**Information for reports on the issue of child, early and forced marriage**

**The progress made towards ending CEFM, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic report to the General Assembly resolution 75/167**

Policy and legislative action

Thailand is aware of the issue of child and early forced marriage. In the past, Thailand has pushed to amend important laws and work in coordination with religious organizations. In 2019, the Section 277 of the Penal Code was amended. The Penal Code Amendment Act (No. 27) B.E. 2019, which lays down key principles in repealing the former provision that allows the court to have the power to consider allowing children to marry for the benefit of less punishment for offenders in cases who is a person under the age of 18, committing a child aged 13 years and under 15 years without consent. In this regard, the Section 277, as amended, the court having the power to consider the protection of the offended child or the offender under the law on child protection instead of punishment without provisions to order permission to marry for less punishment.

While Islamic organizations have issued an announcement Regulations of the Central Islamic Council of Thailand on Marriage (Nika) Persons Under 17 Years B.E. 2561 (2018) in line with social context and provide justice for women. By this regulation, spouses must be at least 17 years of age, although the regulations allow persons under 17 years of age to marry it requires to ask the permission more clearly and systematically. The marriage must be considered by a sub-committee appointed to investigate and approve the marriage; it must be beneficial to the spouse according to Islamic law.

Currently, Thailand is in the process of amending the age limit for marriage under the Civil and Commercial Code.

In the issue of child, early and forced marriage which is against the law, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security by the Department of Child and Youth has operated in the relevant issue to prevent and solve problems both at the national level and international cooperation, including:

1. The Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Solution Act B.E. 2559 (2016), in particular

- The Ministerial Regulation on Social Welfare Provision of Prevention and Solution to Adolescent Pregnancy B.E. 2563 (2020) to support teenage mother and child and providing a replacement family

- Support the budget for the Children and Youth Council of 76 provinces and the Children and Youth of Bangkok at 50,000 baht each for carrying out activities related to AIDS and reproductive health

2. Operations in accordance with Strategies for Preventing and Solving Adolescent Pregnancy Problems (2017 – 2016) to prevent and solve the problem and cooperated with relevant agencies and network partners at the local level, including the government sector, civil society by implementing measures and activities as follows:

- Establishment of Child Love Centers in the Shelter for Children and Families in all 77 provinces to provide advice, counseling, assistance and social welfare arrangements for adolescents who are experiencing pregnancy problems and need services.

- Providing social welfare for adolescent mothers and their families in 4 dimensions of communities (health, education, occupation and society) in 76 provinces by supporting the Shelter for Children and Families in implementing social welfare arrangements for adolescent mothers and their families registered in the parenting subsidy program for newborn and provide education on child rearing for teenage mothers and their families in 76 provinces, 228 sub-districts.

- Provide family welfare and family replacement arrangements by the Shelter for Children and Families. After the estimation of the problems and environments of adolescent mothers and their families, the operation in accordance with the basic rights that adolescent mothers deserve, such as subsidies for raising newborns (Child Support Grant: CSG) family allowance or individual allowance from the Child Protection Fund. The case of adolescent mother and family who unable to raise children on their own, the family replacement according to the rules and regulations will be operated.

- Building a network of leaders of children and youth at the local level for teen pregnancy prevention and solution (DJ TEEN) to communicate about sexual well-being in a positive way through 3 forms of media, broadcast media (On Air), folk media (On Ground) and online media (Online) in 77 provinces, including 228 sub-districts.

3. Proposal for consideration, amendment and drafting of laws for the protection of children in accordance with the standards of the constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to protect children to get the best interest. The drafting of the Act to amend the Penal Code and the draft law amending the Civil and Commercial Code to increase the minimum age to allow marriage from seventeen years old to eighteen years old (section 1448), which is in the process of consideration of the Council of State.

4. Thailand attaches great importance to and cooperation in ending child, early and forced marriage through ASEAN mechanisms such as the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children: ACWC, ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD), ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (SOMY), ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOM-ED) and activities such as the Regional Forum on Eliminating Child, Early & Forced Marriage (CEFM), etc.

Protection and assistance measures

Department of Children and Youth has developed a Child Protection Information System (CPIS), an integrated system of child protection processes by bringing digital technology to support children in all areas to receive assistance quickly. Children will have quick and systematic access to protection both in the case of children who have been severely affected by various dangers and have been inappropriately raised, abandoned, adolescent pregnancy, etc. The CPIS system is a tool for monitoring child protection operations in accordance with the Child Protection Act. The CPIS system consists of six interconnected operating systems:

1. The notification system or Mobile Application “Child Protection” is an application for reporting incidents for the people who see a child who needs help via mobile phones, tablets and computers through the website

2. The CMST Screening System is a Child Maltreatment Surveillance Tool (CMST) for local government organizations.

3. Case management information system which is an information management for children according to the child protection process on a case-by-case basis and is a tool for case managers. (For officials according to the Act Child Protection B.E. 2546 (2003) and child protection practitioners) in planning and monitoring child support

4. Information system for child protection workers which is an information management for employee, according to the staff of Child Protection Act 2003 and child protection workers. It is also an expert case manager search engine in accordance with the problems and needs of each child.

5. Information system on child welfare which is information on welfare for children and families such as the Child Protection Fund, child allowance for poor families, foster family, and foster family registration.

6. Personal Information Verification System which is a system for checking child information from the Bureau of Registration Administration, Department of Provincial Administration to provide case managers with basic information about the child by setting access rights and confidentiality level.

COVID-19 pandemic situation

In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the Department of Children and Youth has taken steps to protect children of all cases. This includes in the case of child, early and forced marriage. There are measures to protect vulnerable groups from the impact of COVID-19 to cover all aspects such as;

1) Access to support services in all dimensions

* Preparation of manuals/guidelines and announced measures to protect and to protect children and youth in contexts such as child care development and protection practices. In the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, child protection practices for local administrative organizations and case management guidelines for protecting children in the situation of COVID-19, etc.
* Increase the number of social assistance center hotline 1300 to be a consulting center, consulting and receiving complaints for those who face social problems covering all areas, 24 hours a day, free of charge.
* mobile application development “Child Protect” brings digital system to support child protection assistance
* Establishment of Child, Youth and Family Counseling Centers in 76 provinces and Bangkok to provide advice, counsel and help to children who may be receiving inappropriate care during the COVID-19 pandemic

2) Alternative care for children affected by COVID-19 and orphans

According to the data in the CPIS system, there are 448 orphans affected by COVID-19 (cumulative data July 2021 – February 2022), the Thai government by the Department of Children and Youth has provided support and assistance in accordance with the rights that children have to receive with immediate measures, which can be divided into preliminary counseling; grant emergency allowance, survival bags/consumables, money from the Child Protection Fund, and coordinate relevant departments for infection testing, home visit and providing other assistance according to the child's case and measures to restore the quality of life of children and youth. These including children who have parents or relatives, and children who need to provide a replacement family. The government will assist them to receive fund of the Rajaprajanugroh Foundation under Royal Patronage, and coordination of referrals for children to receive mental health services. Recently, the Department of Children and Youth together with the Department of Mental Health develop the model “One House, One Hospital" to take care of children who lost their family’s members in the Covid-19 pandemic, and to launch a "Friendly Car" to take care of the development of vulnerable children.

However, there are many forms of alternative care for children, such as kinship family, foster family and replacement family. The families may apply for subsidies to assist with child support expenses from the Department of Children and Youth instead of sending children to foster home. The government agencies, the private sector, and relevant organizations will work together to ensure that children have the right to thrive in a safe and caring family environment.

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