

# **The Women of Thailand**

**Liza Romanow**

## **Abstract**

*Thailand is a developing country located in Southeast Asia. Over the course of the past few decades, it has been going through various transformations. Previously, the country was known for its mistreatment of women. In the new constitution that was written in 1997, women were granted equality with men. However, despite the new legislation, discrimination is still present and apparent in the role women play in government, at home and at work. Women are highly under-represented, are mistreated at home and discriminated at work. Additionally, sex trafficking is still a prevalent problem among women and children. Sex trafficking became extremely prevalent in Thailand during the time of the Vietnam War and has remained a commercial industry ever since in Thailand. Despite some progress, Thailand has a long way to go before reaching gender equality.*

## **I. Introduction**

Thailand is a middle-income country in Southeast Asia that is located to the southeast of Myanmar, the southwest of Laos and the north of Cambodia. The country is historically known for its discrimination of women, as men play a dominant role in this culture. This discrimination is most prevalent in politics, at home, the work place. Thailand is also well-known for its high rate of human trafficking, mostly for prostitution. Women were granted equal rights for the first time in the 1997 constitution, which was reconfirmed in the 2007 constitution, however, stereotypes and prejudice against women are still wide spread.<sup>1</sup> As of 2010, women represented only 13.3 percent of seats in Thailand's national parliament.<sup>2</sup> There is not a lot of oversight and enforcement of the equality clause in the constitution.

Still, compared to some decades ago, women are now a substantial part of the work place and nearly half of them attend college. The jobs they work and the wages they earn are however gender discriminated. Women are known to have jobs as nurses and teachers. In fact, they are banned from being in the police force or serving in the military. Men also exert their dominance over their wives in the household, and it is not uncommon for some abuse to be present. Additionally, prostitution, although illegalized in the new 2007 constitution, still remains widespread. It has been popular in the country at least since the early 1800s, and grew rapidly during the Vietnam War

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of State (2011) *Background Note Thailand*.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2011).

(1955-1975). Today, thousands of women remain trafficked in Thailand.<sup>3</sup> Prostitution is considered to be an easy way to make money, and is a commercial industry for Thailand, with many foreigners coming to Thailand solely for that purpose.

This article reviews the situation of women in Thailand. Following this introduction and a brief review of the literature, the article provides some empirical background (section III) on the Thai population, the political system of Thailand, and the Thai economy. As of late, all three have been changing. Slowly, women are becoming more incorporated into society. This incorporation is examined in the subsequent four sections (IV-VII), reviewing, respectively, the changing status of Thai women with regards to health, education, politics and work. Section VIII provides some conclusions.

## II. Brief Literature Review

There is a plethora of scholastic literature that has been published pertaining to women's rights in Thailand. Since 1997 (which is when the first constitution was drafted by a popularly elected Constitutional Drafting Assembly), more has been written to explain the changes the country has been going through. Many scholars cover Thailand's economic development, including the impact of the East Asian crisis in the mid-1990s. There is not too much information available on the lives of Thai women before the 1997 constitution. In recent years, scholars have produced some good articles on the recent transformation of women in Thai society. Many are on the subject of sex-trafficking, however there is also many on women's growing role in the work force, and outside of the home. The following publications are some of the more recent publications covering a variety of topics related to women in Thailand.

- Amara Pongsapich (2006) wrote a book chapter entitled "Women's Movements in the Globalizing World: The Case of Thailand" which provides valuable information on how Thai women are trying to increase their activism in politics. She explores how certain issues have made women interested in the political process, in particular, the environment and social movements.
- An article by Kanchana Tangchonlatip et al. (2006) provides detailed information on migration and gender-based occupational segregation in Bangkok. Tangchonlatip et al. (2006, p. 54) point out that the sex migration to Bangkok "became more pronounced in the decade after the launching of a new economic development approach of export-oriented growth, and females have been predominant in migration flow to Bangkok for several decades." This "demand for female workers, especially young workers, was mainly due to their perceived desirable characteristics, which included being docile, non-aggressive, and being predisposed to factory work, on account of their nimble fingers and good eyesight."<sup>4</sup> While the occupational segregation has declined in some occupations, it is still a widespread phenomenon that contributes to women's lower pay.
- The book edited by Tim G. Andrews and Sununta Siengthai (2009), which is entitled *The Changing Face of Management in Thailand*, provides lots of valuable information about women and how their roles are steadily improving within the work place. Especially the chapter by Natenapha Wailerdsak (2009) explores women CEOs and women in power who

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of State (2011) *Background Note Thailand*.

<sup>4</sup> Tangchonlatip et al. (2006), p. 72.

are now beginning to set an example for the rest of the country. She also provides some interesting statistics and case studies.

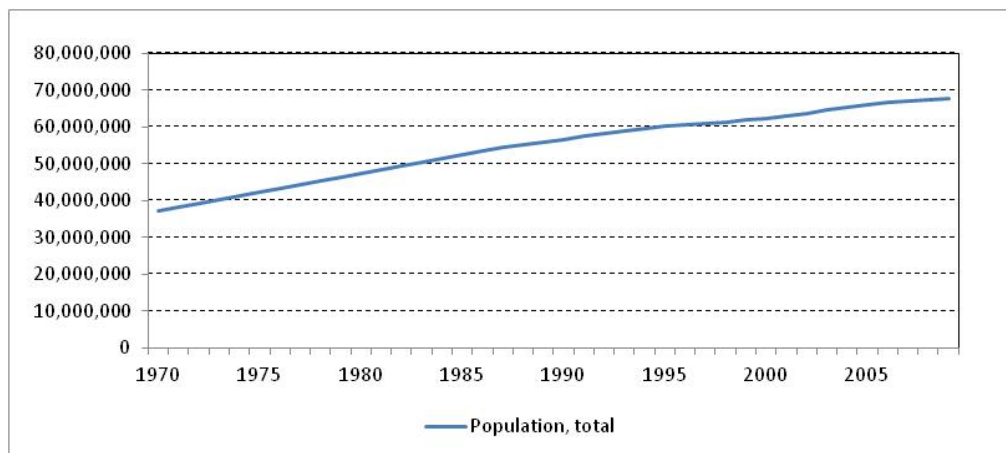
- The country profile for Thailand by the World Health Organization (WHO) (2005) on “Improving Maternal, Newborn and Child Health in the South-East Asia Region” provides detailed information on all of the initiatives undertaken to help prevent the mother and infant mortality in Thailand. It talks about preventative measures being taken against HIV/AIDS, as well as discusses the then recently reformed healthcare laws in Thailand.
- The 2007 report entitled “Stateless and Vulnerable Human Trafficking in Thailand” by the Washington, DC based non-profit organization Vital Voices Global Partnership does a nice job exploring the dangers of sex trafficking and its effects. It discusses why trafficking is such a big industry in Thailand and how the country has come to rely on it.
- One of the many news articles covering sex trafficking in Thailand is the one by Christine Gorman (2004), published in *Time Magazine*. It does an excellent job in explaining the sex trafficking problem in Thailand to the uninformed reader.

### III. Empirical Background

#### III.1. Population

Thailand was supposedly founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but according to the CIA (2011), recent studies show that some areas of the country were inhabited as early as 4000 BC.<sup>5</sup> As shown in Figure 1, its total population nearly doubled from 37 million in 1970 to 68 million in 2009.

**Figure 1: Thailand’s Total Population, 1970-2009**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on June 7, 2011).

Many of the Thai people are of Chinese origin. Buddhism is the most practiced religion, as that is how 94 percent of the people identify themselves.<sup>6</sup> Thai is the most common language spoken.

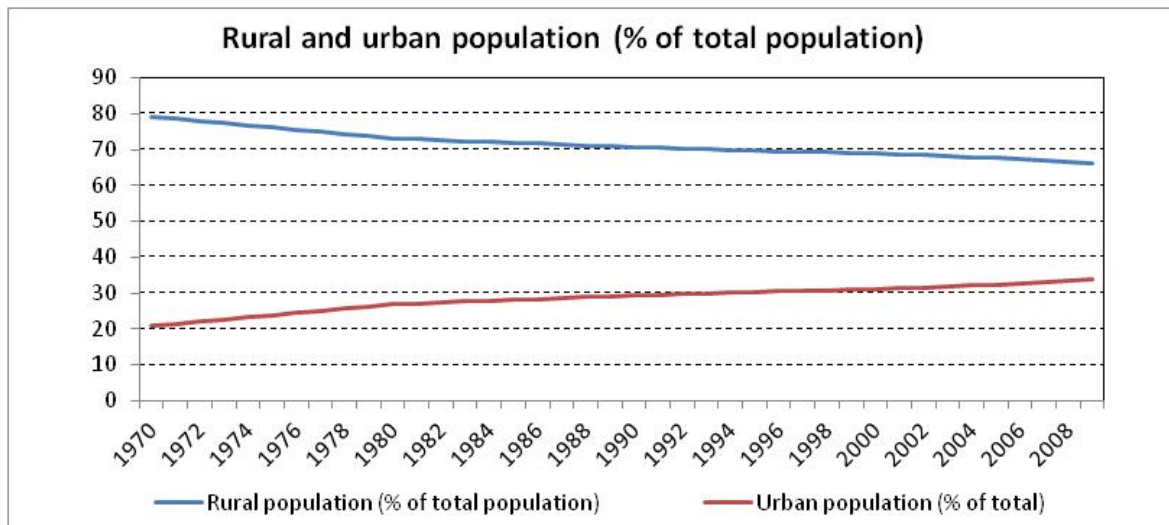
<sup>5</sup> CIA (2011) *The World Factbook: Thailand*.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of State (2011) *Background Note Thailand*.

Nearly everybody (92.6 percent of the population) is literate as public education is provided for free for at least nine years.<sup>7</sup>

The majority (66 percent) of the population resides in rural areas, though urbanization is proceeding slowly in Thailand (see Figure 2). As of 2009, 26.5 percent of the Thai population lived below \$2-a-day, and 10.8 percent lived below \$1-a-day. A major problem that this country faces is wealth disparity. There is a very wide gap between the upper and lower classes.

**Figure 2: Percentages of Rural and Urban Population, 1970-2009**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on June 7, 2011).

### III.2. Political System

Thailand is a former constitutional democracy. In 1997, the government was overthrown and a constitutional monarchy was created. In turn, a new constitution was written.<sup>8</sup> This constitution created a bicameral legislature and allowed for direct elections. Women and men alike are allowed to hold positions; however, as will be shown in more details below, women represent a small minority. After another coup, a new constitution was revised in 2007, according to which there is a King, a Prime Minister, a legislature, and a judicial system.

The legislature is divided into two houses, the House of Representatives and the Senate.<sup>9</sup> Citizens are able to begin voting at the age of 18 years. In Thailand, there is a multi-party system, but communism is banned.<sup>10</sup> The current Prime Minister is the Democratic Party leader Abhisit Vejjava, after the previous two Prime Ministers from the Pro-Thaksin People's Party were thrown out.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> CIA (2011) *The World Factbook: Thailand*.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of State (2011) *Background Note Thailand*.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of State (2011) *Background Note Thailand*.

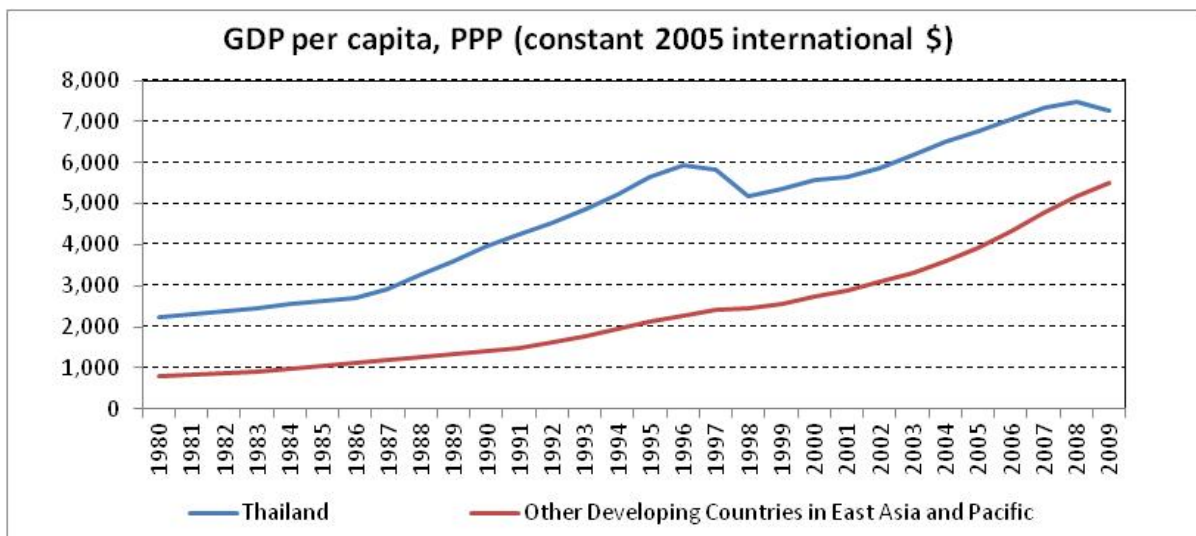
<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of State (2011) *Background Note Thailand*.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of State (2011) *Background Note Thailand*.

### III.3. Economy

In terms of GDP per capita, Thailand is considerably richer than the average developing country in East Asia and the Pacific (see Figure 3). Figure 3 also shows that during the mid-1980s until the East Asian crisis in 1995, Thailand grew faster than the average developing country in East Asia and the Pacific. The East Asian crisis had a severe impact on Thailand. While Thailand continued to grow after the East Asian crisis was over, Thailand was once again severely impacted by the 2008 world economic and financial crisis as the economy is primarily based on exports (which make up nearly 70 percent of Thailand's GDP).<sup>12</sup> Tourism, another major economic sector, was affected as well. Stimulus packages are credited for reviving the government because there has been steady growth since they were passed.

**Figure 3: GDP per capita in PPP (constant 2005 international dollars), 1980-2009**

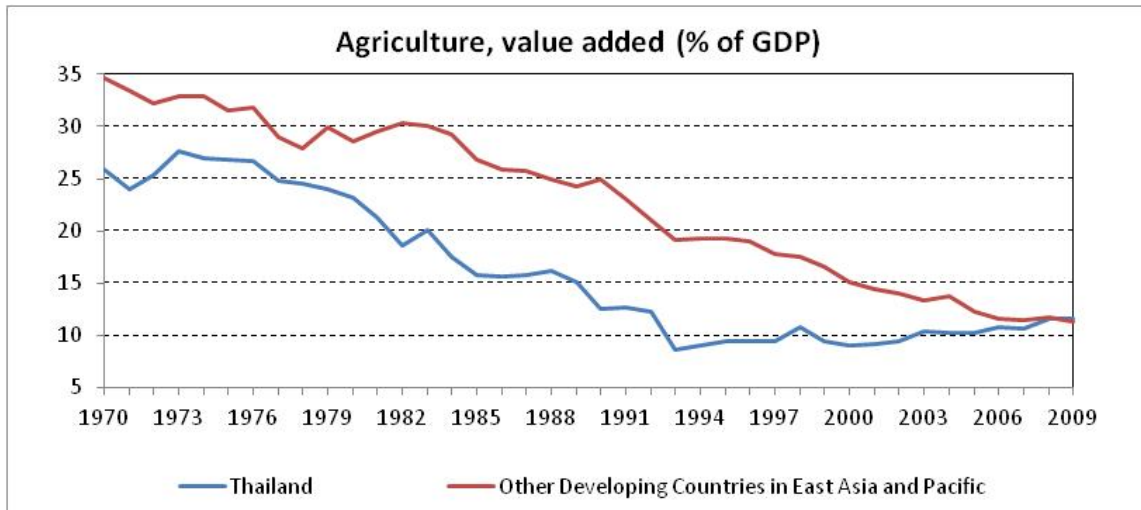


Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on June 7, 2011).

As shown in Figure 4, Thailand had made good progress with its structural transformation towards an industrialized country until 1993, when the share of agriculture in GDP reached a minimum of 8.7 percent. Since 1993, the structural transformation has basically come to an end. Today, the share of agriculture is higher in Thailand than in the average developing country in East Asia and the Pacific (see Figure 4). Based on Figure 5, there are no major gender differences in sectoral employment of women and men in agriculture, industry and services. The share of women working in agriculture is actually slightly smaller than the share of men working in agriculture, while the share of women working in the service sector is slightly above that of men. However, as will be shown below (in Section VII), there remain gender discriminations with regards to positions held and wages paid.

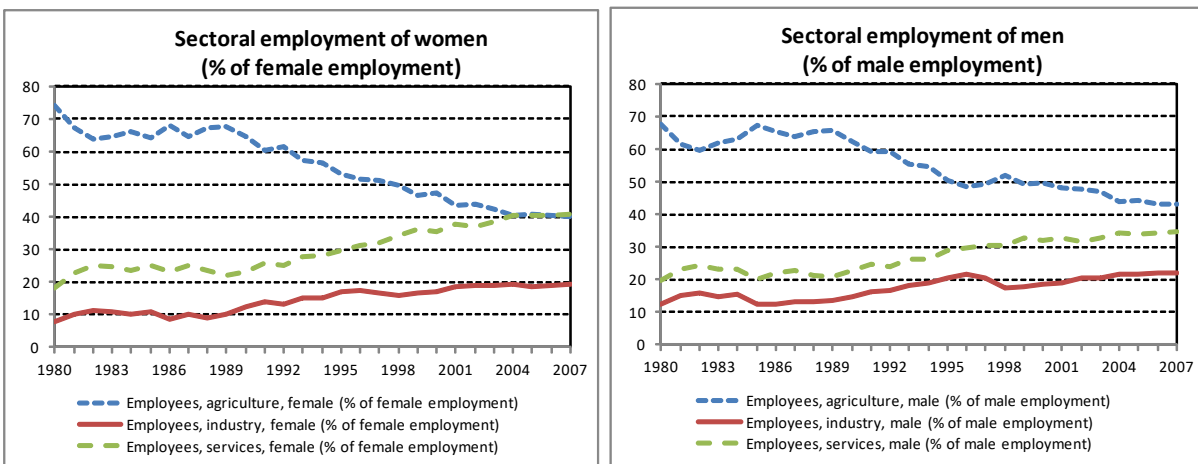
<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of State (2011) *Background Note Thailand*.

**Figure 4: Agriculture, value added (percent of GDP), 1970-2009**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on June 7, 2011).

**Figure 5: Sectoral Employment of Women and Men (percent), 1980-2007**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on June 7, 2011).

#### IV. Health of Thai Women

It is important for a country to look after the health of its citizens. In Thailand, increased efforts have been made in order to ensure 1) a long life and low maternal mortality, 2) protection from HIV/AIDS, and 3) education about birth control.

#### IV.1. Life Expectancy and Maternal Mortality

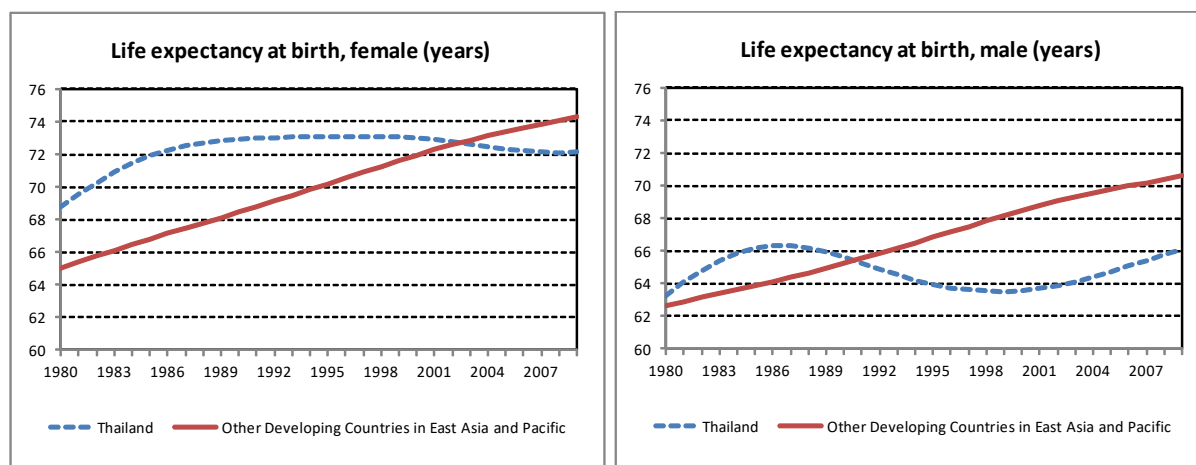
Consistent with global experiences, Thai women live on average longer than men. In 1980, Thai women lived about six years longer than Thai men. By 2009, the life expectancy for Thai women as well as men increased by about 3 years (from 69 years in 1980 to about 72 years in 2009 for Thai women; and from 63 years in 1980 to about 66 years in 2009 for Thai men). Hence, like in 1980, women lived about three years longer than men in 2009. However, as Figure 6 shows, the changes in life expectancy during the last 30 years have been different between Thai women and Thai men. Thai men experienced more volatility in changes of their life expectancy during the last 30 years than Thai women.

Furthermore, Figure 6 also shows that the average changes in Thailand's life expectancy over the last 30 years are very different to the average changes in life expectancy of other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific. Despite complex changes in Thailand's life expectancy over time, with some variations across gender, the most important observation from Figure 6 is that the life expectancy of other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific is now considerably higher than in Thailand.

- In 1980, Thai women lived about five years longer than women in other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific. In 2009, Thai women lived about two years less than women in other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific.
- In 1980, Thai men lived marginally longer (less than a year) than their counterparts in other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific. In 2009, Thai men lived about five years less than men in other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific.

To summarize, while there do not seem to be significant gender discriminations in Thailand's life expectancy, both Thai women and Thai men have (on average) been overtaken in terms of life expectancy by the other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific.

**Figure 6: Life Expectancy of Women and Men, 1980-2009**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on June 7, 2011).

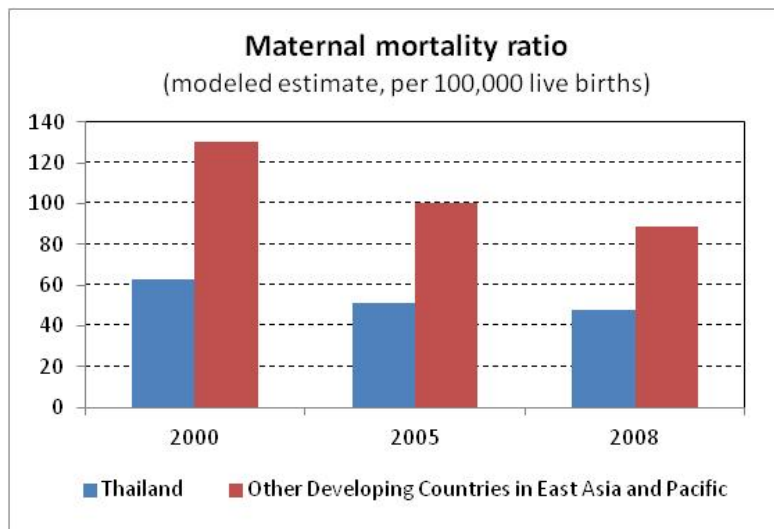
Even though women in other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific live now longer than Thai women, Thailand’s maternal mortality rate is still far lower than that of other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific.

- In 2000, Thailand’s maternal mortality rate was 63 deaths per 100,000 live births, while it was 130 deaths per 100,000 live births in other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific. Hence, in 2000, Thailand’s maternal mortality rate was **less than half** that of other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific.
- In 2008 (which is the latest available data), Thailand’s maternal mortality rate was 48 deaths per 100,000 live births, while it was 89 deaths per 100,000 live births in other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific. Hence, in 2008, Thailand’s maternal mortality rate was **more than half** that of other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific.

In other words, despite progress in reducing maternal mortality in both Thailand and other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific, the later have made more progress in absolute as well as in relative terms.

In any case, one of the main reasons for why maternal mortality has been lowered and women’s life expectancy has gone up in Thailand is because of increased attention paid to women’s health. For example, Thailand’s National Health Development Plans have been paying particular attention ensuring good health care for women. “Maternal and child health has been important and has continually been declared as a top priority since the 3rd National Health Development Plan (NHDP 1972-1976) and continues to be so in the present plan (9th NHDP, 2002-2006), which has set ambitious targets for maternal, newborn and child health.”<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 7: Maternal Mortality (per 100,000 live births)**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on June 7, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> World Health Organization (2005), p. 77.



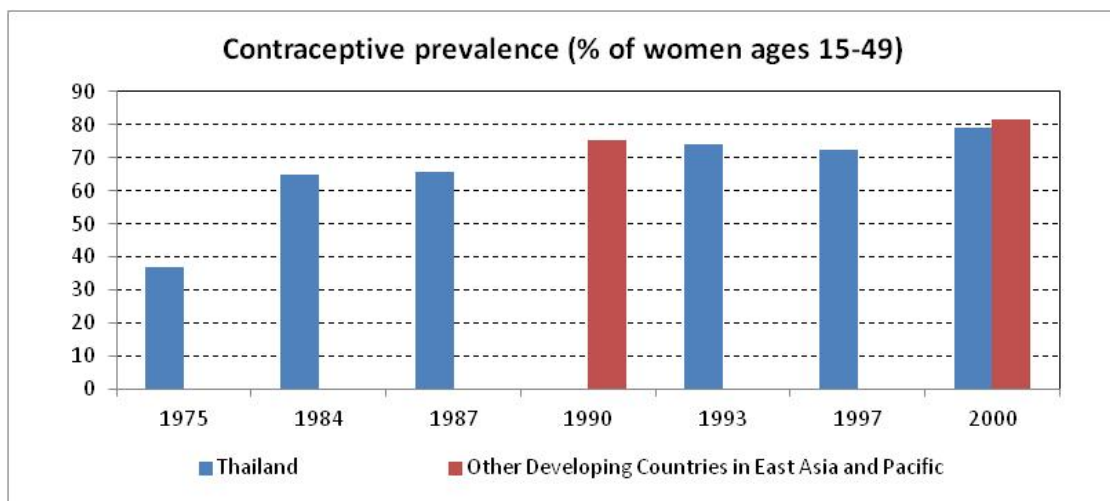
## IV.2. AIDS among Women

In the early 1990s, the threat of HIV/AIDS grew rapidly in Thailand. Ever since, there has been increasing efforts to stabilize and reduce the epidemic. In order to do so, Thailand has increased access to protection from getting infected by HIV/AIDS, like the promotion of condoms. These efforts are beginning to work as is shown by the increased use of condoms in the sex industry. While Thai men are no longer visiting brothels in the numbers they once did, there has been an increase in extra-marital affairs and casual sex, and condom use has fallen dramatically. Meanwhile, HIV infection rates have spiked among young people, pregnant women and intravenous-drug users.<sup>14</sup>

## IV.3. Birth Control Efforts

A larger emphasis has been placed on education materials in order to encourage mothers to wait until they are older to have children. Additionally, related to the increased access to protection from getting infected by HIV/AIDS, women are being more careful with getting pregnant. “More women than ever are making choices over their birth spacing. The contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) of married women in reproductive age between 15-44 years continues to increase and was up to 79.2 percent in 2001.”<sup>15</sup> Despite such progress, comparing Thailand with other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific, the limited data available (see Figure 8) seems to indicate that Thailand is falling behind the progress made in other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific.

**Figure 8: Contraceptive Prevalence (percent of women ages 15-49), all available years 1970-2009**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on June 7, 2011).

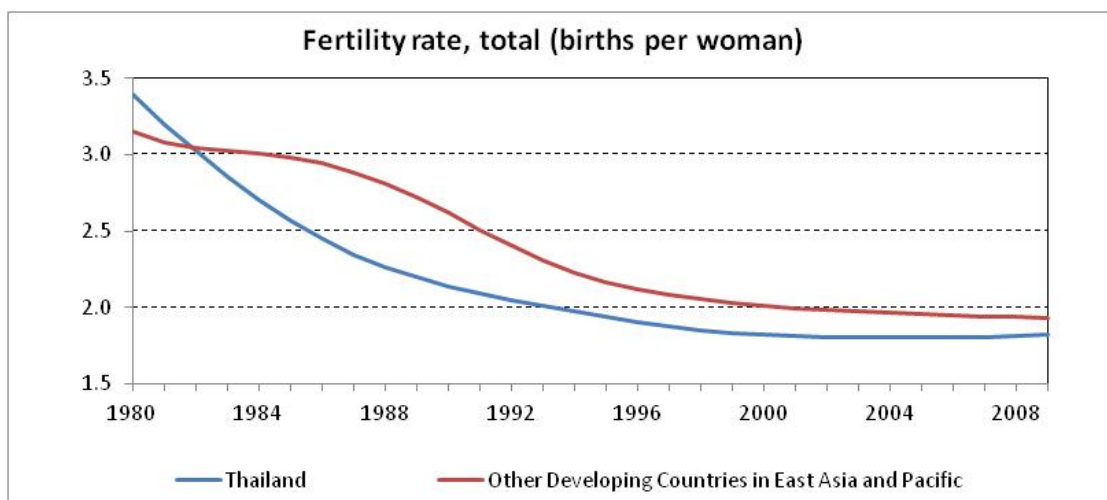
Looking at total fertility, Figure 9 shows that Thailand has made very significant progress (and more so than the other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific) with reducing total fertility

<sup>14</sup> Gorman (2004).

<sup>15</sup> World Health Organization (2001), p. 78.

during the 1980s, reducing total fertility from 3.4 births per woman in 1980 to 2.1 births per woman in 1990. While total fertility continued to decrease during the 1990s (reducing total fertility to 1.8 births per woman in 2000), fertility rates have remained at about 1.8 births per women during the first ten years of this millennium. While Thailand’s fertility rate is today still lower than the average fertility rate of other developing countries in East Asia and Pacific, the difference has become marginal in recent years, and if trends continue as shown in Figure 9, the difference may soon be eliminated.

**Figure 9: Total Fertility Rate (births per woman), 1980-2009**

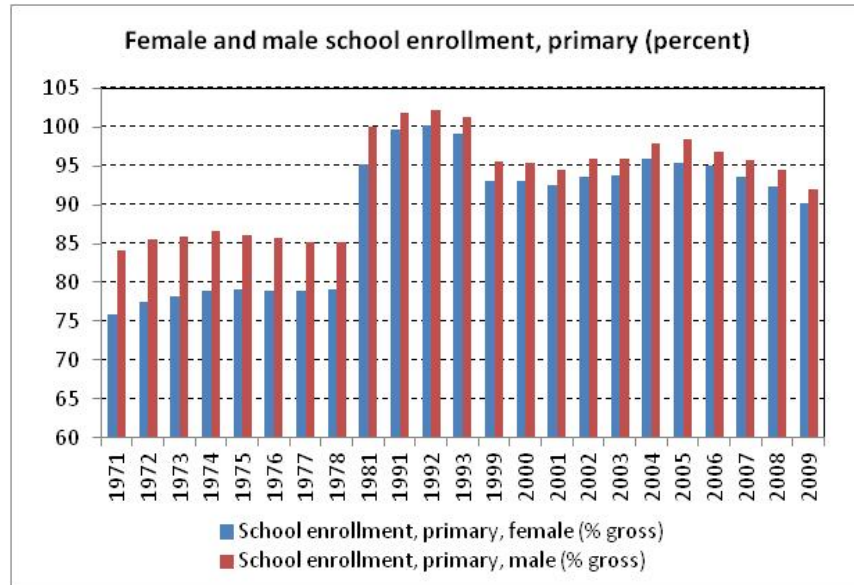


Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on June 7, 2011).

## V. Education of Thai Women

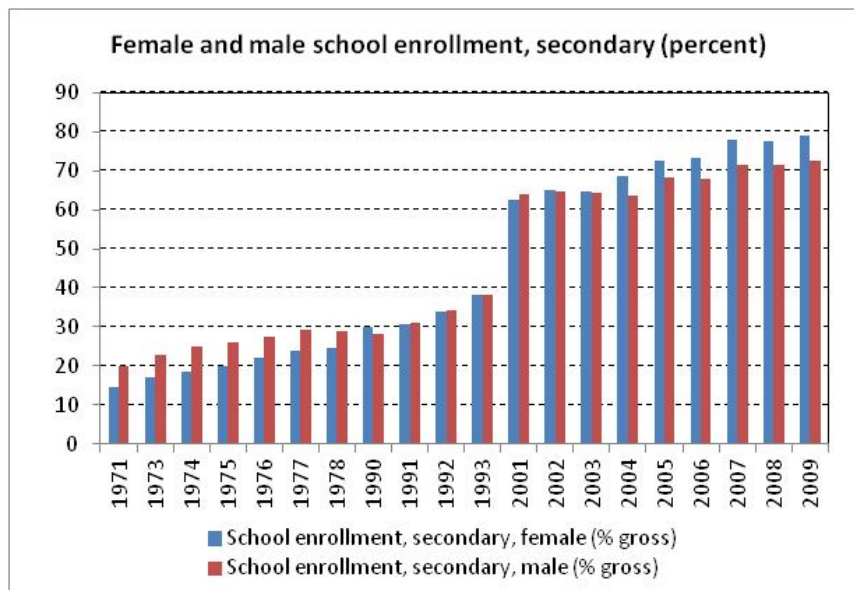
Educational opportunities for women in Thailand are improving. Figures 10 to 12 show the female and male school enrollment ratios (in percent), respectively, for primary, secondary and tertiary schools for all available years during 1970-2009. While there are still less girls than boys attending primary school, the gender gap has decreased considerably from slightly more than 8 percent in 1971 to slightly less than 2 percent in 2009 (see Figure 10). With regards to secondary school enrollment, the gender gap had been eliminated by at least 1990 (there is no such data available for 1979-1989). Indeed, for the last three available years (2007-2009), female secondary school enrollment ratios exceeded that of male by slightly more than six percent. A similar trend exists for tertiary school enrollment, where the gender gap had been eliminated by at least 1993 (there is no such data available for 1979-1992) and for the last three available years (2007-2009), female tertiary school enrollment ratios exceeded that of male by about ten percent. As shown in all of the tables above, women are able to access a good education. As a result, more opportunities arise for women in politics and in the work place.

**Figure 10: Female and Male Primary School Enrollment (percent), all available years 1970-2009**



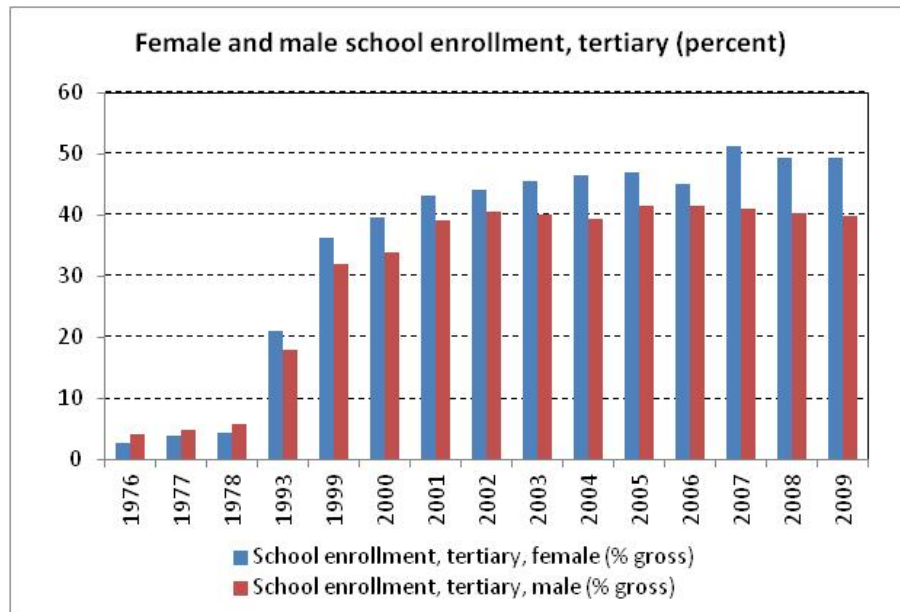
Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on June 7, 2011).

**Figure 11: Female and Male Secondary School Enrollment (percent), all available years 1970-2009**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on June 7, 2011).

**Figure 12: Female and Male Tertiary School Enrollment (percent), all available years 1970-2009**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on June 7, 2011).

## VI. Thai Women and Politics

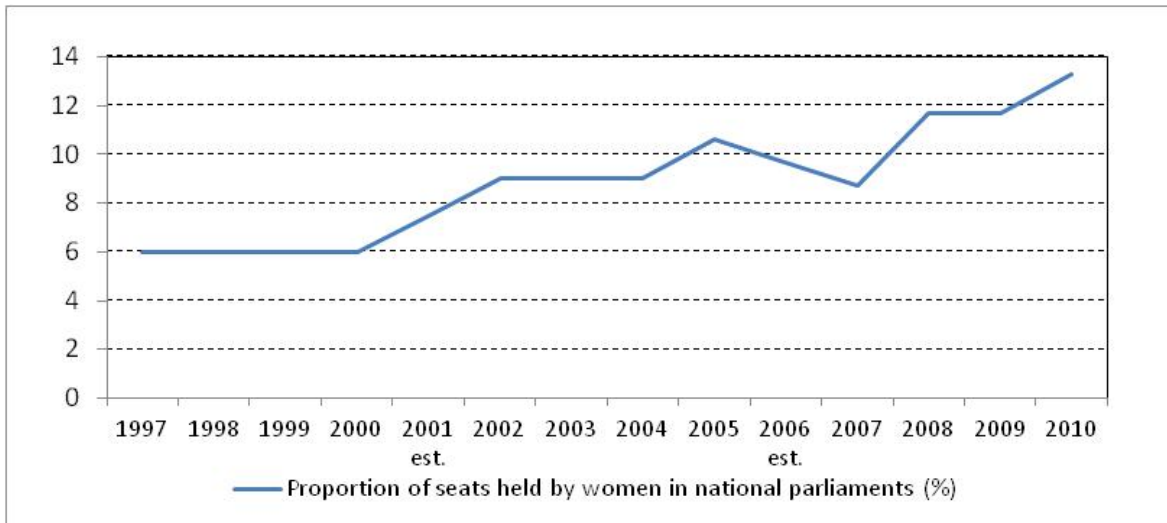
There is long history of a lack of women’s political participation in the country, “At both the national and local levels, women were excluded from active participation. Indirectly, however, they contributed to political power play, political exchange, alliance formations, and probably behind-the-scene plans and intrigues. Women were offered as tributes to kings and members of the royal family and to high-ranking nobles. Princesses were given in marriage in order to foster alliance and to strengthen political ties.”<sup>16</sup> Women were given as trophies in politics because of their sexuality. Now, due to an increased access to educational opportunities and political reform, women are taking their place in Thai politics.

Prior to the 1997 Constitution, women were unable to hold seats in the Thai Parliament. The Thai Parliament is currently divided into upper and lower chambers. There are 650 members total. As shown in figure 13, in 1997, women only held 6 percent of the seats. This number remained steady for a few years, until it slowly increased in recent years. In 2010, women were voted into 13.3 percent of the parliament seats. This is still a small percentage, but it shows at least some progress. Some credit for this progress should be given to the United Nations, who has been working to help facilitate more recognition and activism of women in politics since the 1970s.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Whit-Vadakan (1993).

<sup>17</sup> Pongsapich (2006).

**Figure 13: Percentage of seats held by women in national parliaments**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on June 7, 2011).

## **VII. Migration, Gender-based Job Discrimination, and Sex Trafficking**

Over the last few decades, women are being given more and more opportunities to become a part of the professional work place. As a result, many are moving from rural areas to urban areas. However, not every woman is able to find a job, and therefore, many still continue to being forced into sex trafficking, a still popular industry in Thailand.

### **VII.1. Migration**

As had been shown above, women are being offered more educational opportunities than before, and it is becoming increasingly accepted for women to become a part of the work force. This is causing many women to migrate from rural areas to urban areas to seek jobs. But even before the increase in the education level of Thai women, many Thai women were migrating to urban centers. The main reason for this migration has been due to experiencing different levels of development between rural and urban areas, which started to occur around the time of World War II, when Bangkok was thriving economically and politically.<sup>18</sup>

Oftentimes, the gender of a particular person influences their migration patterns. Men still migrate more often than women, but their patterns are different: females dominate rural-urban migration streams while males dominate urban-to-rural streams.<sup>19</sup> Currently, more and more women are beginning to migrate towards Bangkok. These women tend to be younger, as they are the ones looking for jobs because there is an arising expectation that these women will be able to provide for themselves and their parents. More jobs are also being offered to these women because companies know that they can hire women for slightly less pay.<sup>20</sup> In addition, educational

<sup>18</sup> Pejaranonda, Santipaporn and Guest (1995).

<sup>19</sup> Pejaranonda, Santipaporn and Guest (1995).

<sup>20</sup> Pejaranonda, Santipaporn and Guest (1995).

opportunities were not as good for women in rural areas as in urban areas. Since many jobs in the city are hospitality related, they do not require someone with a high educational background.

In addition to movement and migration by Thai people within the country, many women migrated to Thailand from poorer neighboring countries as well as politically more oppressed neighbors, especially during the late 1990s from Burma (now Myanmar). Unfortunately, during migration, many Burmese women and girls are highly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse as they are physically isolated from their communities when working as domestic workers in private houses and in the sex industry. This makes the establishment of safety networks difficult and often dangerous.<sup>21</sup> Although many of these women were caught in Thailand illegally and returned to Burma, they began somewhat of a women's movement with Thai women. Even female students began to get involved as the Thai woman noticed the injustices of the Burmese women. As stated in O'Kane (2006, p. 246), "[f]or most women activists, the Burma-Thailand borderlands provided their first opportunities to engage with each other across barriers of ethnic difference."

## **VII.2. Gender-based Job Discrimination**

Thai women are migrating, in large part, to seek jobs as they become an increasing part of the educated work force in Thailand. They are being given opportunities that they were not provided with before the 1990s. Women are still not being treated as equal to men, but the gap is narrowing. Previously, women were unable to hold the same jobs as many men in Thailand. Historically, it was a women's job to take care of children and to tend to the household. Since the 1880s, and especially during the Vietnam War, many women have worked as sex slaves. Only within the past few decades had Thai women been present in the formal work place. The heaviest concentration of women at the lower end of the occupational hierarchy is in the service sector as domestic helpers, as restaurant and snack bar workers including cashiers and waitresses, and as entertainers, a euphemism for prostitution. According to the World Bank (2011), in 2008, 45.4 percent of women were employed in the nonagricultural sector.

Now, Thailand is making tracks as female professionals are playing a larger role than ever before in the workplace. The participation rate of women in the Thai workforce is higher than the average Asian participation rate of women.<sup>22</sup> Although women still do not hold many high positions of power, there is excitement when they do. "It is always big and cheering news in the media when a Thai woman comes into a significant work position never before held by a female."<sup>23</sup> These women are being credited for the growing success of Thailand. "Women have been and continue to be key contributors to Thailand's remarkable growth. Over the past two decades, women's activities have expanded in all spheres, owing to robust economic growth, a higher level of education, and a falling fertility rate."<sup>24</sup> The private sector has really contributed to women's involvement in the work place. "The rapid expansion of the private sector has opened new opportunities for women [...]. In 2007, 35.8 percent of female workers were private employees."<sup>25</sup> Overall, Thailand's great strides of equality in the work place will continue, and hopefully carry over and make an impact in other areas as well.

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<sup>21</sup> Min with the Burmese Women's Union' Research Team (2000).

<sup>22</sup> Wailerdsak (2009), p. 248.

<sup>23</sup> Wailerdsak (2009), p. 248.

<sup>24</sup> Wailerdsak (2009), p. 250.

<sup>25</sup> Wailerdsak (2009), p. 250.

**Table 1: Number of Women Executives in Thailand**

Number of Women Executives	Number of Companies	Percentage
8 persons	8	3.9
5-7 persons	27	13.3
3-4 persons	73	36.0
1-2 persons	77	37.9
0 person	18	8.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Created by author based on Wailerdsak (2009).

### **VII.3. Sex Trafficking**

Unfortunately, despite women being provided more job opportunities, thousands are still involved in sex trafficking. Many are migrating to cities, but it is possible that once they do, they are unable find a job. Therefore, many of the women may become involved in sex trafficking, a historically popular industry in Thailand. In Thailand, sex trafficking has become a part of the culture. Women are often demeaned and taken advantage of in this country. It is now against the law, but it has not always been this way, and despite the illegality, sex trafficking continues to be widespread in Thailand. As stated in the report by Vital Voices Global Partnership (2007, p. 3): “International law prohibits trafficking in persons. While the Kingdom of Thailand has committed itself to eliminating human trafficking, Thailand remains an origin, source and transit state for human trafficking.”

There are many root causes that contribute to the problem. One specific cause is the lack of citizenship. Referring to studies by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Feingold (2005, p. 26; quoted in Foster Gorman, 2009) states that a “lack of proof of citizenship is the single greatest risk factor for a hill tribe girl or woman to be trafficked or otherwise exploited.” Without being documented in the country, it is nearly impossible to attain a job. Therefore, many women result to being sex trafficked in order to make somewhat of a living and have a shelter.

### **VIII. Conclusions**

Thailand is a country that is on the rise. With more political certainty and GDP growth, there is hope that the economic situation in the country will continue to improve on this upward trend. Over the course of the recent years, political and other factors have played a part in Thailand’s struggle. However, there finally seems to be some stability.

Thailand is historically known for its poor treatment of women. They used to be denied basic rights, and play no role in society outside of the home. Fortunately, all of this seems to be changing. Women are becoming more educated. As a result, they have the knowledge to make a life for themselves. A few are active in parliament by holding elected positions, and people are becoming more accustomed to them holding higher positions in the work place. In addition, the maternal

mortality rates and birth rates are lower as a result of extra care of women and increased education about birth control methods. In comparison to many of Thailand's bordering countries, it seems to be making the most improvements.

Sex trafficking is still a prevalent industry in Thailand. Although it has been made illegal, escort services and prostitution are still very common. Many men make their way to the country just for these reasons. This is the one area that Thailand needs to pay special attention to. In today's society, women should not be demeaned in such a way. As women's roles continue to improve in Thailand, it is important that more is done to prevent this from happening.

Women in Thailand are fortunate that they have been able to rise in society. Although it has taken a long time, they are finally being able to have the rights and access to the same opportunities that men do. Thailand has shown that the country is ready for this change.

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