



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
19 May 2025

Original: English

## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-ninth session

16 June–11 July 2025

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

## Visit to Thailand

### Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls\*, \*\*

#### *Summary*

The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls visited Thailand from 2 to 13 December 2024. In the present report, the Working Group assesses the situation of women's and girls' human rights, noting achievements, challenges and pathways to progress. This assessment is made in the context of the country's current legal, institutional and policy framework for promoting gender equality and the participation of women in family, economic, social, political and public life, as well as efforts to prevent gender-based violence against women and girls. The Working Group makes recommendations for further progress in eliminating discrimination and promoting gender equality.

\* The summary of the report is being circulated in all official languages. The report itself, which is annexed to the summary, is being circulated in English only.

\*\* Agreement was reached to publish the present document after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



## **Annex**

### **Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls on its visit to Thailand**

#### **I. Introduction**

##### **A. Visit**

1. The Working Group, represented by Ivana Krstić and Haina Lu, visited Thailand from 2 to 13 December 2024, at the invitation of the Government. The Working Group expresses its appreciation to the Government for its cooperation and fruitful exchanges during the visit.
2. The experts met with representatives of central and local authorities, parliamentarians, international organizations, civil society and women and girls in Bangkok, Mae Sot, Hat Yai and Chiang Mai. In Bangkok, the experts met with representatives of the following Ministries: Foreign Affairs, Social Development and Human Security, Public Health, Education, Justice, Interior, Defence, Agriculture and Cooperatives, Natural Resources and Environment, Tourism and Sports, Culture, Finance, Commerce, Digital Economy and Society, Industry and Labour. They also met with representatives of the Office of the Judiciary, the Office of the Attorney General, the Royal Thai Army, the Internal Security Operations Command, the National Security Council, the Royal Thai Police, the Committee on the Determination of Unfair Gender Determination, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, the Office of the Civil Service Commission, the National Statistical Office and the National Human Rights Commission. In addition, the experts visited a one-stop crisis centre, the Central Women's Correctional Institution, the Bang Khen Mother and Child Immigration Detention Centre and the Rajvithi Home for Girls. In Mae Sot, the experts visited the Mae Sot General Hospital, a public school and a migrant learning centre. In Hat Yai, they visited the Songkhla Women's Correctional Institution and in Chiang Mai, they visited a privately-run shelter for child victims of trafficking in persons. The Working Group expresses its sincere appreciation to all interlocutors for their engagement and valuable input.
3. The experts also met with representatives of the United Nations country team in Bangkok and of civil society in the four cities. The Working Group would like to thank the women and girl human rights defenders and activists who shared their insightful testimonies and experiences, including those who travelled from the southern border provinces and the northern provinces to meet with the Working Group.

##### **B. Context**

4. Thailand is an ethnically diverse country located in the centre of mainland South-East Asia, with a population of around 71.8 million. It is an upper-middle income country, with the second largest economy in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The country has achieved remarkable progress in reducing poverty from 58 per cent in 1990 to 3.41 per cent in 2023, with women's economic empowerment playing a key role in its development, although income inequality remains high.
5. Thailand ranked sixty-fifth out of 146 countries in the 2024 Global Gender Gap Index, having risen from seventy-fourth in 2023. At the regional level, Thailand ranks fifth out of 18 countries in gender equality and has achieved significant strides in women's economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival. However, women's political representation remains a challenge, with consistent underrepresentation in the national parliament and in local government.
6. The Working Group's visit came at a critical juncture as Thailand took several positive steps towards safeguarding human rights and gender equality. For example, in

September 2024, Thailand became the first country in South-East Asia to legalize same-sex marriage, with the enactment of the Marriage Equality Act. Furthermore, in October 2024, the Cabinet approved an accelerated pathway toward permanent residency and nationality for approximately half a million stateless persons, many of whom are women and girls. Several bills concerning women's rights have also been pending in the parliament, such as the anti-discrimination act, the sexual harassment act and the gender recognition act.

7. Despite promising developments, major challenges remain, with widespread gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence, limited access to justice and attacks against women politicians and human rights defenders, particularly those working on civic space, gender equality, LGBTIQ+ and environmental issues. In addition, particular groups of women and girls, such as those in the southern border provinces, migrants and refugees, Indigenous and ethnic minorities, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, persons with disabilities, sex workers and women who have been deprived of their liberty face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

## **II. Legal, policy and institutional frameworks**

### **A. Ratification of international instruments and cooperation with human rights mechanisms**

8. Thailand has ratified nearly all the core United Nations human rights instruments and is a State Party to several conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), including the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). Thailand became a State Party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985 and to its Optional Protocol in 2000.

9. However, Thailand has yet to accede to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967. Furthermore, the Government has not yet ratified the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) or the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143).

### **B. Domestic legal and institutional framework**

10. The Constitution of Thailand B.E. 2560 (2017) guarantees equality between men and women and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Notably, section 71 of the Constitution also establishes the State's commitment to gender-responsive budgeting.

11. Thailand has various legislative and institutional frameworks for promoting gender equality, including the Gender Equality Act of 2015, the Ministerial Regulation on the Promotion and Coordination of Women's Affairs, the Women's Development Strategy 2023–2027, the National Strategy 2018–2037 and the National Economic and Social Development Plan 2023–2027, among others. Thailand has also established a National Committee on the Policy and Strategy for the Advancement of Women under the Office of the Prime Minister, as well as the Committee for the Promotion of Gender Equality and the Committee on Unfair Gender Discrimination Complaints.

12. The Gender Equality Act is the main legislation in Thailand that prohibits discrimination based on sex and gender. The law defines unjust gender discrimination as any act or omission that unfairly causes division, excludes or limits one's rightful benefits directly or indirectly on the grounds that one is male, female or expresses oneself differently from one's sex assigned at birth. While the Act protects a broad range of women and girls, including LGBTIQ+ women and girls, section 17, paragraph 2, grants exemptions

for gender-based discrimination based on religious principles or national security, leaving women and girls in the southern border provinces outside the protection of the law.

13. The Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development, under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, serves as the national-level coordinating agency on gender equality. The Working Group found that, despite the increase in budget allocations for 2024, the country's national women's machinery remains underfunded and understaffed, which undermines efforts to promote gender equality. There is also a lack of implementation and understanding of gender-responsive budgeting across the ministries, despite the requirement under the Constitution.

14. The Working Group welcomes the Women's Development Strategy 2023–2027, which prioritizes the development of women's human capital, elimination of violence against women, women's participation in decision-making, and public engagement to foster gender equality. These priorities should be mainstreamed with sufficient resources at both the national and the local levels, including through the Chief Gender Equality Officers and Gender Focal Points in each ministry and department, who should be equipped with the authority, capacity and training to substantively implement these priorities in their respective offices.

15. The Working Group notes with appreciation the awareness-raising activities of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand, including developing a curriculum for human rights education. It hopes that the Commission can step up its protection mandate, especially in relation to women human rights defenders and unannounced visits to places of detention. The independence of the Commission should be strengthened and safeguarded and its powers to enforce recommendations – which were weakened through the most recent Constitutional amendment – should be reinstated.

### III. Public and political life

#### A. Elected and appointed positions

16. According to government data,<sup>1</sup> women are underrepresented in elected office in Thailand, both at the local and the national levels. At the national level, 19.2 per cent of parliamentarians, 10.4 per cent of senators and 11.4 per cent of House committee chairpersons are women, as are 22 per cent of Cabinet members, only 20 per cent of whom (four women) are ministers. At the local level, 7.1 per cent of chief executives of provincial administrative organizations, 10.04 per cent of mayors and 9.31 per cent of chief executives of subdistrict administrative organizations are women. Furthermore, only 37 per cent of ambassadors are women. The Working Group urges the Government to increase the representation of women at the highest levels of public life, given that gender parity (50:50) is a key indicator of gender equality.<sup>2</sup>

17. While section 90 of the Constitution of Thailand specifies that political parties, in sending a candidate for election on a party list basis, must take into consideration candidates from different regions and ensure gender equality, there is no formal gender quota for women in politics. Although some political parties have voluntarily adopted gender quotas, this has failed to systematically address the consistently lagging representation of women in politics.

18. The Working Group is seriously concerned about reports that women politicians are often targets of gender-based harassment and violence, particularly online, and that sexual remarks, defamation, violations of privacy, intimidation, threats and hate speech are

<sup>1</sup> CEDAW/C/THA/6-7.

<sup>2</sup> Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, art. 4, and Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendations No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems and No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures.

commonplace for them. All acts that suppress women's voices in politics must be held to account and women politicians must be protected from all forms of violence.

## **B. Justice sector**

19. While there is growing representation of women in various parts of the justice sector, women remain underrepresented in the judiciary and in law enforcement, particularly in leadership roles. According to government data, in 2021, 9.54 per cent of police officers, 28.73 per cent of public prosecutors and 35.9 per cent of judges were women. In the Royal Thai Police, 17.5 per cent of police officers and only 7 deputy commissioners and 18 commanders were women.

20. The Working Group expresses strong regret about the 2018 decision of the Royal Police Cadet Academy, the only police institution in Thailand to produce commissioned police officers, to require the completion of a pre-cadet academy, which is open only to boys. This requirement, which effectively banned women from enrolling in the Academy, is a clear manifestation of gender discrimination and a dangerous precedent that reinforces negative gender stereotypes of women being unfit to work as police officers. While other pathways remain for women to become police officers, the ban has resulted in women missing out on valuable networking and career opportunities, lowering their chance of entering and advancing in the profession. The Working Group therefore strongly urges the Academy to revoke the ban and encourages the Government to expand pathways for women to enter and advance within the justice sector.

## **C. Women and girl human rights defenders**

21. Thailand has a vibrant civil society in which women human rights defenders have played a key role in advocating for democracy, gender equality, environmental protection, land rights and LGBTIQ+ issues, among others. Yet women human rights defenders, similar to women politicians, routinely face gender-based violence both offline and online, and there are no laws that ban hate speech or hate crimes.

22. Many women activists, including students and teenage girls, have reportedly faced mistreatment from the authorities while participating in demonstrations and peaceful pro-democracy protests. Since 2020, several of them have faced arrest and charges under sections 112 and 116 of the Penal Code, and have been interrogated and placed in pretrial detention. Even after their release on bail, some have been required to abide by conditions, such as wearing an electronic monitoring bracelet, curfews and travel restrictions, despite not having faced trial. Furthermore, several of them have reportedly been targeted by State-sanctioned Pegasus spyware on their personal devices, compromising their private information and facing surveillance.

23. Women human rights defenders who have been sentenced with imprisonment have reportedly faced severe financial hardship, difficulty caring for their family members, including young children, and deteriorating health conditions. The Working Group expresses serious concern about the charges brought against at least 470 women human rights defenders for participating in pro-democracy activities since July 2020. It urges the Government to refrain from suppressing their freedom of expression and assembly and to ensure their protection, in accordance with international human rights standards.

24. In the digital space, women human rights defenders have faced online harassment, intimidation and hate speech, including doxing, rape threats and sharing of non-consensual photographs. The Working Group was told that, since they are regarded as subverting the stereotypical perceptions of women in Thai society as being reserved and demure, women human rights defenders face gendered stigmatization and are labelled as "aggressive" or "bad" for speaking out on political and human rights issues. Some have also reportedly been called "prostitutes" by opponents in an effort to delegitimize their advocacy.

25. Furthermore, several women human rights defenders reported being targets of judicial harassment through strategic lawsuits against public participation initiated by

companies, private individuals and State authorities. The consequences of such lawsuits, even if resolved in favour of the women human rights defenders, are devastating, due to the protracted and expensive nature of litigation, as legal aid is often not available or is insufficient to properly defend their cases.

26. The Working Group is also concerned that the recent draft law on associations and foundations, proposed by the Ministry of Interior in 2024, may allow for the undue targeting of women-led, LGBTIQ+ and Indigenous organizations. The draft law would reportedly require all associations and foundations to register with the Ministry, with criminal penalties for failure to do so, and to disclose foreign funding. Furthermore, it would give the Ministry the authority to dissolve organizations on arbitrary grounds, such as being harmful to “public order” or “public morality”. The experts urge Thailand to ensure that these concerns do not materialize and to foster an enabling environment for civil society organizations.

## IV. Economic and social life

### A. Women’s participation in the labour force and entrepreneurship

27. Thailand has made notable strides in its legal and policy framework to empower women economically. The Government has enacted the Labour Protection Act (No. 7) B.E. 2562 (2019), which requires employers to provide equal pay for work of equal value. The Government has also instituted policies for the protection of domestic workers, including Ministerial Regulation 15, which extended entitlements to minimum wage, overtime pay and maternity leave to domestic workers, as well as protection from discrimination, prohibition of dismissal due to pregnancy and working hour limitations.

28. The labour force participation rate for women is 80.5 per cent, compared with 94 per cent for men. Despite the existence of equal pay laws, women’s wages still lag behind those of men by 10.94 per cent and the ratio of business ownership is higher among men (60 per cent) than women (40 per cent). According to the Thai National Statistical Office, the percentage of women executives in both the public and the private sectors was 36.66 per cent in 2024 and women represent approximately 20 per cent of the directors and board members of companies listed on the Stock Exchange of Thailand.

29. Nearly half of the women in the labour force work in the informal sector, often as domestic workers, home-based workers, street vendors and agricultural workers. The Working Group encourages the Government to continue expanding pathways to formal work for women, while increasing protections for those in the informal sectors.

30. Gendered expectations regarding paid and unpaid care work considerably hamper women from participating equally in the workplace. According to the World Bank, women in Thailand spend 3.2 times as much time on unpaid domestic and care work than men.<sup>3</sup> Research conducted by the United Nations Development Programme in 2019 indicates that women’s unpaid care work in Thailand constituted approximately 4.2 per cent of gross domestic product.<sup>4</sup>

31. With the ageing society in Thailand, disproportionate care work by women is likely to further affect women’s right to equal employment in the future. Moreover, the disparity in maternity and paternity leave policies further reinforces the gendered expectation of childcare in Thailand. While the Working Group welcomes the extension of paid maternity leave in the private sector to 98 days, it regrets that paternity leave is only 15 days and is guaranteed only in the public sector.

32. The Working Group welcomes the fact that the Government is partnering with several organizations to launch a campaign called “Housework is everyone’s responsibility,

<sup>3</sup> See <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/thailand>.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Development Programme, “Thai women’s unpaid care and domestic work and the impact on decent employment” (Bangkok, 2022), p. 28.

both genders can do it". The experts encourage Thailand to expand its efforts to change gendered perceptions of care work, while increasing public investment in care and support services for children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

## **B. Education**

33. The Government provides 12 years of free basic education in public schools, in addition to 3 years of free pre-primary schooling. Education is compulsory up to the ninth grade. Nearly all children in Thailand complete primary education and 94 per cent of girls complete lower secondary education, compared to 85 per cent of boys. Some 73 per cent of girls complete upper secondary education, in contrast to 64 per cent of boys, and 48 per cent of women complete at least two years of tertiary education, as opposed to 33 per cent of men. Nevertheless, women remain underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, although Thailand has a higher percentage of female researchers in those four fields than other countries in Asia and the Pacific and has provided scholarships to promote equal educational opportunities in those fields since 1984.

34. The Working Group commends Thailand for achieving gender parity in school enrolment, with girls outperforming boys in completion rates in secondary school and tertiary education. Nevertheless, the experts remain concerned that the overall educational achievement of Thai children has been declining over the past decade.<sup>5</sup> The Working Group therefore encourages the Government to redouble its efforts to increase the quality of education available, ensuring that every child reaches their full potential.

35. Access to education remains a challenge for rural, ethnic minority, low-income, migrant, stateless and refugee women and girls. Girls without birth registration and identity documents reportedly have difficulty enrolling in public schools. Completion rates for upper secondary school and beyond are noticeably lower for girls from low-income and rural areas, where persistent teacher shortages have resulted in a lower quality of education. School dropouts are linked to early pregnancy, child marriage and economic insecurities, and result in further marginalizing girls and limiting their future opportunities.

36. According to the Government, Thailand has incorporated sexuality and gender education in textbooks used in primary and secondary schools. The Ministry of Education has also conducted reviews of school curricula to ensure gender sensitivity and in 2019, it launched an online programme for the professional development of teachers in facilitating sexuality education. However, the Working Group was also informed that sexuality education is still a sensitive subject in many schools and that the content covered is limited.

## **V. Family and cultural life**

37. Patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes affect the lives of women and girls in Thailand in multifaceted ways, starting within the family. Lingering traditional attitudes in Thai society still consider women to be weak, indecisive, emotional, dependent and less productive than men. The Working Group reminds Thailand of its obligation under article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women to eliminate discriminatory gender stereotypes and norms.

38. Marriage and family relations are governed by the Civil and Commercial Code. The Working Group notes with appreciation that under the Marriage Equality Act, which came into effect in January 2025, the minimum age of marriage has been raised to 18. However, marriage before the age of 18 may nonetheless be permitted with court authorization and individuals over 18 but under 20 must obtain consent from a parent or legal guardian to marry. Furthermore, in the southern border provinces, where Islamic law applies, marriage

<sup>5</sup> See [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes\\_ed6fbcc5-en/thailand\\_6138f4af-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes_ed6fbcc5-en/thailand_6138f4af-en.html).

under the age of 17 may still be authorized with the permission of parents and the Islamic committee.

39. The Working Group expresses regret that child marriage continues to take place in Thailand, particularly in rural and low-income areas. Seventeen per cent of women in Thailand aged between 20 and 24 years old report entering a marriage or a union before the age of 18, and 5.5 per cent do so before the age of 15. In contrast, only 6.6 per cent of boys marry before the age of 18.

40. The Working Group notes that polygamy continues to be practised in the southern border provinces. According to data from 2022, 1.4 per cent of women aged between 15 and 49 years were in a polygamous union. The experts encourage the Government to eliminate this harmful practice, which has grave consequences on the health, well-being and socioeconomic opportunities of women and children, and communities as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

41. Under the Civil and Commercial Code, women and men generally have an equal right to divorce, marital property, child custody and inheritance. Yet section 1453 of the Code contains a discriminatory provision that prevents women from remarrying for 310 days after divorce or the death of the husband, reinforcing harmful stereotypes that view women's reproductive capacity as a reason to control their personal freedoms.

42. Furthermore, the Nationality Act B.E. 2508 (1965) sets out different requirements for Thai men and women to pass on their citizenship to foreign spouses. Pursuant to section 9 of that Act, a Thai man may pass his citizenship on to a foreign wife through her direct application, with a competent official, while a Thai woman can pass her citizenship on to a foreign husband only if he fulfils extensive requirements under section 10, such as knowledge of the Thai language, having a regular occupation and having been domiciled in Thailand for at least five years. The Working Group recommends that the Government revise all gender discriminatory provisions in existing legislation.

## **VI. Health**

### **A. Access to healthcare**

43. Under the National Health Security Act B.E. 2545 (2002), the Government provides universal health coverage to all Thai citizens. Medical expenses are covered for various forms of preventative and diagnostic care (e.g. cervical cancer screenings and human papillomavirus immunization), antenatal care, labour and delivery, newborn and child-related expenses and HIV treatment. Thailand also offers separate public health insurance for migrants, called the Migrant Health Insurance, at a cost of 2,200 baht (approximately \$61) per year. Nonetheless, many undocumented migrants, stateless persons, ethnic minorities and rural women and girls face challenges in accessing healthcare.

### **B. Sexual and reproductive health rights**

44. The maternal mortality rate in Thailand is lower than the regional average, at 29 per 1,000 live births. Some 99 per cent of births are attended by skilled health personnel and the percentage of women and girls with unmet needs for family planning is relatively low (6.2 per cent as of 2020). The experts commend Thailand on decreasing teenage pregnancy rates by over 50 per cent since 2011 and encourage the Government to continue its efforts to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health services for all adolescents, particularly in rural and low-income areas.

45. Abortion was partially decriminalized in Thailand following a Constitutional Court decision in February 2020 that the Penal Code provisions on abortion at that time were

<sup>6</sup> See joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices.



unconstitutional. Under the revised Penal Code B.E. 2564 (2021), a woman may terminate her pregnancy up to 20 weeks, but past 12 weeks she is required to undergo counselling by healthcare professionals. Women who receive an abortion beyond 12 weeks without counselling or beyond 20 weeks may face criminal penalties of up to six months of imprisonment and/or a 10,000 baht (approximately \$300) fine, alongside penalties imposed on their abortion provider. In accordance with international standards,<sup>7</sup> Thailand should revise the Penal Code to fully decriminalize abortion and abolish the mandatory counselling requirement beyond 12 weeks, especially given reports that healthcare providers often counsel women against receiving an abortion, require parental or spousal consent, and seek to delay women's decisions until abortion no longer becomes an option.

46. The Working Group is concerned that, despite the partial legalization of abortion, access to safe and legal abortion remains insufficient due to high costs, the limited number of providers (abortion is reportedly available in only about 10 per cent of hospitals), stigma against abortion and conscientious objection by medical practitioners. The experts were told that when doctors who conscientiously object to abortion refer women to another provider, those providers, too, often try to convince the women not to have an abortion. Furthermore, women are sometimes referred to private clinics where the cost of abortion is prohibitively high. As a result, unsafe abortion continues to be a serious threat to women's and girls' health in Thailand, with some estimated 100,000 unsafe abortions performed each year, resulting in serious complications. The Working Group urges the Government to invest significant resources towards expanding access to safe abortion.

## **VII. Gender-based violence against women and girls**

### **A. General prevalence and manifestations**

47. Gender-based violence against women and girls, particularly sexual violence and domestic violence, remains an epidemic that seriously hampers gender equality in Thailand. Recent data indicate that over 30,000 cases of sexual violence against women and girls occur each year, yet only around 5,000 cases are reported to the police and only around 1,500 cases result in an arrest. Sexual violence against girls aged between 10 to 18 remains a serious concern, with a major one-stop crisis centre in Bangkok reporting that 60 per cent of the survivors are in that age group.

48. In 2024, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security recorded 3,421 incidents of domestic violence, most of which involved female victims. The Operation Centre of the Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development also recorded 2,222 cases of domestic violence, 1,797 of which involved female victims. However, victims sought and received assistance for legal proceedings in only 294 cases, indicating a serious prosecution gap.

49. In addition, technology-facilitated gender-based violence is reportedly commonplace, although no official statistics are available. Many women and girls face online sexual harassment, cyberbullying, image-based abuse and doxing, among other forms of violence.

50. Trafficking in persons also remains a significant challenge in Thailand, which is a major origin, transit and destination country in the region. Traffickers exploit women and girls for the purposes of enforced prostitution, child pornography and forced labour. Migrant, ethnic minority and Indigenous women and girls are particularly at risk of exploitation, with limited prevention, access to justice and support mechanisms in place.

### **B. Legislation on gender-based violence**

51. The Working Group welcomes the progress in enacting gender-based violence legislation since 2007, including the criminalization of marital rape. Nevertheless, it is

<sup>7</sup> World Health Organization, *Abortion care guideline* (Geneva, 2022).

concerned that the Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act, B.E. 2550 (2007), which is still in force and under revision, prioritizes family reconciliation over access to justice and safety of survivors. The Working Group was told that very few domestic violence cases go to trial. Instead, survivors are often pressured into “reconciliation” with their abusers, and police and judicial officers often discourage formal complaints and suggest mediation as the “first step”. The experts are concerned that mediation with the perpetrator creates heightened risks for women and girls, as many are forced to stay in households where they experience continued abuse. Furthermore, it leads to low prosecution rates and a lack of accountability for perpetrators of domestic violence.

52. Sexual harassment is prohibited under various laws in Thailand, yet provisions criminalizing stalking or online forms of sexual harassment are missing and the penalties for sexual harassment offences are relatively light, often resulting in fines only.

53. Female genital mutilation is still practised in certain parts of Thailand, such as the southern border provinces, yet there is no law prohibiting female genital mutilation or official statistics on its prevalence. The experts were told that the female genital mutilation practised in Thailand is understood to be a less physically invasive procedure than that practised elsewhere. The Working Group emphasizes that no matter its particularities, female genital mutilation is contrary to international human rights standards and may constitute a form of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment of women and girls.<sup>8</sup>

54. Thailand has enacted the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act B.E. 2551 (2008) to address all forms of trafficking, with an emphasis on prevention and prosecution, and protection of victims. In particular, section 34 of the Act provides that victims have the right to legal assistance and financial compensation. For sex trafficking and enforced prostitution, the Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act B.E. 2539 (1996) is applicable as well.

55. The Working Group remains concerned that the Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act deters sex workers and undocumented victims of sexual exploitation from reporting abuse due to the fear of arrest and prosecution under the Act. The legislative proposal to decriminalize sex work should be adopted, ensuring that sex workers are not unduly stigmatized and prosecuted due to the conflation with victims of trafficking.<sup>9</sup>

56. The experts were told that many sex workers, including undocumented migrants, Indigenous women and LGBTIQ+ women, were driven to the profession due to economic hardship and marginalization. Compounding their challenges, they reported facing routine harassment, invasive body searches, device confiscation, unnecessary substance abuse tests and extortion from law enforcement officers, who sometimes pretended to be clients and then demanded bribes and/or sex, using the threat of arrest or even deportation. Victims are unable to report such incidents and access legal recourse as the law enforcement officers are the ones exploiting them. Given that the criminalization of sex work enables corruption and sextortion by law enforcement officials, decriminalization is imperative to better protect sex workers from violence and exploitation.

### C. State response to gender-based violence

57. Thailand has taken a number of commendable steps to address the needs of survivors of gender-based violence. The Ministry of Public Health operates one-stop crisis centres in various healthcare facilities, with a total of 10,611 facilities nationwide. One-stop crisis centres receive reports, screen, diagnose and provide medical and psychosocial care to victims, as well as offering legal advice, counselling and referrals to relevant social agencies. The Government has also established a Social Assistance Centre that provides a 24/7 hotline for victims to report violence. Furthermore, there are Child and Family Homes in every province that provide temporary shelter for survivors, as well as Family Violence

<sup>8</sup> A/HRC/31/57.

<sup>9</sup> See the Working Group’s guidance document on eliminating discrimination against sex workers and securing their human rights (A/HRC/WG.11/39/1).

Prevention Operations Centres, where a government official is available to assist survivors of domestic violence.

58. While well-intentioned, the one-stop crisis centres often lack sufficient and specially trained staff and dedicated resources to fully support survivors, particularly in rural areas. The Working Group was told that existing hospital staff are assigned to take on the role of running the one-stop crisis centres on top of their regular jobs and that there are no case workers.

59. Reportedly, survivors who come to one-stop crisis centres are often able to receive only emergency care at these facilities and are left to cover their own expenses for transportation, DNA testing and other necessary services. Furthermore, while there is a roster of local pro bono lawyers available to counsel survivors, survivors cannot specifically ask for a woman lawyer to be assigned to their case, which discourages some of them from formally reporting the abuse.

60. The Working Group was informed that there is only one government-run shelter for women in each province, rendering such shelters out of reach for most women and girls who live in rural or border areas. Furthermore, understaffing remains a serious problem, with one social worker in some instances assigned to work with around 100 survivors, resulting in a lack of comprehensive monitoring, care and follow-up. Some shelters also have various criteria limiting the admission of survivors, so certain groups of women, such as those living with HIV/AIDS or undocumented women and girls, are refused admission. In addition, women are allowed to stay in a shelter for up to three months only.

61. The Working Group commends Thailand for the establishment of the National Referral Mechanism in 2022 to facilitate the cooperation of relevant agencies, information-sharing and referrals to effectively assist victims of trafficking in persons. However, financial compensation for survivors after the perpetrators' conviction remains limited due to the lack of efficient procedures and mechanisms to trace assets and enforce judgments.

## **D. Access to justice**

62. Access to justice remains a significant uphill battle for survivors of gender-based violence in Thailand. Various factors, including gender biases held by law enforcement officers and the judiciary, emphasis on reconciliation and mediation, the lack of a comprehensive legal aid system and language barriers, hamper survivors from obtaining justice. Many survivors are subjected to retraumatizing questions during the investigation and trial process, such as whether they physically resisted their attackers, reflecting deeply ingrained societal attitudes that undermine their experiences. There is a lack of dedicated task force or specialized expertise among police officers and judges to handle cases of gender-based violence. Furthermore, restraining orders against perpetrators are rarely granted and enforced. While gender-sensitivity training has been provided to justice sector personnel, the adoption of victim-centred approaches in gender-based violence cases continues to be uneven across the board. Given the numerous difficulties in obtaining justice through the courts, many survivors suffer in silence without reporting the incident to the authorities, leading to a persistent cycle of underprosecution of gender-based violence.

63. Women and girls facing intersecting forms of discrimination encounter greater difficulties in seeking justice. Migrant, refugee and stateless women rarely report incidents of gender-based violence, forced labour and sexual exploitation to authorities due to the fear of arrest and deportation, particularly if they are undocumented. When they do report, they face challenges due to the language barrier and dismissive attitudes from police officers and prosecutors.

64. Similarly, sex workers report difficulty in accessing justice due to the stigma and discrimination from law enforcement officers, aggravated by the ban on sex work. Moreover, women and girls with disabilities are often discouraged from accessing justice due to the convoluted bureaucratic processes and lack of specialized support and reasonable accommodations available to them. The Working Group calls on the Government to adopt

robust measures to train justice sector personnel on victim-centred approaches and anti-discrimination and to support the work of civil society organizations providing specialized assistance to victims.

## **VIII. Impact of environmental degradation and climate change**

65. Environmental degradation and climate change have profound impacts on women, particularly in rural and low-income areas. Women often bear the burden of climate-induced displacement and water and food insecurity, especially in regions affected by flooding and/or droughts. These challenges are compounded by gendered roles in agriculture and water collection, which are most severely impacted by environmental changes. In addition, women working in the informal sector in urban areas, such as street vendors and delivery drivers, are disproportionately affected by air pollution and heat exposure. The Working Group urges Thailand to adopt a gender-responsive approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation, ensuring the health, safety and livelihood of those who are impacted.

## **IX. Women and girls facing intersecting forms of discrimination**

### **A. Women and girls with disabilities**

66. There are over one million registered women and girls with disabilities in Thailand. They face multifaceted challenges ranging from stigma, systemic neglect and underrepresentation in politics to sexual abuse and limited access to education and employment. These hardships are even more acute for those with intellectual disabilities. The lack of tailored government support perpetuates cycles of poverty and exclusion.

67. The Working Group was told that after the age of 18, many women with disabilities are unable to continue their education, hampering their job prospects. Without jobs, women and girls with disabilities remain financially dependent on their families and are sometimes left at home alone, which heightens their risk of gender-based violence and abuse. The experts were alarmed by reports of forced sterilization of women and girls with disabilities, which reflects a broader pattern of systemic discrimination and denial of their sexual and reproductive health rights.

68. While the establishment by the Government of a 1 per cent disability hiring quota in the private sector is a positive development, the initiative falls short, as companies can easily pay their way out of this requirement. Furthermore, the subsidy provided to persons with disabilities remains inaccessible for many, especially undocumented women and girls with disabilities and those living in rural areas.

### **B. Women and girls in the southern border provinces**

69. While the conflict between the Thai authorities and insurgent groups from ethnic Malay-Muslim communities currently remains at relatively low levels, women and girls in the southern border provinces continue to deal with its ongoing impact and face unique challenges due to lack of inclusion in peace processes, poverty, child marriage and discriminatory family and cultural norms.

70. Many women and girls suffer from severe trauma due to prolonged exposure to insecurity and violence, yet are unable to access psychosocial support. Several of them have lost family members in the conflict and/or become widows, facing economic hardship while taking care of their children and other family members. Furthermore, some have reportedly experienced arbitrary arrest, interrogation, unannounced visits from and forced DNA collection by the Thai authorities.

71. The Working Group commends the Government for its efforts to facilitate reconciliation and peace processes in the region, including through the ongoing

development of a national action plan on women, peace and security and the establishment in 2019 of the Coordination Center for Children and Women in the Southern Border Provinces. Nevertheless, the Working Group was told that, while women are at times consulted behind the scenes, they are rarely represented at the peace process negotiation table itself.

72. Interlocutors noted that, due to the violence and conflict in the southern border provinces, important issues of gender discrimination, domestic violence and gender-based violence have been swept under the rug, despite their prevalence at home, at school and online. Many women are hesitant to report gender-based violence to the authorities as cases are adjudicated by male decision-makers and perpetrators often face no consequences for serious crimes such as incest.

73. The Working Group is concerned about the complete absence of women's representation among the *dato yutiyham* (Islamic judges) and the Provincial Islamic Councils responsible for adjudicating family and inheritance matters, leading to gender bias in the interpretation and application of religious laws and systematic discrimination against women and girls. While women's empowerment and counselling centres in each province, initiated by private entities, provide survivors of gender-based violence with women counsellors, further efforts from the Government are urgently needed to safeguard the rights of women and girls in those provinces.

### C. Women deprived of liberty

74. The Working Group thanks the authorities for having facilitated access to the women's correctional facilities in Bangkok and Hat Yai. However, the experts strongly regret that they were prevented from establishing confidential, unsupervised contact with women deprived of liberty at the Songkhla Women's Correctional Institution, in violation of the terms of reference for special procedure country visits. The lack of unrestricted independent monitoring and oversight of the correctional facilities raises serious concerns that human rights violations inside those facilities may take place and go unreported.

75. The Working Group observed that both prisons had serious issues with overcrowding. Detainees in both facilities each had less than 1.5m<sup>2</sup> of personal space. In particular, the Bangkok Women's Correctional Institution housed 4,336 detainees, despite having capacity for only 3,609 people. In the Songkhla Women's Correctional Institution, which holds nearly 800 detainees, over a hundred women were assigned to sleep in one room, which had only one communal toilet.

76. The Working Group is concerned that Thailand has one of the world's highest incarceration rates for women and the fifth highest number of female prisoners in the world. According to the Department of Correction, working under the Ministry of Justice, 68 per cent of women detainees have been imprisoned for drug-related offences. Furthermore, 94 per cent of women who received a death sentence were convicted of drug-related offences, while that was the case for only 58 per cent of men who received a death sentence.

77. According to information received, most women convicted of drug offences have been driven by poverty and marginalization. Their involvement in these offences reflects a broader pattern of intersectional discrimination, where women's vulnerability is exploited by powerful actors within drug trafficking networks, most of whom are men, yet women are the ones who are disproportionately subjected to harsh penalties such as the death sentence. Reportedly, judges may only consider mitigating factors enumerated in confidential mandatory-sentencing guidelines, which do not include poverty, care responsibilities or a history of gender-based violence. Furthermore, legal proceedings are not adapted to address the trauma or coercion these women may have experienced, contributing to unfair trial outcomes.

## **D. Refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking women and girls**

78. Thailand currently hosts over 90,000 refugees, most of whom are from Myanmar, in nine government-run camps near the border between Myanmar and Thailand. While the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees conducts refugee status determination within the camps, government authorities do not officially recognize refugees as having legal status, as Thailand is not a party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. The Government has established a national screening mechanism as an alternative to provide protected status, which has been granted only to seven individuals to date.

79. Conditions inside refugee camps remain highly challenging for women and girls and have deteriorated as foreign aid has dwindled. Refugees do not have the right to leave the camps or to work in Thailand and there are limited educational and economic opportunities within the camps. Refugee women and girls are thus dependent on services provided by aid organizations for their basic needs, including food, healthcare and education, which are affected by funding cuts. Alcoholism, domestic violence and child marriage are reportedly widespread within the camps. Women and girls have limited access to justice, exacerbated by unclear procedures on whether gender-based violence cases are to be adjudicated through an internal camp justice system or referred to the Thai authorities. Furthermore, survivors of gender-based violence are often unable to leave the vicinity of their perpetrators, making it even more difficult to come forward without fearing reprisals.

80. Since the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, more than 40,000 additional people from Myanmar, including women human rights defenders and pro-democracy protestors, have fled to Thailand. Many of them do not have an official status. The Working Group is concerned that, despite the repeated assurances from the Thai authorities that they are upholding the principle of non-refoulement – an obligation now codified in the Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act – reportedly, at least 650 people from Myanmar were forcibly repatriated in 2024. Women and girls from Myanmar live with a credible fear of arrest and deportation at all times, and some report facing extortion for money by police officers. They also face significant barriers in accessing healthcare, education and job opportunities. Migrant learning centres for children from Myanmar in the border areas remain severely underresourced and understaffed.

81. Unless they can afford bail, undocumented migrants who are arrested by the Thai authorities are detained in immigration detention centres until they can be repatriated or resettled in a third country. While the Working Group welcomes the Government's operation of separate facilities for mothers and children, the experts observed that recreational activities and freedom of movement were highly limited and access to psychosocial care was insufficient, despite some asylum-seekers facing distress from family separation. Furthermore, the experts were informed that overcrowding, limited access to sanitation and menstrual supplies, and invasion of privacy even in showering areas are significant concerns in immigration detention centres overall.

## **E. Ethnic minority and Indigenous women and girls**

82. There are an estimated 6.1 million Indigenous people in Thailand, accounting for 9.68 per cent of the total population. Indigenous people and ethnic minorities live mainly in the south, north-east and north-west of Thailand. Thailand has officially recognized 62 ethnic groups, including ten "hill tribes".

83. Indigenous women and girls face serious obstacles in accessing basic services, including healthcare, social protection and education, due to the lack of birth registration and Thai citizenship. The Working Group was informed that only children born in hospitals are registered upon birth, often rendering those born in rural and low-income communities stateless.

84. The lives of Indigenous women and girls are heavily affected by customary laws and traditional patriarchal systems, where men serve as village chiefs and occupy other leadership roles within their communities. While they are often at the frontline, defending

their ancestral lands from extractive industries, development projects and land grabs, Indigenous women and girls are often excluded from consultations and lack decision-making power within their communities. Free, prior and informed consent is not sought, in violation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

85. In addition, the impact of climate change on Indigenous women and girls remains a significant concern, given their reliance on subsistence farming and agriculture. Compounding factors such as the lack of government support, limited infrastructure, insecure land tenure and statelessness render Indigenous women and girls more vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity aggravated by climate change.

## **F. Older women**

86. Thailand is one of the most rapidly ageing countries in the world. In 2024, it had over 13 million citizens aged 60 and over, accounting for about 20 per cent of the population. Although the Department of Older Persons under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security has taken initiatives to promote the rights of older persons and improve their access to employment and community participation, ageism and gender stereotypes continue to significantly restrict the economic opportunities and financial independence of older women, particularly those from ethnic minority, Indigenous, refugee and stateless communities. Many live in poverty, with limited access to healthcare and social services, especially due to their undocumented status and remote places of residence.

87. The impact of unemployment in older age is compounded by the significant length of time many older women have spent outside the labour market during their younger years, leading to reduced savings and/or pension. Furthermore, 42 per cent of older women in Thailand are reportedly widowed, compared to just 14 per cent of older men,<sup>10</sup> rendering them more likely to rely on other family members for support. In addition, older women are disproportionately responsible for unpaid care work at home, including for their spouse and grandchildren, often at the expense of their own health and care needs.

## **G. Women who use drugs and women living with HIV/AIDS**

88. The Working Group is concerned that drug addiction rates among women are increasing; the number of those undergoing voluntary rehabilitation has more than doubled since 2017. Reportedly, several rehabilitation facilities for drug abuse remain underfunded and overcrowded, rendering them functionally closer to detention centres.

89. While the experts welcome the commitment of Thailand to providing free access to treatment and antiretroviral drugs to all persons with HIV/AIDS, which has successfully lowered the mother-to-child transmission of HIV, they are concerned that many women who use drugs, sex workers and transgender persons (who make up a significant portion of the population living with HIV/AIDS) reportedly face discrimination from healthcare workers, hampering their access to critical treatment.

## **H. LBTIQ+ women and girls**

90. Despite notable legal progress on LBTIQ+ rights in Thailand, LBTIQ+ women and girls continue to face discrimination in many areas, including employment, education, housing and healthcare.

91. LBTIQ+ students experience high levels of bullying by teachers and peers, leading to serious mental health challenges, which are exacerbated by the shortage of specialized psychosocial care providers for LBTIQ+ youth.

<sup>10</sup> International Labour Organization, *Thailand Social Protection Diagnostic Review: Review of the pension system in Thailand* (Geneva, 2022).

92. At work, many LGBTIQ+ women choose to remain closeted to avoid discrimination and stigma, fearing that they may be fired or harassed if they came out. Trans women, in particular, report facing discrimination in securing jobs, often finding themselves limited to working in the hospitality, entertainment or sex industries. This is further exacerbated by the lack of legal recognition of their gender identity, which creates additional barriers to fair employment opportunities and protections.

93. LGBTIQ+ women also face difficulty in accessing housing and healthcare, and these difficulties are exacerbated for migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. The experts were told that gender-affirming care and critical medication, such as hormone replacement therapy, are not always covered in the public healthcare scheme and are prohibitively expensive for many LGBTIQ+ women. The Working Group commends the Government for its decision in January 2025 to invest 145 million baht in hormone therapy for trans persons and urges Thailand to ensure that all trans women have access to this treatment without discrimination.

## **X. Conclusions and recommendations**

### **A. Conclusions**

94. Thailand has made notable strides in promoting the rights of women and girls in the areas of education, health and economic empowerment. More work is critically needed to promote women's equal participation in political life and prevent gender-based violence, both online and offline.

95. The Working Group urges the Government to build upon the work of trailblazing women and girls – including politicians and human rights defenders – who have carried out critical advocacy on civic space, gender-based violence, environmental protection and the rights of LGBTIQ+, refugee, migrant, stateless and Indigenous persons, and accelerate the momentum on adopting and revising key legislation, such as the Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act, the Gender Equality Act, the anti-discrimination act and the sexual harassment act.

96. The Government should implement policies tailored to the specific needs of local communities, informed by data disaggregated by sex, gender, age, ethnicity, disability and other relevant intersectional factors. The Working Group encourages Thailand to embrace the whole diversity of women and girls and celebrate their contributions to society.

### **B. Recommendations**

97. With regard to the legal framework, the Working Group recommends that the Government:

(a) Ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

(b) Ratify the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189);

(c) Ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees;

(d) Amend the Gender Equality Act in line with international human rights standards, including by removing the exceptions in section 17, paragraph 2, to ensure the protection of all women and girls from discrimination;

(e) Revise the Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act in line with survivor-centric principles, removing any mandatory requirements for reconciliation with the perpetrator and emphasizing accountability;



(f) Ensure the effective implementation of the Marriage Equality Act and the Cabinet resolution providing an accelerated pathway for permanent residency and nationality for stateless persons;

(g) Revise all discriminatory provisions in existing legislation, including section 1453 of the Civil and Commercial Code which prevents women from remarrying for 310 days after divorce or the death of her husband, and sections 9 and 10 of the Nationality Act, which set out different requirements for Thai men and women to pass their citizenship on to foreign spouses;

(h) Amend section 1436 of the Civil and Commercial Code to remove the requirement for parental consent for marriage after the age of 18;

(i) Adopt pending legislation strengthening protection from gender-based discrimination, such as the anti-discrimination act, the sexual harassment act and the gender recognition act;

(j) Revise the Penal Code to fully decriminalize abortion, removing all criminal penalties against women seeking abortions and abortion providers;

(k) Strengthen the implementation of existing legislation on women's rights and gender equality and ensure that all legal reforms are age- and gender-responsive, recognizing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of girls.

98. With regard to the policy and institutional frameworks, the Working Group recommends that the Government:

(a) Strengthen the implementation of constitutionally mandated gender budgeting across each ministry, including through enhanced capacity-building of Chief Gender Equality Officers and Gender Focal Points;

(b) Allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources to mainstream priorities in the Women's Development Strategy 2023–2027 at both the national and the local levels and strengthen the leadership of the Department of Women and Family Affairs in this regard;

(c) Safeguard the independence of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand and reinstate its power to enforce recommendations.

99. With regard to political and public life, the Working Group recommends that the Government:

(a) Adopt a formal gender quota for elected office at the national and the local levels in order to address the chronic underrepresentation of women in politics;

(b) Provide adequate resources, including financial support and capacity-building, to women seeking electoral office;

(c) Adopt gender-responsive legislation addressing violence against women in elections and in politics and protect women politicians from all forms of political violence, both online and offline;

(d) Implement special measures to increase the representation of women at all levels of civil service, particularly in managerial and decision-making positions, with a view to achieving gender parity (50:50);

(e) Repeal the Royal Police Cadet Academy's requirement to complete the pre-cadet academy prior to enrolment, allowing women to enrol on an equal basis to men;

(f) Expand pathways for women to enter and advance in the justice sector, including as police officers, judges and lawyers, through temporary special measures, scholarships and increased networking and mentorship opportunities;

(g) Respect the rights to freedom of expression and assembly of women and girl human rights defenders, including by dropping charges brought against at least 470 women human rights defenders for participating in pro-democracy protests;

(h) Address all forms of gender-based harassment, intimidation and threats against women human rights defenders, including online harassment, doxing and cyberstalking, through prompt investigation, prosecution and sanctions;

(i) Adopt a gender-responsive law ensuring the protection of human rights defenders in compliance with international standards,<sup>11</sup> as well as legislation banning hate speech and hate crimes;

(j) Provide robust support to women's and girls' organizations, granting them adequate resources, particularly given recent disruptions in donor funding, and including them in lawmaking and policymaking;

(k) Ensure that the draft act on associations and foundations does not impose unduly burdensome requirements on civil society organizations.

100. With regard to economic and social life, the Working Group recommends that the Government:

(a) Increase access to formal work for all women and protect those working in the informal sector, ensuring their right to fair remuneration, social security, maternity leave and health and safety at work, including by strengthening its labour rights monitoring mechanism;

(b) Continue to promote men's awareness of their shared responsibility for child-rearing and domestic work, and extend paid paternity leave in both the public and the private sectors to match maternity leave;

(c) Expand both State-run and privately-operated care and support services for children, older persons and persons with disabilities, with extended hours and flexibility;

(d) Ensure that stateless, migrant, asylum-seeking, refugee, ethnic minority, rural and Indigenous girls have access to public education and remove administrative and financial barriers preventing their school enrolment;

(e) Invest in educational quality in both Thai public schools and alternative educational institutions, such as migrant learning centres;

(f) Expand interventions to prevent school dropout among girls, including those at risk of early pregnancy, marriage or economic hardship;

(g) Continue to enhance women's and girls' access to science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, including through temporary special measures, scholarships and mentorship opportunities;

(h) Incorporate human rights education in all levels of the school curriculum and provide comprehensive, age-appropriate sexuality education based on scientific evidence in schools;

(i) Ensure that climate adaptation and resilience policies specifically address the gendered impacts of climate change, including increased risks of displacement, economic precarity and gender-based violence, and strengthen women's participation and leadership in disaster response, resource management and sustainable agricultural practices.

101. With regard to health, the Working Group recommends that the Government:

(a) Provide universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, including confidential access to affordable modern contraceptive methods and family

<sup>11</sup> Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, art. 7, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 19, Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, General Assembly resolution 68/181, Human Rights Council resolutions 13/13 and 31/32, [A/HRC/23/50](#) and [A/HRC/50/25](#).

planning services, especially for women and girls from low-income, migrant, stateless, rural, ethnic minority and Indigenous communities;

(b) Expand access to safe abortion by training more healthcare professionals on abortion, strengthening referral networks and conducting awareness-raising campaigns on the availability of safe options;

(c) Remove the mandatory counselling requirement for women and girls seeking abortion past 12 weeks of pregnancy and ensure that counselling is voluntary, non-discriminatory and non-biased;<sup>12</sup>

(d) Improve prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes for HIV/AIDS patients and drug users, and conduct awareness-raising programmes for healthcare providers to combat stigmatization and discrimination.

102. With regard to family and cultural life, the Working Group recommends that the Government:

(a) Ensure the effective enforcement of the minimum age of marriage revised to 18 years without any exceptions, and impose criminal sanctions on perpetrators of child marriage;

(b) Enact legislation outlawing female genital mutilation, gather data on the prevalence of the practice and sanction perpetrators;

(c) Step up efforts to raise awareness about harmful practices, including female genital mutilation, child marriage and polygamy, working with religious leaders to deconstruct cultural misconceptions and raise awareness of their detrimental effects.

103. With regard to gender-based violence, the Working Group recommends that the Government:

(a) Address gaps in legislation for technology-facilitated gender-based violence and develop targeted programmes, including through cooperation with relevant stakeholders, aimed at improving the digital literacy of girls and protecting them from online sexual abuse and exploitation;

(b) Increase penalties for sexual harassment so that they are proportional to the seriousness of the offences, and adopt proactive measures to combat sexual harassment in the workplace, including by issuing relevant directives with clear reporting obligations, deterrent sanctions and protection from reprisals;

(c) Establish middle- and long-term shelters for survivors of gender-based violence, including in rural areas, equip the shelters with sufficient human resources and ensure that the admission criteria do not discriminate against any particular group of women and girls;

(d) Improve the quality of services provided at the one-stop crisis centres, particularly in remote areas, by hiring dedicated staff (including case workers) for each centre and conducting public outreach to ensure that potential victims are aware of the existence of the centres;

(e) Address the root causes of trafficking in persons, including the dearth of economic opportunities in rural areas and statelessness, and develop effective procedures for asset tracing and recovery to ensure timely and adequate compensation for survivors;

(f) Establish a comprehensive legal aid system for all survivors of gender-based violence, including migrant, stateless, refugee, ethnic minority and Indigenous women and girls, those with disabilities and sex workers, providing, where relevant, child-friendly and disability-inclusive accommodations, access to women lawyers and language interpretation;

<sup>12</sup> World Health Organization, *Abortion care guideline*.

(g) **Revise the Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act to decriminalize sex work, decreasing the vulnerability of sex workers to exploitation by law enforcement officers and other actors;**

(h) **Invest greater resources for the implementation of the National Referral Mechanism and adopt clear policies to ensure that undocumented victims of trafficking in persons can be properly identified as such and are not deterred from reporting gender-based violence and exploitation due to their status;**

(i) **Increase the number of women police officers and prosecutors and ensure that all law enforcement and legal personnel are duly trained to handle cases of gender-based violence;**

(j) **Provide compulsory and regular gender-responsive training to all relevant actors (including police, healthcare providers, social workers and the judiciary), particularly in border and rural areas, in order to combat gender stereotyping, discrimination and victim blaming in the justice system.**

104. **With regard to women and girls facing intersecting forms of discrimination, the Working Group recommends that the Government:**

(a) **Address structural barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities, including by increasing their representation in decision-making processes, ensuring their sexual and reproductive health rights, and developing disability-sensitive justice processes;**

(b) **Strengthen efforts to improve the livelihoods of women and girls with disabilities, including by expanding their access to tertiary education, enforcing the hiring quota in the public and the private sectors, and increasing social benefits and allowances for them and their caregivers;**

(c) **Protect women and girls from the disproportionate impact of the conflict in the southern border provinces, ensuring their access to psychosocial support and financial assistance, and cease all violations committed by State actors, including arbitrary detention, surveillance and forced DNA collection;**

(d) **Ensure the meaningful inclusion and leadership of women and girls in peace processes in the southern border provinces, in accordance with the women and peace and security agenda;**

(e) **Increase women's representation in decision-making bodies in the southern border provinces, including among the *dato yutiyham* (Islamic judges) and the Provincial Islamic Council, and engage in gender-sensitivity training and dialogue with religious authorities to change discriminatory practices;**

(f) **Abolish the death penalty for drug-related offences and review drug-related policies and penalties to ensure alignment with a comprehensive, restorative and reintegrative justice approach, focused on community-based preventative measures;**

(g) **Allow the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand to conduct unannounced visits to places of detention and confidential interviews with prisoners;**

(h) **Ensure that the living conditions of women prisoners comply with international standards, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules);**

(i) **Devise alternatives to incarceration for women, especially pregnant women and mothers, in accordance with the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules);**

(j) **Ensure the right to a fair trial for women charged with drug offences, considering mitigating factors such as poverty, marginalization, gender-based violence and care responsibilities in prosecution and sentencing;**

(k) Combat discrimination based on gender expression and identity as prohibited by the Gender Equality Act, and effectively investigate incidents of discrimination, harassment and hate speech against LGBTIQ+ women and girls;

(l) Improve policies that address the specific challenges faced by older women, including by implementing comprehensive care systems for older persons and expanding access to pension schemes, regardless of migratory and citizenship status;

(m) Protect Indigenous women and girls from the gendered impact of development projects and of climate change, ensuring that they are fully consulted in any decisions involving their land and communities, and increase their overall access to birth registration, basic services and economic opportunities;

(n) End the practice of treating asylum-seekers and refugees as irregular migrants and ensure strict compliance with the non-refoulement principle;

(o) Enhance collaboration with technical partners to improve living conditions in refugee camps and access to justice, while developing pathways for refugees to become integrated into Thai society;

(p) Strengthen the effectiveness of the National Screening Mechanism, providing all asylum-seekers with timely protection and legal status without burdensome requirements, duration and costs;

(q) Remove all barriers to employment, education, healthcare and social services for stateless women and girls, and ensure their access to the accelerated pathway toward permanent residency and nationality;

(r) Improve conditions in the immigration detention centres, providing sufficient space, access to sanitation and menstrual supplies, privacy and psychosocial care, and ensure that asylum-seekers are promptly identified and families are not unduly separated in different facilities.

105. The Working Group recommends that the technical and financial partners of Thailand, including United Nations entities:

(a) Apply an intersectional gender lens across their programmes and take a holistic approach to promoting gender equality;

(b) Develop a targeted country programme and strategy for gender equality in Thailand, led by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and/or other relevant entities;

(c) Provide the Government with comprehensive assistance in implementing the recommendations contained in the present report.