

PROSTITUTION IN THAILAND



WATHINEE BOONCHALAKSI • PHILIP GUEST

INSTITUTE FOR POPULATION AND SOCIAL RESEARCH
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
SALAYA, PHUTTAMONTHON
NAKHONPATHOM 73170, THAILAND
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by

Wathinee Boonchalaksi

Philip Guest

Institute for Population and Social Research
Mahidol University

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A Report Prepared for the Research Project

THE SEX SECTOR: PROSTITUTION AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Prostitution in Thailand

Wathinee Boonchalaksi

Philip Guest

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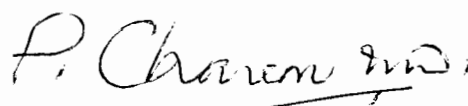
Preface

Prostitution, although not unique to Thailand, has been highlighted both internationally and domestically as being particularly prevalent in Thai society. Although the results of the present study suggest that the number of women involved in the sex industry in Thailand is probably much fewer than commonly asserted, studies of prostitution in Thailand remain valuable as they provide an insight into the impact of development on the relationships between men and women in Thai society. An understanding of the sex industry is also important because of the links between prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS.

The results of this study show the complexity of the sex industry in Thailand. No single approach, whether it be legal or socially based, is likely to be universally effective because sectors of the industry operate differently. Sex workers in various sectors operate under very different working conditions, face varying types of hazards and enjoy different levels of rewards. The study also indicates how deeply the commercial sex industry is integrated into Thai social and economic life.

This study is part of a larger project that involves four countries in Southeast Asia. In the Thailand component of the study, comparisons made between two sectors of the sex industry provide special insights into the social forces supporting prostitution. The results from the Thailand study will be used in comparisons with the results from the studies conducted in the other three countries to further our understanding of the sex industry.

Mahidol University supports high quality research which advances knowledge. It is particularly important that the results of the research can be used to improve the quality of life of the Thai people. The research reported upon here will help inform policy makers and planners about the conditions under which prostitutes work and the ways in which the sex industry operates. It is hoped that this information can be used to benefit Thai society.



Prof. Dr. Pradit Charoenthaitawee
President
Mahidol University

Foreword

The Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR) has initiated a number of studies designed to increase our understanding of the commercial sex sector in Thailand. Much of the recent research in this area has been motivated by the need to develop policies that can be used to combat the spread of the AIDS epidemic. The commercial sex sector is viewed as being a major link in the chain of HIV diffusion throughout Thai society and hence IPSR has been actively investigating the linkages which contribute to the spread of the epidemic.

However, even before the attention of researchers was focused upon AIDS, IPSR researchers were undertaking research designed to understand the social dynamics which supported the sex industry in Thailand. It was recognized that the growth of the commercial sex sector in Thailand was in part a function of the forms of economic development that were being pursued by Thailand. But it was also believed that there were cultural underpinnings of prostitution that were associated with relations between the sexes and between generations. To effectively design policies meant to impact upon the sex industry it is necessary to have an understanding of both the economic and cultural correlates of prostitution.

The research described here suggests that most women who work as prostitutes do so willingly in order to provide support for parents and/or children. Although women in the sex industry are placed in a powerless position in society, the relationship between prostitutes and the sex industry cannot be viewed as a simple case of exploitation. The relationships are very complex and involve benefits for both sides. The workers have considerable freedom, although this freedom is bounded by the needs of the workers to earn money and the desire of the sex industry to obtain profits. The sex

industry provides protection and a predictable environment for the sex workers who, in turn, obtain incomes they could not otherwise attain.

It is the hope of IRSR to continue to devote research effort and resources to obtaining a better understanding of Thai society. The aim of the present research is not to show that Thailand is a country that abounds with prostitution. Rather we suggest that it is a sign of the maturing of social science in Thailand that research can be objectively focused on a sensitive topic such as prostitution. The research results can now be used in the development of policies designed to lower the level of prostitution and to also reduce the levels of exploitation of commercial sex workers.



Dr. Aphichat Chamratrithirong

Director

Institute for Population and Social Research

Mahidol University

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Special thanks are due to the directors of the other country teams involved in the project. An initial planning conference held in Bangkok in 1992 was a valuable source of ideas for the Thai study. Dr. Aphichat Chamrathirong, the Director of the Institute for Population and Social Research, was supportive of the study throughout and provided many insightful comments. Valuable research assistance was provided by several students and research staff of IPSR. Although we cannot thank all of them here we wish to make special mention of Somsak Nakhalajarn who provided valuable input into the project. Finally, we would like to thank all the women who contributed their time to talk to us. It was difficult and emotionally painful for the women in the study to open themselves up to our questions but all did so with dignity and honesty.

Wathinee Boonchalaksi
Philip Guest

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I. Introduction

Prostitution is currently the focus of much public debate in Thailand. Media reports which depict Thailand as a country in which there are large numbers of prostitutes and concern over the role of prostitution in spreading the HIV virus have resulted in an examination of the role of the sex industry in Thai society.

In Thailand, there have been transformations in the form and structure of the sex industry over the last three decades. These changes can be linked to patterns of economic growth which have widened the gap in standard of living between urban and rural sectors and between the rich and the poor. Relationships with other societies, influenced in part by security concerns which during the Vietnam War resulted in thousands of soldiers being stationed in Thailand and many hundreds of thousands visiting for short periods, and in part by the desire to pursue outward-oriented growth strategies, have been influential in the growth and differentiation of the sex industry.

Prostitution, while illegal, is not a disguised activity in Thailand. It has become an economic activity with high levels of investment and is directly connected to tour companies, hotels, clubs, massage parlors, member clubs, mail-order brides, golf clubs, etc. Thai prostitutes are also available internationally, with Thailand being an essential link in the international supply of women. The bodies of Thai women have become one of the bases of growth of the Thai economy.

To understand the development and the role of prostitution in Thai society requires a comparative and holistic framework. Holistic in that social, economic and cultural bases of Thai society must be examined in relation to

prostitution, and comparative because the sex industry is an institution and can only be understood in relation to other institutions. The first part of this study describes the historical development of the sex industry, the different sectors of the industry, the legal framework under and the Thai socio-cultural structure circumscribing the commercial sex industry¹. In the second half of the study, prostitution is examined by comparing the activities of two sectors of sex industry: rural brothels and urban massage parlors. The comparison, which is based on a small survey of workers in each of these sectors, is intended to provide an understanding of how various forms of prostitution are integrated into Thai society at the micro-level.

II. Historical Development of the Sex Sector (Ayuddhya to the 1920s)

There is no clear evidence as to when prostitution in Thailand became widespread. During the Ayuddhya period (1350-1767) prostitution was legal and taxed by the government (Mettarikanond, 1983). Prostitute houses were situated in the area occupied by the Chinese community in Ayuddhya. The prostitutes served both local and foreign customers. There has been a close association between prostitution, migrant communities and economic development throughout Thai history.

In the reign of King Rama I (1782-1809) the Chinese community again figured prominently in the recorded history of prostitution of Thailand. As Chinese migration into Thailand increased and comprised mainly of males (Skinner, 1957), prostitution flourished and was geographically concentrated in Sampeng, a Chinese locality of Bangkok. Sampeng remained the most well-known place for prostitution in Thailand up to the reign of Rama IV

¹ The sale of sexual services is not confined to women. In this study, however, the focus will be placed on female prostitutes.

(1852-1868). Most of the prostitutes were Chinese, while the Thai prostitutes working in the area would take Chinese names (IPSR, 1991).

Sampeng was both a commercial and residential centre in Bangkok for the Chinese. As the Thai economy developed and new communities of foreigners were established, prostitution also expanded with prostitutes adapting to the characteristics of their new customers. For example, as Bang-rak developed as a community of mainly Europeans, it attracted prostitutes who often adopted foreign names in order to identify with their clients (IPSR, 1991).

Prostitution was not, however, confined to serving the foreign communities. In addition to Bangkok, there was a well documented sex industry operating in regional centres. For example, during the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910), prostitution was an activity that was taxed in a number of provinces, including Chanthaburi, Trad, Nakorn-chaisri, Samutsakorn, Chonburi and Chachengsao. The tax was euphemistically called a "road tax" (Mettarikanond, 1983). In Phuket, prostitution developed alongside the growth of coal mining and the associated influx of Chinese migrants and was recorded as early as the reign of King Rama III (1825-1852).

The most common form of prostitution during the reigns of King Rama IV and V involved "stationed women". These women were essentially slaves. Under Thai law, during most of this period a slave was viewed as both as an object and person. Although the slaves had rights and, could redeem their freedom, they were also obligated to serve their owners. As objects, slaves could be sold by their owners. In the case of female slaves, the price varied by the beauty and character of the woman. Women were commonly purchased to serve in houses of prostitution -- the forerunner of the Thai brothel. In these houses there was a manager who supervised the female slaves, ensuring that they served their clients with good manners.

Reports indicate that the houses were very well managed, stealing was forbidden and clients who might forget their belongings had them returned. These houses also served a variety of other functions such as gambling centres (Mettarikanond, 1983).

There were two styles of decoration in the houses of prostitution: Chinese and Thai. The Thai style was characterized by decorations that suggested the room of a rich woman. In the Chinese style, Chinese wall pictures dominated. The most famous house was in Sampeng and was occupied by a Mrs. Fueng who was a prostitute from the time of King Rama IV through King Rama V. She built a temple from the money she earned from prostitution. The temple was called "Wat Kanikapol", which literally meant the temple constructed from the profits of prostitutes (Tupthong, 1983) and suggests the level of gain from prostitution and the general acceptance of prostitution by Thai institutions. Separate houses of prostitution for Thai and Chinese customers were maintained until quite recently in some areas (Havanon et al 1992).

After King Rama V abolished slavery in 1905, some slaves voluntarily became prostitutes and there was an increase in the numbers of prostitute houses in many areas of the country. In 1908, the Contagious Disease Prevention Act was passed with the intent to register prostitute houses and keep them in good order. According to this Act, every house operating as a brothel had to hang a lantern at the front door. Although there was no stipulation under the Act as to the lantern's color, the example used in the announcement of the Act was green so this was the color that was adopted. Hence brothels became known as "green-lantern houses" and prostitutes were called "green-lantern women". Houses with green lanterns had to pay tax and therefore had legal status (Mettarikanond, 1983). There were also "illegal" prostitutes who did not stay at a registered house but who instead

would seek out clients at gambling centres, lottery centres or the theater. These women operated mainly along Worajak Road, Wat Suthat, Rajawongse Road, Surawongse Road and See-phraya Road (Mettarikanond, 1983).

In summary, the patterns of development of prostitution during the 19th and early 20th centuries in Thailand were connected with the large scale immigration of Chinese migrants and the institution of slavery. On the one hand, economic development provided migrant communities whose members were eager to purchase sexual services, while, on the other hand, the bonded status of many women meant that there was a supply of prostitutes. Prostitution was profitable, legal, and, to some extent, acceptable in Thai society.

III. The Recent Development of Prostitution

The present state of the sex industry in Thailand is that it is highly visible, economically successfully, internally differentiated and illegal. It is an irony that since the 1960s the main policy issue has been how to legally reduce the size of the industry while in fact this period saw the greatest growth of the industry, often under the indirect patronage of the government. Three major factors can be linked to the growth of the sex industry in Thailand. These factors are gender roles, economic development and tourism.

a). Gender Roles and Prostitution.

The position of women in Thai society has been the subject of much debate (Keyes, 1984; Hongladarom and Guyot, 1983; Yoddumnern, 1985, Yoddumnern-Attig et al. 1992), partly because of the complexity of defining women's status. A common assessment, based on socio-economic indicators such as education and labour force participation, is that Thai women do not

suffer major disadvantages compared to men (Limanonda, 1992). Patterns of economic development have increased women's economic roles and reinforced their autonomy (Soonthorndhada, 1992). However, there are a number of factors which run counter to these trends and have created an ideology in which a woman's beauty is considered her major asset. Chief among these factors has been the expansion of upper-class values associated with the roles of women. Thai women from lower socio-economic classes, especially those in rural areas, have always had major economic roles and a high degree of autonomy. Much of Thai society, especially in the North is matrilineal, with the youngest daughter expected to inherit the family's agricultural holdings (Potter, 1977). But in upper-class Thai society, women were totally separated from economic activities and were expected to pursue "feminine" interests (Santasombat, 1992). Many of these interests were focused on pleasing their husbands. Furthermore, polygamy was widely practiced by Thai upper-class men and was viewed as a prerogative of position and economic success. Men expected to be served by their wives (Santasombat, 1992).

The stress placed on feminine values found in the upper class has spread throughout Thai society, even though there has been concurrent improvements in female education and access to modern sector occupations. The stress placed on beauty and service to men was reinforced by the mass media. Since the time of King Rama V, the cinema and newspaper and, more recently, television have highlighted the physical aspects of Thai women. This was in indirect ways supported by the government. For example, one objective of the first "Miss Thailand Beauty Contest" held in 1934 was to promote cooperation with the new government (Kobkitsuksakul, 1988). The contest was seen as a tool to encourage women's participation in national development, but used beauty as the criteria of women's success. The Miss Thailand contest has since become very big business with beauty schools established to turn out beauty queens. Women who win these

contests obtain very valuable prizes and are assured of careers as models, television or movie stars, or in public relations.

Other factors associated with women's roles in Thai society also help explain the supply of women available to work in the sex industry. A number of researchers have drawn attention to the deeply-rooted cultural expectation that Thai daughters contribute in any way they can to the support of their parents (Podhisita, 1985; Yoddumnern, 1985; Pramualratana, 1990; Yoddumnern-Attig et al. 1992). This expectation, when it occurs in conjunction with an economic structure which provides relatively high rewards for work in the sex industry, can represent a strong motivation for young women to enter prostitution. The link between support for parents and prostitution in Thailand has been emphasized by a number of researchers (Phongpaichit, 1982; Malikaman et al. 1983; Wongchai et al. 1988). The obligations to parents felt by daughters are stated to be strongest in the Northern region of Thailand and result from an interplay of local customs and a matrilineal society (Pamornbutr, 1976). The matrilineal basis of Northern society provide an added incentive for daughters to support their parents as they will eventually inherit from their parents.

The link between prostitution and obligations as a daughter is only one aspect of the value placed on the sexuality of Thai women. Another relatively common finding is that many Thai women enter prostitution because they lost their virginity before marriage (Skrobanek, 1983) or separated from their spouses (Thaipakdhi, 1973; Wongchai et al. 1988). In both these instances, their sexuality has lost the value that is associated with socially accepted roles (bride and wife), but retains an economic value which can be accessed through working as a prostitute.

The view that men are sexual predators and that their sexual appetites must be satisfied if the virtue of "good" women is to be protected is also

common in Thai society. This is reflected in comments made by male respondents in a study in rural Thailand (Havanon et al. 1992) and is also seen in statements made by officials. For example, a senior police official recently argued that sex crimes would increase if brothels were banned. He was quoted as saying "the rate of rapes and other sex-related crimes might sky-rocket if these men find no place to satisfy their sexual desires" (Bangkok Post, 11/11/1992).

b) Patterns of Economic Growth and the Sex Industry

Role expectations and other social and cultural factors related to prostitution operate within an economic structure which influences the supply of women willing to work in the sex industry and affects the demand for commercial sexual services. The patterns of economic development in Thailand over the last thirty years have contributed to the growth of the sex industry and the types of services available.

Economic development in Thailand has had a strong international orientation. In the 1950s and 1960s, this was strongly related to investments made by the United States. These investments were mainly undertaken for strategic reasons, but the result was large transfers of money and men into Thailand. Most of these men were military personnel who came to Thailand for short periods of time, either to serve at U.S. military bases established in Thailand or who were on R&R (rest and recreation leave) from the Vietnam war (Santasombat, 1992).

It was at this time that Pattaya, one of the centres most famous for prostitution in Thailand, first developed a visible sex industry. During the Vietnam War, Pattaya was selected as an R&R centre for American soldiers. Restaurants, shops, hotels, bars and night-clubs expanded rapidly from North Pattaya through South Pattaya. After the American withdrawal from Vietnam,

Pattaya survived and expanded on the basis of tourists, although a military presence can still be seen when American warships dock for crew shore leave.

But more important than the military-related investments of the US have been the domestic economic policies which have attempted to transform Thailand's agricultural economy into an economy with a high proportion of its national product derived from the export of industrial goods and provision of services (Santasombat, 1992). Economic growth during the 1970s was high, due in large part to high prices of farm products on the world market. A decline in prices of agricultural goods at the end of the 1970s coupled with a rapid escalation in the price of oil, depressed the Thai economy and prompted the government to apply for World Bank structural adjustment loans (Akraanee et al. 1991; Sahasakul, 1992; Brummitt and Flatters, 1992).

A World Bank mission to Thailand in 1980 made a number of suggestions for the development of the Thai economy. Many of these suggestions focused on expanding the share of the economy derived from manufactured exports. Based on the commitment of the Thai government to implement these recommendations the World Bank loaned \$US325.5 million to Thailand in the form of structural adjustment loans, the first loan coming in 1982 and the second in 1983. Based on the growth of industrial exports, the results of the Thailand Structural Adjustment program has been lauded as one of the successes of the World Bank (Sahasakul, 1992). In 1980 manufactured goods comprised 32 per cent of exports and this doubled to 64 per cent in 1990 (Brummitt and Flatters, 1992). Based on other indicators the policies have also proved very successful. The Thai economy has expanded at one of the fastest sustained rates of any country over the last decade, the incidence of poverty has decreased and there has been significant human resource development (Tinakorn, 1988; Krongkaew, 1993).

However, a shift in emphasis from agricultural to industrial exports, and from import-substitution to export led growth, has also resulted a shift in the spatial concentration of development efforts and in labour force demands. The strategy of structural adjustment was pursued in conjunction with extracting surplus from the agricultural sector for industrial investment, subsidizing urban dwellers in order to keep urban wages low (Tonguthai, 1987), encouraging foreign investment and promoting tourism (Komin, 1989).

Some negative outcomes of this development strategy have been increasing inequality between areas and among social groups, marginalization from economic development of some groups, and the increased commercialization of Thai society. These processes are apparent in the contrasting patterns of urban and rural development. Poverty in Thailand is overwhelmingly rural based. The concentration of poverty in rural areas appears to be increasing. The incidence of rural poverty was at least five times higher than urban poverty in the 1980s compared to a ratio of about three for the mid 1970s (Hutaserani, 1990). Furthermore, data on the incidence of poverty among social groups suggests that poverty is becoming increasingly concentrated among those who have been marginalized in the process of economic development. These are the aged, women and those with low levels of education (Hutaserani and Jitsuchon, 1991). Regional inequalities in income also widened over the decade of the 1980s. The Northeast and the North, the poorest two regions in the country, in relative terms became poorer, mainly because the policies of export-led industrial growth have concentrated industries in Bangkok and the Central regions (Chalamwong, 1992). Sussangkarn et al (1988) argue that increases in rural incomes in the 1980s came mainly through a movement out of agriculture. Much of this movement was geographical as well as occupational, with migrants flocking to Bangkok and contributing to rural households through remittances (Sussangkarn et al. 1988).

Thailand's process of economic development has resulted in the inevitable commercialization of the rural economy. Nearly all villages are now electrified and exposed to television media, and transportation links have made movement between areas easy and cheap. The rural population has become increasingly integrated into the urban economic and media markets. However, this process in the Thai context has not been occurring currently with an expansion of rural economic opportunities. The productivity of agriculture has increased due to greater levels of purchased inputs and through mechanization, but labour opportunities in agriculture have stagnated. The economic effects of these changes can be seen on the one hand, in increased levels of tenancy in the Central Region due to indebtedness (Chiengkal, 1983) and on the other hand, in higher aspirations for consumer goods (Porpora and Lim, 1987). These changes have affected the rural female labour force more than males. As in many other countries (Boserup, 1970, Schultz, 1990), increasing productivity in agriculture in Thailand has been associated with decreasing opportunities for wage employment in agriculture for women and increasing opportunities for men (Sakar, 1974; Thitsa, 1980).

The structural adjustment policies pursued by the Thai government have expanded urban employment opportunities for women at the same time that rural opportunities have declined. Government policies for the promotion of export-led development have been conducive to high levels of female labour force participation for the well-known reasons that women are: 1) less likely to engage in industrial disputes; 2) more suited to the repetitive and often detailed tasks required in light manufacturing; 3) can be paid lower wages, and; 4) can be easily hired and fired depending on the need for labour (Porpora et al. 1989).

The growth of urban economic opportunities has led to increased levels of female migration. Migration to urban centres in Thailand is dominated by women and this domination has increased over time

(Manusphaibool, 1991; Phongpaichit, 1991; Guest, 1992). Unfortunately, female rural-urban migrants are confronted with low-paid urban jobs, which while adequate to meet the costs of urban living, provide them with little additional money to remit to their families. In urban areas female migrants are also away from the strict social control of parents and community members. The desire to earn more money and a loosening of social control may influence young women to enter prostitution (Sattaporn, 1975; Malikaman et al. 1983).

Nearly all the research on prostitution in Thailand has concentrated on the economic reasons why Thai women become prostitutes. But there has been no research on the effects of economic development on the male demand for services of prostitutes. The literature which traces the expansion of the Thai sex industry to the involvement of foreign men, either as military on R&R or tourists, view the economic power of these men as an important causal factor (Phurisinsith, 1976; Godley, 1991). However, similar attention has not been given to increases in disposable income of Thai men. As noted earlier, wealth in Thailand has traditionally been associated with increased sexual access to women, usually in the form of taking minor wives. The economic growth in Thailand over the last three decades has considerably expanded the size of the Thai middle class, especially in urban areas. While the practice of taking a minor wife (*mia noi*) continues for some men, the increased spending power of males seems to have been used to obtain sexual services on a temporary basis under enjoyable, and in many cases luxurious, circumstances. This trend has been associated with the establishment of new sectors of the sex industry such as member clubs. Economic development has not only contributed increased the size of the sex industry but has also resulted in an increased diversity in the settings where sexual services are offered.

One of the main developments of the sex industry in Thailand over the last decade has been an apparent increase in the numbers of prostitutes being recruited from neighboring countries to work in Thailand, and the numbers of Thai women working as prostitutes in other countries with fast growing economies, particularly in East Asia. The number of commercial sex workers flowing in and out of the country is difficult to establish. Japan is viewed as the major destination for Thai prostitutes and the government has allocated over 5 million Baht to discourage women to enter prostitution in Japan (Bangkok Post, 22/12/93). Although estimates of the numbers of Thai women working as prostitutes in Japan have been as high as 70,000 (Bangkok Post, 19/3/1993), this would appear to be an over-estimate. In 1991, the Japanese government estimated that there were around 100,000 illegal immigrants in Japan and, based on detention of illegal immigrants, Thailand contributed only about 10 per cent of all illegal immigrants and around 25 per cent of female illegal immigrants (Nagayama, 1992).

There are also believed to be a several thousand Thai prostitutes working in Europe, particularly in Germany (Skrobanek, 1986). Many of these women are recruited from work in the sex industry in Thailand by German men, while others are forced into prostitution because of failed marriages or sham marriages with Germans. Although the number of Thai prostitutes working outside the country is undoubtedly lower than the number working within the country it is also true that more and more Thai prostitutes are seeking opportunities outside the country. In part, this must be viewed as a consequence of the internationalization of the Thai economy. For several decades Thailand has promoted international tourism, with Thai sex workers being a major attraction for some tourists. The contacts made between the tourists and sex workers in Thailand inevitably has established a counterflow of women to the countries of origin of tourists. It is not a coincidence that the two countries most renowned for have "sex tour" packages to Thailand --

Japan and Germany -- are major destinations for Thai prostitutes. Skrobanek (1986) notes that Thai prostitutes are highly valued in Europe because ~~they~~ they are willing to work for lower fees and because they are less emancipated (ie. more submissive) than women of other nationalities.

Both of these reasons, lower cost and a more submissive attitude, have been attributed to an increase in the number of foreign prostitutes working in Thailand. Recently there has been considerable publicity given to the large numbers of Burmese and Southern Chinese women working in brothels in Thailand (Bangkok Post, 6/8/1992). One estimate of the number of young women being brought into Northern Thailand from China and Burma to be 150 per week. In some border provinces such as Ranong, where the number of prostitutes is very high, it appears that the majority of CSWs are from foreign countries. A special police task force which was recently established to combat the recruitment of Chinese and Burmese women into the sex industry reported the "rescue" of more than 100 such women (Bangkok Post, 14/4/1993). Given the possibilities of high earnings in the Thai sex sector it is debatable how many of the foreign women wanted to be rescued, although their illegal status and inability to speak Thai tend to make them more prone to exploitation than are Thai prostitutes.

c) Tourism and Prostitution

The growth of the Thai tourist industry during the past three decades is related to internal and external developments. In 1961, the United States Ministry of Commerce, in cooperation with the Pacific Tourism Association, hired a private company to evaluate the tourist potential of the Pacific and the Far East (Clement, 1961). The recommendations of the study supported a rapid expansion of the Thai tourist industry. This expansion was given a boost through the visits of US servicemen during the Vietnam war. There has been almost constant annual increases in the number of international tourist

arrivals over the last three decades. Since 1960, when there were 81,000 visitors the number of tourist arrivals has increased more than 50 times; in 1970 there were 628,000 international tourists, in 1980 the number had reached 1.8 million and in 1990, 5.3 million arrived. Figures for 1991 indicate a slight downturn to 5.1 million, of whom 65 per cent were male (Bangkok Post, 21/2/93). The income obtained from tourism increased from 31.8 billion baht in 1985 to 110 billion baht in 1991. This comprised almost 5 per cent of GDP in that year (TDRI, 1992).

The development of the tourist industry has also expanded employment in the service sector. In Thailand, tourism is a major earner of foreign exchange, providing a large number of jobs in the hotel and restaurant sector, in commercial enterprises, as well as in the commercial sex sector. There has also been much publicity given to 'sex tours' arranged for foreign tourists. Although outwardly organized sex tours appear to have declined in recent years, mainly because of public pressure from women's groups, they still occur. For example, some massage parlors in Bangkok offer special rates to tour groups from Asian countries. The role of foreign tourists in patronizing prostitutes is highly visible because of the concentration of the activities of commercial sex workers catering for foreign tourists in a few areas. In Bangkok, there is Patpong and several areas in the Sukhumvit area (Soi Cowboy, Nana Entertainment Plaza etc). Outside Bangkok there is Pattaya and sections of Phuket, and also Hat Yai in the south which caters mainly for Malaysian tourists. This visibility has led several researchers to link the existence of the sex industry to foreign tourists (Thanh-Dam, 1983; Sereewat-Srisang, 1987).

Numerically, however, foreigners are probably only a small proportion of the customers of the commercial sex market². They do dominate as customers for certain sectors of the industry, most notably the beer bar and A-Go-Go sectors, but, as will be noted later, these are relatively small sectors. Most clients of prostitutes in Thailand are Thai men. However, the influence of foreign tourists on the sex industry does not stem from the numbers who frequent prostitutes. Instead, the influence derives from the perception of policy makers and politicians that commercial sex is a major factor in bringing tourists to Thailand and therefore the sex industry should be at a minimum ignored and, in some cases supported, but not banned.

Every government in recent times, including the present government of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai has espoused policies of support for tourism. The implications and strength of such support are most clearly seen in the attempts by the government to publicly minimize the threat of AIDS in order not to deter tourists from visiting the country (Cohen, 1988). Since the new government has been in power there have been a number of statements by Ministers requesting that stories about AIDS be toned down in order not to scare tourists away.

Government support for tourism has been more direct in some instances. In 1980, the then Deputy-Prime Minister made a speech at a conference of provincial governors in Thailand in which he said that in order to increase tourism the governors should promote sexual-oriented entertainment in their provinces (Matichon; 18/10/1980). Such attitudes still

² In 1991 the average stay of an international tourist was 7 days. Of the 5.1 million tourists, 65 per cent, or approximately 3.3 million, were male. Even if the unrealistic assumption of each international male tourist visiting a female prostitute each day they were in Thailand was adopted in conjunction with conservative estimate of the number of commercial sex workers it can be seen that international tourists are not the major contributors to the total number of clients in the sex industry.

prevail. In March 1993 the Governor of Songkhla, a southern province, was reported as supporting the idea that prostitutes be prevented from returning home during the Thai New Year period (Songkran) and instead be made to participate in the annual Songkran parade because "their participation would make the procession more colorful, particularly when they are in Hawaiian dress or scantily clad...I think they will attract foreign tourists" (The Nation, 18/3/1993). It is this desire to see the sex industry flourish in order to encourage the inflows of foreign exchange that help explain the government's supportive attitude towards the entire sex industry, not just that segment frequented by foreign tourists. Another form of government support to the sex industry is financial, although indirect. For example, a significant component of the sex industry is associated with hotels, restaurants, and tour companies. These are the same establishments which are supported by tourist promotions paid for by the Government.

The government has also reacted very vigorously against international reports which suggest that Thailand has a prostitution "problem". In 1993 there were three instances in which international attention was focused on Thailand's sex industry. On all three occasions the government made official protests. The first occasion was a Time magazine article on prostitution which included a picture of a Thai bar girl on the front cover and which stated that there were two million prostitutes working in Thailand. Soon after the Time article appeared the *New Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* was published. In the dictionary Bangkok was described as a city "often mentioned as a place where there a lots of prostitutes". Thai authorities were successful in persuading the publisher to withdraw the dictionary and amend the entry for Bangkok. The third incident was a television program on BBC that identified Thailand as one of the most dangerous tourist destinations. The danger referred to both physical violence and the possibility of contracting AIDS.

The protests by the Thai government must be viewed partly in terms of attempts to protect national honor but also there was obvious concerns that the stories would affect tourism and foreign investment. Although some government officials did note that in many respects the stories, although exaggerated, did identify a problem that needed to be addressed through policy actions, the more common reaction was denial of anything unique about the Thai situation. Thai politicians and businessmen appear to be in a dilemma. While there is a perception that the sex industry is an important attraction for a segment of the tourism market there is also an awareness that too much focus on prostitution could depress other segments of the tourist market. Hence indirect promotion of the sex industry coupled with public denial of the size of the industry do hand in hand.

d) Gender, Economic Development and Prostitution

Patterns of economic development, including the expansion of the tourist industry, and gender relations in Thai society have interacted to create the conditions for a flourishing sex industry. A complex set of inter-related changes associated with economic development and gender roles have operated to provide an increasing supply of female labour available to the sex sector. For example, Blanc-Szanton (1990) argues that the combined effects of agricultural transformations, changes in inheritance rules, in which property must be equally divided among sons and daughters rather than going primarily to daughters, and the proletarianization of the labour force have adversely affected the position of women in society. Women are forced to migrate and enter employment where they are easily vulnerable to exploitation and where remuneration rates are low. But they are still expected to continue to support their parents, siblings, and even children.

The low income earning opportunities open to women with low levels of education; the desire to provide substantial support for their families, and a relatively tolerant attitude towards prostitution in some segments of Thai society, help ensure that some of this labour supply will be directed towards the sex industry. A demand exists in the sex industry because of the general acceptance of men buying sexual services, the increased disposable income of a large segment of the Thai population, and the development of tourism which tends to promote the sex industry. A sex industry has developed to match the supply and demand because of the large amounts of money that can be made. There is a lack of research on the economic interests behind the development of the sex industry in Thailand. Information on the involvement of the police or "influential people" in the sex trade comes mainly from press reports. Frequent press reports suggest that even if the authorities do not actually own the establishments, they provide protection to the industry and in many cases moral support (as noted in the section on tourism). A sampling of recent reports from the English language press regarding the involvement of government officers or officials in the sex industry include the suggestion that members of Parliament are involved in providing Thai women to the Japanese sex industry (Bangkok Post, 19/3/93), and the involvement of police and government officials in the murder of a prostitute in Songkhla (Bangkok Post, 11/11/1992).

IV. The Legal Status of Prostitution

Thailand has had three main legal statutes directly related to prostitution: the Contagious Diseases Prevention Act of 1908, the Prostitution Suppression Act of 1960, and the Entertainment Places Act of 1966. Besides these three Acts, it was stated in the Penal Code of 1956 (Sections 282-286) that persons who are convicted of procuring persons for prostitution or profiteering from prostitution can be jailed and fined (for discussion of the legal status of prostitution in Thailand see Malikaman et al 1983; Jamnarnwej,

1984; Saisawat, 1986; Working Group of Public Welfare Department, 1989; Prukongsawalee, 1991).

The Contagious Diseases Prevention Act was enacted during the reign of King Rama V as a result of the perceived increase in numbers of prostitutes. The Act intended to control places of prostitution because of the frequent occurrence of fights and brawls at brothels. There was also a concern, as the title of the Act suggests, with sexually transmitted diseases. The Act was first enforced in Bangkok and several of the larger cities, and was extended throughout the Kingdom in 1913 (Saisawat, 1986). The Act did not make prostitution illegal and was only intended to control the public order and health effects of prostitution. The Act was abolished in 1960 with the substitution of the Prostitution Suppression Act, which is still in force. The Prostitution Suppression Act was enacted in part because of pressure from the United Nations, which was campaigning internationally for the abolition of prostitution (Saisawat, 1986). As reflected in the name of the Act, the intention was to suppress prostitution through making it an illegal activity. Under the Act, prostitutes (prostitution is defined as an act promiscuously rendering sexual services for remuneration) and anyone else who is involved in arranging or profiting from the act, are liable for punishment. The customer is not liable to punishment. In comparison to the Penal Code, penalties are light, with a maximum imprisonment of six months (National Commission on Women's Affairs, 1985).

The Entertainment Places Act of 1966 is designed to control the operations of establishments which endanger the morals of the community through empowering the police to close a place in which commercial sex is offered. The Act also provides for the Social Welfare Department to send prostitutes to rehabilitation centres where they are to receive occupational training. The Act is rarely used, with the exception of the component providing for "rehabilitation" after completion of punishment. Instead, the

Prostitution Suppression Act, with its lighter penalties is employed in the limited number of cases where offenders are actually prosecuted (National Commission on Women's Affairs, 1985). Furthermore, the Act is used selectively. It is rare for the owners of sex establishments or persons in the industry, other than prostitutes, to be prosecuted. This creates an unequal relationship between the owners of establishments and their workers since the latter know that they can be arrested while the former are basically free to operate as they please. To make the situation worse for the women involved, the arrest for a prostitute often means public exposure through their names and photos being published.

There has been increasing awareness of the weaknesses of the current legal framework for dealing with prostitution. On the one hand, there have been calls for legislators to recognize that the sex industry in Thailand is large and profitable and that little can be done through legal means to abolish it. On the other hand, there have been increasing concerns about the need to legislate in order to reduce the large numbers of children in the sex industry. These two concerns have intersected in efforts to draft new legislation.

After a series of short-lived government-established bodies to promote women's issues, a National Commission on the Promotion and Co-ordination of Women's Affairs was established in 1989 during the Government of Chatchai Choonhavan (Tantiwiranond and Pandey, 1991). The committee's task was to support and coordinate public and private sector women organizations in their attempts to further the position of women. The committee set up a subcommittee to examine the prevention and abolition of prostitution. Based partly on the work of this sub-committee the Chatchai government intended to revise the prostitution acts, mainly with the aim of limiting the spread of AIDS. The 1991 coup intervened in these plans but debate continued through the two governments of Prime Minister Anand Panyarachoon. A central aspect of the debate involved the question of

registration of prostitutes and/or places of prostitution. Much of the impetus for these efforts involved fears of the spread of AIDS. The debate, much of which was carried out in the press, highlighted a number of points for and against registration of prostitutes.

Those supporting registration argue that prostitutes have a right to earn a living and that laws against prostitution have no effect on the number of prostitutes. But some vulnerable groups of the population, especially children and "amateur" prostitutes, should be protected from engaging in the industry. Registration would act to limit the possibilities for these groups to work in the industry. Registration would also make it easier to check the spread of venereal diseases, especially AIDS. Another benefit is that registration would better protect the rights of prostitutes since it would give them a legal status (Prukongsawalee, 1991; Santasombat, 1992).

Those who want to see prostitution abolished argue that registration implies acceptance of prostitution as a legal, and even a moral act. This would result in an increase in the number of prostitutes, with the result that more abuses, such as the selling of women and children, would occur. Those concerned with the rights of prostitutes argue that registration would label prostitutes and hence make it difficult for them to change occupation, that it would open up possibilities of further exploitation of prostitutes by authorities through withholding registration or through disclosing a prostitute's registration after they had left the occupation. It was also noted that if the purpose of registration is to control the spread of AIDS the application of registration to the prostitutes is unfair since customers are not being targeted for registration and furthermore, those with a venereal disease would be forced to hide their activities and this might make it more difficult to provide them with medical help.

The issues related to the registration of prostitutes are complex and will undoubtedly influence the new legislation on prostitution that is being drafted (see below). What is often forgotten, however, is that registration is not a new idea in Thailand (Santasombat, 1992). As noted earlier, registration was required for payment of the "Road Tax" on prostitution during the last century and the Contagious Disease Prevention Act also required that houses of prostitution be registered and that prostitution outside these house not be allowed. The Venereal Disease Section of the Ministry of Public Health also has a de-facto system of registration of sex industry establishments in order to provide the workers in these establishments with health services. The main difference between these previous efforts and those currently proposed is that while in the former period it was the establishments and owners that were registered, the suggestion now is to register the sex workers.

The concern over child prostitution escalated when the Government of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai took office in September of 1992. Child prostitution, according to some authors, has a long history in Thailand (see Rutnin, 1992) but only recently attracted the attention of researchers and policy makers (Nawarat, 1987; Archarvanitkul and Havanon, 1990). The current Prime Minister has long been associated with efforts to improve the education and health of children so it was not surprising that one of his major goals has been an attempt to rid Thailand of child prostitution. This campaign was aggressively supported by the Ministry of Interior which has control of the police. A child prostitute is defined as a prostitute below 18 years of age. Estimates of the number of child prostitutes vary widely and reach as high as 800,000 children under the age of 18 (Bangkok Post, 29/8/1992). A newspaper estimate that 200,000 children aged 9-16 are working in brothels in the Kingdom (Matichon, 1/7/1992), while a much lower figure of 15,000 is quoted by the Ministry of Public Health. Based on estimates of between 150,000 and 200,000 prostitutes, and using information from small-scale

surveys, Guest (1993) estimates that there are approximately 30-35,000 child prostitutes.

The recent crackdown on child prostitution was boosted by three events which received considerable publicity. The first was continuing controversy over an advertisement for Lauda Air (an Austrian based airline) which appeared to suggest that tourists should visit Thailand in order to avail themselves of the sexual services of children. The second incident involved the murder of a prostitute in Songkhla province. Early reports that the prostitute was aged under 18 were widely used to support the government's campaign.

Although it was later discovered that the murdered woman was much older, this did not detract from the publicity that the event received. In the following five months it was rare for a week to go by without reports of child prostitutes being "rescued" in raids on brothels (see Bangkok Post reports of 17/1/1993, 19/1/1993 and 4/2/1993), and considerable resources have been invested in order to "rehabilitate" ex-child prostitutes. The problem of forced child labour also featured strongly in the United States decision to place Thailand on a special list for possible revocation of trade concessions.

Although the campaign against child prostitution was recently branded a failure by the Task Force to End Child Sexploitation in Thailand (Bangkok Post, 2/4/93), it has given added impetus to efforts to enact new legislation dealing with prostitution. Draft bills have been widely circulated and discussed. Additional drafts have also been written by political parties and government departments.

The proposed new legislation, which will substantially amend the Prostitution Suppression Act, has been substantially revised from early drafts. Initial drafts included provisions for registration and carrying of health cards.

This provision now appears to have been dropped³, although it could reappear in amendments to the bill. Prostitution will be decriminalized, although not made legal. Prostitutes would be subject to a small fine (500 baht or US\$20 is suggested). They will no longer be forced to enter "rehabilitation centres" although it is proposed that support be given to such centres and that Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's) be given a role in the rehabilitation of prostitutes. The greatest attention is given to forced prostitution and child prostitution. In the details of the draft bill that have been made public, anyone who is involved with forced or child prostitution will be heavily punished. This includes customers, owners and employees of establishments, and even taxi-drivers who deliver customers to establishments in which there are underage and/or forced prostitutes. The penalties, which include prison terms and fines, are much heavier than stipulated in previous Acts. In order to combat the sale of children into the sex industry by their parents it is proposed that parents of child prostitutes have parental rights withdrawn from them.

The drafts of the bill clearly reflect the attitudes of the Government and many private organizations towards prostitution. Prostitution is seen as a "problem" in so far as persons are forced into the industry against their will, are mistreated in their work as prostitutes, or are under-age. Prostitutes are seen as persons who enter the profession because of poverty and lack of skills and therefore should be provided with opportunities to obtain new skills which would allow them to leave the sex industry. Customers and others connected with the sex industry are basically ignored except in so far as they contribute to an environment in which child or forced prostitution exists.

3 Some reports state that the draft prepared by the Department of Interior contains a provision that will make the carrying of health cards mandatory for all prostitutes (Bangkok Post, 9/4/1993). At the time of writing, December 1993, the legislation has not been submitted to parliament. It is reported in the press that the draft bill is being studied by the Juridical Council and will be submitted to parliament sometime during 1994. However, suggestions are still be made by politicians for amendments and this suggests that passage of the bill that will be submitted could take considerable time.

V. Strategies Adopted to Address the Prostitution "Problem" in Thailand

Prostitution receives a great deal of political and media attention in Thailand. In addition, there are numerous local and international agencies which write reports and initiate projects in attempts to solve what is invariably seen as the "prostitution problem" in Thailand (see Appendix A for a list of some the Thai organizations involved). The solutions that have been proposed can be roughly categorized into: legal, social and economic. The strategies can be further sub-divided into short and long term strategies. The definition of the problem varies from group to group; prostitution is variously seen as a health problem, moral problem, human rights problem etc. and the strategies advanced are a mixture of the general and the specific. Examples of these strategies can be found in a wide variety of publications (see Malikaman et al, 1983; Hantrakul, 1985; Saisawat, 1986; Skorbanek, 1986; Working Group on Public Welfare, 1989; IPSR, 1991; Ungphakorn, 1990; United Nations, 1991; Muntarbhorn, 1992).

The proposed "solutions" are mainly directed towards women as prostitutes while disregarding men. Those that focus on men typically stress the short-term strategy of invoking legal penalties or the long-term social strategy of changing men's attitudes towards women, although how this is to be done is not made at all clear. Economic pricing policies, such as increasing the price of sexual services, are rarely encountered. Most strategies are based on the assumption that women enter the sex industry out of poverty, lack of occupational skills, or because they are tricked into entering. Hence the solutions are formal education (to increase their labour market chances), vocational training, income support, and informal education so that they are not tricked. Other motivating factors, such as high levels of income differentials between sex industry occupations and alternative occupations are rarely discussed in a policy context, although they receive

attention in the research literature. Finally, there is very little attention given to alternative administrative arrangements for the sex industry. For example, private ownership is assumed to be the only possible alternative. Other arrangements tried elsewhere, such as state control, worker co-operatives and community control have not been considered.

a). Vocational Training Schemes

As poverty is viewed as the major reason why women enter prostitution, vocational training programs are often targeted at groups of women considered at risk. Some programs involve women currently working as prostitutes, with the stated aim being to help the women obtain alternative employment. Other programs involve women who have been convicted under the Prostitution Suppression Act or who have been rescued from participating in involuntary prostitution.

The Department of Public Welfare is the implementing Department for government programs involving the 'rehabilitation' of prostitutes. Under the provisions of the Prostitution Suppression Act of 1960, the Department of Public Welfare is empowered to provide institutionalized care for persons referred to under the Act as "socially handicapped women" i.e., prostitutes. The aims of the care is stated to be: controlling the spread of venereal diseases, suppressing prostitution, and providing vocational training, adult education, counselling and follow-up services in order that they can earn a living in an alternative occupation after leaving the institution. Under normal conditions women are not to be kept in the institutions for more than one year. Women in the institutions include prostitutes convicted under the Prostitution Suppression Act, those rescued from forced prostitution, and women who voluntarily seek such assistance the Ministry of Public Welfare.

The two institutions mainly responsible for providing the services are the Kredtra Karn home in Nontaburi province and the smaller Narisawad home in Nakhon Ratchasima. In both centres women are provided with adult education at the first and second level (equivalent to obtaining a Grade 4 primary school education and vocational training), mostly involving the production of handicrafts. Vocational courses are either of 6 or 9 months duration. In the first year after their release the women are contacted at three monthly intervals. These contacts are meant to assess their living conditions and to extend any further assistance necessary.

Compared with the estimated number of women working as prostitutes, the number of women passing through the two homes is very small. In the 1992 budget year the two homes contained a total of 591 women with 26 dependent children. Of the total number of women and children slightly over 400 were institutionalized at Kredtra Karn and the remaining 200 at Narisawad. During the first three budget years of the 1990s, a total of 1,164 women stayed at the two homes run by the departments. Even when the most conservative numbers of female prostitutes is adopted this would constitute less than 1 per cent of women working in the sex industry during the period.

The Department of Public Welfare claims a high degree of success in being able to rehabilitate the commercial sex workers. For the period 1990-1992 it has released results from a survey of women during that period which indicate that 80 per cent had not returned to prostitution within a one year period after being released while the remaining 20 per cent probably had returned to prostitution. The validity of these results, however, are very questionable. They are based on self-reports of those women who could be located, or where the women could not be directly located, based on reports of others who claimed to know their situation. Also the results refer to the

period within a year of release and hence do not provide any indication of long-term success of the program.

Press reports and conversations with commercial sex workers suggest that the rehabilitation programs are considered with some fear and of little practical value. The fear is based on being institutionalized for a period up to one year, and the stigma attached to being institutionalized, while the educational and vocational training are seen as providing limited opportunities for obtaining well-paid employment.

Private organizations such as EMPOWER also run vocational training courses for commercial sex workers. However, it is very difficult to obtain any information on whether these programs achieve stated aims of helping women find alternative employment. In most cases it appears that the data is not available because follow-up work has not been undertaken. In other cases the organizations involved were unwilling to provide data. In summary, vocation training and the so-called rehabilitation schemes appear to reach very few women, are expensive and are avoided where ever possible by women working in the sex industry.

VI. The Size of the Thai Sex Industry

One of the problems encountered in efforts to formulate policies related to the sex industry is that there is no clear idea as to the number of persons involved. For example, types of labour market policies required will vary substantially depending on whether there are 75,000 or 2.8 million prostitutes (the approximate low and high range estimates available from the literature). The links between prostitution and the economy also require some estimate of the numbers of ancillary workers employed in the industry, while the potential health impacts of activities associated with the sex industry have to be based on an estimate of the number of customers of sex workers.

One basis for estimating the numbers involved would be the population most likely to be employed as prostitutes. According to the 1990 census, there were 8.3 million women aged between 15 and 29. While there are male prostitutes, these make up a relatively small proportion of prostitutes (see sources cited by Muecke, 1990 and Brinkmann, 1991), and while undoubtedly there are female prostitutes outside of the ages 15-29 this range captures the age group for which prostitution is most likely (for example, Sittitrai and Brown, 1991, claim that most female prostitutes are aged 15 to 24. Approximately one-third of these 8.3 million persons, or somewhat less than 2.8 million live in municipal areas or large districts⁴ which are considered to have some urban characteristics⁴. Since it is generally agreed that the majority of prostitutes in Thailand operate from urban areas the validity of some of the estimates come into question. The 2.8 million or so urban females aged 15-29 is approximately the same as the highest estimates of prostitutes in the country.

Godley (1991) provides estimates of numbers of prostitutes based on interviews and other sources. She indicates that the most commonly cited figure is around 700,000 women. This is in the range of 500,000 to 1 million that Muecke (1990) cites from other sources. This number of 700,000 constitutes around 8.5 percent of all women aged 15-29 and about 25 per cent of urban women in those ages. One of the few studies which attempted to rigorously estimate the number of prostitutes, based mainly on ethnographic methods, produced an estimate of between 150,000 and 200,000 prostitutes (Sittitrai and Brown, 1991). If 175,000 was taken as the estimate this would constitute 2.1 per cent of all women aged 15-29 and around 7.3 per cent of urban women at these ages. These percentages, especially the latter, are

4 These areas in Thai are called *Sukakibaan* and are normally translated into english as Sanitary Districts. In most official statistics they are treated as rural.

possible. The police department estimate is also in the range of 150 to 200 thousand⁵.

The estimate which is the lowest, but which is most systematically derived, is obtained from the Venereal Disease Section of the Ministry of Public Health. The Ministry undertakes a twice yearly survey of sex establishments in order to determine the number of women working in sex establishments. Interviews conducted with health officials in a provincial area suggest that considerable care goes into these surveys. The sex establishments are identified through women and/or men coming in for VD checks. If the person is tested positive and contracted the disease through a commercial sexual encounter the health officials contact the establishment (or the prostitute if she operates on her own) to obtain information on the number of workers, price etc. The health officials also arrange for the workers to have free health checks. The statistics are collated and sent to Bangkok twice a year⁶.

The estimate of sex establishments and workers provided for the survey area covered in this study coincided with our own assessment and those of other people interviewed in the area⁷. The numbers reported by health officials for the massage parlors we surveyed in Bangkok also were in rough agreement with the numbers reported to us by the management of the

⁵ Several estimates are available from the police department. The highest estimate is 500,000 is based on the number of registered entertainment establishments is likely to be too high as some establishments hold more than one license. If they get closed down by police they can reopen with another license. Also the list is cumulative -- establishments get added to the list but not taken off when they close down. The estimate of 150,000 to 200,000 was based on a survey of establishments.

⁶ Therefore, it is a twice yearly collation of data rather than, as is often stated, a twice-yearly survey.

⁷ One health official even discussed the problem of the definition of one establishment, that she considered to be comprised of three independent workers rather than a brothel. We had come to the same conclusion after interviewing them for the survey and based on the interviews discarded the three women as respondents.

massage parlors. Where understatement of prostitutes does occur it is most likely to happen in those places where the prostitution is "indirect", that is where the main function of the establishment is something other than commercial sex. This could happen in the case of restaurants, discos etc⁸.

The actual number of sex workers is difficult, if not impossible, to estimate. The issue is made more complicated by the rapid turnover of workers in the sex industry. An estimate of the number of women working as prostitutes at a particular time will be much lower than an estimate based on an interval, for example, one year. As suggested above, a plausible range of the number of women involved at one point is 150,000 to 200,000. Results from small-scale surveys of sex workers in Thailand suggest that the median length of employment as a sex worker is between 18 months and 2 years (see Guest, 1993). Hence, in any one year period it could be expected that between 200,000 and 300,000 women work in the sex industry.

In summary, we agree with the statement by Havanon et al. (1992) that the figures provided by the Ministry of Public Health can provide a valuable indication of changes over time and among sectors in the numbers of commercial sex workers even though they are underestimates. The most recent figures reported by the Ministry are for the year 1992, with 6,026 establishments and a total of 75,376 commercial sex workers (CSWs). In Figure 1 the numbers of CSWs, and the numbers expressed per 1000 female population aged 15-29, are shown for the period 1979 to 1992. The patterns are similar for both total numbers and for the rates, an indication that there have not been major changes in age structure for this age group, although in the latter half of the 1990s the number of women in their late teens will begin

⁸ In the rural area studied, the Venereal Disease Section listed one restaurant with three prostitutes. They found out about this place from a male customer of the restaurant who had come for a VD test. The health officials admitted that it was much more difficult to find out about these types of establishments. Other informants stated that there were three restaurants in the area where waitresses also worked as prostitutes.

to decline. The slowing of growth at the young adult ages, a result of fertility declines commencing in the late 1960, is reflected in the narrowing of the gap between the numbers and rates. The changes in the demographic structure of Thailand mean that in the next decade there will be a much smaller pool of young Thai women from which prostitutes may be drawn.

The pattern during the 1980s is one of general increase in the total number of CSWs, with a stagnation during the years 1982 and 1984, which coincided with a period of slow economic growth, and some decline after 1990. The peak of some 85,000 workers was reached in 1989 and 1990.

Figure 1 : Number of Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs) and CSWs per 1000 Women Age 15-29, Thailand: 1979-1992

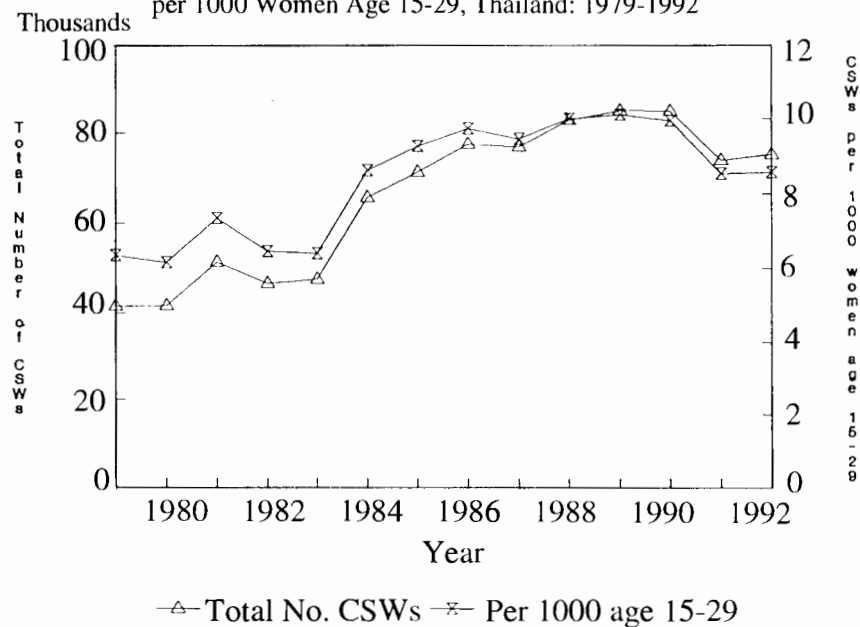
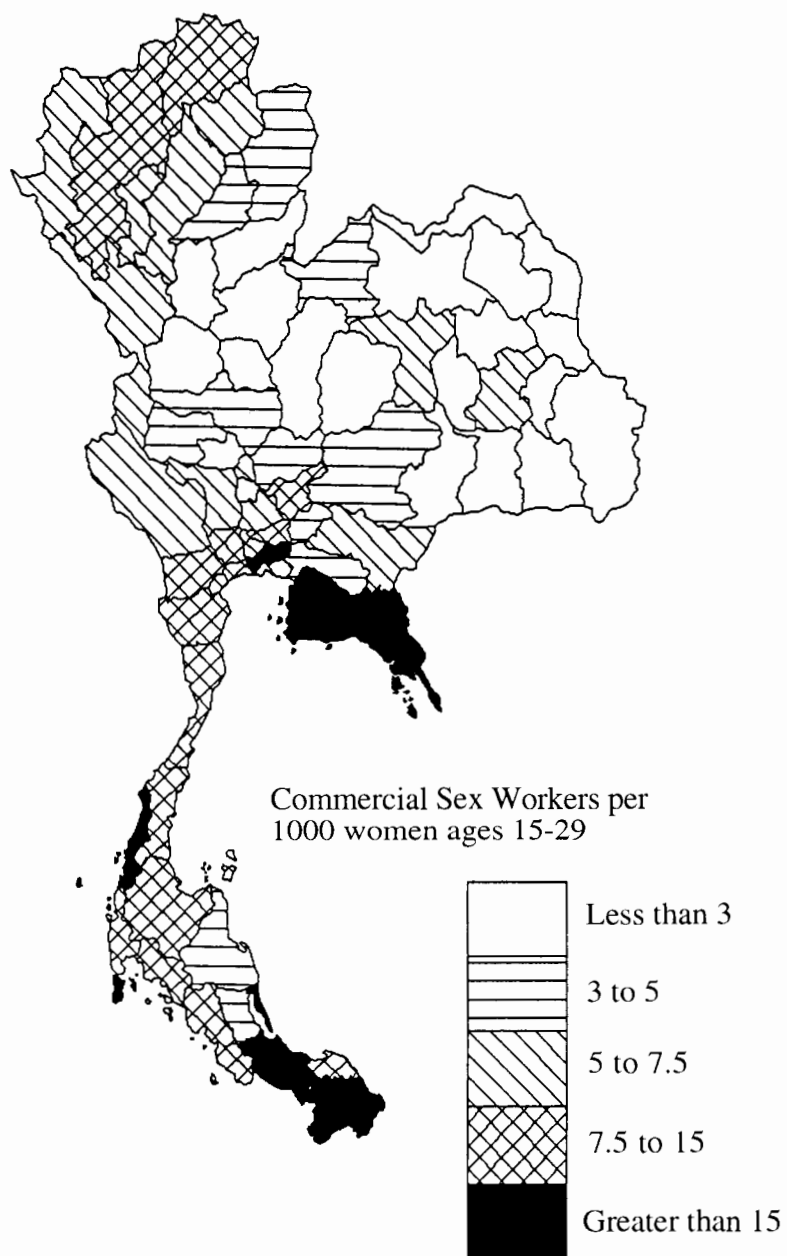


FIGURE 2: COMMERCIAL SEX WORKERS PER 1000 WOMEN AGES 15-29 :
Thailand, 1991



Economic recession cannot account for the declines after 1990 and alternative explanations, such as the fear of AIDS and shifts from direct to indirect and less easily detected prostitution, are the most likely explanations. However, even with the declines experienced over the last two years, current numbers of prostitutes are much higher in both absolute and proportional terms than they were a decade earlier.

The geographical distribution by provinces, expressed as the numbers of CSWs per 1000 women age 15-29 for the year 1991 is shown in Figure 2. There are several important patterns evident from the map. Firstly, the areas that are commonly known to be the main source areas of prostitution, namely the North and Northeast, have very low numbers of prostitutes. The one exception is Chiang Mai in the North, while several of the Northern provinces bordering Burma have moderate levels. Secondly, there are three belts of high levels of prostitution. One is centered in Bangkok and extends down the Eastern Seaboard; a second is found in the central provinces of the South, particularly Phuket and Ranong; and the third includes the border provinces in the far South.

There are many possible explanations for this pattern. Levels of economic development, tourism, or urbanization are all possible reasons why these patterns have developed. Indicators of these factors are strongly correlated with the provincial rate of prostitution. To help disentangle the relationships an ordinary least squares regression equation of the form:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Log (CSW rate)} = & \text{Constant} + \text{Log(GDP)} + \text{Log(per cent Urb)} \\ & + \text{Log(phones per 1000)} + \text{Log(number of males} \\ & \text{aged 20-24 per 100 females aged 20-24)} \\ & + \text{Log(tourists per 1000 population)}\end{aligned}$$

was estimated. Variables were expressed in log terms because of the very skewed distribution resulting from the inclusion of Bangkok and several other developed provinces. All variables were measured at the provincial level (73 provinces) and, except for the dependent variable, relate to the period of the late 1980s. The coefficients of the estimated equation are:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Log (CSW rate)} &= 10.70 + .42 (\text{GDP}) + .10 (\text{Urb}) + .29 (\text{Phone}) \\ &\quad - 3.60^{**} (\text{Sex Ratio}) + .48^{**} (\text{tourists}). \\ \text{R-squared } 0.72; &^{**} - \text{significant at the } 0.01 \text{ level.}\end{aligned}$$

The results suggest the importance of tourism in promoting prostitution. Once tourism was entered into the equation, significant positive effects of GDP and Phone (both measures of economic development) disappeared. The tourist measure, which included both foreign and domestic tourists, accounted for an additional 13 per cent of explained variance after being entered into an equation with all other variables present. The sex ratio variable has an unexpected negative effect ie. an excess of males over females at ages 20-24 (the ages for which the indicators was constructed) is associated with lower levels of prostitution. It was expected that this variable would tap the positive effects of high numbers of male migrants on prostitution. Instead, it appears to be measuring the effects of concentrations of young women. These effects occur after controlling for urbanization and tourism and suggest that in those areas where women are concentrated, prostitution is more likely. Analysis of the residuals indicate that the provinces with much higher levels of prostitution than expected are border provinces in the South and the East, while Bangkok and surrounding areas have lower proportions than expected. The high levels for border provinces may be related to the high numbers of male migrants working away from their families. It is possible that the lower than expected numbers in Bangkok are a result of large numbers of CSWs who are working in sectors where they go unrecorded by the Ministry of Public Health.

The simple aggregate analysis undertaken above provides an indication of the demand factors operating in the development of the commercial sex industry. It sheds no light on those factors leading to the supply of CSWs, although it is instructive to note that cultural factors, which might give rise to a supply of North and Northeastern women willing to work as CSWs, does not result in the development of a strong indigenous local sex industry in these two regions.

Other questions posed earlier about the numbers involved in the sex industry are much more difficult to answer than the already difficult question of how many CSWs there are. In Thailand, the people likely to benefit economically from the activities of CSWs, apart from the sex workers themselves, are: (1) parents of sex workers (through remittances), (2) owners, managers and other employees of sex industry establishments, (3) those in tourism-related industries, and (4) officials who receive payments from the industry.

If we assume a ratio of at least two workers in the sex industry to every CSW (this ratio is probably higher in some sectors of the industry, such as massage parlors and member clubs where there are many support staff and lower in other sectors), and at least four family members of each CSW directly benefiting through remittances, the numbers of people with financial connections already exceeds 1.2 million (assuming 200,000 CSWs). These numbers, conservative as they are, indicate the potential economic dependency of a large part of society on the sex industry. Employment is also generated in the hotel and restaurant industries by the activities of the sex industry. This indirect effect on employment is likely to be higher than the direct effects.

As most of the sex industry is located in urban areas, while most sex workers are from rural areas, the industry provides a major source of funds

for many rural households. A recent survey found that average remittances from CSWs were 3,000 Baht per month. This is almost three times the average monthly wage available in agriculture in 1991 (TDRI, 1993). Using the assumed number of CSWs as 200,000, this implies an annual transfer from urban to rural areas of 7.2 billion baht. This amount dwarfs the budgets of many development programs funded by the government. For example, it is 8 times the amount earmarked for rural job creation schemes designed to stop migration to Bangkok.

The number of customers of the sex workers is also difficult to establish, although there have been efforts to do so. Brinkmann (1991) reports on other studies which estimate that 4.6 million Thai men regularly frequent prostitutes. He makes his own estimate of 500,000 foreign tourists annually visiting prostitutes. Survey based results from a variety of studies (see review in Weniger et al., 1991), also suggest very high levels of contact with prostitutes. The results include estimates of over three-quarters of a sample of young Bangkok men and almost one-quarter of men in stable relationships visiting prostitutes during the previous 12 months. Therefore, the numbers suggested by Brinkmann (1991) appear feasible.

In summary, much of the Thai population is directly touched by prostitution, either through working as prostitutes, financially benefiting from prostitution, or paying for the services of prostitutes. These groups vary in size, with the sex workers comprising the smallest group and the customers of sex workers the largest group.

VII. Differentiation of the Commercial Sex Sector

A homogeneous sex industry does not exist in Thailand. Sexual services can be purchased through a number of institutional arrangements. Furthermore, the diversity of such arrangements seems to have increased over

time. The differentiation of the sex industry is not based on the type of services available, rather the main purpose of the differentiation seems to be serving specific market niches. Some of these niches are based on socio-economic status, some on nationality, while others rely on perceived lower health risks in order to attract clients.

The increasing internal complexity of the commercial sex sector in Thailand is a relatively recent development. In some cases it is easy to trace the ancestry. Prostitutes' houses have become what are known as brothels. The "Opium Houses" became traditional tea-rooms which more recently have turned to providing sexual services in addition to tea. In many other cases, the new ways of packaging commercial sex were imported from overseas, although often in an adapted form. Massage parlors and nightclubs became popular venues for obtaining sexual services, or meeting prostitutes, during the 1960s. Beer bars and dance clubs also appeared at this time.

During the period of the Vietnam War, being a *mia chaw* (rented wife) to American soldiers was popular in those provinces where U.S. Air-Bases were situated. This form of prostitution expanded to also cater for tourists spending at least several weeks in Thailand. There are certain hotels in Bangkok where women can be picked up for this purpose (Phongpaichit, 1982). The international trade in Thai women has been a more recent expansion of the industry. Thai women are working as prostitutes in many countries, including significant numbers in Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Germany and other European countries. It has been estimated that there are more than 200,000 Thai prostitutes working outside of Thailand (IPSR, 1991), a number which, if accurate, may exceed the number of Thai women working in the sex industry in Thailand. However, as in other areas the estimates of numbers of Thai women working overseas as CSWs seem to be based more on supposition than on data and a number less than 100,000 would be more plausible.

More recently, there has been an expansion of indirect prostitution. Prostitutes now work as waitresses, as salesgirls in department stores, as golf caddies and in a variety of other industries where they can meet potential customers. Those operating in restaurants are, more often than not, working with the full knowledge of their employer, who in many cases is paid directly by the customer for the sexual services of their employees.

The following partial list of places where prostitution is currently practiced in Thailand provides some idea of the variety of locales:

- traditional brothels
- hotels and motels
- tea-rooms
- massage parlors
- Call-girl and escort-girl services
- Bars, night clubs, A-Go-Go bars, cocktail-lounges restaurants
- public places (street walkers)
- other places such as golf clubs, discos, pubs etc

The data from the Ministry of Public Health referred to above can also be used to provide an indication of the size of different sectors of the sex industry. The changing share of different sectors is shown numerically in Table 1 and graphically in Figure 3.

Several significant changes in the relative shares of the different sectors can be observed from Figure 3. The sector which is largely patronized by foreign tourists -- the bars -- experienced very little change in numbers. The numbers employed in 1979 were roughly the same as those employed in 1992. Brothels, the other sector in which there is some foreign custom, although confined largely to areas bordering Malaysia, grew considerably over the decade of the 1980s, and then declined by almost one-third in 1991 and 1992. Similar declines can be observed for the hotel sector.

Both these sectors cater mainly for low-income Thai men. The decline might be due to fears concerning AIDS and to police crackdowns.

In many cases the reduction of brothel prostitution involved a shifting, or redefinition, of the sector. Referring to the brothel sector in the southern province of Ranong, Sombat Raksakul, a columnist for the Bangkok Post writes "When the pressure is on from higher up to get rid of a sleazy old brothel in Ranong, the owner picks up the phone and calls a redecorator. Before long, he or she is the proud proprietor of a "restaurant", a "cocktail lounge" or a "discotheque". But for customers, it's business as usual" (Bangkok Post, 13 September 1992).

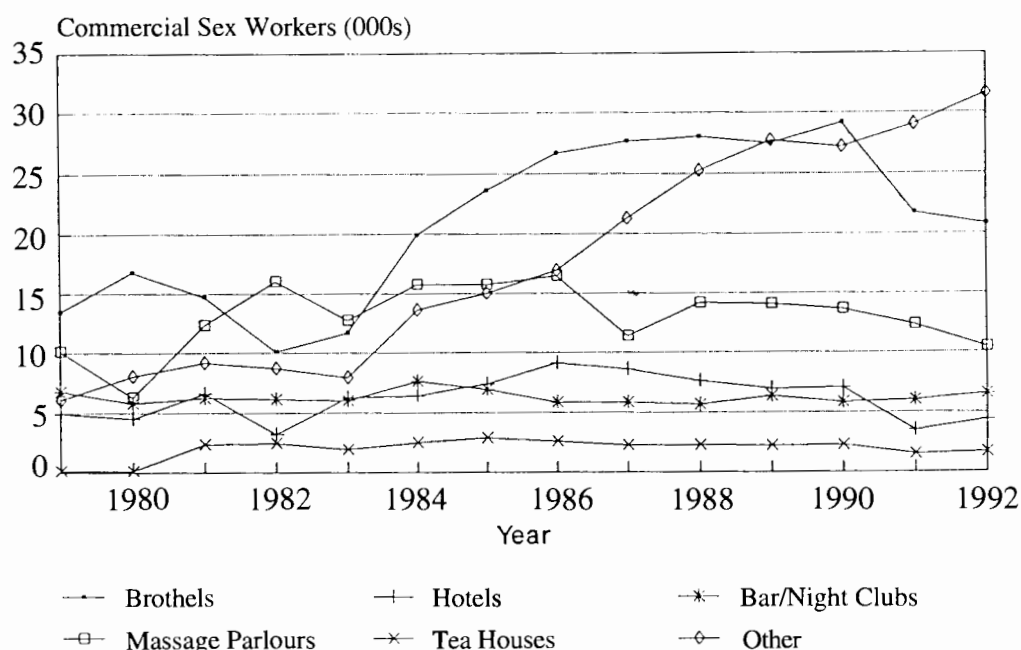
This pattern, especially the shift to the restaurant section of the sex industry as a result of police crackdowns, was observed in a study of a Central Plains province during 1992. In discussions with brothel owners at another location, however, the same shift was explained as means by which the sex establishment owner could employ the younger girls that the customers desired, while at the same time allaying the customers' fears about AIDS. Because of advertising campaigns, there has been a strong tendency in the minds of customers to link AIDS with brothel and hotel prostitutes. There has also been a shift from other sectors, although these shifts are not as large as those noted for the brothels. For instance, the number of sex workers in massage parlors reached a peak of 14,000 in 1988 but dropped to around 10,500 in 1992. Tea houses, a relatively small segment of the market, were most popular during the middle of the 1980s.

TABLE 1
 Number of Commercial Sex Workers by Sector of Employment:
 Thailand, 1979-1992

YEAR	SECTOR						Total
	Brothels	Hotels	Bars and Nightclubs	Massage Parlors	Tea Houses	Others	
1979	13,456	4,962	6,775	10,140	128	6,061	41,522
1980	16,798	4,516	5,792	6,272	144	8,058	41,580
1981	14,729	6,608	6,198	12,308	2,336	9,177	51,356
1982	10,138	3,218	6,107	16,034	2,452	8,681	46,630
1983	11,716	6,244	5,997	12,764	2,915	7,948	47,584
1984	19,911	6,420	7,638	15,775	2,488	13,610	65,839
1985	23,550	7,388	6,905	15,758	2,854	14,992	71,447
1986	26,681	9,140	5,828	16,466	2,619	19,952	77,677
1987	27,680	8,596	5,843	11,385	2,252	21,254	77,010
1988	28,047	7,639	5,656	14,148	2,267	25,214	82,971
1989	27,842	6,967	6,330	14,044	2,219	27,724	85,126
1990	29,148	7,034	5,848	13,627	2,244	27,177	85,078
1991	21,712	3,845	6,020	12,317	1,510	29,004	74,048
1992	20,786	4,370	6,536	10,431	1,658	31,595	75,376

Source: Ministry of Public Health

Figure 3: Commercial Sex Workers by
Sector of Employment: Thailand 1979-1992



The sector which has gained numbers of workers is the "other" category. From around 15 per cent of sex workers in 1979, it comprised almost 40 per cent in 1992. This sector covers what is often referred to as "indirect" prostitutes, since they operate under the guise of some other activity. However, in most cases, knowledge of their real activities is no secret. The "other" category contains a wide variety of venues for commercial sex. By far, the largest component involve women working out of restaurants. More detailed 1991 data made available by the Ministry of Public Health indicate that 15,469 CSW's working from restaurants, 950 from hairdressing or beauty salons, 3,801 from cafes, 842 were call girls and 315 operated from discos. The move from "direct" to "indirect" prostitution is a trend which, as noted earlier, is probably an outcome of official pressure and of customer demand. One consequence of the trend is that it is now more

difficult for concerned groups, for example health officials, to gain access to the sex workers. They first have to identify the women involved and then in many cases have to approach the workers individually, rather than going through the owner or manager of the establishment, since the latter can disclaim any responsibility for the sexual activities of their employees.

To provide a better understanding of the different sectors a brief description of arrangements in major sectors is provided below.

a). Hotels

Two star hotels which provide prostitutes are located primarily in Bangkok (particularly in areas such as Pratuu-nam, Silom, Sukhumvit Road, Rajadamnoen Avenue, Larn-Luang and Soi Na-na), and in the larger provincial cities. The prostitutes are usually free-lance and are not harassed by the management of hotels since they bring customers to the hotels. These women wait in places such as the hotel coffee-shop. In some up-market hotels, including some of the five-star hotels in Bangkok, hotel staff such as doorman and bell-boys solicit customers. If the hotel guest is interested the CSW will come to their room.

In no-star hotels, many of which are distinguished by a prominently displayed number rather than a name, prostitutes are directly employed. These hotels are also often used where a CSW has been approached in another setting, for example a bar, as rooms can be rented on a short term basis. In most hotels the short time rental is for two or three hours. These types of hotel are common both in Bangkok and in the provinces. A variation of these hotels which are similar to western style motels, is also available. They can usually be identified by the curtains that are pulled over the car which can be driven right to the door of the room which the person subsequently rents. Such arrangements, which may be used for both

commercial and non-commercial sexual liaisons, protect the customers anonymity.

b). Brothels

Brothels are found in Bangkok but are more common in the provinces. They are a traditional rural venue for sexual services. Prostitutes in brothels work for the owner and usually receive a fixed percentage of the fee paid by the customer. Brothels vary widely in the conditions and the freedom provided to the workers. There have been many stories in the press about young girls imprisoned in brothels and forced to work against their will. This is particularly true in many of the border provinces. Many women confined in this manner are illegal immigrants from Southern China and Burma, and hence are not likely to try to escape. On several occasions in 1993 brothels police raids on brothels in provinces such as Ranong in the South, reported rescuing large numbers of prostitutes from neighboring Burma. In another case in Tak, a province bordering Cambodia, of 69 women released from a brothel 29 were Cambodian nationals and 1 a Vietnamese (Bangkok Post, 20/1/1993). While raids on brothels receive a larger amount of publicity, it should not be overlooked that in most brothels workers are free to come and go as they please.

c). Tea-Rooms

More than two decades ago tea-rooms mainly served tea. Now they are more likely to offer sexual services than they are tea. Most tea-rooms are in the Yowarat area of Bangkok. Clients are mainly Sino-Thais. The establishments have acquired a reputation of employing very young women and they are (in)famous for being able to provide virgins at very high prices. They mainly operate in a similar fashion to brothels.

d). Massage Parlors

Massage parlors for sex services first appeared in Thailand in the 1960s, rapidly becoming popular and increasing in numbers. They are mainly frequented by middle-class Thai men, although there are several in which foreigners make up a large share of clients. Sexual service can be obtained in several ways:

1. Orgasm by "massage"
2. "Body Massage" :- The girls use their nude bodies to massage the customer.
3. Sexual and oral intercourse

A complete service usually includes body massage and intercourse. Sexual activities normally take place within the establishment. The women sit behind a glass partition where they can be viewed by the customers. The customers select the woman they want, often with the help of staff who highlight the special ability of each of the workers, and she is summoned to accompany the customer to a room. Women are hired by the hour or for a fixed period (90 minutes to 2 hours). The women working in the establishments are often subject to strict rules and can be fined for infractions of these rules. They are commonly recruited to work in the parlors by agents with whom they share their earnings. These agents often work as "*cheer kheek*", ie. workers employed by the parlor to provide customers with information to help them in their selection of a woman.

e). Call Girls

The popular history of how call-girls originated in Thailand is interesting. When Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat was the Prime Minister from the late 1950s to the early 1960s he was famous for his relationships with film-stars and models. It is said that in order to protect their reputation he

used the telephone to make arrangements about meeting for sex. After Sarit's death, these arrangements were revealed and the telephone became a fashionable method of working as a prostitute, a trend that was perhaps aided by the increasing availability of telephone services. The telephone numbers of call-girls are usually restricted to small groups of customers, although there are publications in which numbers are published. These publications include "girlie" magazines and some devoted to support and are sold at newsstands. Tourist magazines in English available free to at the airport and hotels also include telephone numbers of escort agencies. In some cases the call girls can be contacted through telephone paging services. Call girls may be students who are earning their tuition, married women facing money problems, or sex workers who prefer the relative anonymity of meeting customers through telephone calls.

f). Bars and Night-Clubs

There are a wide variety of bars, cocktail lounges and night clubs where it is possible to obtain the services of a prostitute. These venues became popular in the 1960s. Apart from individual bars and clubs, there are areas which cater for particular groups. For example, in Bangkok foreign tourists mainly go to bars in the Patpong area or on Sukhumvit. Within these two areas, there is further differentiation according to nationality. Japanese tourists are more likely to go to Thaniya Plaza while western tourists go to Patpong, Nana Entertainment Plaza and Soi Cowboy. There are also bars on Soi Nana which cater mainly to Arab customers. Scattered throughout Bangkok are bars, nightclubs and cocktail lounges which cater to Thai customers. There are also areas with a concentration of bars mainly for Thais, for example, on Sutasarn Rd. Bars of all varieties are also found in the major tourist resorts of Pattaya and Phuket.

When bars first developed as places for meeting women, the hostesses often only chatted with customers. In the Thai language they were called "partners" or "hour-sitting hostesses". Their duties more overtly included offering sexual services during the Vietnam War. Other types of entertainment, for example erotic dancing and sex shows were also introduced around this period. A-Go-Go bars are reported to have first made their appearance in Bangkok around 1967 and were established in Patpong in 1969. Now dancing may be done topless or without any clothes. It is also possible to get sexual services, particularly oral sex, within the premises of some bars.

In most establishments, however, sexual services are arranged by paying the bar a fee to take the worker out of the bar to a hotel and then arranging further payment for sexual services through negotiation with the woman. In other bars, total payment for sexual services is paid to the bar and the bar manager pays the prostitute an agreed percentage. Bar hostesses can also make money by customers through buying them drinks for which they receive commissions (around 20 baht per drink). In nightclubs in which sexual services can be arranged, singers are a source of prostitution. Arrangements can vary from women working on their own, to situations where the nightclub management is involved in managing the services of the women employees.

A recent development involves "Karaoke" bars in which visitors can sing along to music videos. Many of these bars provide hostesses and private rooms can be hired. Not all karaoke bars or all hostesses are involved in the sex industry, but in many bars it is possible to arrange to pay for sex with a hostess, although this is typically a privately negotiated arrangement with the woman.

g). *Public Places*

In some public places it is also possible to pick up prostitutes. In Bangkok, there are several areas which are well-known, or were previously well-known, such as the foot of Memorial Bridge, Pramane Ground, Hua Lampong railway station and Wong Wian Yiisipsong Karakada. Normally sex takes place at nearby hotels. Prostitutes working from public places are normally those who cannot easily get employment in establishments, for example because they are too young or too old, have a noticeable addiction to drugs, etc.

h). *Other Places*

An important form of prostitution is that which occurs from restaurants, especially garden restaurants (with tables set in open grounds). Generally, waitresses work as prostitutes for the owner. In some places, rooms are available at the back of the restaurant for sexual activities, in other cases the customer has to take the woman out. It is not difficult to identify these places: many have more waitresses than they have tables. This form of prostitution is growing rapidly, especially in the provinces.

Other forms of prostitution occur in hair-dresser's shops, by golf-caddies (who in Thailand are female), and by some women frequenting discos. Escort agencies also advertise their services in both the English language and Thai newspapers. A more up-market venue is what is known as a member club. In fact it is rare for these clubs to actually restrict their visitors to members. They are located in hotels and along some of the larger streets in the inner-city. They usually have dining services, live bands and attractive well-educated hostesses. Some only cater for one nationality, for example, there are numerous Japanese only member clubs.

VIII. Setting for Case Studies of Two Sectors of the Sex Industry

The segmentation of the commercial sex sector in Thailand clearly makes it difficult to generalize about prostitution in Thailand. It is necessary to examine different sectors in some depth. For this study, two sectors -- rural brothels and Bangkok massage parlors -- were chosen for in-depth analysis based on the results of a structured questionnaire administered to purposively selected samples of female sex workers in each sector. In both sectors several establishments were visited and in each of these establishments unstructured interviews were also conducted with the owners or managers. Interviews were also held with government officials whose responsibilities bring them into contact with the sex industry.

a). The Rural Brothel Sample

The area selected for the study of rural brothels is in a province approximately four hours drive north of Bangkok. Major roads to the Northeast and North run through this Central Region province. The original site selected for the study, a town about 15 kilometers south of the provincial capital, could not be used for the study because of recent conflicts between the brothel owners and police had caused many brothels to close down. This was a direct outcome of the Department of Interior's announced crackdown on brothels. As this crackdown was very localized in its application, and seemed to vary in severity depending on existing relations between brothel owners and the local police, it was possible to shift the study site to another small town where brothel operations continued to operate fairly normally. This town was about a one hour drive north of the provincial capital.

According to the 1991 Department of Health Statistics on sex establishments, there were 52 prostitutes working in six brothels in the town.

All six brothels were operating during the time the survey was conducted (five days in December, 1992). All 48 women working in the six establishments during this five day period were interviewed. Another four women working in a brothel in a nearby town were also interviewed. Therefore, a total of 52 rural brothel workers were interviewed.

The town in which the brothels were located is small, containing less than ten thousand persons. Unlike the other main centre for brothels in the province, brothels in this town do not depend on long-distance truck drivers and persons from other provinces for its main custom. Most of the clients are local, coming from the town itself and neighbouring areas. Nearby, there are a number of very large factories producing cement or involved in extractive industries and there are also several large factories being built. These industries provide one source of customers. The town is also a famous religious site, particularly revered by Sino-Thais. Many people visit the main temple located in the town and there is also a major festival held at the temple in the early part of the year. These visitors, especially during festival time, provide a valued seasonal source of clients. For regular customers, however, the brothels rely on locals.

The brothels are located in a group clustered around an intersection. They are not far from the temple and commercial area of the town, about one kilometer from the main highway and this reduces the number of transit customers. It is not difficult, when driving through the area at night or in the afternoon, to recognize the function of the buildings in which the brothels are located. In the early evening, many of the young women sit out in front of the establishments. Later in the evening the places are brightly lit. They close around three in the morning. The brothels are not segregated from the rest of the community. There are shops and houses next to some of the establishments. Children play on the street and people go about their normal activities in the area of the brothels.

The brothels are rundown in appearance, although similar to other buildings in the area. Inside they are unattractive and relatively dirty places. They all basically have the same layout. In the front is an area when the customers can view the women who are partitioned off but not, as in massage parlors, by a glass wall. Here it is merely an open metal grate. The women sit behind this grate engaged in their own activities -- putting on makeup (which could take 30 to 60 minutes) chatting, sewing etc. The women have numbers affixed to their clothes. Clients select the girl based on the number. After making a choice the client and the woman chosen go to rooms in the back of the establishment. The rooms in which the women receive clients are also the rooms in which they live. Each room is decorated by the woman living in it and normally has a bed, fan, bedside table, wardrobe and usually one or more posters of semi-naked women, and sometimes posters of male pop stars.

The first brothel in the town was established about 30 years ago. This establishment, with the original owner, is still operating and in terms of the number of customers appears to be the most popular of the six brothels. According to the owner, before the brothel was established there were prostitutes working out of rented rooms but they had to deal with the authorities on their own and hence most were happy to join the brothels when they were started. Soon after the first brothel commenced operation, other brothels opened. While some establishments opened and then subsequently closed, there have always been at least six establishments operating. A few years ago there were about 10 brothels in the town. The cost for sexual services was 30 baht when the first brothel opened.

Over time there has developed a family network linking three of the six establishments. One establishment, which has been operating for about 25 years, is run by a woman in her sixties. One of her daughters owns another establishment, while her 22 year old grandson owns another, which

he inherited from his mother. These family linkages undoubtedly contribute to the co-operation that exists among all the establishments. The owners meet regularly to decide on common policies such as prices (an increase from 60 to 100 baht was implemented in 1991) and how to deal with customers refusing to use condoms. It was decided that no establishment will accept a customer who refuses to wear a condom and it does seem that this united front has been successful in enforcing what appears to be almost universal use.

There was pessimism shown by all brothel owners regarding the current level of business. They did not link this to pressure from police for them to close down, but rather saw it as related to the fear of AIDS and an economic downturn. All said that they did their best business about 5 years ago when the economy was in a boom period and when AIDS was not yet a concern. Several of the owners claimed that the effective ban on hiring women under the age of 18 was also hurting business because most of the customers wanted to have sex with younger women (ie. less than 18 years). It is important to note that while there has been a drop in customers the owners said there was no difficulty in obtaining women to work in the brothels. The problem was seen as one of a lack of demand rather than of supply. Several of the younger owners expressed a desire to get out of the business but said that they had no other skills.

b). Bangkok Massage Parlors

Bangkok has a wide variety of massage parlors. The main distinction is between those establishments which offer traditional massage and those offering other forms of massage. In many traditional massage establishments sexual services are not available. In others, some women may offer sex while others may not. According to Department of Health statistics, Bangkok accounts for around 60 per cent of the commercial sex workers employed in non-traditional massage parlors in Thailand. However, only 22 per cent of

sex workers in establishments which are classified as offering traditional massage work in Bangkok. Overall about one half of sex workers operating under the guise of performing massages operate in Bangkok. The establishments which function to provide a setting for commercial sex vary in size from very large buildings with hundreds of rooms, offering also dining and entertainment (nightclub-type) facilities to small establishments in nondescript buildings. Massage parlors also tend to be spatially concentrated. For example, in Bangkok, over half of the establishments are located in the Ratchadamri area,⁹ with particularly high numbers on New Petchaburi Road. The average number of sex workers in Bangkok massage parlors is a little less than 100, although several have over 250 employees.

Four establishments were chosen for the survey. In order to get a range of establishments which were in rough proportion to the price distribution outlined in the Department of Health listing of commercial sex establishments, two massage parlors from the middle price category, one high-class establishment and one low price massage parlor were selected. All establishments were located in the Ratchadamri area. A total of 37 interviews were completed in the medium price massage parlors (17 in one and 20 in the other), 10 in the low price parlor and 8 in the high price establishment. Data analysis is therefore based on 55 completed interviews.

While the cost and services available vary from massage parlor to massage parlor, the method of operation is basically the same (see Sureeman, 1988). The women sit behind a glass partition. On the other side of the partition customers stand, or in some place sit drinking and eating, until they make their selection. Each woman has a number and it is this number that the customer uses to inform the massage parlor staff which woman he wants.

⁹ This is the name given to a region of Bangkok by the Ministry of Public Health. The area is not confined to the street of the same name. It takes in most of the Huay Kwang area of Bangkok.

The woman is then called out and, after payment of the fee to the massage parlor, they go to a room in the building. The rooms contain a bed and a large bathing area and normally mirrors on the walls and ceilings. Food and beverage service is available in the rooms. The women do not live in these rooms, although depending on the establishment, they may have rooms which they decorate themselves.

The two middle-price massage parlors included in the study had about 100-120 women providing sexual services, although only 70-80 would turn up on any one night. The high price establishment had 200-300 women workers although only 100 or so were regular workers. The low price massage parlor had about 40 rooms in regular use. All four establishments also had a restaurant in which there was live entertainment. Aside from the sex workers there are many employees, ranging from persons (mainly men) who help customers make a decision about which women to choose (*cheer kheek*), cleaners, waitresses (for the restaurant and for room service), cashiers, parking valets and security guards. The number of support staff exceeds the number of women employed to provide sexual services.

All four establishments surveyed have been operating for over 10 years with one, the high price massage parlor, in operation for 20 years. The massage parlors occupy prime real estate, probably some of the most expensive land in Bangkok. Apart from the value of the land there is also substantial investment in buildings and furnishings. One establishment has invested several hundred thousand baht in equipment that allows two tier parking. While all four managers complained that business had fallen from the peaks experienced several years ago, a fall they attributed to a combination of economic downturn and fear of AIDS, there has been no trimming of staff and there were no plans to close. In fact a new massage parlor advertising itself to be 15 stories high was recently opened. This new place, which had attracted workers from three of the establishments surveyed, employed

several hundred women and charged prices at the top end of the range. The building is reportedly owned by interests associated with the largest theatre chain in Thailand (Nation, 11/7/1993). While statistics indicate a reduction in the number of commercial sex workers employed in massage parlors, discussions with managers suggest that the decline is concentrated at the low end of the market and that at the high price end there may even have been an expansion.

IX. Survey Results

a). Demographic Characteristics and Background

Because of the nature of the work, women in the sex industry are generally young. The mean age of the 106 women interviewed was 23.1 years, with women working in brothels on average almost two years older than those working in the massage parlors (24 as compared to 22.2). The age distributions for both massage parlor and brothel workers were skewed to the right (Table 2). In both sectors several women aged over 30 were interviewed. These women generally entered the profession late in life, usually as a result of a marriage breakdown.

One surprising aspect of the age distribution is that three workers were under the age of 18. Two of these worked in the brothels and one in the massage parlor. The police, especially in the rural area surveyed, were very strict on checking ages and had sent some young girls home not long before the survey (girls from a local Hmong community). However, it is not unusual for the workers to have obtained identity cards in which their ages are misstated. It is notable that both of the underage brothel workers were from the neighboring area.

TABLE 2
Percentage Age Distribution by Sector of Employment

Age	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
Less than 18	4	2
18-19	8	34
20-21	14	23
22-23	20	11
24-25	24	6
26-27	10	8
28-29	8	6
30 and above	12	11
Mean	24.0	22.2
Median	23.0	20.0
N	52	54

Source: Sex Sector Survey

The concentration of women at ages under 21 in the massage parlors can be contrasted with a much more even distribution of ages from the late teens through the early twenties for respondents working in the brothels. These differences are hard to reconcile with the results of interviews with managers and owners of the establishments. The brothel owners often highlighted the preference that customers have for very young women. But because of the recent crackdown on under-age prostitutes owners were quite wary of employing anyone that did not have evidence of their being over 18

years or who did not look to be aged over 18. In the massage parlors, however, the managers did not express any strong customer preference for very young women, although there had been a highly publicized police raid on one of the establishments in the sample a few months before the survey and several under-age girls were found. It is more likely that the younger age composition of the massage parlor workers reflects their origins; mainly from the North. This issue is taken up in a later part of the section.

There was a high degree of geographical concentration of origins of women who enter the two sectors. The Northern region was the place of birth of almost 60 per cent of the women while a further 20 per cent come from the Northeast. The remaining 20 per cent came from Bangkok, other Central Region provinces or from the Southern Region. Most of the women from the Northeast and the Central/South worked in the brothels, while 75 per cent of the massage parlor workers were from the North. Most of the variation in origins was among establishments rather than within establishments. For example, two of the seven brothels specialized in hiring women from the North while several others preferred to hire women from the Northeast and Central regions. In the four massage parlors covered in the survey, one had no women from the North while the other three had more than 75 per cent from the North.

There are a number of explanations for these patterns. Social networks are the main mechanism through which the women are recruited. Once a link with an area is established, it helps channel women into the establishments. In both sectors we encountered instances where sisters were working together. There is also a demand factor. An often expressed belief in Thai society is that Northern women are the most beautiful, partly because of their fairer complexions. This view was expressed by the managers of the establishments. Even among those brothels which employed few Northern women it was said that customers prefer Northern women. However, three

brothel owners indicated that they did not like hiring girls from the North because they would usually demand money in advance of employment (up to 20,000 baht, but usually several thousand baht) and then would sometimes not stay long. While none of the brothel owners claimed to be directly involved in recruiting from the North, a local official suggested that it did occur.

Massage parlors do not normally engage in direct recruiting although private agents are active in supplying workers to massage parlors and then taking a cut of their earnings (often against an advance paid to the parents of the girls). In three cases in the sample, women working in the massage parlors were living in the premise of their agent, together with other women the agent had recruited. The one massage parlor that did not have any women from the North among those interviewed was the high class establishment. This did not appear to be a result of any deliberate policy, but seems to be related to the qualifications of women recruited. Women at this establishment have relatively high levels of education and the pool of women with such qualifications is small in the North and Northeast. Nearly all of the few women in the total sample who were raised in Bangkok worked in this high-price massage parlor. There was not a large number of Northeastern women in the sample, even though the Northeast is the most populous and poorest region. This probably reflects a lower level of entry into commercial sex of Northeast women compared to Northern women, but is also probably because of the sectors surveyed. For example, the beer bar and A-Go-Go sectors of the sex industry are popularly believed to be mainly comprised of women from the Northeast.

The sex workers come not only from particular regions but also particular provinces within these regions. Approximately 35 per cent of all sex workers sampled were from two Northern provinces, Chiang Rai and Phayao. As a percentage of massage parlor workers these two provinces

contributed 57.4 per cent of respondents. Furthermore, within these two provinces there were several districts from which most of the workers originated. These patterns might be expected to result from the purposive sampling design where, because of the existence of strong social networks and recruiting patterns, different establishments would end up with large proportions of their employees originating from the same area. However, it is likely that the patterns do also reflect an industry wide reality. For example, 8 of the 54 respondents working in the massage parlors came from Dok Kham Tai District in Phayao. Girls from this district were found in three of the four establishments. This district is famous in Thailand for the numbers of sex workers it exports and there is even a popular song titled 'plaeng saaw dok kham tai' (song of the young women from Dok Kham Tai) about girls from this district coming to Bangkok. This district is also given special attention as a source area of massage parlor workers in Phongpaichit's (1982) classic study of massage parlor workers.

None of the respondents interviewed were from other countries, although there has been a great deal of recent concern that sex workers from neighbouring countries, especially from Burma and China were being brought into the country. These women are often very vulnerable because of language difficulties and it is also difficult for health workers and other government workers to communicate with them. These women are more likely to be found in the brothel sector rather than the massage parlors since communication with customers is more important in the latter sector. All brothel owners interviewed stated that they had never had workers from other countries, although they did know of such workers in brothels in other areas of the province. Several did mention, however, that they had employed hill-tribe women. There is a local community of several thousand Hmong from which previously some young women had come to work in the brothels. Because of crackdowns on child prostitution, and since only a small

percentage of the Hmong have identity cards to establish their age, all had been sent home.

Almost all respondents were recent migrants. None of the brothel workers had been born in the town in which they worked while only 3 of the massage parlor respondents were born in Bangkok, and another 2 had migrated to Bangkok while they were still children. The percentage distribution of number of years since the respondents arrived in their place of employment is shown in Table 3. As will be discussed in a later section, these distributions are related to the recruitment of workers. Rural brothels rely largely on recruitment of recent arrivals, most of whom come specifically for employment in the brothels, while massage parlors in Bangkok obtain many of their workers from within Bangkok.

Workers in both sectors are not required to live in the establishment where they work. While the brothels provide free accommodation for women working there, women in the massage parlors are required to make their own living arrangements. Only nine of the 52 brothel workers lived outside of their place of work. The main reasons for making this choice related to a desire to live with spouses and/or children. While all of the 54 massage parlor some did not have to pay for accommodation as they were living with relatives or had other arrangements which provided them with free accommodation (3 were living with agents). The mean rent paid by massage parlor workers was 2,550 baht a month, with the highest rent paid being 8,600 baht a month. The amounts paid for rent were kept low by sharing accommodation with workmates. Only 39 per cent of massage parlor respondents slept in a room by themselves, compared to 85 per cent of the brothel workers who slept alone in the room in which they received customers.

TABLE 3

Percentage Distribution of Years Residing in Locality of Current Employment:
by Sector

Years in Locality	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
Less than 12 months	34.6	14.8
1 year	28.8	24.1
2 years	9.6	11.1
3-4 years	15.4	25.9
5-9 years	9.6	11.1
10+ years	1.9	13.0
Total	100.0	100.0
N	52	54

Source: Sex Sector Survey

A striking finding of the survey was that 79 per cent of respondents in the brothel sector and 48 percent in the massage parlors had been married before or were currently married. These findings contradict the popular perception that the sex industry is composed of young single women who are lured into the sex industry. In fact many women enter the sex industry after the failure of their marriage. In Table 4 the present living arrangements of the

TABLE 4
 Current Marital Status, Fertility, and Child-care Arrangements of
 Ever-married Women: by Sector

Characteristic	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
Percentage Distribution		
Marital Status		
Living together	3.8	13.0
Separated	63.5	11.1
Divorced	1.9	24.1
Widowed	9.6	0.0
Single	22.2	51.8
Total	100.0	100.0
N	52	54
Have Children	53.8	11.1
Living Arrangements of Children		
With Respondent	17.9	0
With partner/ex-partner	3.6	16.7
Mother's Parents	46.4	66.7
Partner/ex-partner's Parents	10.7	16.7
Other	21.5	0
Total	100.0	100.0
N	28	6

TABLE 4
(Continued)

Characteristic	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
Percentage Distribution		
<hr/>		
Responsibility for Care of Child if Living with Mother		
Respondent	40.0	0.0
Partner/Ex-partner	0.0	0.0
Mother's Parents	20.0	0.0
Hired	40.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0
N	0	0

Source: Sex Sector Survey

ever-married respondents and their fertility is shown¹⁰. The most notable difference between the massage parlor and brothel workers was the large percentage of the former who reported they were divorced compared to the latter who were more likely to report they were separated. This is a result of the types of marriages contracted. Women working in the brothels were less likely than the massage parlor workers to have had their marriages registered.

¹⁰ No respondent who was never-married reported having any children. This appears to be a result of definitional conventions in Thai society. If a Thai woman has a child she appears to automatically define herself as having been married, whatever the status of the relationship with the father of the child. Childbearing is one form of entry into the status of being married.

Only registered marriages can end in divorce. Approximately 13 percent of women working in massage parlors were living with their husbands.

Slightly over one half of respondents in brothels had children while the corresponding percentage for women working in the massage parlors was only 11 per cent, or 6 women. Most children did not live with the mother, being mainly looked after by the respondent's mothers.

However, several women working in the brothels did look after their children. In two instances they hired women to undertake childcare but five women were living with their young children in the brothel (the oldest child was about 3 years).

The attitudes of the owners towards having children live with their mothers varied considerably among establishments. Some owners said they would not accept any worker that had a child with her while others had no objection. In one establishment, the owners were raising a child of a worker who had left several months earlier and had not yet returned to pick him up. Women who were looking after their own children were doing so because they have no other childcare options.

The respondents came mainly from agricultural backgrounds. Many had lost one or both of their parents (11 per cent of mothers and 25 per cent of father had died), and the majority of parents worked in agriculture. Respondents in the massage parlors appeared to be from more prosperous families than the women in the brothels, with 17.6 per cent of the fathers of the latter working as agricultural labourers and 35.3 working as farmers compared to 2.3 and 61.4 per cent respectively for the former group. A similar difference was noted for mothers occupation.

The levels of education of the sex workers were similar to those of other rural women but much lower than that of rural-urban migrants (Table 5). While 15 per cent of the brothel workers and 17 per cent of the massage parlor workers had completed at least some secondary education, the corresponding figure for rural Thai women aged 20-24 was 15 per cent and for rural-urban migrants age 20-24 was 24 per cent. The education patterns of brothel workers were not greatly different from those of the massage parlor workers. Only at the high price massage parlor did workers have relatively

TABLE 5

Percentage Distribution of Educational Attainment by Sex Industry Sector,
Rural Women Aged 20-24 and Rural-Urban Migrants Aged 20-24

Educational Attainment	SEX WORKERS		RURAL POPULATION	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors	All Rural Age 20-24	Rural-Urban Migrants Age 20-24
No Education	13.5	1.9	3.7	1.3
Primary	71.2	79.6	75.6	55.0
Secondary	15.4	16.7	15.2	24.4
Tertiary	0.0	1.9	5.5	19.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	52	54	2,127,800	111,800

Source: Sex Sector Survey and NSO (1993)

high levels of education; 5 of the 8 respondents had a secondary level of education while another had been to college. In the other massage parlors the workers, nearly all of whom were from the North, had the low levels of education which characterize the rural North. There are other sex sectors, such as member clubs, in which higher levels of education may be an important factor in recruitment of workers. One feature revealed by the survey is the substantial differences in the characteristics of women from different regions. These differences characterized women working in both sectors. As shown in Table 6, the largest differences were seen for women from the North compared to those from the Northeast. Women from the North tended to be younger, less educated, more likely to be never-married, and less likely to have children.

TABLE 6
Characteristics of Sex Workers by Region of Birth

Characteristic	REGION		
	Northeast	Central/South	North
Mean Age	24.8	24.1	22.1
Mean Years of Education	5.9	5.7	5.5
Percent Ever-Married	95.0	83.0	45.0
Percent with Children	75.0	21.0	22.0
Percent ever-married living with Husband	10.0	15.0	14.0
N	20	24	62

Source: Sex Sector Survey

These findings agree with the statements of brothel owners who claim that women from the Northeast largely enter the occupation because of a failed marriage and a consequent need to support their children, while women from the North are more likely to be supporting their parents. Women from the Central/South form an intermediate category, with over 80 per cent ever-married but only 21 per cent having children. Much of the available literature, which has concentrated on sex workers from Northern provinces, has emphasized the importance of obligations to parents, and the need to meet these obligations through remitting money. It is argued that this is a strong motivating factor for young Northern women to enter the sex industry (Muecke, 1989).

For Northeastern women, however, entry to the sector appears to be related more to a need to provide for their children. Phongpaichit (1982) notes that the attitude of Northeastern villagers and parents towards women who had gone to work as sex workers was much more intolerant than that of Northern villagers. This attitude extended to potential husbands of women who worked as sex workers. A woman from the Northeast who enters the sex industry is reducing her chances of marriage in a society in which marriage and children are still considered very important. This might explain why only one Northeastern women in the sample had not been married.

The results presented above indicate that sex workers in both sectors come from impoverished family backgrounds, primarily in the Northern region. Many have already married and borne children themselves, although few of the marriages remain intact. The women are generally young and have limited education. Important differences in the characteristics of women can be observed by sector of employment and by region of origin. These differences suggest that factors other than human capital are operating to (a) attract women into the sex industry, and (b) channel these women into different sectors of the industry.

b). Work Experience, Entry into the Sex Industry and Job Mobility

One-half of the respondents in the massage parlors and 29 per cent of respondents in the brothels stated that a job in the sex industry was the first employment that they had ever had. These percentages are over-stated, however, as many of the respondents did not consider working on the family farm, or in home industries, as employment. When asked what type of work they had undertaken before entering the sex industry, only 15 per cent of the brothel workers and 24 per cent of the massage parlor workers said that they had never been employed (Table 7). Almost half of the brothel workers and 22 per cent of the massage parlor workers had previously worked in agricultural. A further 17 and 11 per cent of the massage parlor respondents worked in home or cottage industries or as domestic maids, respectively.

Unemployment does not seem to be a factor prompting women to work in the sex industry. Only 12 per cent of brothel workers and 22 per cent of massage parlor respondents reported a period of actively looking for work before entering the industry. The period of unemployment was usually short; 9 of the 18 reporting a period of unemployment of less than one month.

Almost one-third of the women interviewed first worked as commercial sex workers before they reached the legal age of 18 (Table 8). Nearly one-fifth of the women currently working in brothels commenced working between the ages of 13-15. This did not mean, however, that they worked continuously after first entering the industry. There were several workers (or their parents) who received a large amount of money by having sex for the first time when they were quite young. This was arranged through an agent, occurred in a hotel, and the girl returned home afterwards and did not re-enter the industry for several years. While many more massage parlor workers lost their virginity through commercial sex than did brothel workers (43 vs 23 per cent), their first sexual experience often occurred in a massage

parlor and they continued work afterwards. Women from the North entered the industry at younger ages than women from the other regions. Over two-thirds of Northern women interviewed had entered the industry by the time they were aged 19 compared to 40 per cent of Northeastern respondents and 46 per cent of Central/South respondents.

TABLE 7
Percentage Distribution of Occupation Before Entering Sex Industry :
by Sector

Occupation	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
Never Worked	15.4	24.1
Agriculture	44.2	22.2
Construction	5.8	5.6
Factory	1.9	0.0
Home Industry	5.8	16.7
Domestic	1.9	11.1
Sales	7.7	7.4
Restaurant	5.8	5.6
Hairdresser	9.6	1.9
Clerical	1.9	5.6
Total	100.0	100.0
N	52	54

Source: Sex Sector Survey

TABLE 8
 Percentage Distribution of Age at Entry into Sex Industry by Sector
 of Employment

Age of Entry	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
13-15	19.2	11.1
16-17	11.5	18.5
18-19	25.0	27.8
20-21	13.5	14.8
22-23	15.4	7.4
24-25	5.8	1.9
26-29	3.8	16.7
30 and above	5.8	1.9
Total	100.0	100.0
N	52	54

Source: Sex Sector Survey

Most of the massage parlor workers who entered the sex industry at ages in their late twenties or early thirties were employed in the low price massage parlor. In this establishment both sexual services and regular massages are provided. Although all the respondents from the low-price massage parlor did offer sexual services many did not begin to do so until after being employed for a considerable time providing regular massages. Many of the elder workers did not offer sexual services while others offered such services on an irregular basis.

Only approximately 6 percent (7 respondents) stated that they had been forced to work as a commercial sex worker. All of these respondents were interviewed in the brothels. Economic reasons for starting work as prostitutes dominated the responses of both brothel and massage parlor respondents. However, the types of economic factors varied among the sectors (Table 9). The main difference is that brothel employees had a higher proportion saying they started work because they wanted money to raise their children, while a higher proportion of the massage parlor workers wanted to obtain a good income. These differences are related to the regional origins of the workers. Women from the Northeast were much more likely to state their reason as need to raise a child, while women from the North were more likely to state the reason that their parents were poor.

TABLE 9
Reason for Entering Sex Industry by Sector and Region of Origin

Reason	SECTOR		REGION OF ORIGIN		
	Brothels	Massage Parlors	Central/ South	Northeast	North
Parent Poor	44.2	50.0	29.2	30.0	59.7
Help Siblings	11.5	14.8	16.7	20.0	9.7
Raise Child	23.1	1.9	12.5	30.0	6.5
Obtain Good Income	54.8	24.1	16.7	5.0	17.7
Forced	13.5	0.0	10.3	15.0	1.6
Other	1.9	9.2	14.7	0.0	6.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	52	54	24	20	62

Source: Sex Sector Survey

There was relatively little difference in the ways in which workers first entered the sex industry (Table 10). Almost 60 per cent were introduced by a friend, while a further 20 per cent learned about the availability of work, usually through an acquaintance returning to their home village, and then made their own arrangements to come to the establishment. Two women working in massage parlors saw advertisements for workers as they walked past the massage parlor and then applied to work there. Thirteen respondents (8 currently working in brothels and 5 in massage parlors) were recruited by agents or owners into the industry while 7 women working in brothels said they were forced into commercial sexual activities. The results of the survey indicate, however, that the great majority of respondents voluntarily entered into work as prostitutes and most work in order to support family members.

TABLE 10

Percentage Distribution of Method of Entry into Sex Industry by Current Sector of Employment

Method of Entry	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
Introduction by Friends	53.8	63.0
Self-Arranged	17.3	24.1
Owner of Establishment Arranged	1.9	1.9
Agent or Middleman	13.5	7.4
Forced	13.5	0.0
Respond to Advertisement	0.0	3.7
Total	100.0	100.0
N	52	54

Source: Sex Sector Survey

Yet many family members do not agree with their daughter or sister working in the sex industry. Perceived levels of agreement vary according to the sector of the industry, the family relationship, and the regional origin of the workers (Table 11). The majority of workers in the brothels felt that while their families knew they were working in a brothel, family members did not agree with their employment. The levels of perceived family disagreement were much lower for women working in the massage parlors. Much higher percentages of women from the South/Central region than women from the North reported that their families disapproved or did not know about their type of employment. In fact, a third of women from the North felt that their mother approved of their present job in the sex industry while a slightly lower percentage of fathers and siblings were also thought to approve. For the Northeast, percentages disapproving were low but this was primarily a result of workers thinking that family members were not aware of their activities. For women from the North, 70 to 80 per cent of family members were thought to know about their activities in the sex industry.

For brothel workers, there is a pronounced U-shaped distribution of the amount of experience they have had in the sex industry (Table 12). One-quarter of the respondents had worked for three months or less while 44 per cent had worked for four years or more. For massage parlor workers, the distribution of total experience in the sex industry is much more even, with around 50 per cent having been employed between 2 and 5 years. Workers in the brothels do not stay long in any one job (ie. with the same brothel), although a large proportion stay for relatively long periods in the sex industry. Approximately 60 per cent have been in their current job less than 1 year. In contrast, 41 per cent of massage parlor workers had been in their current job for less than 1 year while 30 per cent had been in their current job for over two years.

TABLE 11
Percentage Distribution of Perceived Attitude of Family Members
Towards Respondent Working in her Current Occupation:
by Sector and Region of Origin

Family Relationship	SEX SECTOR					
	Brothels			Massage Parlors		
	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know
Mother	10	48	43	41	31	29
Father	3	31	66	37	30	33
Siblings	9	42	49	28	37	35

	REGION OF ORIGIN								
	Central/South			Northeast			North		
	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know
Mother	15	30	55	14	21	64	33	46	21
Father	11	11	78	17	8	75	29	44	27
Siblings	5	45	50	14	14	72	26	44	31

Source: Sex Sector Survey

TABLE 12
 Percentage Distribution of Years of Experience in Sex Sector and Years
 in Current Job: by Sector

Years of Experience	SECTOR			
	Total	Brothels Present Job	Massage Parlors Total	Present Job
3 months or less	26.9	26.9	5.6	14.8
4-6 months	1.9	11.5	9.3	24.1
7-11 months	3.8	21.2	3.7	1.9
12-17 months	3.8	17.3	11.1	18.5
18-23 months	1.9	7.7	11.1	11.1
2-3 years	17.3	9.6	33.3	16.7
4-5 years	21.2	5.8	16.7	9.3
6 or more years	23.1	0.0	9.3	3.7
Total	100.0	100.01	100.0	100.0
N	52	52	54	54

Source: Sex Sector Survey

Table 13 indicates that workers in both sectors moved primarily within their sector of current employment. Workers currently employed in the rural brothels had on average previously worked in two other establishments, either other brothels or "other" establishments. Most of the "other" category consisted of hotels, while several women had also worked in tea houses. Few women mentioned working in restaurants. Massage parlor workers were less likely to have changed their place of employment, but for those that

TABLE 13
Mean Number of Sex Industry Establishments Previously Employed:
by Sector of Employment

Sector of Previous Employment	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
Brothels	1.06	0.06
Bars	0.08	0.04
Cocktail Lounges	0.00	0.04
Massage Parlors	0.08	0.46
Other	1.02	0.17
Total	2.23	0.76
N	52	54

Source: Sex Sector Survey.

did, the most common form of movement was from massage parlor to massage parlor. Several massage parlors workers had also worked as call girls.

In summary, women working in the two sectors surveyed generally enter the sex industry at a young age. They mostly obtain their knowledge about the industry and introductions to employers through friends who are already in the same occupation. Once in a particular sector of the industry they are likely to stay in that sector and, in the case of workers in the massage parlor sector, stay for a relatively long time in the same job. Women in the brothels, however, shift jobs quite regularly, although most move between

jobs that are in the lower paid end of the sex industry. It is not levels of human capital that restrict workers to a particular sector. As noted earlier, levels of education and socio-economic background are reasonably similar among the workers in both sectors. Nor in many cases is it physical appearance, although a subjective judgement of study team members was that there is much more variation in appearance among the brothel workers than among the massage parlor workers. Instead, the limited amount of inter-sectoral mobility appears to be related to the operation of social networks that restrict flows of information about opportunities in other sectors.

c). Working Conditions

Very few workers were unaware of the activities they would be required to perform in taking up their current occupation. Almost all of the brothel workers and 82 per cent of massage parlor workers stated that they knew the type of work they would be undertaking before they entered the job. In many cases, the knowledge was obtained from past experience in the sector. In addition, there was usually someone who explained the activities to them before they arrived. For brothel workers, the main source of information was friends who had worked in the establishment (61 per cent) and other women currently working there (21 per cent). For massage parlor workers, 51 per cent obtained information from workmates while 23 per cent obtained the information from friends who had previously worked there. These results clearly indicate the importance of social networks in providing information about conditions. Once the women arrived at their places of employment they were generally given information about the types of duties they would be required to carry out. Only in terms of benefits, of which there are very few, were less than 75 per cent provided with information (see Table 14). Workers in the massage parlors appeared to be better informed than workers in the brothels. In three of the four parlors sampled new workers are provided with training in basic massage and how to provide services to customers before

TABLE 14
 Percentage of Respondents who were Informed of Activity before
 Commencing Work: Sector of Employment

Activities	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
Duties	50	87
Pay	85	91
Sex Services	92	91
Hours	75	94
Benefits	73	76
N	52	54

Source: Sex Sector Survey

they commence work. During training, the conditions of employment are explained to them.

Workers in both sectors were asked if they had the right to select their own customers. All brothel workers claimed that they had complete freedom to select their customers. However, in discussions with owners and the workers it soon became apparent that this right, with a few notable exceptions, was rarely exercised. Rejection of customers was usually because the customer was drunk or old. It did appear that the workers would be supported by the management in those situations where they did not want to go with a client. Two women interviewed were very selective, often sleeping with only a few customers a night, but were not considered a

problem by the owners. For nearly all the workers, there were strong economic incentives not to reject clients. Brothel workers are piece-rate workers, with the more pieces (customers) completed the higher the return.

The situation in the massage parlors is slightly more complicated than in the brothels. Massage parlor managers place a great deal of stress on customer satisfaction. The workers are trained to please the customer sexually and in other ways. As one manager emphasized in the interview 'the most important thing is that they [the workers] don't upset customers'. In this environment, freedom of choice to select customers is difficult to define. Thirteen per cent said they had no right of selection while 28 per cent said they had complete freedom. The majority, 59 per cent, said they had the right to choose but that they needed a good reason to reject a customer. In discussions with both the managers and workers, the only "good" reason that was cited was if the worker was acquainted with her customer outside of her work role, for example if the prospective customer lived in the same apartment block or was from the same home village. Apart from this reason, choice of clients for massage parlor workers seems more ideal than real.

As with brothel workers, workers in the massage parlors have economic incentives to entertain as many customers as they can. Due to the greater amount of time spent with customers, however, massage parlor workers on average have only about half the number of customers of a brothel worker. In Table 15, the mean number of customers for a variety of reference periods are shown. The number of customers in a normal week is significantly higher than an average week because in any cross section of time some portion of women will have not worked during the previous week, the most normal reason being that they were menstruating. This in part explains very high ranges for the number of customers. For example, during the week prior to the survey the range in the number of customers for brothel workers was 0 to 60 while the range for the massage parlor workers was 0 to 28.

TABLE 15
Mean and Median Number of Clients during Last Week, Average Day
and Average Week: by Sector of Employment

Reference Period	SECTOR			
	Brothels		Massage Parlors	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Last week	22.8	20	12.8	13
Average day	4.2	4	2.4	2
Average week	26.0	25	16.0	16
N	52		54	

Source: Sex Sector Survey

The averages shown in the above table indicate that the amount of time spent with customers is small relative to the total working day. The hours during which brothel workers generally receive customers are from about 7 or 8 at night to 2 or 3 in the morning¹¹. Massage parlor workers start earlier, 5 or 6, and work to around midnight. Weekend hours are longer and workers are normally required to work on the weekend (unless they are menstruating). Brothel workers expect to spend about 20 minutes with each customer while massage parlor workers spend 90 minutes to two hours, depending on the establishment. In both sectors, most of the time spent at work involves waiting for customers.

¹¹ Customers would also be received out of normal working hours. This did not occur very often. Both massage parlor and brothel workers normally started work an hour or so earlier than the time for receiving customers as they had to apply makeup.

In a normal week, the women work every day. At no establishment are there paid holidays. The brothel workers are free to work as many or as few days as they want, while massage parlor workers are provided with incentives to work 20 or more days a month. Even though there are no paid holidays few women worked every day of a month. The workers took 3-5 days off work each month during the time they were menstruating. Many also took long breaks to return home or simply because they did not want to work. Another reason for taking time off work was sickness, although women were not paid if they were sick, even if the sickness is an outcome of their work. The average number of days taken off per month was approximately the same for women in both sectors (8 for women in the brothels and 9 in the massage parlors). Many of the brothel workers even stated that they had taken too many days off to remember the approximate number. The impression obtained from the interviews, rather than the data, is that brothel workers tend to work fewer days than do massage parlor workers. The time spent visiting home was rarely connected with labour demands from the workers family. Only 12 per cent of brothel workers (6 persons) and 1.9 per cent of massage parlor workers (1 person) returned home on a seasonal basis to undertake agricultural work. For the women in the two sex sectors surveyed, their sex industry work is a full-time occupation that requires they work regularly in order to obtain high returns.

d). Income and Expenses

As previously noted, most of the surveyed workers entered the occupation for economic reasons. In exchange for working in an industry which is disapproved by most of society and which can have severe and well-recognized health risks, the workers expect to obtain an income greater than they could obtain in other occupations for which they would be qualified. Other studies have also documented the high incomes that can be earned by workers in the sex industry (Phongpaichit, 1982; IPS, 1993).

The results of this study confirm the high earning popularly attributed to workers in the sex industry. The frequency distribution of gross earnings for women in each sector is shown in Table 16. The mean income of the entire sample is around 20,000 baht, with a mean of 35,000 baht for women working in the massage parlor and a mean of 6,000 baht for women in the brothels. Median incomes are somewhat lower, reflecting the influence of the high earnings of several workers in each sector. The highest monthly income for a woman in the brothel sector was 15,000 baht, which disregarding a relatively small contribution of tips, corresponded to 300 customers per month. The highest earning in the massage parlor sector was 91,500 baht, obtained by an employee of the high price establishment and based on receiving approximately 70 customers over the previous month.

The income distribution shown in Table 16 reports gross earnings. Net earnings (ie. earning obtained after deductions by employers, agents or officials) are roughly the same as gross earnings for brothel workers. But a substantial difference of 2,300 baht between mean gross and net earnings was calculated for the massage parlor workers. In the brothels, only 2 workers reported making any payments which were directly related to their employment, in both cases this involved small payments to police and were not typical of the general situation. In the massage parlor sector, 11 out of the 54 respondents reported deductions. In six cases these deductions were in the form of fines, mainly for coming to work late or not working on a weekend, and the highest amount of fines was 2,000. Five women made substantial payments to their agents, typically about half of their earnings. In some cases, the agents worked in the establishments, being employed as *cheer kheek*.

TABLE 16

Percentage Distribution of Gross Income for Month Prior to the Interview:
by Sector

Income Categories (baht per month)	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
2,999 or less	15.4	0
3,000 to 4,999	26.4	0
5,000 to 6,999	25.0	5.6
7,000 to 9,999	21.2	1.9
10,000 to 14,999	9.6	16.7
15,000 to 19,999	1.9	13.0
20,000 to 24,999	0	5.6
25,000 to 29,999	0	3.7
30,000 to 34,999	0	7.4
35,000 to 39,999	0	7.4
40,000 to 44,999	0	1.9
45,000 to 49,999	0	3.7
50,000 to 54,999	0	9.3
55,000 to 59,999	0	7.4
60,000 to 64,999	0	7.4
65,000 and above	0	9.3
Mean	5,959	35,526
Standard Deviation	3,223	21,651
Median	5,000	26,500
N	52	54

Source: Sex Sector Survey

Note: The exchange rate at the time of the survey was approximately 25.3 Baht per \$US1.

Very few workers had other activities or sources of income. Three brothel workers reported earning money from other jobs during the last month, two of these earned less than 1000 baht each from working as cashier in the brothels, while the third obtained 600 baht from agricultural activities. Three massage parlor women reported other economic activities, in a beauty shop and sales.

The variation in earnings is greater within the massage parlor sector than in the brothel sector. This is a direct outcome of the sampling strategy used for massage parlors. The mean income of workers in the four massage parlors was 11,300, 19,200, 41,310 and 67,606. Within each establishment the standard deviation of income was less than one-half of the means. In the brothels there was relatively little variation in mean earnings among establishments and variation in earnings within establishments was high.

The relative lack of differentials in earnings among the brothels might help explain the lack of movement among different establishments in the rural area studied. All owners stated that the workers, once established at a brothel, did not work in another brothel in the town, although as previously noted, many had worked in brothels and other sectors of the sex industry in other areas. In Bangkok, however, workers do move between the different massage parlors. One manager complained that a recently opened massage parlor had taken some of his workers, while another manager said that the workers will quickly leave if offered better terms. When asked why price differentials occurred between parlors, the managers claimed it had nothing to do with the perceived quality of the workers but was instead related to the luxuriousness and physical amenities of each establishment.

However, there is a ranking system of massage parlor workers. This ranking is clearly expressed within establishments. Both middle price parlors in the sample had two classes of workers: the normal and the stars (*dara*).

The stars can be considerably more expensive (an additional one-third of the price in one parlor), and are selected on a combination of physical appearance and personality characteristics. For example, a star must have a light complexion, be over 165 centimeters in height and have good manners. The stars also undergo special training in manners and how to service customers. The term "star" (the english word is used in the brothels rather than the thai word *dara*) was also used in the rural brothel and referred to those women who received the most customers. In some brothels the designation of star did not involve any increase in price, but to be called the star was an obvious source of pride for the worker.

The method of receiving income varied considerably between sectors. In the rural brothels, payment was based on the numbers of clients received. Each client paid the establishment 100 baht for which they expected to spend about 20 minutes with the brothel worker. This time period was normative rather than fixed by regulation. It was nearly always considered to be sufficient, although some of the women complained that they had experienced problems with clients staying longer than the norm. One of the reasons why the workers do not like very drunk clients is that sex may take longer than 20 minutes. The number of clients were entered into a book and the women would be paid at the end of the night, based on how many clients (*pratuu* or doors)¹² they had. They receive 50 baht for each client. Several women also accepted clients on a nightly basis (200-300 baht per night). Some money was made on drink commissions and some on tips, but in both cases the amounts were irregular and not very large. Even under probing most of the workers could not provide an estimate of the amount earned through tips during the last month because it was such a small component of their earnings. None of the women in the brothel reported having their earnings cut for infractions of rules. One owner did say that in other establishments,

¹² The use of this word appears to derive from the number of times that the door to the woman's room is opened to receive customers.

but not hers, money could be withheld if the workers had been absent for extended periods. This did not, however, appear to be the norm. The system of payment and the lack of defined rules regarding attendance means that there were high levels of movement in and out of the brothels. All owners mentioned that the workers were free to come and go as they wished and that they do regularly circulate between their homes and the brothels. Several of the workers said that this freedom was an advantage of working in the brothels.

Payment methods in the massage parlors were much more complicated, with the arrangements meant to encourage working on a regular basis. In two of the establishments, both in the middle price range, there were four main components of payment. The first component was paid at the end of the working night and was a portion of the fee paid by the client to the establishment. This amount was between one-quarter to one-third of the fee paid by the client (800 baht for 90 minutes at one place and 1,200 baht for two hours at another). The workers also received coupons, redeemable at the end of the month, for each client. These coupons were worth 10 to 20 per cent of the total money paid by the client. The coupons also formed the basis of an incentive system. In both establishments extra incentive payments started when the woman had received 41 customers during the month. The amount of the incentive increased for every extra 10 customers. Commissions on drinks and food were available but of little value. Overall, it was possible for the women to receive between 50 and 60 per cent of the money paid by the client, but to do so she would have to work regularly.

At the high price establishment, the workers received at the end of each night 1,000 baht from the 1,600 baht paid by the customers for the two hour service. There was also an incentive payment based on the number of hours worked (40 baht per hour) with an additional 800 baht if a woman worked more than 160 hours during the previous month. There were no food

or drink commissions. At the low price parlor the system of payment resembled that which, according to informants, was previously the industry standard. Customers paid for a massage by the hour (90 baht an hour), with a usual period of 2 hours. The masseurs received 20 baht an hour from this. An extra fee for sexual services was up to negotiations between the woman and her client. Commissions were available on food and drink but these were rarely worth more than 50 baht a day. Finally, there were monthly incentive payments based on hours worked with the minimum payment of 800 baht available for working 124 hours and a maximum of 3,000 baht for over 221 hours during the month.

At the three middle price and high price establishments, tips accounted for about one-quarter of gross income. The amount of tips varied considerably and sometimes included gold ornaments from regular customers. In the low price massage parlor, it was difficult to differentiate tips from payments for sexual services since the latter payment was arranged through a matter of negotiation.

A fixed establishment price instead of individual bargaining has obvious advantages for the establishment and some customers. The establishment can be sure that it obtains a fixed amount from the sexual services provided by its workers. A fixed all-inclusive price is also more convenient for institutional users, such as companies, tour operators, etc who wish to pay in advance for their guests to use the services of the massage parlor. Special rates may be offered such customers. Payment of the fee to the establishment rather than the worker also means that customers can be much more demanding than if conditions are set during a process of bargaining. For the massage parlor workers, themselves, however, the system of fixed payments is not always beneficial as the women may be able to negotiate higher prices.

Most massage parlor employers retain part of the women's earnings to the end of the month as a means of disciplining or controlling them. Several workers reported being fined for coming late. The fines, which were usually around 500 baht, were deducted from their salaries. The rationale provided by one employee of a massage parlor (a *cheer kheek*) for retaining some of the earnings was that if they didn't keep back some of the money the women would spend it all each night by going to the disco or giving it to their boyfriends and then have nothing to pay the rent or send home at the end of each month. This paternalistic attitude of the management was also reflected in comments by one manager who claimed that he had to be like a father to the women (giving advice, loans etc).

Earnings in both sectors far exceed anything that might be earned in other occupations by women who commonly have only a primary school level of education. The majority of women at equivalent levels of education were engaged in the agricultural sector or were self-employed in the service sector (NSO, 1988). The vast majority of respondents were conscious of the income loss they would face if they moved to another occupation. In the bottom panel of Table 17 the self-assessed difference in earnings between their present employment and the alternative type of employment that they may think of entering is shown. Only 6 per cent of women in each sector think that they will obtain equivalent earnings in their chosen alternative occupation, while 85 per cent of the massage parlor respondents and 90 per cent of the brothel workers felt they would obtain less.

The types of occupation that the respondents considered as alternatives to their current employment reflect the limited occupational choices open to them. As seen in the upper panel of Table 17 the brothel workers were most likely to consider alternatives in agriculture, factory employment and sales (mostly as vendors). In contrast, no respondent from a massage parlor was considering working in a factory, although almost 20 per cent said they

TABLE 17
 Percentage Distribution of Alternative Employment Plans and
 Assessment of Earning Potential in Alternative Occupation

Sector of Alternative Employment	SECTOR	
	Brothel	Massage Parlor
Agriculture	15	9
Factory	23	0
Sales (self-employed)	29	33
Beauty Shop	2	20
Other	25	26
No thought given to alternative	6	11
Total	100	100
Assessment of earning differential between alternative employment and present employment		
Earn Less	90	85
Earn Same or More	6	6
Not Sure	4	9
Total	100	100

Source: Sex Sector Survey

wanted to work in a beauty shop or as hairdressers. A minority of respondents in both sectors had not thought about entering other occupations, either because they were happy in their work or because they had no wish to do anything else.

Although massage parlor workers have much higher incomes than do brothel workers, they receive less in terms of benefits. Workers in the brothels were provided with accommodation (if choosing to live in the brothel), food, legal help and loans from the owners. There was considerable variation in responses by massage parlor workers about benefits available to them. Most were provided with uniforms, but they were required to pay for these; some said that they could obtain loans from their employers, while most thought they would be given legal help if they had a problem associated with their employment. While most managers of the massage parlors said that clothing and medical treatment were provided, they did not mention that the costs were deducted from the workers' payments. Also, while managers said loans were available, the responses from workers reveal a great deal of individual discretion on the part of owners as to whether loans are made available.

The types of benefits available in each sector have clear impacts upon the expenses of workers. In Table 18, the expenses refer to normal monthly expenses over the previous year, or where a woman had worked in the establishment less than one year, normal monthly expenses for the period during which she had been employed. The mean total expenses for the workers in brothels was 4,717 baht while the mean expenses for the massage parlor workers was 28,300. These amounts are approximately 15 per cent lower than the mean take home pay for the previous month. The differences probably reflect a combination of differences in definition of the time period employed (the previous month vs a normal month) and understatement of expenses. There is considerable individual variation in levels of expenses.

TABLE 18
Mean Monthly Expenditure (in baht) and Percentage Distribution
by Category of Expenditure and Sector

Expenditure Items	SECTOR			
	Brothels Baht	Per cent	Massage Parlors Baht	Per cent
Clothes	671	14	2,256	8
Food	775	15	3,525	12
Cigarettes	195	4	201	1
Alcohol	56	1	246	1
Accommodation	203	4	2,863	10
Transport	109	2	1,839	7
Cosmetics	232	5	2,244	8
Leisure	45	1	499	2
Remittances	1,841	39	6,151	22
Savings	541	11	8,074	29
Other	158	3	380	1
Total	4,714	100	28,279	100
N	52	52	54	54

Source: Sex Sector Survey

For example, while 90 per cent or more spend money on clothes, food, cosmetics and remittances, less than 10 per cent claim to spend any money on alcohol and only 44 per cent buy cigarettes.

Some of the sectoral differences in expenditure patterns can be directly related to the living arrangements of the workers. Nearly all the brothel workers live on the premises and, apart from paying a utilities charge in several of the establishments, have no accommodation expenses. Massage parlor workers, however, on average allocate approximately 10 per cent of their expenditure to accommodation. Both groups spend a considerable amount on food. This might appear rather surprising for the women working in the brothels as meals are provided, but as was pointed out several times during discussions with the workers, the meals provided are very basic and hence the workers often go to the nearby market to for snacks.

Workers in the massage parlors have large expenditures for transport and cosmetics. Because the massage parlors do not close to around midnight it is more convenient, and in some cases necessary, for the women to go home by taxi. Three categories with relatively small amounts of expenditure are cigarettes, alcohol and leisure. The small outlays for leisure can be explained somewhat by the payments on food: most leisure activities seem to revolve around having meals. The limited outlays on cigarettes and alcohol does not mean that most of the women do not drink or smoke, rather these items are often provided by customers.

Repayment of debts was another category of expenses. Overall, 65 per cent of respondents in the brothels and 30 per cent of massage parlor workers had borrowed money. Brothel workers normally borrow from fellow workers or the owners/managers of the establishment. Massage Parlor workers tend to borrow from workmates (80 percent). For brothel workers, the main reason for borrowing was to cover everyday expenses, while massage parlor workers were more likely to borrow to buy durable consumer goods. At the time of the survey a minority of workers had outstanding debts. The mean outstanding debt of the massage parlor workers still owing

money was 20,798 while the mean debt of 22 brothel workers was 3,434. Most outstanding amounts tend to be small.

Since their incomes which are considerably higher than they could earn in other sectors of the economy, they have few personal economic obligations, and their expenses are moderate, the workers in both sectors generally have large amounts of surplus income. Most of this income is used for remittances and savings.

e). Savings and Remittances

Approximately 70 per cent of brothel workers and 90 per cent of massage parlor workers reported having some form of savings. The most common form of savings was cash. The mean cash savings of brothel workers was 3,468 baht, with 5 workers having savings over 10,000 baht and the maximum amount of saving being 50,000 baht. In the more lucrative massage parlor sector, the mean level of cash savings was 46,800 baht with 6 women reporting savings in excess of 100,000 baht and one worker having 450,000 baht in the bank.

The next most popular form of savings is the purchase or building of a house. Approximately one quarter of brothel sector workers and over one-half of the massage parlor workers owned houses. In several cases they owned more than one house. Typically the houses are built back in their home villages and are occupied by the family of the worker.

Over one-quarter of massage parlor workers, and smaller percentages of brothel workers, also have savings in the form of land and animals. These are purchased with the earnings of the workers but are held by their families back in the home villages. For the sex workers, remittances and the

TABLE 19
Per cent of Respondents Having Savings in Specified Areas: by Sector

Area of Savings	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
Any Savings	71.2 (52)	90.6 (53)
Cash	50.0 (50)	80.0 (50)
Gold	11.6 (52)	17.6 (51)
Animals	9.6 (52)	27.8 (54)
Houses	26.9 (52)	53.9 (52)
Land	13.5 (52)	28.8 (54)
Mean Cash Savings	13.5 (50)	46,800 (50)

Source: Sex Sector Survey;

Note: Numbers in parenthesis refer to the numbers of respondents

purchase of houses, land etc. are both helping their families and insuring their own futures by providing resources to their families. The women commonly specify the use of the money they send home or that they bring with them on their frequent return trips. Especially for the brothel workers, the money is often for raising their children.

The amount of remittances is large relative to total expenditures and in absolute terms. On average, brothel workers remit 1,841 baht per month while massage parlor workers remit 6,151 baht. Another recent survey of sex

workers in a variety of sectors and geographical areas recorded average monthly remittances of between 2,000 and 4,000 baht (IPS, 1993). In comparison, the legislated minimum daily wage for workers in areas outside Bangkok was less than 100 baht per day. The average annual per capita income for the whole country in 1991 was 41,000 baht (NESDB, 1992) and was much lower in the North and Northeast regions. For 1992, the per capita GDP of the Northeast is estimated to be about 37 per cent of the national total while that of the North is about 57 per cent (Chalamwong, 1992). In contrast, the per capita GDP of Bangkok is three times the national average. Remittances can therefore provide families with a relatively high standard of living. Phongpaichit (1982) has described how the earnings of daughters in the sex industry can provide poor families in the North and the Northeast with the chance of being upwardly mobile. No other industry would provide the opportunity for young uneducated women to send these large amounts of money regularly to their rural families.

f). The Role of Industry Gatekeepers

Prostitutes are engaged in activities which are illegal and hence they are prone to exploitation and harassment from numerous sources. Perhaps because of this potential for harassment women are willing to join sex industry establishments rather than operating on their own, even though this means obtaining only a portion of the money customers pay for their services¹³.

Workers in both industries surveyed are well protected from outside harassment. Because there are fewer layers of protection in the brothels, compared to massage parlors, women working in brothels are more likely to experience some form of trouble in their job. Another possible reason for the

¹³ This was the explanation given by the owner of longest established brothel for why prostitutes were willing to join his brothel when it was set up some 30 years ago.

TABLE 20

Mean Monthly Remittances, Per cent Remitting, Percentage Distributions of
 Person Receiving Remittances, Frequency of Remittances and
 Use of Remittances: by Sex Industry Sector

Characteristic	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
Per cent remitting	82.7	96.3
Mean monthly remittances (baht)	1,841	6,151
Person receiving remittances		
Parents	74.4	96.1
Siblings	11.6	3.9
Children	14.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Frequency of remitting		
One of more a month	76.7	82.4
Less than once a month	22.3	17.6
Total	100.0	100.0
Primary use of remittances		
Everyday Use	46.5	66.7
Schooling	4.7	2.0
Build house	4.7	3.9
Personal use	16.3	23.5
Raise child	27.9	2.0
Savings	0.0	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Sex Sector Survey

greater security of women in massage parlors is that massage parlors are often frequented by customers who are influential. As the owner of the high-price parlor commented to a question regarding problems with police and officials "I don't have any trouble, many [officials] are customers".

Workers in the massage parlor do not live at the parlor and have their customers screened by the *cheer kheek*. All massage parlors have security personnel and a variety of other staff who act as buffers, or potential buffers against trouble. Management can also screen out customers who they think will "upset" the workers. For example, at one parlor it was stated that *farangs* (westerners) were not admitted. Any *farang* who wants to enter is told that it is a member club and only members are admitted. Japanese and other Asian customers are admitted. Another possible reason for the ban¹⁴ is to deflect the workers concerns about AIDS. In the minds of many of the workers the disease is associated with *farangs*, an association which appears to be fostered in this particular massage parlor¹⁵.

The brothel workers live where they work, are identified by community members as prostitutes, and only have the owner standing between them and harassment. Even so, only 11 of the 52 workers reported having experienced any problems. In most of these cases, harassment came from the police, in other cases it was the customers and in only one incident did the problem come from a person living in the neighborhood of the brothel. In most cases, the harassment was verbal, although two workers reported being arrested and one reported being physically assaulted. Problems with customers mainly centered around the workers being asked/forced to perform acts they did not want to do. The important role of the owner in protecting the

¹⁴ The ban was not total. We were told that there were several regular *farang* customers.

¹⁵ An employee who was interviewed said that in the training provided for the workers the workers were told of high levels of AIDS among *farang* tourists.

workers is evident in that the majority of incidents were solved through the intervention of the owner.

It is the owners/managers that are required to deal with outsiders, normally officials who have some role to play in regulating the activities of the sex industry. In many cases, these roles are non-punitive and the relationships are quite cordial. For example, health officials appear to have very good relations with owners/managers and regularly organize meetings to provide health-related information to the workers. There are other groups, such as the police, who have a potential punitive role. It is with this group that relations are most open to conflict.

When asked, none of the managers of the massage parlors said that any arrangements were made with the police in order to keep business operating smoothly. All indicated that the police regularly visited the parlors to check that the workers were above the legal age of 18. All brothel owners, however, admitted making payments to local police. In addition to regular payments special payments might be required in order to correct a specific problem. For example, one owner whose brothel had been closed for having some under-age workers paid money to the police in order to re-open the following day. In most cases, the regular payments were not seen as onerous and were viewed as having the benefit that police would respond quickly to any trouble and help the owners solve it. The amount of money paid was difficult to establish. Most owners said it was not a large amount, in the order of 50-100 baht per day, although one owner claimed she had to pay 10,000 baht per month.

To keep their businesses functioning as smoothly as possible, the owners/managers have to protect their workers from harassment and to establish good relations with agencies that have some jurisdiction over them. The arrangements they make involve some accommodation, for example

making payments to police or allowing health officials (and university survey teams) access to the workers.

g). Health

Prostitution involves a number of health risks. These risks can vary from HIV infection through a range of other sexually transmitted diseases to vaginal abrasions and other soreness resulting from high levels of sexual activity. Two-thirds of respondents reported having experienced some form of illness related to their work, much higher for brothel workers than for massage parlor workers. These differences can be directly related to the numbers of customers served by workers in these sectors. The higher number of customers in the brothel sector increases the risks of infections and abrasions. Sixty per cent of brothel workers reported having had Gonorrhoea, 10 per cent had Syphilis and 60 per cent had experienced an infected or abraded vagina. The corresponding percentages for massage parlor workers were 41.2 and 28.

Workers in the brothel sector relied on government services for information about health issues and treatment for health problems. In nearly all cases brothel workers who were ill obtained free treatment from the Health Department. The massage parlor workers, however, paid for their own treatment. In Table 21 sources of health information are shown. Almost all of the respondents reported having had received health information related to their work. Three-quarters of brothel workers had received information from a government health official, 25 per cent had received information from a friend and almost 40 per cent had obtained information from other sources (normally customers). In contrast, massage parlor workers relied less on government health officials, being more likely to obtain information from owners/managers of the place in which they worked, the media and friends.

TABLE 21
 Per cent of Respondents Receiving Health Information by Source
 of Information and Type of Information:
 by Sex Industry Sector

Source/Type	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
Source of Information		
Employer	15.4	33.3
Government health official	75.0	61.1
Other government official	1.9	0.0
NGO	0.0	1.9
Friend	25.0	38.9
Media	7.7	33.3
Other (including customers)	38.5	35.2
Type of Information		
Family planning	1.9	27.8
Abortion	0.0	9.3
Protection against disease	63.5	46.3
AIDS	76.9	88.9
Sexually transmitted disease	34.6	61.1

Source: Sex Sector Survey

For brothel workers, the health information is normally about how to protect themselves against diseases, including AIDS. Nearly 90 per cent of massage parlor workers also reported having received information about

AIDS and 61 per cent had received information about other sexually transmitted diseases. A much higher percentage of massage parlor workers than brothel workers had received information on family planning and abortion.

The lower levels of information about abortion and family planning provided to brothel workers might be one of the reasons why the incidence of abortion was higher in the brothel sector. One-quarter of respondents from the brothel sector reported having undergone an abortion compared to 11 per cent of respondents in the massage parlors. Only 5 of the 19 women from both sectors who had undergone abortions had experienced more than one abortion.

Health checks are one way to reassure clients that they are safe, and careful monitoring of the workers health also ensures that they are available to work. In both sectors health checks are mandatory and are arranged on a regular basis. In the brothel sector, the checks are conducted weekly by the Health Department. The workers from each brothel go for their checks on a designated day of the week and if they do not come as scheduled the health officials send someone to find out why they have not appeared. Blood tests to check for HIV are undertaken every three months.

The arrangements at the massage parlors are very different. One of the parlors operates its own clinic, one arranges for a doctor to come to the massage parlor and the remaining two parlors arrange for their workers to be checked at nearby private clinics. The health checks are compulsory for the workers, who are also required to pay for the checks. The frequency of health checks varies among the establishments. In two establishments it is three times a week, in another twice a week and in the fourth establishment it is once a week. Blood tests are undertaken every three months.

The concern about AIDS is universal. It was shared by the owners/managers of the establishments, by the workers and, according to the workers, by the customers. All of the 106 respondents had heard about AIDS. They all were aware of precautions they could take to minimize the risks of infection. All except three of the brothel workers said that they used condoms all the time as a precaution against AIDS while the remaining three said that they used condoms some of the time as a precaution. Among the massage parlor respondents 87 per cent said they use condoms all the time. Some of the secondary precautions against AIDS that were reported included refusing to engage in oral sex (brothel workers only) and careful washing after sex.

In response to a question asking how many times during the last five times with a client the respondent used a condom, 99 of the 106 women interviewed responded every time. Of the remaining seven respondents, three worked in the brothels and 4 in the massage parlors. All seven said that they did not use the condoms because their customers did not want to. In the case of two of the brothel workers the customer has removed the condom during sex.

It is difficult to gauge the validity of responses to survey questions about condom use. All owners/managers and workers are aware of the "proper" answer when asked about condom use. It was also apparent, however, that in the brothels the concern was very real and that the owners had taken a united front against customers who would not use condoms. In the massage parlors the situation was not as clear. Although condom use was supposed to be mandatory, one manager said that it was up to the workers since he did not know, or want to know, what went on in the room, and an employee (*cheer kheek*) indicated that if the customer was a regular and was respectable it was not necessary for him to use a condom.

Part of the real fear that is associated with AIDS among the sex workers is from the constant flow of warnings received about the disease. This has resulted in a high level of knowledge among the workers. In Table 22 the most notable feature is that almost 80 per cent of women in both sectors claim that the media was one source of knowledge. Health officials were the most common source of knowledge for brothel workers, while significant proportions also obtained information from customers. In contrast, higher proportions of massage parlor workers obtain their knowledge from the manager of the massage parlor and from workmates.

TABLE 22

Per cent of Respondents with Knowledge of AIDS by Source of Knowledge:
by Sex Industry Sector

Source	SECTOR	
	Brothels	Massage Parlors
Employer	3.8	31.5
Government health official	88.5	55.6
Media	78.8	79.6
Workmate	15.4	31.5
Customer	25.0	9.3

Source: Sex Sector Survey

X. Conclusion

In the Thai media and in statements by politicians, prostitution in Thailand is normally linked to poverty. The view is that once Thailand develops further the incidence of prostitution in Thai society will decline. This could indeed be the outcome of further development. However, it will require much more than an overall increase in per capita income for the extent and character of prostitution to change.

The overview showed that prostitution in Thailand is linked to gender and family relations, and types of economic development policies adopted by the Thai government. These dimensions of Thai society have combined over the last several decades to transform an industry which was once relatively concentrated in terms of geographical location, customer base and types of service delivery, into an industry which now has a high level of internal differentiation, serves several distinct markets and can be found in most parts of Thailand.

In most public discussions, prostitution is seen as a problem. The solutions proposed to the problem target the prostitutes, the most visible and vulnerable part of the industry. There are several ways in which solutions directed at prostitutes are advanced. Prostitutes are sometimes portrayed as 'bad' women who must be punished by law, or as poor unfortunates who do not have job skills and hence should be provided with vocational training. Or they can be seen as persons who are forced to work in the sex industry and therefore they must be rescued. These three views are expressed in one way or another in the legal framework dealing with prostitution or in social programs suggested to deal with prostitution.

The results of the studies of the brothel and massage parlor sectors indicate that many of the stereotypes of the sex industry are not based on

reality. There are significant differences in the operations of different sectors of the sex industry, and among women from different regions. Most women who work as prostitutes do so willingly. The main reason is a desire for money, either to provide support to their parents or to support their own children. Their earnings are much higher than they could obtain in other occupations and entry into the sex industry is relatively easy. Women in the industry rarely face harassment in their jobs, although many perceive that their families do not approve of what they are doing.

The relationship between prostitutes and the sex industry cannot be viewed as a simple case of exploitation. The relationships are very complex and involve benefits for both sides. The workers have considerable freedom, although this freedom is bounded by the needs of the workers to earn money and, in the case of massage parlors, by a system of incentives and disincentives. The establishments take almost half of the money provided by the clients of the prostitutes. At the same time, however, they limit the extent of interaction that the worker need have with the client and in dealing with other parties, in particular the authorities.

Similar relationships are observed between the sex industry and other sections of society. Government departments, including the police and health officials, find it easier to work with establishments than to have to deal with individual prostitutes. Combinations of activities, for example prostitution and the selling of food and drinks, also work more profitably in an establishment setting.

The overall development of the sex industry in Thailand has been shaped by the macro forces outlined in the first section of this paper. The particular institutional arrangements of the industry are the outcomes of actors in different markets finding an arrangement that is mutually satisfying. That these arrangements involve some degree of exploitation, corruption, and in

some cases physical force, is indisputable. On the whole, however, the relationships are based on individuals pursuing their economic aims within an institutional setting.

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XII. Appendix A

Thailand has many organizations which directly or indirectly deal with prostitution through providing services and/or undertaking basic research. A list of some of the major organizations is provided below. For some of these groups, and for women's organizations operating in Thailand, a more detailed discussion can be found in Tantiwiranond and Pandey (1991).

1. **The Thai Association of University Women (TAUW):** provides basic education and information services to maintain literacy levels and career development.
2. **The National Council of Women:** provides information services to maintain literacy levels and provide support for work.
3. **National Council on Social Welfare of Women:** provides basic education, an information service, supports rural career development, personality development and has a variety of community based approaches.
4. **Foundation for Women:** provides information and counseling for women seeking work in foreign countries and/or intending to marry foreigners. Coordinates with international organizations to help Thai women with problems in foreign countries. Publishes newsletters and books on special occasions and produces media for educationally disadvantaged women.
5. **Friend of Women Group:** promotes women's legal rights and social values based on gender equality. Publishes a journal called "View of Women". Established a women's rights protection centre to help women facing legal problems.
6. **Hotline:** provides telephone counseling.
7. **The Samaritans of Bangkok:** provides telephone counseling.

8. **Women Lawyers Association of Thailand:** advises on legislation related to women, and arranges for legal assistance.
9. **Women Lawyers Club:** provides information and advice on legislation affecting women and arranges for legal representation for women.
10. **Centre for Rape Resistance:** provides counselling and help for rape victims. Ongoing support if pregnancy occurs from rape.
11. **The Centre for the Protection of Children's Rights:** provides help for children who are victims of sexual molestation.
12. **Ban Tantawan Project:** provides help for malnourished children. Organizes female adolescent groups and arranges vocational training and education for them.
13. **Club for Northern People:** provides help for sexually abused women, and assists in preventing the selling of women.
14. **Home for Battered Women:** provides temporary shelter for women beaten by their husbands and/or sexually molested. Arranges for vocational training and renders some financial assistance.
15. **Emergency Home and Relief Fund for Distressed Women and Children:** provides temporary shelters for women and children in emergency need.
16. **Rainbow House:** is a shelter for women under 18 who are victims of prostitution and want to change their career.
17. **Research for Women Project:** carries out studies and research on women's problems in order provide accurate information.
18. **Women Studies Program:** Coordinates with related organizations to research prostitution.

19. **Women Studies Programme:** studies women's issues. Arranges seminars and undertakes research.
20. **Association for the Promotion of the Status of Women:** carries out studies on women's status and rights.
21. **Education Means Protection of Women Engaged in Recreation (EMPOWER):** advocacy group for sex workers, provides language training, health education, and career training. Perhaps the best known of the NGOs working in the field. Concentrates on CSWs working with foreign customers.
22. **The Girl Guide Association of Thailand:** trains rural young women in public health and nutrition and encourages them to take part in socially beneficial activities.
23. **Association for the Promotion of the Business of Women in Thailand:** renders various assistance to poor women who want to set up their own businesses by coordinating with the Bangkok Bank to provide information on production, management and marketing.
24. **The Captive Women's Rights:** provides assistance to prostitutes who wish to leave the sex industry. Help finds employment for ex-prostitutes.

