

## The nation newspaper's reporter from Thailand

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Access of New Communication Technologies to Women in Education and Work: Thailand.  
A lot more to fulfil : NCT and Women in Thailand  
Introduction

In Thailand the new communication technologies such as computer, satellite, cable television, Internet as well as telecommunications have become popular and beneficial for general public.

In the pre-information technology era, these technologies mainly catered to business and financial sectors. But now they have become effective and useful tools for education. However less capable infrastructure is the main problem for development of NCT in Thailand. Therefore such technologies are limited within the mega cities like Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Khon Khean and Phuket. And they are still very expensive in Thailand. Hence the women in upper and middle classes have better chances and get more benefit than women in lower class who are the majority in the society.

#### IT Development in Thailand

Since information technology has become a significant tool for any country's development, Thailand has announced national policies for information technology (IT) infrastructure.

In fact, Thailand has had its national IT policy for several years. It commits to a national IT 2000 policy, with an emphasis on expanding Thailand's communications infrastructure and development of human resources. However, in reality, most of IT projects which have been proposed by Thailand are still only on paper. This is because the country still lacks a clear-cut IT policy to proceed with the projects, according to Sumeth Vongpanitlerd, senior research fellow of Thailand Development and Research Institute (TDRI).

He says that Thailand does not lack super-projects, but action plans. There is no national leader willing to implement national projects appropriately. The nation's IT 2000 policy is just a piece of paper. There are no clear paths for the projects to follow and most of the existing IT projects are not related.

The National Electronics Computers and Technology Centre (NECTEC), a small organisation that lacks the power to approve the budgets for IT projects manage most of Thailand's IT projects. The country's leader should do this instead.

The National IT 2000 policy includes 1. SchoolNet, a project to link all government high schools nation wide through the use of the Internet network 2. Government Information Network, the establishment of a network connecting government organisations 3. Information Superhighway, a pilot project using a very high-speed ATM-based technology networks 4. Electronic Data Interchange Project 5. Software Park. These projects are proceeding without the firm commitment from the government to complete their implementation.

Compared with other Asian countries, Thailand's IT development has never been encouraged by its national leaders who have the authority to promote the IT projects. Therefore, IT development in Thailand has not progressed. Thailand's political instability is the factor that has contributed to curbing of the country's prosperity.

#### Access of New Communication Technologies (NCTs) to Women in Education

In general, Thai students in some government primary and secondary schools are instructed to access the new information via compute and internet called 'SchoolNet'.

The SchoolNet provides 'Classroom 2000' project including five interactive programmes: Learning is Fun, Multimedia, Synchronous Learning, Electronic Library and Information-on-demand. By this way, NCT are more useful for students collecting information for their researches. However the SchoolNet is expanding slowly because of lack of financial assistance. In addition, some of the private kindergarten schools and nurseries, teach computer as this is considered modern.

Although, new communication technologies feature a wide range of facilities, young Thai generation does not necessarily take more advantage of the global information as educational tools. In contrast, they enjoy accessing the interactive medium as entertainment like playing games or chatting via Internet. While few young male students access pornographic matters, other female students prefer to chat via Internet.

At the mid of this year, Loxlay one of the big Thai communication companies joined hands with three other media companies of the same size: providing news and entertainment services on internet. The three giant companies are- Nation Multimedia which produces news and entertainment programs, A-Time Media Company which produces music programs and JSL Company which features entertainment on television. This information is provided by Loxlay Information Service, interne.

#### Access of New Technologies to Women in Work

Working in Bangkok where there is terrible traffic round the clock, NCTs especially mobile phone and laptop computer are the important equipment in the life of upper class Bangkokians. The teleworking gives a chance to Thai women to return to the workforce. Moreover the teleworking could also enable some of the women to balance work and family life. They have more flexibility in time management.

Women who work in mass media get more benefit from these NCTs. In the past, many journalists had to report hot news via telephone. By this old method, some misunderstandings could occur. But now in the world of competition on 'fastest and truth' reporting has become very effective with the help of computer, mobile phone as well as satellite.

Mass media companies are subscribers of news agencies like CNN, BBC, Reuters or AP in order to present live and up-dated world news for Thai audiences.

Nowadays, Internet, is becoming the effective tool for women in mass media. In case of interviewing or getting latest global information, Internet makes their work easier. By this way, the journalists can save the budgets for transportation and also time.

However, there are some limitations for interviewing via Internet, in case of sensational and emotional issues and also controversial issues. Therefore they have to approach source at the real situation and perceive the emotional and sensational matter by themselves.

#### NCT on Women Issue in Thailand

In Thailand there are over thirty women's organisations providing information and support to the women's issues. They distribute mostly printed information and educational material promoting the human right of women and participate in the negotiation with government, nationally as well as internationally.

The target groups of these organisations are poor and underprivileged people, so the communication media mostly used are printed material. However telephone and fax have become the effective tools for speedy communication.

Hotline Foundation, a government organisation, is the main centre helping women on various problems. The number of hotline centres is increasing slowly. The centres were initially conceived as a short-term measure to deal with the recent rise in violence and crimes against children and women.



The centres study ways to deal with problems such as drugs, prostitution, child and women rights, violation, homeless children, Aids and abuse of women at workplace etc. Internet and homepage are yet very expensive for these organisations. E-mail is more popular and cheaper than open homepage to inform their organisations.

While E-mail is used for exchange of information among local and international organisations, general women are familiar with telephone and fax.

The usage of new technologies such as e-mail and home page on World Wide Web is more prominent in the young generation having high education levels and in professionals.

Conclusion

The introduction of new technologies does not appear to have significantly changed the position and status of women in Thailand.

New technologies are a powerful tool to bring about social change as well as women's status. They can also improve women' attitude. However an understanding of the social system as a whole is necessary to aspire for real change. A deep understanding of the different factors affecting behaviour of people of each sex in necessary to solve problems associated with the male-dominated society.

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