



WOMEN IN THAILAND'S SOUTHERN BORDER PROVINCES AND CEDAW



What is CEDAW?



CEDAW

- CEDAW stands for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- Thailand has been a member since 1985.
- CEDAW defines discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end it.



Article 1 defines discrimination against women as:

"Any distinction, exclusion, or restriction based on sex which impairs or nullifies women's recognition, enjoyment, or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on equal terms with men, regardless of marital status."



Why it matters?



- CEDAW requires governments to ensure women's equal access and opportunities in political and public life, as well as in education, health, and employment, and targets cultural and traditional practices that shape gender roles and family relations.
- States must submit periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee, an expert body of 23 specialists on women's rights.



Thailand's latest report was reviewed on 19 June 2025.



The CEDAW Concluding Observations—identifying both positive developments and key areas requiring further action by the Thai government—were released on 7 July 2025.

Learn more



English

Thai



CEDAW recommendations for Thailand cover:

- Constitutional and legislative reform
- Women's access to justice
- Gender stereotypes and harmful practices
- Gender-based violence (GBV)
- Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution
- Equal political participation
- Nationality and statelessness
- Employment and economic empowerment
- Rural women and those facing multiple discrimination
- Climate change and disaster risk reduction



Several recommendations focused on women and girls in the Southern Border Provinces (SBPs)

1

Women, Peace & Security (WPS)



Concerns

- Women and girls face killings, injuries, loss of family members, increased care burdens, and arbitrary detention.
- No finalized National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP).
- Women underrepresented in peace dialogues and the Advisory Council for the Administration and Development in the SBP (ศอ.ถอ.).



Recommendations

- End arbitrary arrest and interrogations; guarantee effective remedies.
- Adopt and implement the NAP.
- Ensure women's equal and meaningful participation in peace processes and the Advisory Council.

2

Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs)



Concerns

- WHRDs linked to victims of extrajudicial killings, torture, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary detention face harassment.
- Language barriers limit access to justice.



Recommendations

- Create an enabling environment for WHRDs to work freely.
- Investigate and prosecute all acts of harassment, violence, and intimidation (online and offline). Ensure access to justice and affordable legal aid, including in local languages.





Education



Concerns

- Safety risks and limited access to education for girls.



Recommendations

- Strengthen school safety measures.
- Integrate peace education in school curricula.

5

Marriage & Family Relations



Concerns

- Islamic family and inheritance law sometimes conflicts with CEDAW.
- Barriers for Muslim women to access divorce; men retain unilateral divorce rights.
- Exceptions to minimum marriage age and prevalence of child marriage and polygamy.
- Unregistered religious marriages lack equal protection.



Recommendations

- Harmonize religious and customary justice systems with CEDAW.
- End unilateral divorce through triple talaq and provide legal support to Muslim women seeking divorce.
- Amend laws to eliminate child, forced, and polygamous marriage.
- Require civil registration before religious wedding ceremonies.



Health & Harmful Practices



Concerns

- High maternal mortality and early pregnancy rates.
- Limited postnatal and reproductive healthcare.
- Shortage of female medical personnel.
- Widespread trauma due to violence.
- Practice of female genital mutilation (FGM).



Recommendations

- Increase resources for public health services.
- Provide culturally appropriate sexual and reproductive health education.
- Support women affected by physical and psychological trauma.
- Strictly enforce the ban on FGM.





**These recommendations align with those
of another UN body to Thailand**



UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls



Mechanism established by
the UN Human Rights Council



Composed of five
independent experts



Visited Thailand 2–13 December
2024 and issued a report in May
2025 assessing women's rights



Shared concerns (similar to CEDAW Committee) on women and girls in SBPs, such as:

- ✦ Severe trauma and inadequate psychosocial support.
- ✦ Arbitrary arrests, interrogations, unannounced visits, forced DNA collection.
- ✦ Underrepresentation of women in peace negotiations
- ✦ Poverty and economic insecurity
- ✦ Child marriage and discriminatory family norms.



Gender-based and domestic violence

In addition, the Working Group raised concerns about gender-based and domestic violence, specifically in the SBP context, namely:



Concerns

- Domestic and gender-based violence swept under the rug.
- Hesitancy to report due to male-only adjudicators (Islamic judges & Provincial Islamic Councils).
- Perpetrators often face no consequences.



Recommendations

- Establish women's empowerment and counselling centers in every province.
- Increase women's representation in decision-making bodies, including religious councils.
- Conduct gender-sensitivity training for religious leaders.
- Engage in dialogue with religious authorities to change discriminatory practices.