



## Towards the 21st Century

by **Dr. Chira Hongladarom, Executive Director, Human Resources Institute, Thammasat University.**

**IN THIS WEEK'S HRI-POST CO-OPERATION COLUMN, Dr. Chira calls for equal human resources opportunities for women in order to equip them for the globalization age.**

We must devote this week's column mainly to the topic of women's issues. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the international conference on women taking place this week in Beijing, which I believe is one of the largest international conferences ever organised by the United Nations and also the largest gathering of women in history. United States first lady Hillary Clinton is among the delegates, as is our own Khunying Supattra Masadit, who also plays such a significant role in women's issues. It was she who visited Aung San Suu Kyi and smuggled out the video of the Myanmar opposition leader which launched the unofficial conference last week.

As the world progresses further, the issue of the role of women becomes increasingly important. Therefore I hope that the conference will take some concrete steps towards further uplifting the status of women in society, especially in terms of reducing the degree of discrimination against women in the workplace. Equal opportunities for the promotion of women to high positions in both the private and government sector must also be on the agenda.

In my opinion, women's issues will have to be increasingly aired, and the discussions should be conducted in a spirit of open and scientific debate. Too often discussions on this subject are based on deep emotions and strong feelings.

In Thailand as elsewhere, we owe a great deal to the contribution made by women to economic development. In our major export sectors, textiles and garments, food processing and electronics, women have contributed significantly. Indeed they have been key figures in our economic development to date, and I think they will continue to be. Even so, I think women will have more difficulty in adjusting than men when it comes to globalization because a lower priority is often given to training them.

We must also remember that women tend to do the lion's share of housework. According to some research recently conducted by the HRI, if you calculate the amount of unpaid work women perform in the family, cooking, raising children and doing the housework, the real Gross National Product of Thailand would be much higher. And yet women do not see enough of the economic returns of development.

The second reason for talking about women's issues this week is the publication by the UNDP of the 1995 World Human Development index, which highlights differences between the sexes. It shows that the Scandinavian countries have treated their women almost equally to men, and Canada ranks not very far behind. However, many developing countries in Asia and Africa are still trailing in terms of equal treatment of women. Thailand has a lot of room for improvement in this area.

Recent research conducted into human resources by the HRI shows that because of mass migration of workers from rural areas to cities and towns, there has been an increase in the number of women who are left in charge of households. Therefore any training which is provided for them must be tailored to meet the specific demands they have.

Whereas women have made such a strong contribution to economic development, they have still been neglected in terms of human resource development. Training courses, including those for management and high technology occupations, must therefore be designed in a way that gives equal opportunities to the sexes.

Finally, I would like to remind readers that the HRI has just launched a series of short documentaries on human resources on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 11.00 pm on Channel 11. I hope you will find these programs interesting. I'd also like to let everyone know that our High Level Training on HR strategies Mark IV, will commence on September 5, 1995 at the Hilton Hotel. As with the previous seminars in this series, it is bound to be interesting and provocative. Anyone who wishes to join us should contact the HRI.

See you next week!

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