseling services, plan for production of media material, plan for revision of laws pertaining to the family, plan for an awareness campaigning on the importance of the family, plan for the elimination of violence in the family, plan for family and community recreation, and plan for research (OWAFD undated-a, p. 31).
• Setting up centres for family promotion at the sub-district level. There are currently 800 sub-districts that have established such centres. According to the National Family Development Policy (2004-2013), Tambon administrative organizations are encouraged to use their budget for social development-related activities. Most of the activities that have been implemented so far relate to training for new families, and day care and other activities for the elderly.

On Thai Family Day (14 April), seminars are organized and rewards are awarded to strong Thai families. The criteria for “strong families” are extended families of three generations, no gambling, no usage of drugs, participation in community activities, and stable occupation.

Since 2001, there is also a national campaign on the elimination of domestic violence, and a white ribbon campaign to show commitment to non-violence. The Ministry of Public Health has set up a One-Stop Crisis Centre for Women and Children Encountering Violence. It started in 2000, and there are currently 104 centres based in hospitals.

Even though the 9th NESDP places a strong emphasis on strengthening families, policies and plans for the development of children and families either do not receive significance or are not given top priority (OWAFD, undated-a, p. 29). Aside from the recognition of the issue of work-family conflict, one of the difficulties is the sectoral nature of the bureaucracy. Even though OWAFD considers the requirement of working parents to be problematic for the family, it has no mandate to deal with labour issues. The Ministry of Labour deals with labour issues, but its focus is primarily on labour protection in the workplace, and families are not included in its mandate. The work-family issue slips into the crevasse between labour issues and family issues. The Ministry of Labour gives prizes to enterprises that provide good welfare, maintain excellent labour relations and have a good safety record. It has, for the first time, given a prize for women’s labour in 2004. It also campaigns to promote longer holidays, and raises awareness on the need for families to stay together, but this is not considered as its main activity.

It should be noted that the Ministry of Labour organizes “thi pruksa rengaang ying” (women labour counselors) in workplaces. It trains these advisors — who are factory workers themselves — as counselors to advise other women workers and also refer issues to the network of advisors. They discuss various issues, such as law, health, sanitation, accident prevention, family, drugs and abortion. Around 5,000 people have been trained. The idea behind this is to allow women workers to express their problems both at work and in the family, and within their marriage. These counselors play a role in conflict resolution in employer-employee relations (Tonguthai, 2002, p. 45).

4.2.2 Policies and measures on child care

More than ten years ago, the Thai government announced a policy to promote child-care centres in both urban and rural areas. Rural child-care centres took off at a faster pace than in urban areas as well as attracting more budget allocation. According to Tonguthai (2002, p. 49), “Its success was attributed largely to the Community Development Department’s effectiveness in working with women’s groups in villages throughout the country”. Child-care centres in urban areas, on the other hand, met with more difficulty, partly because it was more costly to secure a place in urban areas.

The Bureau of Trafficking of Women and Children is trying to encourage nurseries in workplaces. However, it is difficult to promote them as there is no law to force the workplaces to set up nurseries, and there is no tax or other incentives given to establishments for this purpose. There are only campaigns and verbal encouragement, with some support in terms of teaching aids. At one point, the Bureau tried to promote child-
care centres for construction workers, but it did not work out, since it was difficult to arrange a safe place for the children to stay on a construction site.

Even when people want to set up day-care centres in communities, there is no scheme that provides financial support. Communities have sought government support, but have experienced difficulties in getting aid. It is costly to set up day-care centres since a place will have to be bought or rented, and normally places where day-care centres are required are in urban areas, where land prices are very high.

As for breastfeeding, there are government campaigns, but so far no facilities or policies have been enacted to actively support breastfeeding among mothers. In short, there are campaigns on work-family conflict, but no serious measures have been taken so far.

If there is any attention paid by the government to pre-school children, it is related to child development and not work-family conflict. The Ministry of Public Health has embarked on reform of child-care centres. It has conducted a survey on children’s intelligence in the last five years and has been alarmed by the low IQ of Thai children. The Ministry believes that the low quality of child-care centres is one of the principal causes for this. The Ministry plans to set up two child-care centres per province (150 in the whole country) that will focus on development of children’s intelligence.

4.2.3 Policies and measures on elder care

If there is one issue that has been recognized within the work-family conflict, it is the conflict with child care; conflict with elder care has not yet been appreciated.

In 1953, the Department of Public Welfare provided homes for the aged (Government of Thailand, 1995). Residents needed to be over 60 (women) or over 65 (men), be homeless, have no relatives or be dissatisfied with their own families. Government homes for the elderly provided food, shelter, clothes, activities, rehabilitation, health and social services, and traditional funeral services. There were day centres that offered home visitation services to the elderly in order to provide counseling services, information and treatment. NGOs and various foundations played a crucial role in helping the elderly. The issue of elder care outside families is still new in Thailand due to the cultural and structural changes. Many Thai people do not prepare for old age. But as Phananiramai (1997) pointed out, if there is no security in old age, many elderly, especially women, face the risk of poverty.

51 Interview with Ms. Boonsom Namsomboon of Forward Foundation, 8 October 2005.

Part 5: Assessment of current situation

5.1 Is there a problem?

The largest problem associated with work-family conflict in Thailand is that it is not perceived as a problem. The child-care issue is not seen as an important one compared with pay and security in jobs. There is a general belief that parents can depend on grandparents in the provinces for child care. Or, it is assumed that women will be able to cope with child care in one way or the other. Many families with better income can afford hiring child-care assistants, and thus perceive child care as less of a problem. However, there are many cases where grandparents cannot be depended upon, either because they are too poor, or because parents have severed ties with the grandparents; because husbands are not cooperative; or families cannot afford child-care assistants. One sub-contract worker has two children, and she has never worked as a permanent worker even before the crisis, when most of the workers were permanent workers. She explained that there was always something coming up in the family, such as no one to take care of the children, etc. Women quit jobs because there is no one to take care of the children. They consider it their duty to do so. As in the case of this sub-contract worker, she cannot rise above the minimum wage because she was not able to ensure continuity in the workplace, in terms of period of service.

After the economic crisis, there was a decrease in real wages, intensification in the casualization of labour, and an increase in both household debt and working hours. The minimum wage is not adequate to ensure a living, and workers have to work overtime in order earn enough. There is more pressure to work outside the home and in urban areas in the face of declining real wages. In urban areas, the high cost of living, the high cost of housing and long working hours make it impossible for working couples to raise their children in an urban setting. It is especially noted that piece-workers are paid the least, while having the longest working hours. With little financial and time resources, it is expected that this group of workers will have the largest problem in work-family conflict. It should also be noted that they have the least job security, thus have less possibility for being covered by social security or to be given maternity leave.

Even when grandparents are able to take care of the grandchildren, parents do not have enough income to visit them often and are thus not able to build lasting bonds with their own children. At the same time, family patterns are changing. The Thai culture places a heavy responsibility on daughters to support the family financially, and expects grandmothers to look after grandchildren. In the past, there were always other relatives (aunts, uncles, grown-up cousins) who were there to support grandmothers in their role in child care. However, the number of household members is decreasing. Daughters and sons find jobs as migrant labour outside the village or even outside the country, and can return home only after a long period of time. Grandchildren are left with grandparents often with little help, both in terms of finances as well as labour.

There is an increase in female-headed households where women raise children alone. For these households, the work-family conflict is strong.

In Thailand, work-family conflicts can be summarized in two main areas. First of all, balancing work and family commitments on a daily basis. This conflict occurs for those parents who are living with their own small children. Questions that crop up frequently include how to manage working hours to accommodate child care; how to avail of other child-care services, such as day-care centers and private child-care assistants; how to keep the house safe when children are left alone at home; and what needs to be done when children fall sick.
The other conflict is when the parents are not able to live together with their children. If the parents are not able to cope with child care themselves, they decide to send their children to their grandparents or other relatives. They live separately, and with long working hours with little holidays and low wages, it becomes difficult for parents to visit their children often or long enough to build bonds with their children. The indirect consequence of this work-family conflict is the greater financial and child-care burden on grandparents.

The focus now is more on child care, but with the growth in the ageing population in Thailand, elder care and work-family conflicts associated with it could become a problem in the near future.

5.2 Assessment of current support

Since the problem is barely recognized as one, there is less support for work-family conflict from both the government and the employers. There is an assumption that grandmothers are always available. Thus, there is little provision or support for child care for working mothers. In particular, there is virtually no other option except asking for help from the grandmother with respect to infant care.

Even in unions, there is little recognition that the work-family conflict is a problem. This is partly due to the low number of women in decision-making committees in large unions. However, unions have been successful in obtaining longer maternity leaves and some are negotiating for paternity leaves. This is an encouraging effort by unions in terms of reconciling the work-family conflict.

The government recognizes the problems arising from the changing nature of families, but the directions and measures that it is taking are focused on strengthening traditional family values, without taking into consideration that the working conditions and the social environment around the workers have also changed. The government is advocating families to stay together. However, there are many workers who are not able to do so even if they want to.

Even though the government advocates strengthening of family institutions, there are few facilities or support available to working class Thai families to achieve this. The number of day-care centres is far from enough, and those that are available are largely substandard. Those that have good standards are either too expensive for workers to afford or are not located in a convenient place for workers. Thus, day-care centres often do not become an option for working class couples. In Thailand, operating hours of day-care centres was not considered as a problem. Most centres are quite accommodating in terms of time, and parents can easily arrange a few hours’ extra care time by paying a small amount to the caretakers of the centre. Thai workplaces, especially in public organizations, are quite tolerant in having children at workplaces. Thus, both the workers and employers do not see flexibility in working hours as a solution to work-family conflict; to allow flexibility in bringing children to workplaces is seen as a more suitable solution. Flexibility of space is practiced more than flexibility of time in Thailand.

As for private enterprises, such flexibility of place is not the case. There is little incentive given to enterprises to establish day-care centres in the workplace. There is also no scheme to support community initiatives in establishing a day-care centre in the community. Breastfeeding is only encouraged verbally without any accompanying practical measures.

Under the social security scheme, a child allowance is provided to members with children, which should be commended as a generous provision compared to other countries in the region. But the allowance is still small and is provided to workers, not the child-care
providers. There is an assumption that if the allowance is given to the worker, it will automatically reach the care providers. The allowance is available only to those workers who are covered by social security, i.e. those who are employed in a responsible establishment. Once workers are unemployed and/or not covered by social security, it becomes even more difficult to balance the work-family conflict. An extreme case of this burden is described in Box 5.1, which is a case of a retrenched worker (Committee for Asian Women, 2000). The case shows vividly that, for women who are responsible for the care of the family as well as financial support, the pressure become enormous once they are retrenched.

Box 5.1

Dang: Retrenched woman worker’s burden to support her family

Dang, a 40-year-old mother of two, has to raise her children and a paralysed husband. She had been working for 16 years, but she has recently been laid off. Although she was compensated, the money is barely enough to pay her husband’s medical bills, debts and living expenses. Dang takes sole responsibility for supporting the family, including her husband. Her oldest son is 20 years old and unemployed, and her daughter is 7 years old. She said;

“When I was working, I did a lot of overtime work, so I didn’t have much time for my family. Every morning, I had to prepare lunch for my daughter to take to school, put my husband in a comfortable place, and make sure that I left him enough food for the day. I always came home late. My son was hanging out with some bad guys, and was addicted to drugs. He often stole things from our house. Then, when I was laid off, I didn’t have any income, and was faced with a huge burden. When we warned our son about the drugs, he got angry and started breaking things in the house. So his father called the police, and my son was put in prison.”

Later, Dang lost the work she had found collecting scrap metal, and grew more worried about her family’s situation, knowing she was too old to be able to get a new job. She then talked to her husband about getting methamphetamines from friends and selling them, so that they would have money to support the family. Dang had thought that if she made 100,000 baht from selling methamphetamines, she and her family could move to Pitsanulok and buy land and start farming, or start a small business. However, Dang had been selling methamphetamines for three months when the police came and searched their house. Her husband was at home. The police arrested her husband, and Dang now doesn’t know what to do.

There are several good practices in terms of providing day-care centres in workplaces. The case of Pranda Jewelry shows that the provision of day-care centres very much depends on the vision of the company management. But state support could help expand such practices, since providing the service is costly for many individual companies. Unions have played important roles in running day-care centres in some places. Both the Soi Wat Koo Sang and Telecom Union cases show that external support was important for the initial setup of the day-care centres. At the same time, cultivating needs for such services is important. Parents generally do not have positive perceptions of day-care centres because many day-care centres are substandard. Many parents have already arranged some form of child care, even though it might not be the optimum solution. Some time would be needed for workers to have confidence in the system and gradually shift child-care arrangements to day-care centres in workplaces.

Although these are an important support to working parents, such good practices are still very few in number. It should also be noted that the major incentive for private enterprises to provide child-care support to workers is to improve their productivity, and thus there is always a limitation in the provision of support. There is often discouragement for temporary workers, workers under probation and those undergoing training to have children. Such restriction is normally not given to men. Thus, there is a limitation in depending solely on the efforts of private enterprises to provide support to reconcile the work and family conflict, and the state still needs to provide a universal service to accommodate the needs of the vulnerable workers – temporary and low-paid workers.
There is still a general belief that care is not a problem because “Thai culture” allows the elderly to take care of the children while the parents work. Most of the employees, and to some degree unions, consider child-care support to be either a private family matter or a responsibility of welfare organizations. With changes in the nature of families and means of work, this is not always a reliable option for many young parents. Or even when it is an option, the burden on the elderly is becoming heavier, with not too many younger people available to assist them in child care, as well as little availability of income-generating work to support the grandchildren when remittances are not reliable. The importance of looking at family welfare has already been recognized in the 8th NESDP. It is now important to recognize that the work environment is resulting in a strain upon families, and we need to change the labour conditions in order to improve family well being.
Part 6: Conclusions and recommendations

The neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies in Thailand have put a strain on women of all ages, who are expected to earn their livelihood as well as take care of their family members. The neo-liberal policies embrace market liberalization and competition, through which it is believed economic efficiency and productivity will be achieved. Both women and men are expected to work longer hours, making it increasingly difficult for them to manage their time between work and family. At the same time, their wages are suppressed as a whole, especially devaluing women’s wages. This is most evident for piece-workers, who work the longest hours and are paid the least. It should be noted that this type of employment is now on the increase. On the other hand, the neo-conservative policy emphasizes family values and expects parents to fulfill this duty. Even though there are no written laws that suggest that mothers should be the one to preserve family values, there is an unspoken understanding that women should be more responsible to keep the family from disintegrating. As Brodie (1994, p. 57) pointed out, the rising neo-conservative political forces see “the family as the fundamental building block in the new order, asserting that families should look after their own, and that state policies should act to make sure they do”. The contradicting directions of neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies put much strain on women.

“The contradictory nature of both processes and rhetoric, requiring women to be simultaneously in the workforce, sustain family income and take on additional caring responsibilities, is leading to ‘a crisis in social reproduction’”.

(Marchand and Runyan, 2000, p. 15)

With strengthening work-family conflict with little support, women are left to suffer alone. This is typically seen in the continuing decline in the fertility rate. It is getting increasingly difficult for women to have children and to raise children. This is a worrying trend in the face of an ageing society that Thailand is heading towards. In order to better support families, especially low-income families in dealing with work-family conflict, the following policy measures are recommended:

1. The Government of Thailand should ratify the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), in order to show its recognition and commitment to tackle work-family conflict.

2. Child-care services should be improved, as well as access to services, especially at the worker level.

   (a) The standards of existing day-care services need to be improved so that workers can access their services without worry. According to the Child Protection Act B.E. 2003, the Bureau of Anti-Trafficking in Women and Children of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security is drafting a law to improve and standardize day-care services throughout the country. They are also responsible for the implementation of this law. This will provide a basis for improvement of day-care services. The implementation of this law needs to be further followed up.

   (b) Fees for day-care services should be kept to an affordable level for workers.

   (c) The government should provide incentives and subsidies to establish new day-care centres, both in communities and in workplaces. Especially for enterprises, there should be tax incentives and subsidies to establish day-care centres. Trade unions should also be supported both financially and administratively for their efforts in organizing child-care centres.
There should be a requirement for industrial zones to provide spaces for day-care centres for a cluster of enterprises. The Office of Industrial Estate should be providing such day-care centres for workers in the estate.

There should be a special incentive to provide services for infant care as well as providing services for female-headed households.

Local government should play a larger role in providing day-care services in the communities. They should have adequate budgets and roles in supporting communities to establish child-care centres.

Communities themselves need to be organized to arrange child-care services with the financial/administrative support from the government.

Coordination of concerned authorities in implementing these initiatives needs to be strengthened. There are several ministries that are involved in organizing and supervising child-care centres and services. The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Public Health have already formed a working group and are preparing an MOU for the development of child-care services, with the Ministry of Labour as the main actor of this working group. Such effort is welcome and would contribute to improved coordination. It should also be noted that the Welfare Committee under the Labour Protection Law can play a larger role in giving specific welfare to women and children in the enterprises.

3. Provide child allowances independent of employment and directly to the care provider. This has two merits. One is that many low-income workers often are not covered by social security because they tend to be engaged in temporary, casual and informal work. They will not be able to access child allowances, but they are the ones who are most in need. The other merit is that this will provide support to grandparents who are providing child-care services in the rural areas for their grandchildren. This needs to be discussed and implemented by the Social Security Office and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. The Ministry will be in a good position to identify child caretakers who could need child allowances. It should also be noted that the current amount of child allowance is very low. The Social Security Office should provide better child allowance to parents.

4. Reduce working hours and provide a living wage as a minimum wage. It is noted that workers with the longest working hours are the least paid. It is important to enable workers to earn a living wage without working excessive hours, so that they will be able to have more time to balance their work and family duties. Labour inspection should be strengthened to avoid employment practices that pay less than the minimum wage or pay the minimum wage for an extended period of time. There has to be a system in place wherein the income of workers increases with numbers of years of experience, so that there is less pressure to work overtime in order to earn enough to support their families. Gender wage differences should be paid extra attention, especially noting that female-headed households are more dependent on work as employees. This needs to be spearheaded by the Ministry of Labour as well as the unions and employers’ confederations.

5. Increase leave entitlements to balance work and family.

(a) Strengthen the implementation of 90 days’ maternity leave, especially for temporary workers.

(b) Promote the introduction and implementation of paternity leave. The Office of Women’s Affairs and Family Development (OWAFD) is asking for government
approval to grant male government officials two weeks’ paternity leave. This should be seen as a feasible good practice and be expanded to private enterprises.

(c) Extra sick leave can be introduced for parents who need to attend to sick children.

(d) These initiatives need to be taken up by unions and employers’ confederations, with the supervision and cooperation from the Ministry of Labour.

6. Promote sharing of household work between women and men, and men’s responsibilities in child care and childbirth.

(a) Promote the idea of sharing household work among husbands. OWAFD is working to educate Thai people on equal sharing of domestic work. Such effort should be further strengthened.

(b) Promote fathers’ responsibilities in child bearing and child care.

(c) This needs to be initiated by the unions, employers’ confederations, media, as well as the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. It should not be seen as a sole responsibility of OWAFD.

7. Improve data collection to improve statistics on family and work.

(a) Improve data collection/presentation on family and labour statistics. Currently, most of the tabulated statistics are not gender disaggregated, making it difficult to understand the gender differentiated impact of work and family. All presentations of statistics need to be gender disaggregated. At the same time, information collection/presentation related to family situations need to be strengthened. For example, the composition of household members and economic well-being of different types of households (not only disaggregated by sex of household heads) need to be readily available.

(b) Initiate research on family issues as well as work-family conflicts.

(c) These need to be carried out by the National Statistical Office as well as OWAFD. The National Statistical Office needs not only to improve their own statistics, but also to advise other ministries in making their statistics gender disaggregated when they collect data on their own. Currently, OWAFD emphasizes the strengthening of the family as an institution, without actually addressing the dilemma that workers have in balancing work and family. Even when workers want to spend more time with their family, it is not possible to do so under the current working environment. Through a series of research on work-family conflicts by OWAFD, it is expected that the family policies of the Government of Thailand will be more realistic in addressing the needs of poor workers.

8. Promote the debate on work-family conflict to raise public awareness on care work.

(a) Organize public debates on work-family conflict.

(b) Promote the inclusion of family support issues in the concept of corporate social responsibilities.

(c) This needs a concerted effort by the media, unions, employers’ confederations, academia as well as the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.
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Appendix

List of key informants

1. Ministry of Labour, Department of Labour Protection and Welfare (DLPW), Labour Protection Bureau
2. Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Office of Women’s Affairs and Family Development
4. Employers’ Confederation of Thailand (ECOT)
5. Employers’ Confederation of Thai Trade and Industry (ECONTHAI)
6. National Congress of Thai Labor (NCTL)
7. State Enterprise Workers’ Relations Confederation (SERC)
8. Women Worker Unity Group (WWUG) (a solidarity group of mostly retrenched women workers)
9. Thai Labour Campaign (a labour NGO)
10. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Thailand
11. National Council for Child and Youth Development
12. National Human Rights Commission of Thailand
13. HomeNet Thailand (a NGO working with home-based workers)
14. Friends of Women (a NGO working with women workers)
15. Empower (a NGO working with sex workers)
16. Thai Women Watch (a NGO working on advancement of women in Thailand)
17. Telecom Union, Bangkok
18. Soi Wat Koo Sang
19. Shoe Makers’ Group, Phra Kanong, Bangkok
20. Garment Workers’ Group, Laksi, Bangkok
21. Garment Workers’ Group, Vangtonland, Bangkok
22. Confederation, Rangsit Area (a workers’ association)
23. Pranda Jewelry