

Note
Concerning the access of women to professions

The Department of the Secretary-General to the Council of Ministers for Administrative Affairs has, by letter No. 8127 (dated 17th. December, 2501) submitted a request of the UNO expressed in its letter so 244 (1-1) date 18th. September 1958 to consider the Resolution of the Commission of the Status of women to study “the access of women to and the exercise by them of public services and functions” together with a questionnaire appurtenant to the matter. Informations at this first stage are especially requested concerning “the legal, architectural and engineering professions” (see details in the communication of the Secretary-General of the UNO dated 4th December, 1957 and confirmed by the letter of the Council of Ministers 13th. February, 2501).

General speaking, it may be said that there has so difficulty to apply the statement of article 2 of the Declaration of Human Rights which says that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind such as.....sex.” The formal adhesion given by the Thai Government to the principles of that Declaration means the acceptance of the wording “everyone” who means both sexes and is translated in Thai by “Touk Kon” which has exactly the same meaning and extension.

It follows that, as a fundamental principle, both men and women have the same rights and advantages unless there is a specific provision of law depriving them from it. The meaning is so clear that it needs not to be reinforced in each specific case by some provision stating that women enjoy the same position as men do. This also is a formal application of article 21(2) of the Declaration which concerns particularly the case under our consideration when it says that “everyone” has the right of equal access to public service in his Country.”

Coming now to the relevant points found in the document mentioned here above (i.e. communication of the Secretary-General) the situation in Thailand for the three professions considered at this stage is as follows.

1. Legal professions

The studies in the law school being in Thailand as everywhere the necessary requirement for exercising legal profession, it must be noted firstly that the Law Schools (two in Bangkok included in the two big local Universities) are open to women in the same conditions as they are to men. Women may be members of the Bar Association. There is a permanent “Women Lawyers Association of Thailand” and they have sent a member to attend the tenth Convention of the International Federation of Women Lawyers Association of Los Angels (August 1958). Besides, they are frequently appointed in legal commission; for instance, there is now a Commission of the Legislative and Judicial Council for the reform of the Civil and Commercial Code as far as the fights of women are concerned : four Thai ladies are members of that Commission.

Women having the required diplomas, although they are not usually appointed judges in the Courts, are already utilized as in the Juvenile Courts (save that those posts are not permanent and there is no regular salary, because they have not yet the status of officials of the Ministry of Justice). However they are protected against eventual offences as Judges themselves are. Already many women are in the Civil Service (Ministries etc.) or in semi-official concerns (Banks, Hospitals, etc.) although still in subaltern positions.

2. Legal professions

There is no prohibition for the women to undertake those professions, but up to now they do not seem to have been very desirous to do it. A few instances only could be mentioned, so that the present conditions in Thailand make it unnecessary to refer to the elaborate discriminations of the "International classification of occupations" which has been published by the International Labour Office in June 1957.

Their work and capacities are appreciated; their initiatives are sympathetically welcome. There are no obstacles to further developments in the near future. One may in Thailand remind appropriately the saying of Madame Lefauchaux (France) that "it is entirely up to women to make equality a reality" since there are plenty of opportunities for women to realize it if they like.