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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare includes the development of skilled labour, the promotion of employment and increased incomes, and the development of sound social welfare and social security programmes.

In order to fulfil these roles, the Ministry requires reliable, timely and compatible statistics on employment, manpower and associated conditions of work, as well as on socially distressed and vulnerable groups.

These statistics are essential in order to quantify the current situation in respect of labour, manpower, and social conditions in Thailand so that appropriate plans and policies can be formulated. These data are also needed to measure subsequent progress towards the goals set by the Ministry in its planning.

### *Objectives and limitations*

In May/June 1994, an ILO specialist in labour statistics reviewed the current system of labour statistics in Thailand, identified constraints and data gaps in that system, suggested modifications, made proposals in respect of the Labour and Social Information Centre established in MoLSW Order No 3/1994, and outlined areas of possible follow-up assistance.

He dealt with statistical issues only and his report did not cover (nor was it intended to cover) non-statistical issues such as data bases of personnel, finances, library services, list of NGOs and the like.

The report mainly relates to labour statistics, and has only limited coverage of social statistics. A separate major project is recommended to fully review and advise on social statistics. Although labour statistics in Thailand are rather fragmented and uncoordinated, social statistics are even more complex as a result of the large number of government and non-governmental agencies involved. Many of the agencies engaged in social activities were not contacted and therefore not all sources of data were investigated adequately. Furthermore, many social statistics fall outside the ILO's area of competence.

### *Data needs, statistics available and data gaps*

Labour statistics are not well used in Thailand. This is partly because of the problems and constraints with the data as described below (especially due to timeliness and lack of an integrated approach), but also due to inadequate training and limited appreciation of the value of quantitative methods in analysis, planning and policy formulation.

Users have not been articulate or forceful in pressing for improvements to the system of labour statistics. One of the recommendations of the report concerns the establishment of an

on-going committee to discuss and advise on statistical priorities and to consider improvements in the system of labour and social statistics. This committee will improve collaboration and consultation between users, producers and suppliers of statistics and will provide a forum for constructive appraisal.

Thailand has a comprehensive set of labour and social statistics. Table A (on the last two pages of this Executive Summary) summarises the available labour statistics and their constraints. The statistics are in many cases untimely, inconsistent and fragmented.

This is particularly true of the labour statistics based on establishment surveys. Valuable statistical resources are being inefficiently used:

- (a) In the maintenance of similar (but not identical) listings of establishments (which also cause inconsistencies in results) and
- (b) In the conduct of separate unrelated employment surveys of establishments.

The establishment surveys place a heavy respondent burden on businesses and this has led to very low response rates, which contribute to the lack of timeliness and also raise doubts as to the reliability of results.

#### *Suggested changes for improvement*

A major review of the system of establishment-based surveys (and associated multiple listings of establishments) is recommended with a view to reducing the number and complexity of the existing surveys, and hence improving continuity, reliability and timeliness. Such a rationalisation and integration of statistical activities will also make more efficient use of the existing statistical resources.

A single unit within the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, such as the Labour and Social Information Centre, should be responsible for:

- (a) Maintaining a single listing of establishments (which would be accessed by all agencies including the National Statistical Office);
- (b) Implementing all MoLSW surveys which require the collection of statistics directly from establishments. (Departments should continue to remain responsible for statistics derived from their administrative systems.)
- (c) Establishing a statistical plan and statistical standards on concepts, definitions and classifications for the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

The Labour and Social Information Centre would need to be strengthened for these functions by transferring staff and

resources from those MoLSW departments which now collect data directly from businesses.

The NSO's *Labour Force Surveys and Household Socio-Economic Surveys* are statistically sound and reliable, but additional tables and data analysis are recommended. The MoLSW should also be permitted early access to the results of these important surveys on the same basis as currently given to the NESDB. At present, the MoLSW makes very limited use of the Household Socio-Economic Survey and yet this survey has the potential for a number of important analyses for both labour and social issues.

For the Labour Force Surveys, the following changes are recommended:

- (a) Changes in the treatment of certain special groups of the population (such as those who "had a job but not at work", unpaid family workers, and the seasonally inactive);
- (b) Normal hours of work should not be imputed in place of actual hours for those who "had a job but not at work";
- (c) The LFS questionnaire should be changed to provide more data on visible under-employment and the informal sector;
- (d) Additional Labour Force Survey modules should be used on an *ad hoc* basis to cover special topics such as school-leavers and labour migration;
- (e) Sample rotation methods should be introduced in order to improve the estimates of the changes from one year to another.

The Department of Public Welfare is currently engaged in an extensive data collection exercise as part of the Government's *Households' Social Welfare Promotion Project*. The purpose of this project is operational (and not statistical). Nevertheless, a huge quantity of data is being collected and appropriate attention needs to be given to proper statistical standards in data collection, processing and analysis. The data content of the project needs review. More labour related data will add an additional burden but could be analysed for programmes to reduce rural under-employment and rural-urban migration as well as for social and welfare purposes.

From a statistical point of view, sample survey techniques would provide cheaper and more reliable results, and would enable a more complete analysis of the rich set of social data being collected. (At present, the richness of the data at village level is being lost at higher levels of geographic aggregation.)

This project (also called the Village Welfare Assistance Centres project) will severely stretch the resources of the Ministry to process, analyse and disseminate the results and it needs careful monitoring to ensure that it achieves its objectives in the most efficient and optimal manner.

Improved dissemination and presentation of MoLSW statistics is recommended. In particular, there should be more textual comment and interpretation of results, and more use of graphs and other pictorial methods. The "Year Book of Labour Statistics" should be expanded to include a wider range of data and more detail than at present. Departments should publish separate timely releases of important statistics derived from their administrative systems, rather than delaying the release of these important results until the Year Book is published.

Continued close liaison between the MoLSW and the National Statistical Office (and other agencies engaged in statistical work) is stressed throughout the report. A strong relationship between these agencies is essential for an improved system of labour and social statistics and for the effective implementation of the recommendations in the report.

### *Staffing and functions*

The current statistical resources of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare are considerable, amounting to 282 people engaged in statistical activities of which 170 are temporary and 28 are professional statisticians.

These resources are more than sufficient for the production of reliable, timely statistics. However, as already pointed out, these resources are not being used optimally and some restructuring and re-allocation of resources to the MoLSW's Labour and Social Information Centre as the central coordinating unit are recommended.

Even if the Centre does not take on these new functions (maintaining the listing of businesses, conducting direct statistical surveys from businesses and establishing statistical standards for the Ministry), it will still need more staff to carry out its original planned functions specified in MoLSW Order No 3/1994. At least 18 new staff are required to adequately staff the Centre for library work, data base maintenance, and statistical evaluation.

### *Data base*

The MoLSW expects the Labour and Social Information Centre to operate a computerised data base. The report reviews the currently incomplete nature of the data bases in the various MoLSW departments and indicates that it will be complex and difficult to link these data bases with a data base at the Labour and Social Information Centre.

A number of activities are recommended in the development of the planned computerised data base:

- (a) A modest list of data items should be selected for inclusion in the computerised data base. The content can be expanded later if resources are available for the

maintenance of a larger data base. The report includes a set of basic data items.

- (b) MoLSW data base administrators should compile explanatory notes which qualify the data, indicate data sources, and so on. Staff training will be required.
- (c) Suitable software should be identified to store and access the statistics.
- (d) Sufficient hardware of required speed and capacity should be made available, ideally in a network.

A data base consultant should be recruited to advise the MoLSW on software and hardware, to assist the MoLSW in implementing the system, and to train the staff.

In the interim, the Labour and Social Information Centre should concentrate on establishing and maintaining a non-computerised data base of available statistics. The ILO has recently provided support in this area using a consultant funded by the ILO/Japan Inter-Country Project on Strategic Approaches Toward Employment Promotion.

#### *Follow-up action*

It is recommended that the MoLSW should consider technical assistance in the following areas:

- (a) Reviewing and modifying the system of social statistics (ESCAP Statistics Division);
- (b) Feasibility and technical preparation for the establishment of a computerised data base using a data base consultant.
- (c) Technical advisory missions (labour statistics specialists) on:
  - (1) Listing, sampling and content of establishment-based employment surveys;
  - (2) Processing, analysis and dissemination of results;
  - (3) Labour Force Survey methodology and analysis;
  - (4) Compilation of statistics as a by-product of the MoLSW's administrative systems; and
  - (5) Measuring child employment.
- (d) Staff training in data analysis and interpretation, the preparation of textual and graphical reports on statistics, and the preparation of explanatory notes to be included in statistical data bases.

In conclusion, it is essential to note that the system of labour and social statistics being developed within the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare is part of the overall statistical system in Thailand. The Ministry's statistics need to be fully integrated into other statistical systems (demographic, social and economic) so as to improve their value to users.