

From  
the People of Japan



# Training Needs Assessment and Mapping of Training for Sex workers in Thailand

Copyright © UNDP 2021 United Nations Development Programme Thailand

Published by United Nations Development Programme

National Library of Thailand Cataloging of Publication data

ISBN: 978-974-680-471-4 (e-book)

Also available in Thai:

การประเมินความต้องการการฝึกอบรมอาชีพและการสำรวจการฝึกอบรมอาชีพสำหรับพนักงานบริการทางเพศในประเทศไทย

ISBN: 978-974-680-472-1 (e-book)

#### Disclaimer

UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crises, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in more than 170 countries and territories, we offer a global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed herein are entirely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of UNDP. UNDP cannot guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work. The boundaries, colours, denominations and other information shown on any map in this work do not imply on the part of UNDP any judgement of the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.

#### **United Nations Development Programme Thailand**

12th Floor United Nations Building

Rajadamnern Nok Avenue

Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Email: [undp.thailand@undp.org](mailto:undp.thailand@undp.org)

Tel: (66) 2288 3350

Design by Parppim Pimmaratana, Yusirawee Suwannawat

# Acknowledgements

This study was conducted by Ms. Ravipa Vannakit on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Thailand under the project COVID-19 Social and Economic Response and Recovery, with support from the Government of Japan.

This study was made possible through the collaboration and guidance of the Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development (DWF) at the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. Their willingness to acknowledge the needs of sex workers and to develop interventions that include them is commendable. The active participation of sex workers was central to the design of the research and the implementation of data gathering activities. The partnerships with community-based organisations (CBOs) was indispensable. The participating CBOs worked tirelessly to mobilise sex workers in a particularly difficult context of restricted mobility arising from COVID-19 measures. They were creative in responding to different challenges. The CBOs were as follows:

- Empower (Chiang Mai and Udon Thani)
- Mplus Foundation (Chiang Mai)
- Rainbow Sky Association (Songkla)
- Service Workers In Group/SWING (Bangkok, Pattaya/Chonburi, Sra Kaew and Udon Thani)

The contributions made by sex workers through completing the surveys and participating in focus group discussions extended the understanding of demand and supply issues pertaining to finding alternative employment and training opportunities.

# Tables of Contents



Acronyms.....	6
Executive summary.....	7
<b>Section 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1 Purpose.....	13
1.2 Methods.....	14
1.3 The structure of the report.....	16
<b>Section 2: The context.....</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1 Sex work in Thailand.....	17
2.2 A diverse population.....	17
2.3 Sex works as a livelihood choice.....	18
2.4 Criminalization of sex work.....	19
2.5 A stigmatised population.....	20
2.6 Limited knowledge base.....	20
2.7 Impact of COVID-19 on sex workers.....	20
2.8 Opportunities for skills training.....	21
<b>3. Section 3: Understanding the demand for training - the demand side.....</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 Demographic data.....	23
3.2 Current employment status.....	25
3.3 Education and training background.....	27
3.4 Attitudes towards training.....	28
3.5 Interest in alternative employment.....	29
3.6 Steps taken to find alternative employment.....	31
3.7 Barriers to gaining alternative employment.....	32

3.8 The need for help and advice.....	32
3.9 Training needs.....	33
<b>Section 4: Mapping of training opportunities - the supply side.....</b>	<b>37</b>
4.1 Methods.....	37
4.2 Limitations.....	37
4.3 Key findings.....	37
4.3.1 Formal education skills delivery .....	39
4.3.2 Existing short course skills training options for the target group.....	39
4.3.3 Non-Formal and Informal education and skills training.....	40
4.3.4 The problem of quality in the supply of skills development training for the world of work.....	41
4.3.5 The policy framework emphasises higher level skills.....	42
4.3.6 20-Year National Strategy (2018-2037).....	42
4.3.7 Thailand 4.0 Policy.....	43
<b>Section 5: Mapping of demand with supply for training opportunities.....</b>	<b>45</b>
5.1 Demand side findings.....	45
5.2 Supply side findings.....	47
<b>Section 6: Recommendations.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Annex 1: Survey questionnaire .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Annex 2: Focus group discussion questions.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Annex 3: Provincial site data .....</b>	<b>60</b>

# Acronyms



<b>AQRF</b>	ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
<b>BMA</b>	Bangkok Metropolitan Administration
<b>CBO</b>	Community-based organisation
<b>CLC</b>	Community Learning Centres
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organisation
<b>DSD</b>	Department of Skill Development (Ministry of Labour)
<b>DWF</b>	Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development
<b>FGD</b>	Focus group discussion
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>LGBTI</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
<b>MoSDHS</b>	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualification Framework
<b>ONIE</b>	Office of Non-formal and Informal education
<b>OVEC</b>	Office of Vocational Education Commission
<b>RSAT</b>	Rainbow Sky Association
<b>SCE</b>	Science Centres for Education
<b>SWING</b>	Service Workers In Group
<b>TGW</b>	Transgender women
<b>TGM</b>	Transgender men
<b>TNA</b>	Training Needs Assessment
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and vocational education and training
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UFW</b>	Unacceptable Forms of Work

# Executive Summary

## The purpose

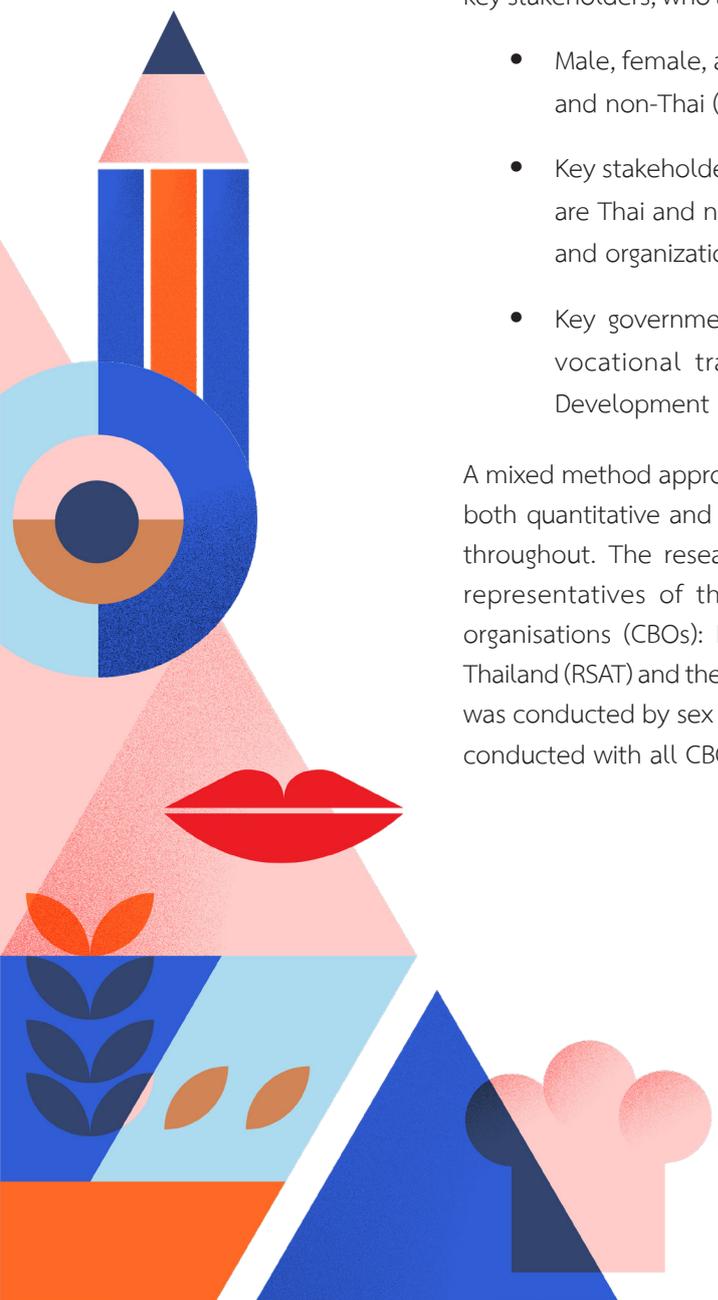
The purpose of this training needs assessment (TNA) is to investigate both the demand and supply sides of training opportunities for sex workers in Thailand in order to identify learning pathways that will enhance their participation in the labour market and to enhance their economic empowerment. The study focuses on training courses offered by the Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development (DWF) at the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and the Department of Skills Development at the Ministry of Labour..

## Methods

The assignment involved conducting a training needs assessment with the following key stakeholders, who are the direct beneficiaries as set out in the terms of reference:

- Male, female, and LGBTI sex workers who are Thai citizens, stateless people, and non-Thai (migrants);
- Key stakeholders and networks of male, female, and LGBTI sex workers who are Thai and non Thai (migrants), including civil society organisations (CSOs) and organizations working with sex workers; and
- Key government stakeholders responsible for implementing/reporting on vocational training for sex workers, including the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and the Ministry of Labour.

A mixed method approach was employed which involved desk-based research with both quantitative and qualitative analysis. A participatory approach was employed throughout. The research design and tools were developed in partnership with representatives of the sex worker community assisted by community-based organisations (CBOs): Empower, Mplus Foundation, Rainbow Sky Association for Thailand (RSAT) and the Service Workers In Group (SWING) Foundation. Site preparation was conducted by sex worker leaders. Training on the use of the questionnaires was conducted with all CBOs.



## Main finding

### *Demand side findings*

#### 1 There is weak effective demand for skills training for alternative employment

While the great majority of sex workers who participated in the surveys and focus group discussions (FGDs) expressed a desire to find alternative employment and participate in related training, their ability to do so is highly constrained.

- I. The ability to participate in available training courses is constrained by lack of money and time (direct and opportunity costs);
- II. The availability of child care and travel concerns are other factors.

#### 2 Perceived lack of suitable jobs

There are a number of concerns that affect motivation and seeking alternative employment. There is a perception that there is a lack of suitable jobs available for the target group. Allied to this is the concern that training might not lead to enhanced job opportunities.

#### 3 The basic skills level of the group is low and many require basic skills upskilling

It was found that many of the survey respondents needed assistance when completing the survey. This was due to a combination of deficits in functional literacy, the ability to focus and stay on task and critical thinking skills. Around 50% of the survey sample had not progressed beyond lower secondary school and 20% had not studied beyond primary school, including 4% who had never attended school. The need for basic skills development is reflected in the survey findings, including literacy skills and basic IT skills.

#### 4 There is an expressed need to improve the soft skills or core work skills of the group

Soft skills development is needed to build the confidence and self-efficacy of many sex workers. The group recognise the value of developing core work skills such as communication skills and empowerment/self-efficacy skills. Vocational skills training should therefore be complemented with core work skills training.

#### 5 The demand for vocational skills training needs to be further explored

The survey data indicate that the respondents are limited in their vocational horizons and tend to opt for what they know e.g. food preparation, cosmetics/beauty and sales/retail. There may be

options that will be of interest to the group that they are not currently aware of. They need to be exposed to other forms of training and livelihoods and to understand the benefits of working in these areas. The areas of interest in vocational training expressed by the participants appear to reflect gender stereotyping in the world of work, and this constrains their decision making. Efforts need to be made to raise awareness of this issue with regard to sex workers and TVET provision more generally.

6

#### There is demand for training to start up their own businesses

A large percentage of survey respondents (86%) were interested in obtaining training to start up their own businesses. This needs further exploration as training alone will not be sufficient and other services including loans, mentoring and guidance may also be necessary. There is also scope for providing planning and financial management skills, which are transferable skills.

7

#### The group has taken limited steps to obtain alternative employment and training

55% had not thought about participating in training for alternative employment and less than half had actually taken steps to obtaining training or alternative employment. The survey data suggest that apart from seeking help from friends, relatives and connections, there is limited awareness of what to do and how to go about doing it. This indicates the need for guidance services.

8

#### There is need to provide guidance and support services

88% of the survey respondents would like help in finding suitable training and work. Professional support services do not appear to exist for this target group. Exploratory work in the mapping of available training courses revealed that some relevant information is not routinely provided and it is difficult to understand what options may exist.

9

#### Qualifications matter to the target group

The majority of survey respondents felt that qualifications were either essential or very important (69%). In this regard, it will be important for any qualifications obtained to be within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Only 2% felt that they were not needed..

10

#### A quarter of sex workers would like to train with other sex workers

There is a preference among some sex workers (24%) to train together while 31% had no preference. This means there is a need for some tailored training to be given specifically to sex workers while others can join mainstream training..

11

#### This is a diverse group with varying assets, needs and wants

A differentiated approach is needed to cater for different levels of education and skills, different ages and different aspirations. There are different preferred learning styles. Some would opt for online courses. A single strategy would not include all those who need to develop skills for alternative employment..



## Supply side findings

### 1 Excluded from higher level opportunities

The majority of sex workers who participated in this assignment appear to be excluded from higher level opportunities in formal education and training due to their current life circumstances and lack of skills/qualifications.

Training opportunities at NQF levels 4-8, which constitute the main skill and qualification pathways for work appear to be closed for most of the target group. They are unlikely to be able to make the transition to professional and skills worker status.

### 2 There are more options for sex workers who have completed secondary education

These sex workers may be better able to re-join formal education pathways and obtain higher level qualifications. Sex workers who are university graduates may be best placed to obtain suitable training and alternative employment.

### 3 There are more options for sex workers who have already some of form of vocational training

These sex workers may be able to use prior training and qualifications to improve their training options in terms of qualification level and entry requirements.

### 4 There are many short courses available for skills training, but these generally have not been designed with the target group in mind

Available short courses provided by DWF and other providers cover many of the areas for vocational training that were suggested by the survey respondents and FGD participants. It should be noted that these tend to cover vocational skills only and do not include soft skills/core work skills development. There appears to be no available courses that combine basic and soft skills with vocational and entrepreneurial skills. The duration of the longer courses is reportedly problematic for many sex workers as the timetabling does not suit them and their evening work hours. Some sex workers may be able to enrol for existing courses, but many will not be able to and will need a more tailored approach.

### 5 Migrant and stateless sex workers are unable to take up training and be awarded qualifications

There appears to be little scope for the inclusion of migrant and stateless sex workers in mainstream training courses. It may be possible to include them in CBO-delivered training.

### 6 Training (and alternative employment) is only one measure that is currently needed to help sex workers in the current COVID-19 crisis

The immediate need is for money to make up some of the loss in earnings arising from the impact of COVID-19 on sex work. In the short run, attention needs to be given to enhancing social protection support for vulnerable households to address food insecurity and income poverty. In the longer term, the human capital of sex workers can be developed, but this needs to be included in the mainstream framework for training and skills development in a more elaborate lifelong skills development policy framework.

## Recommendations

### *Short term*

The Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development and CBOs are working with and representing sex workers to consider the following:

1. Putting in place **comprehensive information and guidance services** to help sex workers make informed choices about training, alternative employment and other issues. This could be developed by and located at CBOs that work with sex workers. Providing high-quality information and individualised advice and guidance services and raising awareness on the benefits of learning can encourage greater and more inclusive participation in training.
2. Developing accredited **short pre-employment training courses** specifically tailored to sex worker life situations to enable them to better understand their livelihood options and to strengthen their core work skills. These can be delivered by government and non-government training providers.
3. Putting in place **incentive packages, including financial stipends**, to support selected sex workers through formal skills training courses.
4. Providing targeted support services to the most marginalized sex workers e.g. those with disabilities and those who are stateless or migrant workers.
5. Consider piloting an “**Individual Learning Scheme**” for sex workers that can also be conducted with other non-standard workers. This could include individual learning plans (ILP) to improve access to adult learning and training for currently excluded workers. Such an approach could be developed and piloted with interested sex workers at one site.
6. Collaborating with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour to **support the development of modular training courses** that enable more flexible learning for sex workers who have time constraints.

### *Longer term*

UNDP is also considering the following:

1. Advocating with the Ministry of Education for the development of a strategy to address gender stereotyping in TVET provision.
2. Collaborating with other UN agencies, e.g. World Bank, ILO, UNCEF, UN Women for the government to routinely include data on sex workers in mainstream surveys and data gathering on the labour force, household poverty, etc.
3. Advocating with and providing support to the government of Thailand with other UN agencies, e.g. ILO and UNESCO, to develop an inclusive National Skills Policy.
4. Advocating with all partners and stakeholders to take progressive steps to decriminalise all forms of sex work.



## SECTION

# 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Training Needs Assessment (TNA) is to investigate both the demand and supply sides of training opportunities for all sex workers in Thailand in order to identify learning pathways that will enhance their participation in the labour market and to enhance their economic empowerment.

The assignment as set out in the terms of reference includes the following tasks:

- Identifying the main areas that the Thai government should focus on to enable the economic empowerment of sex workers, including, but not limited to, vocational and skills training. This will help them to participate in the labour market by including career coaching and job-matching, etc.;
- Identifying the key barriers for sex workers to access training, apart from stigma and discrimination;
- Recommending to the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security on how to safeguard and protect the human rights of sex workers and to enable the economic empowerment of this target group through vocational and skills training;
- Identifying possible solutions to engage non-Thai sex workers in vocational and skills training programmes; and
- Mapping the results from the TNA with the existing training curriculum offered by the Division of Protection and Occupation Development at the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and the Department of Skill Development at the Ministry of Labour.

It is anticipated that the findings will assist in the development of policy recommendations and the identification of technical support that UNDP Thailand will provide to the government on the human rights dimensions in enabling the economic empowerment of sex workers. It responds to the findings and recommendations of the United Nations Country Team's socio-economic impact assessment on social protection and basic service, and social cohesion and community resilience pillars.

UNDP Thailand aims to advocate and provide technical support to the government to remove the human right-related barriers in regard to the training courses offered to sex workers to promote their economic empowerment. It has been found that many training courses provided by the government do not respond to the needs of sex workers in terms of content, time, type of training, etc. It is expected that vocational and skills training courses will enable the economic empowerment of sex workers through income-generating participation in the labour market. It will also lay the foundations for a discussion to decriminalize sex work and enhance the quality of life of sex workers in Thailand.

## 1.2 Methods

The assignment involved conducting the training needs assessment with key stakeholders who are the direct beneficiaries as set out in the terms of reference, that included. They include the following:

- Male, female, and LGBTI sex workers who are Thai citizens, stateless people, and non-Thai (migrants);
- Key stakeholders and networks of male, female, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) sex workers who are Thai and non- Thai (migrants), including CSOs and organizations working with sex workers; and
- Key government stakeholders responsible for implementing/reporting on vocational training for sex workers, including the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and the Ministry of Labour.

To obtain relevant data for the TNA, a mixed method approach was employed. This involved desk-based research, and quantitative and qualitative analysis. A participatory approach was undertaken throughout the research process. The research design and tools were developed in partnership with representation from the sex worker community assisted by CBOs: SWING Foundation, Mplus Foundation, Rainbow Sky Association for Thailand and Empower. Site preparation was conducted by sex worker leadership. Training on the use of the questionnaires was conducted with all CBOs.

**Facilitated surveys** were conducted in four provinces (Chiang Mai, Srakaew, Songkla and Udon Thani) to obtain data on learner characteristics, perceptions and needs, demand for training among sex workers, and barriers to accessing training and skills development. Data from two additional sites (Bangkok and Pattaya) that were conducted under a different UNDP-funded programme implemented by SWING but using the same survey were added to increase the sample size and representation of sex workers.

The sampling approach depended heavily on the availability of sex workers in terms of time and place as well as the resources that were available for this assignment. A purposive sampling approach was used, involving a snowball sample. The drawing of a simple random sample in order to ensure statistical representativeness was not possible at the current time due to time constraints, available resources and the progressive impact of COVID-19. It was a non-probability sample. The population sizes at the national and provincial levels are not known.

In practice, a minimum of 100 sex workers were sampled at each of the four provincial sites and the two additional sites. These sites were selected as they are known to host substantial populations of sex workers. A snowball approach was implemented by sex worker organisations and their outreach workers. Each respondent was given assistance if required to be able to understand and complete the questions. In this regard, the survey has the features of a facilitated interview in order to elicit reliable information from

a group that may have low education levels and limited functional literacy. It was assumed that the vast majority of the target groups had little if any experience in completing a questionnaire.

The survey questions had been developed and reviewed by stakeholders (see Annex 1), and the survey questions were piloted in Chiang Mai on April 21, 2021, and further revisions were made in the light of feedback. The survey questionnaire was transmitted via mobile phone to outreach workers.

Data collection was supported by selected sex workers who were trained for this task. The various sub-populations of sex workers, particularly male, transgender and migrant sex workers generally need to be able to trust those engaging with them. It was considered particularly important to be able to access the 'hardest-to-reach' among sex workers, e.g. those with disabilities, stateless people and migrants. All survey data were disaggregated by age, gender (non-binary), migrant status, ethnicity (stateless people) and disability status,

**Focus group discussions** (FGDs) were conducted to obtain qualitative data regarding the objectives of this assignment and to triangulate the data obtained from the surveys. FGD guiding questions were developed (Annex 2). Given the complexity of the issues to be investigated, which were based on the experience of sex workers, FGDs played an important role in gaining an understanding of the demand for training and alternative employment among this diverse population.

The approach involved developing a set of questions and instructions covering implementation with the target groups. This was structured to enable the participants to talk about employment experience and aspirations/interests, perceived training needs and wants, awareness of skills training programmes and any barriers to accessing them. The FGD questions were piloted with a group of sex workers in Pattaya, facilitated by SWING in a separate project.

It was planned to conduct 3 FGDs in each province (3x4). Each FGD aimed to include 8-10 sex workers based on their availability and willingness to provide information. Where possible, the FGDs were structured to include representation of female sex workers, male sex workers and transgender sex workers (male and female).

The FGDs were organised by the participating sex worker community/organisations who were responsible for inviting the representative sex workers to the FGDs. They also provided support during the discussion as needed.

**Desk based research:** A desk review was conducted using internet searches in both English and Thai using key words relevant to education and training for the world of work in Thailand. This included an investigation of adult education/learning opportunities, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes provided by Royal Thai Government and non-government providers, a review of labour market reports, and data and trends with regard to employment opportunities for vocationally trained sex workers.

## 1.3 The structure of the report

This report is organised as follows:

**Section 1:** Introduction: This section provides the rationale for the report and describes the methods used in obtaining data.

**Section 2:** Context: This section provides an overview of the context of the research and the problems to be addressed.

**Section 3:** Understanding the demand for training – the demand side: A fundamental first step is to understand the learners in training course development. This section presents data on the learners. It includes the skills they already have and those they wish to acquire, e.g. basic skills, occupational skills, soft skills and core work skills. This section also includes data on barriers and bottlenecks as perceived by the learners.

**Section 4:** Mapping of training opportunities – the supply side: The mapping of available training opportunities involves reviewing the existing provision of adult skills training for the labour market including formal and non-formal education, life-long learning, and community learning. This section includes the mapping of training courses (including MoSDHS/Department of Skill Development (DSD), Ministry of Labour, the private sector and non-formal vocational training) and certification.

**Section 5:** Mapping of demand for training opportunities with supply: This section is the mapping of TNA findings against available training opportunities, which involves bringing together the findings of the TNAs and the mapping of available opportunities. This will help to identify good matches between the demand for, and supply of, skills training, gaps and promising opportunities for investment.



## SECTION

# 2

# THE CONTEXT

## 2.1 Sex Work in Thailand

Estimates of the number of sex workers in Thailand vary from 200,000 to more than 2 million. This includes full-time sex workers, part-time freelancers who may supplement their regular income with occasional sex work, and migrant sex workers from neighbouring countries and elsewhere. It is difficult to make a reliable estimate of the number of sex workers in the country as such work is illegal and conducted in some secrecy. The largest populations of sex workers are to be found in major tourist cities such as Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Pattaya and Phuket. While there is a large international clientele, there is a larger segment of the entertainment sector which serves local clients (Villar, 2019).

Clients of sex workers include foreign tourists and businessmen as well as Thai nationals. A high proportion of men in Thailand (>75%) report having bought sex from sex workers (Bhattacharjya et al, 2015).

## 2.2 A diverse population

Sex workers are a diverse group and include females, males, transgender men and women, migrants, people with disabilities, and stateless ethnic minorities. There is also a wide age span among sex workers from young people to senior citizens. Some sex workers enter the trade before the age of 18. The majority are Thai nationals who are from rural areas or poor households.

There is diversity in the markets for sex work and how it is conducted. Sex workers may be venue-based (e.g. bars, karaoke venues, clubs, massage parlours, spas and saunas). It is estimated that over 85% of sex workers are employed in entertainment venues (Empower, 2017). They are registered as service providers. Freelancers keep their illegal working status a secret. Public space sex workers are a particularly vulnerable sub-group that work on the streets, beaches, parks and markets. These latter two groups are more vulnerable to violations of their human rights, including violence and harassment. Migrant sex workers are outside the law, work in precarious situations and are vulnerable to exploitation.

## 2.3 Sex work as a livelihood choice

The majority of sex workers enter sex work by their own choice (Bhattacharjya et al, 2015). Financial reasons at the household level are important in choosing sex work, which provides better pay and greater flexibility than other employment options. The vast majority of female sex workers report entering sex work for financial reasons due to the lack of alternative employment opportunities. Many see their work as a means to obtain a better personal, family and community life.

Female sex workers often begin sex work to support their dependants, who are mainly their children, but may also include their parents. Empower (2017) estimated that 80% of female sex workers are mothers. According to the International Labor Organization, sex workers in the major cities of Thailand send an estimated \$300 million a year to their families in rural areas (Havocscope, 2015).

Gender inequality is a driver of entry into sex work. The factors include early marriage, including child marriage, childhood sexual abuse, early widowhood, abusive family members, intimate partner violence, divorce and low levels of education. Male and transgender sex workers report different motivations for entering sex work including personal financial needs, sexual satisfaction and opportunities to explore their own sexuality. The gender identity of transgender sex workers often forces them to leave home and limits their employment opportunities.

The sex work market in Thailand was estimated in 2012 to be worth \$6.4 billion a year or about 1.6% of the country's GDP. As a part of the "black economy", there is little, if any, data on the contribution of sex work at the household level, or to the national economy. The level of the black economy in Thailand is amongst the highest in South East Asia, estimated at 43% of GDP in 2015 (Schaper, 2020).

Sex work in Thailand is a non-standard form of employment that is outside the formal labour market and largely beyond the scope of international labour standards. There are aspects of international labour standards that are applicable to the informal sector, for example, the ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment (C190) explicitly mentions its scope as applying to both the formal and informal sector. An analysis using the Unacceptable Forms of Work (UFW) model and its 10 dimensions revealed issues of unsafe and unfair working environments that increase the risk of exploitation, forced labour and other human rights abuses for sex workers, especially migrant workers (Villar, 2019). There is also a lack of access to legal protection, health services and social security. Sex workers therefore lack representation and voice. They are unable to claim social security benefits or maternity leave, have sufficient days off work, protect themselves from unfair employment termination, and they often have inadequate working and living conditions. These are consequences of the criminalisation of sex work and the lack of effective oversight of the Thai entertainment industry, which points to the need to decriminalise sex work.

## Unacceptable forms of work

**Unacceptable forms of work (UFW)** have been identified by the ILO (Fudge and McCann, 2015) as work in conditions that deny fundamental principles and rights at work, put at risk the lives, health, freedom, human dignity and security of workers or keep households in conditions of poverty. It is highly relevant to sex work.

The UFW model contains 10 dimensions of unacceptability. These are:

- **Forced labour:** trafficking, forced prostitution
- **Health and safety:** risks to health and well-being
- **Income:** insecure payments and inadequate payments
- **Security:** insecure employment, no prospects for promotion and no opportunities for skills development or training
- **Working time:** excessive working hours, unprotected night work
- **Representation and voice mechanisms:** the right to freedom of association, the right to organise and the right to collective bargaining are not respected and there is a lack of consultation and voice mechanisms
- **Child labour:** child prostitution
- **Social protection:** health care, pension coverage, paid sick leave, unemployment insurance, etc
- **Equality, human rights and dignity:** discrimination in working life, abuse, violence and harassment
- **Legal protection:** exclusion from legal protection, lack of information on legal rights, no contracts

## 2.4 Criminalization of sex work

The Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act (1996) is the central law which prohibits prostitution which is defined as any act done to gratify the sexual desire of another in exchange for money or any other benefit, but only if done in a promiscuous manner. (Fox, 2009). The Act can be used to penalize sex workers, customers and employers/managers.

The criminalization of sex work results in structural problems of violence, harassment and abuse of sex workers by law enforcement agencies. During 2019, according to the Royal Thai Police, some 24,000 sex workers were arrested, fined or prosecuted. Sex work, and the risks involved to sex workers, are therefore hidden due to its illegal status.

A compounding factor is that prostitution can be conflated with trafficking. Migrant sex workers are often treated as victims of trafficking regardless of their decision to engage in sex work under the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act of 2008 (Villar, 2019).

Criminalisation also puts in place substantive barriers to obtaining information about sex work and sex workers. Most sex workers keep their identity and sex work activities hidden from their families and communities. Sex work venues may also keep their activities hidden from the general public, but not the clients. This means that obtaining information from sex workers needs to be carefully managed and handled with discretion/confidentiality.

## 2.5 A stigmatised population

Sex workers of all genders continue to face deep social stigma (Villar, 2019). Transgender sex workers face compounded stigma and discrimination. Transgender women are often portrayed as sex workers and petty criminals and may face arbitrary arrest and random drug tests while walking the streets. Discrimination against people living with HIV is also prevalent among sex workers, a key population that has been heavily impacted by HIV.

## 2.6 Limited knowledge base

Since all forms of sex work are illegal in Thailand, data on sex workers are not captured in national statistics on employment, the labour market, social protection or household poverty. Little is known about their human capital or contribution to the economy or society. There is also a lack of reliable data on the size and composition of sex workers across the country, which is likely to be somewhat fluid as sex workers may move in and out of sex work and are mobile between workplace and home. Research on sex workers tends to have a restricted focus on HIV, gender-based violence and trafficking. There is a need for more mainstream ethnographic and social science research into the lives and opportunities for sex workers and their families.

## 2.7 Impact of COVID -19 on sex workers

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism activities in Thailand, both domestic and international, have largely stopped. International travel to Thailand has declined to very low levels. This has resulted in an increase in tourism-related unemployment, although statistical data for sex workers are lacking. The crisis has exacerbated the challenges faced by migrant workers in regard to the lack of work and income, the lack of access to health care and vaccinations, food insecurity and homelessness. The COVID-19 crisis of 2020 has evolved and deepened as different variants of the virus have emerged and spread in the country. Currently, infection rates are at peak level and increasing, and the number of deaths is increasing, while the pace of vaccination is slow and there is no clear strategy to protect those who are most vulnerable and at risk from the virus. The socio-economic impacts are deepening and likely to be long lasting, especially for the most vulnerable groups.

Sex workers are among workers in the informal economy that have been most severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis due to their lack of income security and social protection measures (ILO, 2020). The loss of income will push many over the poverty threshold. Since all forms of commercial sex are illegal in Thailand, sex workers are excluded from many of the schemes in the social security system and receive little support.

A survey conducted by UNAIDS in April and May 2020, found that 72% of respondents reported that they were not eligible for government assistance due to the illegal status of their occupation (Surang et al, 2020). Many were breadwinners for their families but found themselves in a situation where they were not able to

generate sufficient income. The situation has since improved for sex workers and they have been able to access Government safety net payments.

Sex workers who are migrants or stateless (predominantly from Thailand's ethnic minority groups) are formally undocumented, lack access to government support and are at greater risk of being arrested because of their illegal status in the country.

The impact of COVID-19 is evolving and changing as clusters of cases arise in various provinces. Preliminary FGDs conducted by SWING with sex workers in Pattaya, Chonburi indicate that many sex workers are continuing to work on the street or in the entertainment venues that remain open, but with reduced earnings. It is reported that sex workers who are computer literate are conducting their work on line. The market for sex work now relies on local men, including expatriates, at a massively reduced scale when compared to the pre-Covid era. This has implications for the training options and pathways that sex workers may wish to consider. It is likely that some sex workers will wish to develop alternative or additional work activities to supplement income from sex work.

During the crisis, they are being left behind. Many sex workers lack access to information about COVID-19 prevention and supplies as the criminalization of sex work and high levels of stigma hinder sex workers from participating in some community-level health information initiatives. Additionally, migrant sex workers (both regular and irregular) face further challenges in accessing information and essential services, as well as an increased risk of arrest.

## 2.8 Opportunities for skills training

It is reported that female sex workers are unable to access accredited skills training and development (Empower, 2017) which may enable them to expand their livelihood options and provide opportunities for those who wish to leave sex work.

In the context of a deepening employment crisis for sex workers in Thailand, there is an opportunity to provide support to address the economic vulnerability of sex workers by identifying training opportunities that are accessible to them and relevant to their livelihood needs and aspirations. Training opportunities are provided by both government and private sector providers that are not available to sex workers. There may also be demand for training that is not matched by supply. Thus, the challenge is to understand the demand for and supply of training options that are available to the diverse sex worker population. The way forward is to match demand with supply and to take into consideration the enabling environment/externalities in relation to local labour markets. Currently, little is known about sex worker demand for employment-related training or the options that are available to them. This constitutes an obstacle to effective policy-making and programming that will be addressed in this assignment.

The identification of accessible work training options can be seen as part of an approach to empower sex workers within the framework of their own self-determination.



## SECTION

# 3

## Understanding the demand for training – THE DEMAND SIDE

### 3.1 Demographic data

A total of 689 respondents completed the survey comprising 632 Thai (92%), 11 stateless (2%) and 46 migrant sex workers from Cambodia (1%), Laos (3%) and Myanmar (2%). 11 FGDs were also held, 7 via zoom and 4 face-to face with 92 sex workers - FSW (41), MSM (26) and TG (25) in 5 provinces: i) Bangkok; ii) Chiang Mai; iii) Chonburi (Pattaya); iv) Songkla (Hatyai and Dan Nok); and v) Udon Thani. It was not possible to conduct any FGDs in Srakaew province due to the lack of a CBO to assist in gathering sex workers for a FGD.

#### Gender:

Of the survey respondents the majority were female sex workers (54%), with male sex workers (28%) and transgender male sex workers (5%) and transgender female sex workers (12%).

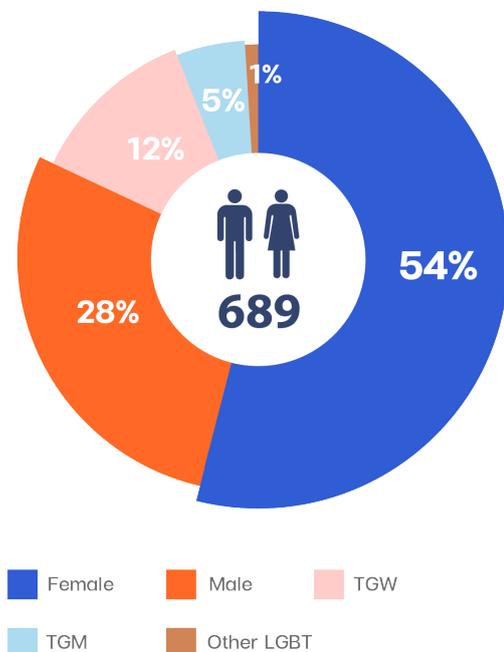
#### Disability:

Four per cent of the survey respondents reported that they had some form of disability.

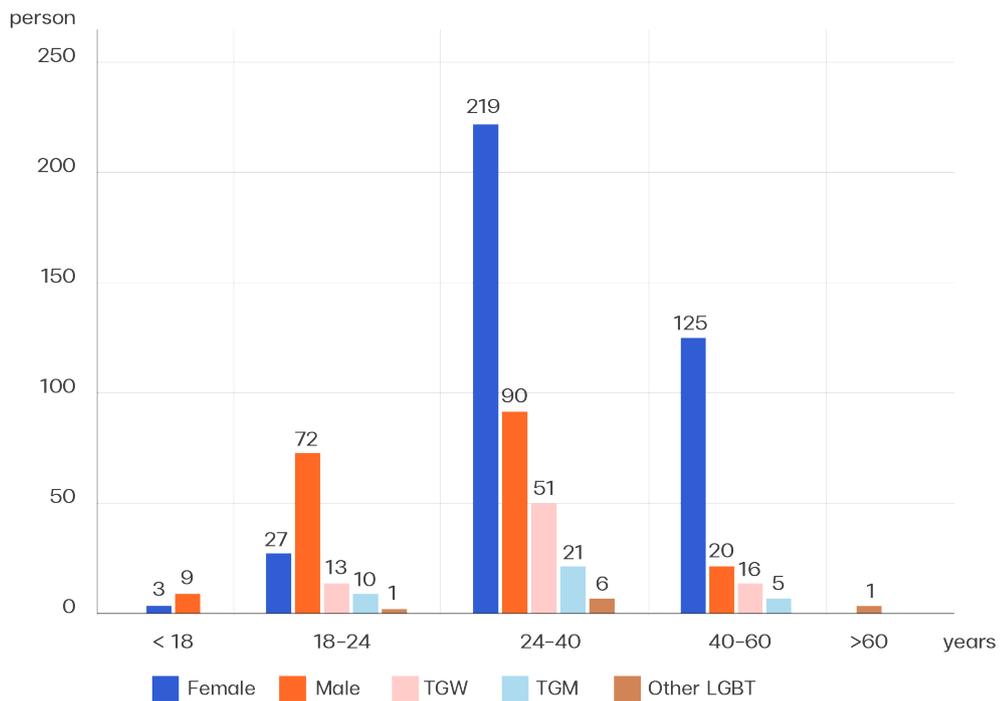
#### Age:

The majority of the survey respondents were aged 24-40 years (56%), with 24% aged 40-60. 18% were aged between 18 and 24 and 2% were below the age of 18. Of the focus group participants, most FSWs were in the 20-67 age group, most MSMs were aged 19-45 years and most transgender women were aged 22-55.

Gender



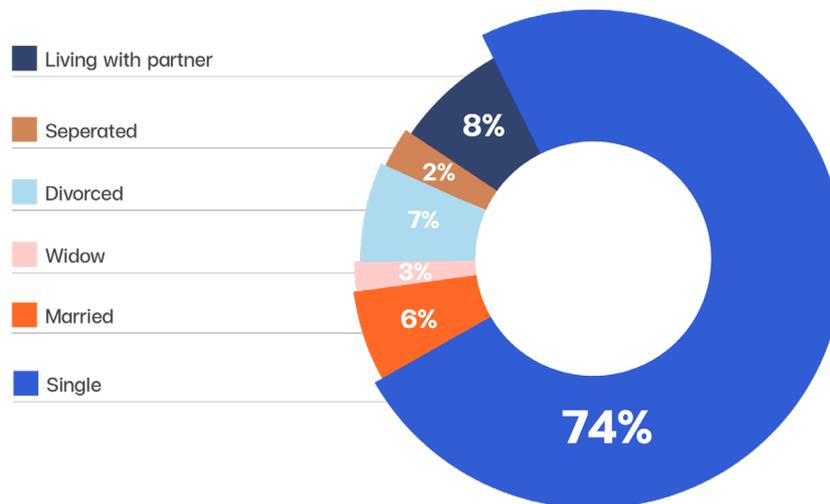
## Age



## Marital status:

Six per cent of survey respondents were married and eight per cent lived with a partner. The remainder were identified as being single (74%), widowed (3%), divorced (7%) and separated (2%). Among female sex workers, 10% reported being married.

### Marital status



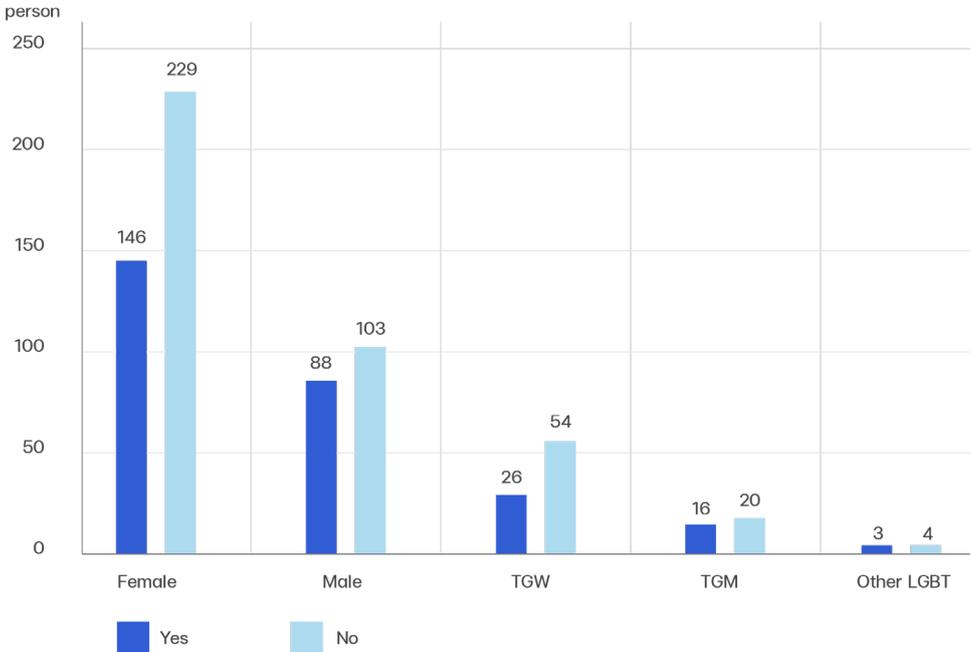
## Dependents:

65% of the group had no children under the age of 20. 35% had children below the age of 20, with one child (21%), two children (10%) and three children (4%). Of these, 58% reported that the children were cared for by the family, while 37% reported looking after their children themselves. 5% reported others looking after their children. 73% reported that they were currently supporting their parents (79% of female sex workers).

### 3.2 Current employment status

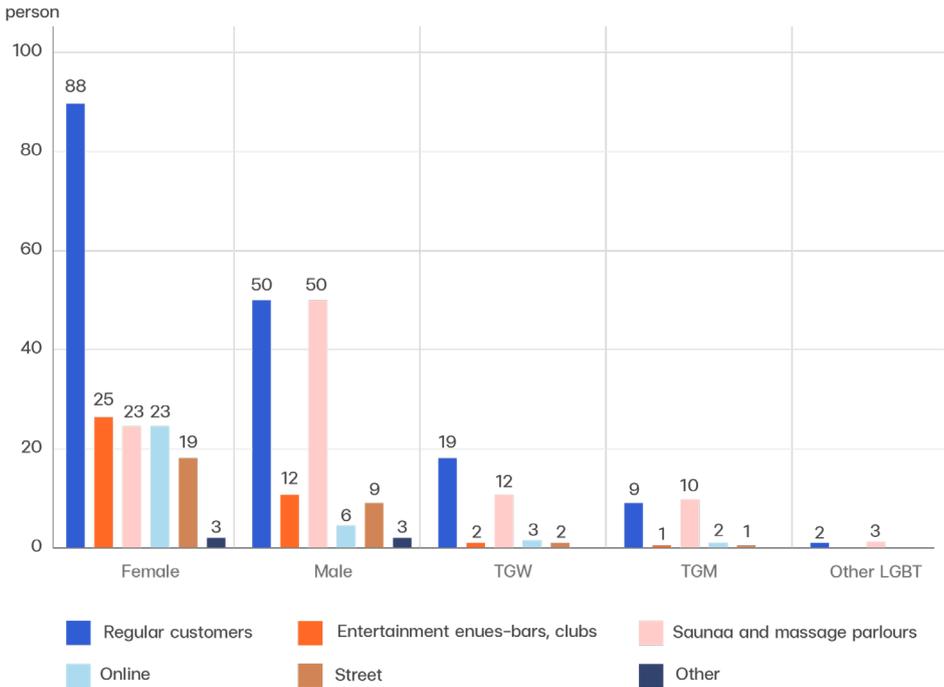
Less than half of the survey respondents (40%) reported that they were able to continue doing sex work. Male sex workers reported the highest rate regarding being able to continue (46%). 60% of survey respondents reported that they were unable to do so.

Able to continue sex work



Those who were able to continue reported that their customers were regular clients (45%) or they met them on the street (8%). 9% found customers online while others found customers at entertainment venues (e.g. clubs), spas or saunas (37%).

Where to find clients to continue work

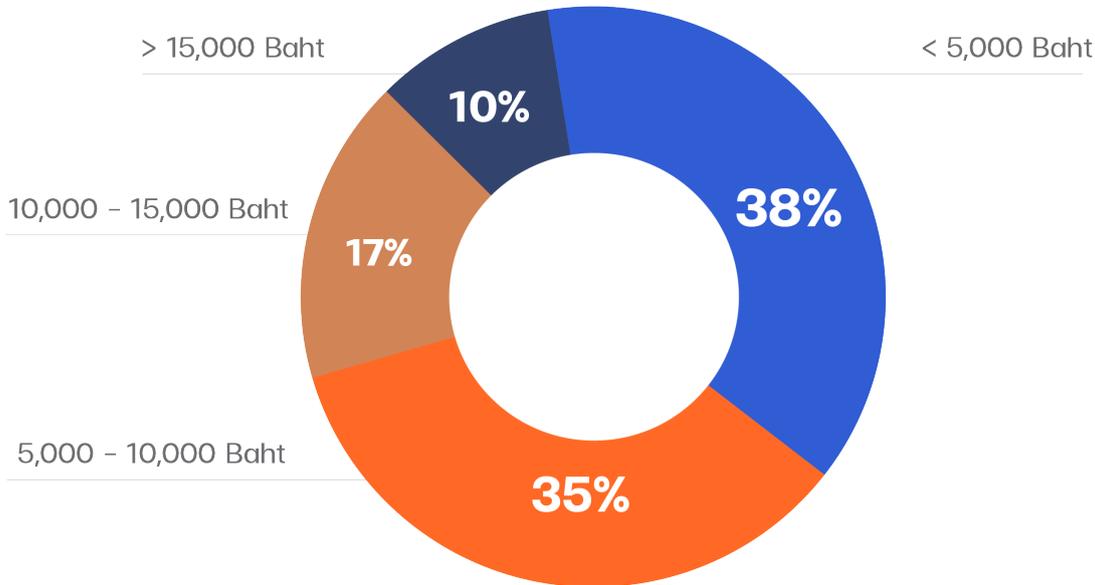


Venues are now closed, but the owners still provide food and accommodation to most of the FSWs. FSWs felt that online sex-work was risky while Transgender women sex workers were more comfortable with the online approach to find clients. Male sex workers reported having several options including online as well as migrating to other work such as food delivery, particularly for those residing in Bangkok. Although some foreign clients live in Thailand, they were found to be unwilling to pay the same rate to sex workers. The negotiating power of sex workers has been dramatically reduced at all sites.

In FGDs, it was reported that the sex work market is strongly dependent on foreign tourists. In Pattaya, Chonburi, sex workers rely more heavily on foreign tourists than Thai customers. Some sex workers have periodically worked abroad such as Malaysia, Singapore and Europe. High-earning sex workers reported income of Baht 50,000 to Baht 100,000 . The majority were earning Baht 30-50,000 per month. Those who traveled to other countries once or twice a year reported earning more than Baht 100,000 for each trip. Earnings in Songkla and Udon Thani were lower than at other sites. FGDs in all provinces indicated that sex workers’ current earnings were 0-10% of the pre-COVID 19 level.

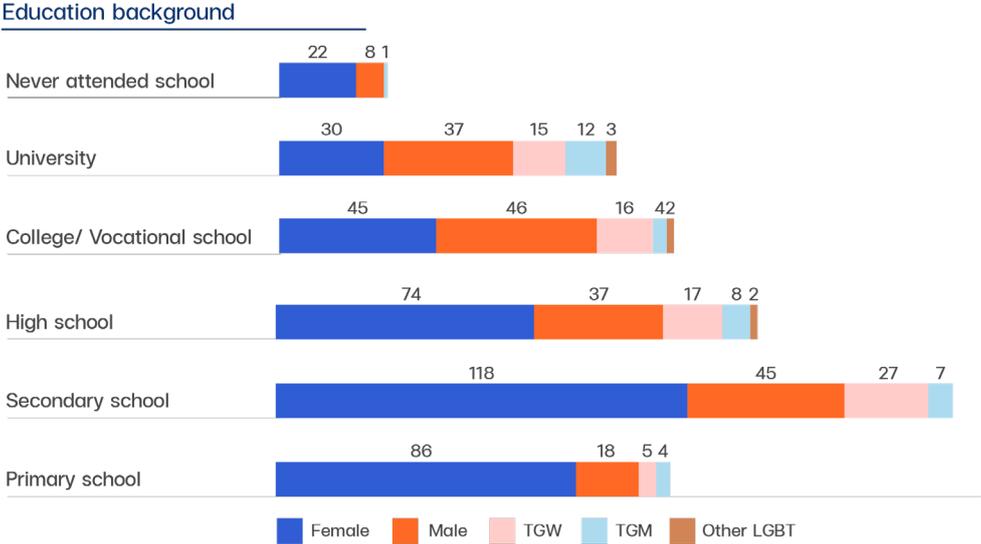
The reported current monthly income was below 5,000 baht for 38% of the respondents, rising to between Baht 5,000 and Baht10,000 for 35% and between Baht 10,000 and Baht 15,000 for 17%. A smaller proportion (10%) reported earning more than 15,000 baht a month. FGDs revealed that savings were being used up and the outlook was grim for the next few months and coming year. All FGD participants reported that they were able to access Government safety net payments (3,000-5,000 baht/month for 3 months and the cost sharing scheme (Kon La Krueng 50/50 cost sharing when purchase food). Those excluded from the schemes had not been able to register in time. CBOs are also providing support services.

Monthly income



### 3.3 Education and training background

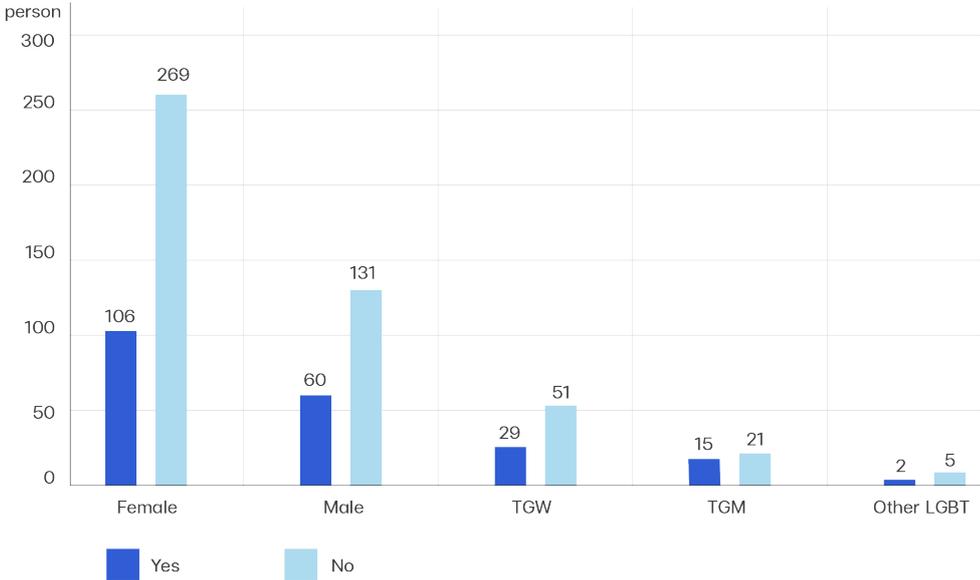
There is a broad spectrum of education attainment among the sampled population. 5% had never attended school and 14% had completed university. 16% had completed primary school and 29% has completed only lower secondary school . A fifth (20%) had attended high school (upper secondary school), while 16% had attended vocational school.



FGDs revealed that the lack of money was a major factor in not continuing in education. Pressure on elder girls to support parents or siblings was also reported. Some reported they were not at good at school and did not like it as they preferred to earn a living and support others. Several FSWs in Pattaya reported sexual abuse by their family members, friends and spouses, causing them to leave town and find work in Pattaya. Male sex workers left school primarily to earn money for themselves and to support their families.

Almost a third of the respondents (31%) reported that they had participated in some form of vocational training. The most frequently reported training was for traditional massage, food preparation and cosmetics and beauty. Certification was obtained in 58% of courses. It is not known if the certification was within the National Qualification Framework (NQF).

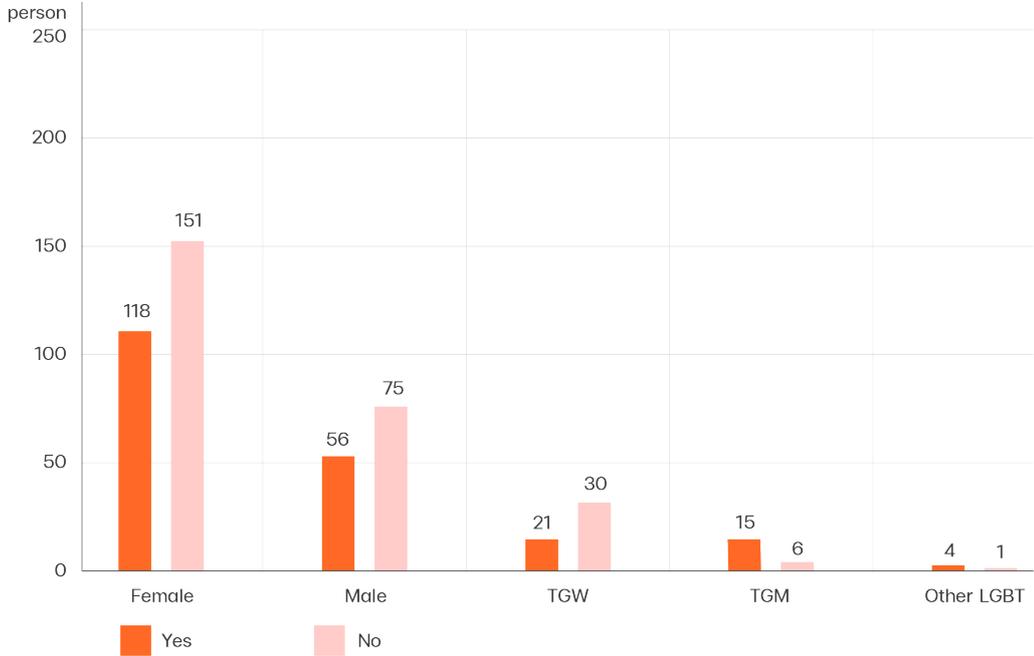
**Attended vocational training courses**



### 3.4 Attitudes towards training

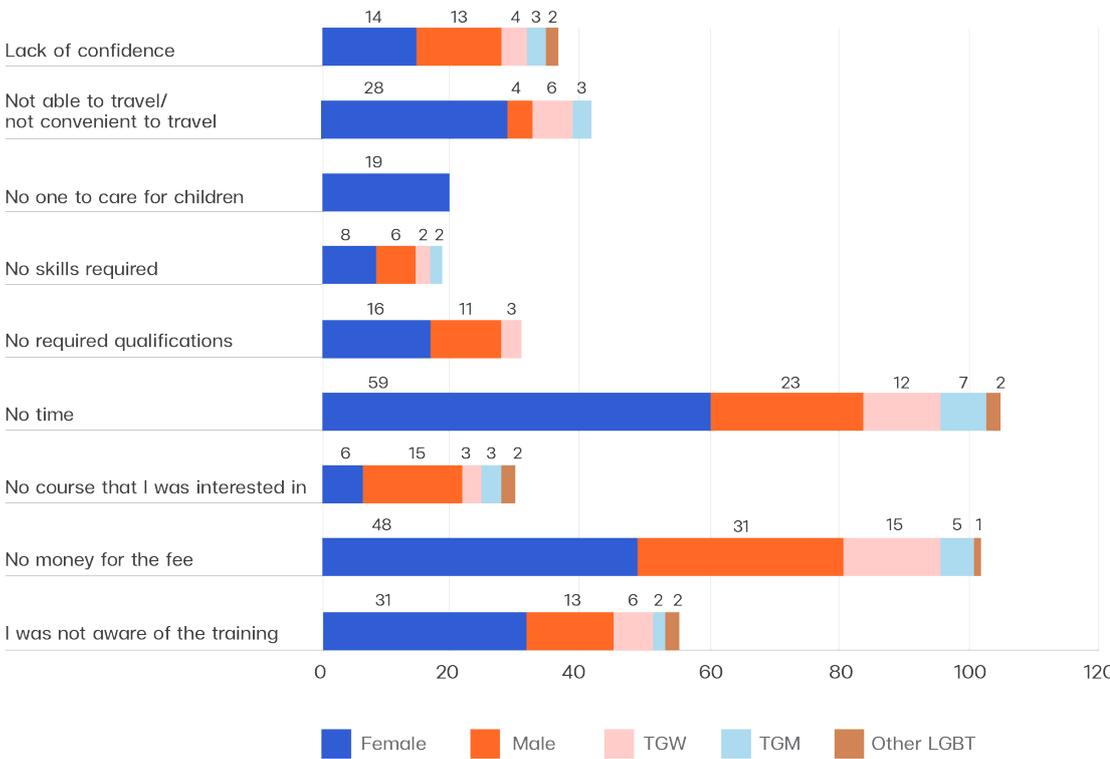
The majority of respondents (55%) reported that they had not thought about participating in further vocational training courses, while 45% reported that they had.

Ever thought of attending vocational courses



The reasons for not taking training in the past were; lack of money (21%), lack of time (22%), not aware of training courses (12%) and lack of confidence (8%).

Barriers to participation in training in the past

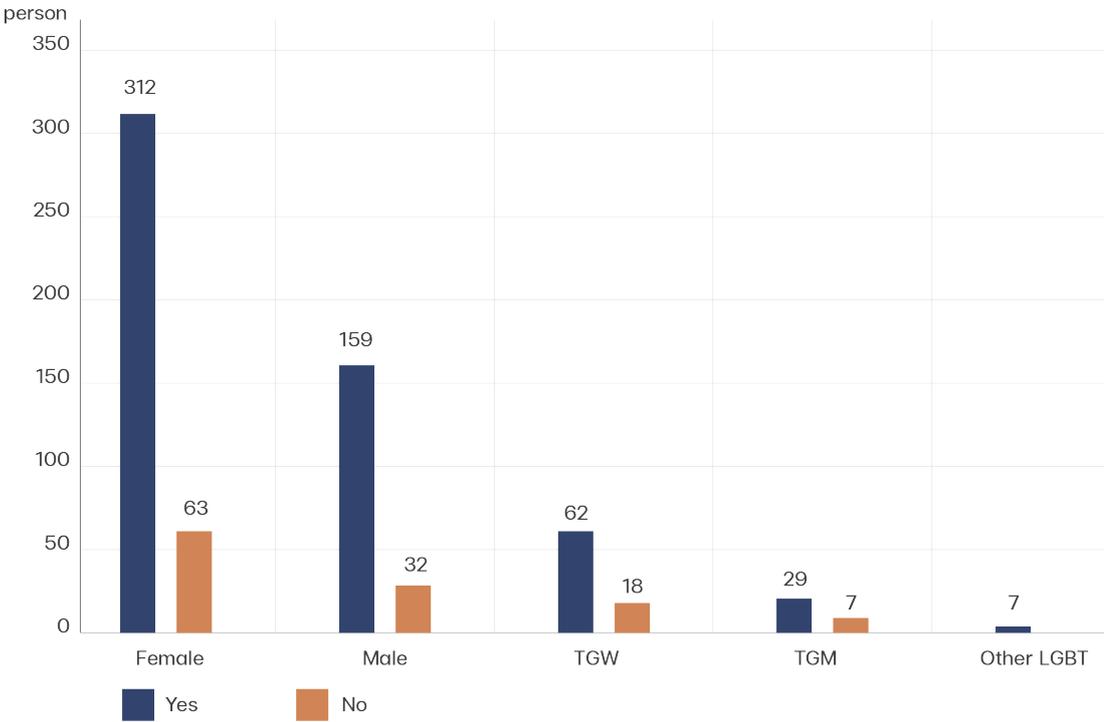


The FGDs revealed that participants were largely unaware of training opportunities. Those who were aware emphasised the lack of time to take up training. Female and transgender sex workers in Song Kla strongly refused to take up any training even though it may be provided free of charge. Lack of time was stated to be the main reason. Their stated preference was returning to continue sex work as soon as the situation allows. In contrast, female sex workers interviewed elsewhere strongly expressed the desire to attend skills training made available to them, particularly if it was delivered by a CBO with whom they felt comfortable. All FGDs, when asked about participating in skills training provided by a CBO, expressed a greater level of enthusiasm.

### 3.5 Interest in alternative employment

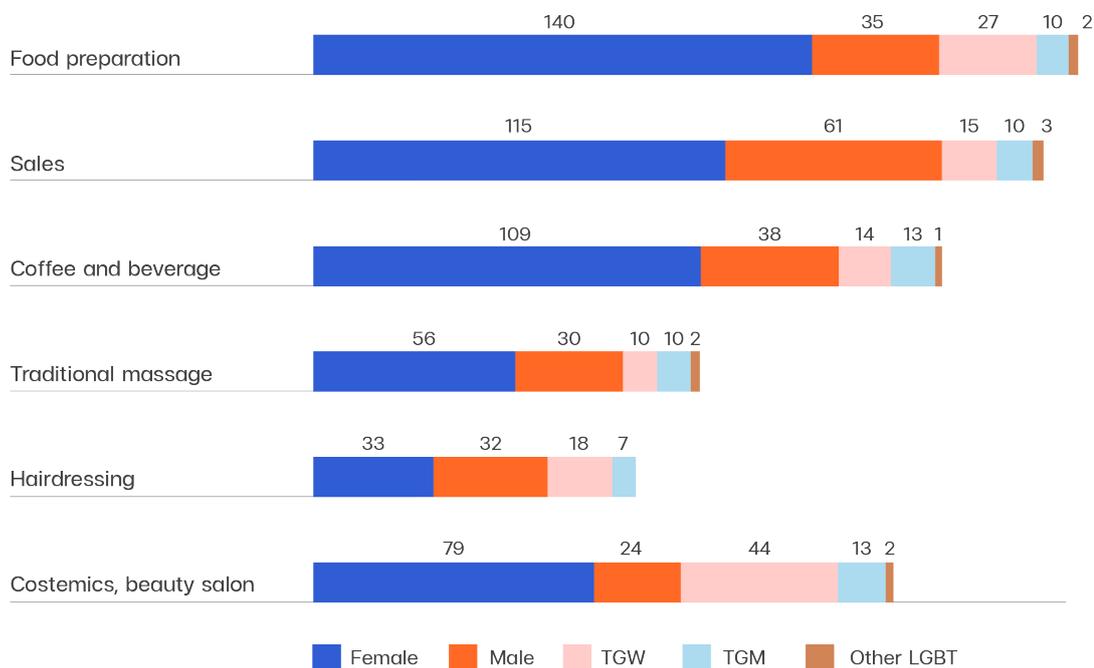
More than three quarters of the survey respondents reported that they were looking for alternative employment (83%), 17% were not. All FGDs, except those in Songkla, revealed that sex workers were interested in finding alternative employment at this time. They expressed some interest in participating in available skills and vocational training courses provided by the government depending on the timing and courses. However, when asked if such training opportunities were made available at the CBOs (e.g. Empower, MPlus, RSAT and SWING), they stated they would be more eager to participate.

#### Demand for alternative employment



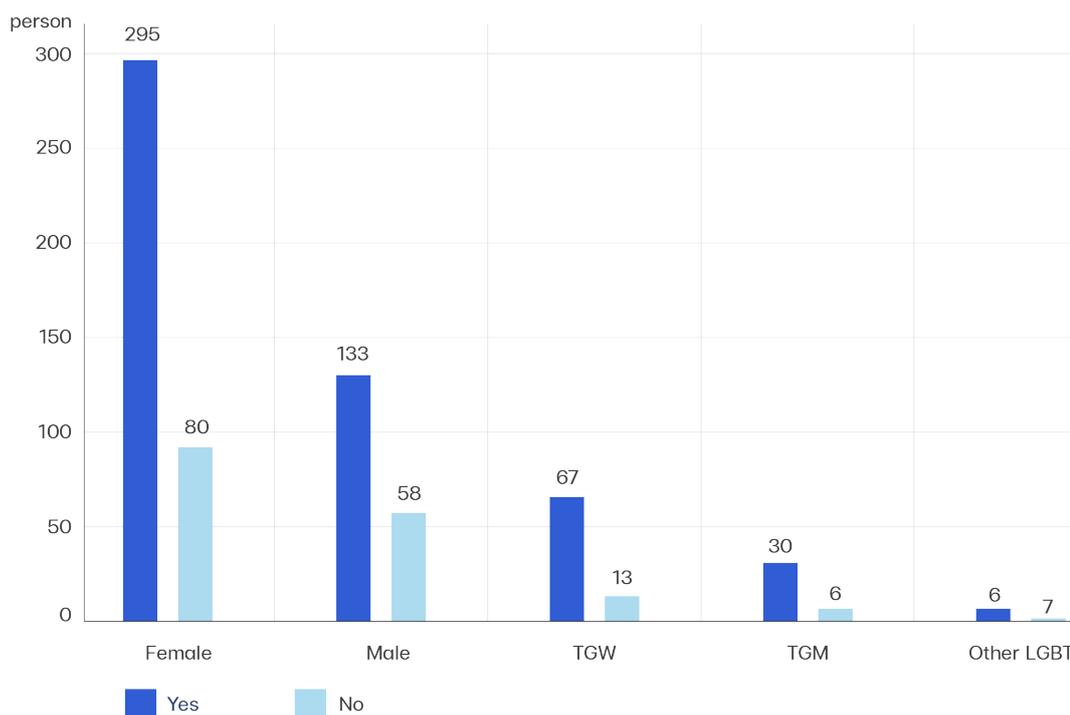
Interest in different employment areas was reported in regard to food preparation (18%), beauty and cosmetics (14%), beverages (15%) and retail/sales (17%).

### Areas of interest



77% of the survey respondents reported that they wanted to start their own business while 23% did not. In the FGD many thought that starting a business now was impossible due to COVID-19 and the state of the economy.

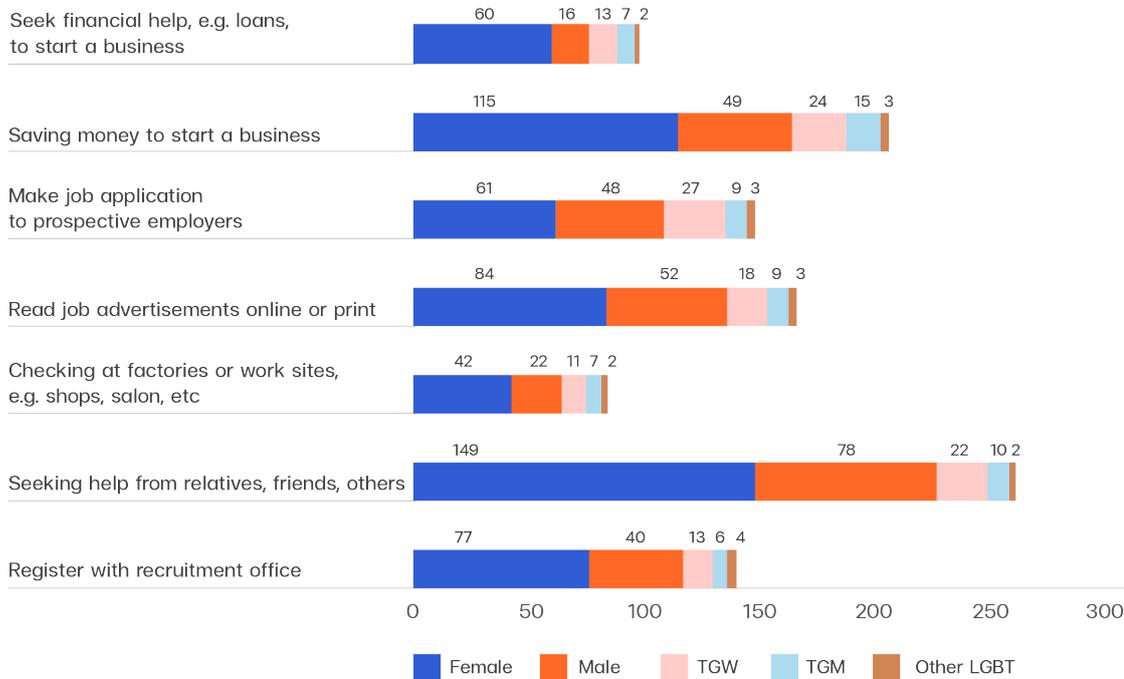
### Starting their own business



### 3.6 Steps taken to find alternative employment

During the previous 30 days, 51% of the survey respondents reported that they had taken steps to find a paid job or start a business while 49% had not.

#### Taking action to find alternative employment



The most common approach was to seek help from relatives, friends or others (24%). 13% reported that they had registered with a recruitment office. A fifth (19%) reported having saved money and 9% had sought financial help such as loans to start a business. Some respondents had checked at factories or workplaces for opportunities (8%), 13% had made applications for jobs and 15% had looked at job advertisements.

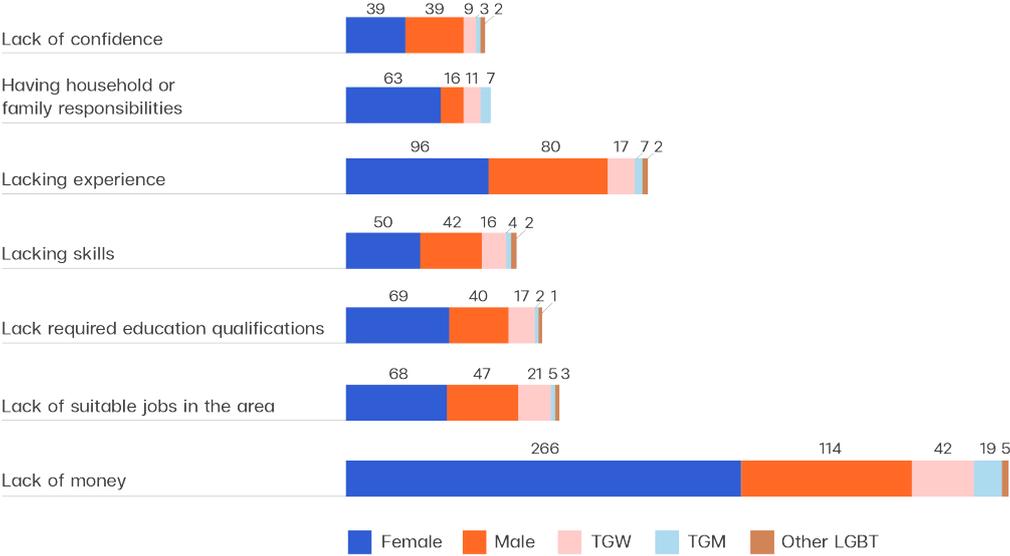
In the FGDs, it was mentioned that some were waiting until their savings were exhausted before going back home and working on the farm. Some had no idea about what to do and lived day-by-day. Some sex workers felt the need to link training with employment. Support for entrepreneurship, including guidance, mentoring and credit for start-up, was also needed. Some loans were obtained from local government sources which require minimal paper work. It was suggested that all available loans had probably already been accessed and repayment was uncertain.

The FGDs indicated that the respondents had not seriously thought through their future plans. They did not fully understand the evolving situation of COVID-19, its duration and its impact on their lives. They were waiting to return to normal, i.e. how things were before the pandemic

### 3.7 Barriers to finding alternative employment

The most commonly cited barrier to obtaining alternative employment was lack of money (31%). Sex workers reported the need to continue working to meet their basic needs. This was followed by lack of experience (14%) and lack of suitable jobs in the area 10%).

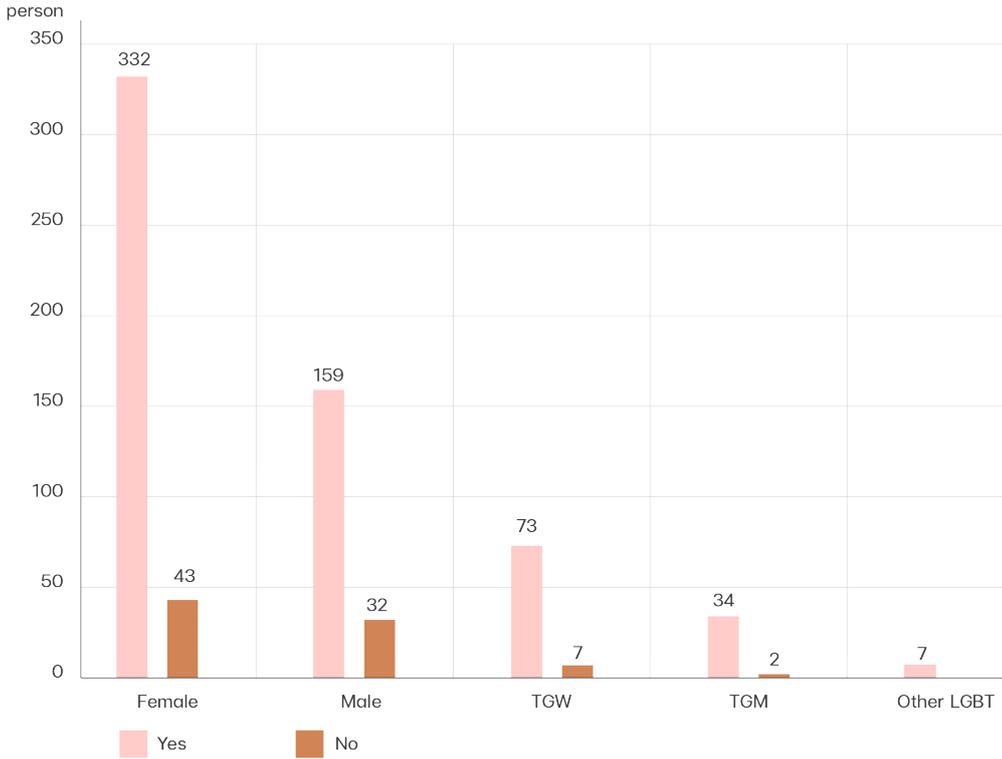
Obstacles to finding alternative employment



### 3.8 The need for help and advice

The majority of respondents (88%) reported that they would be interested in obtaining help and advice on job searches, with 12% reporting that they would not be interested.

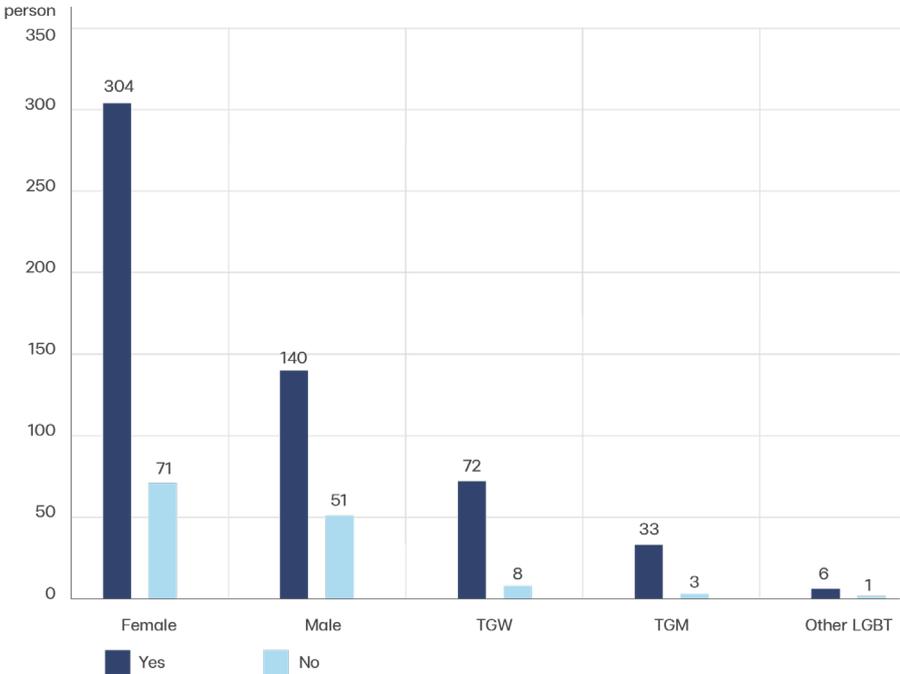
Need for help



### 3.9 Training needs

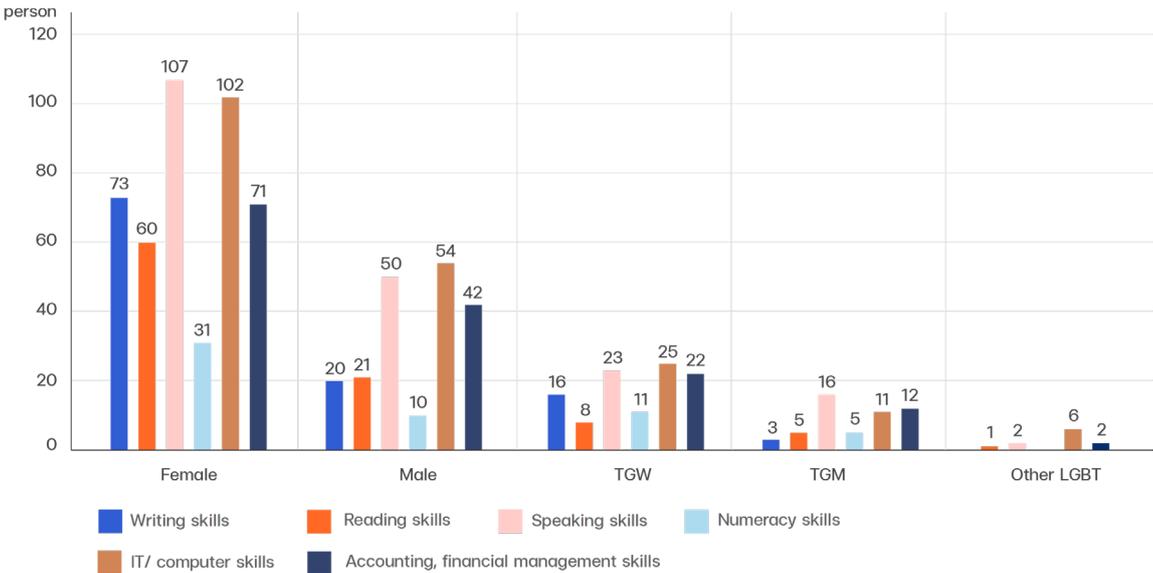
More than three quarters of the survey respondents (81%) thought that they needed further training for alternative employment or self-employment. 19% felt that they did not need any more training.

Demand for training



There is demand for basic skills training. A total of 89% perceived the need to upgrade their basic skills in speaking/communications (22%), basic IT (22%), basic financial management (16%), writing (12%) and reading (11%). 6% felt they needed numeracy skills development.

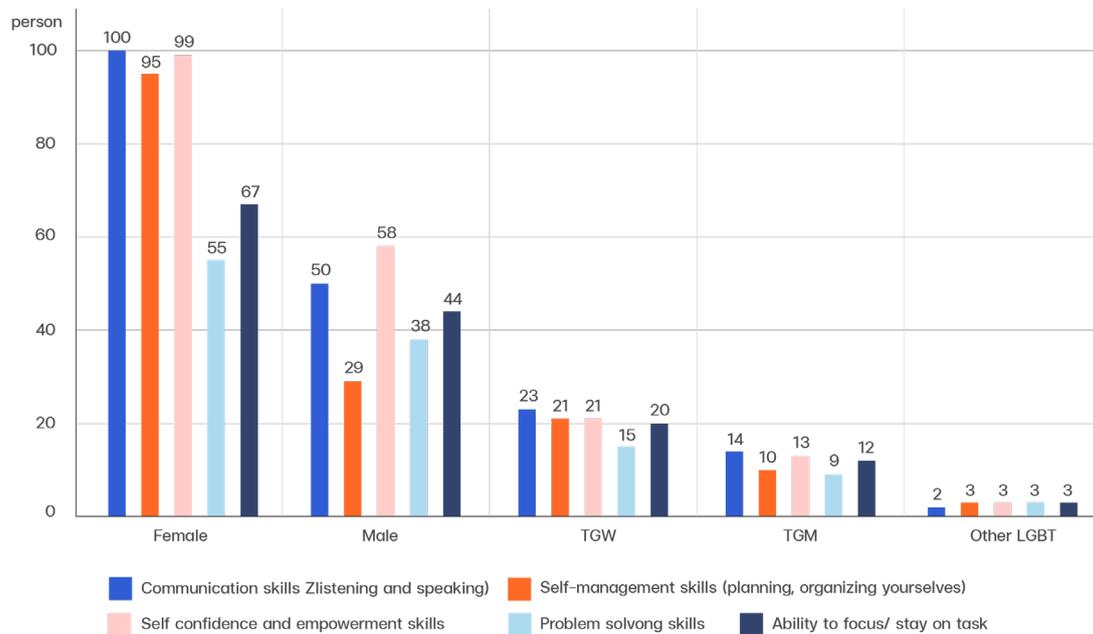
Need for basic skills development



### Soft skills:

88% felt they needed soft skills development. Empowerment/self-efficacy (21%) and communication skills (21%) were the most commonly identified aspects that needed development. This was followed by focus skills (16%), communication skills (21%), problem-solving skills (13%) and self-management skills (17%).

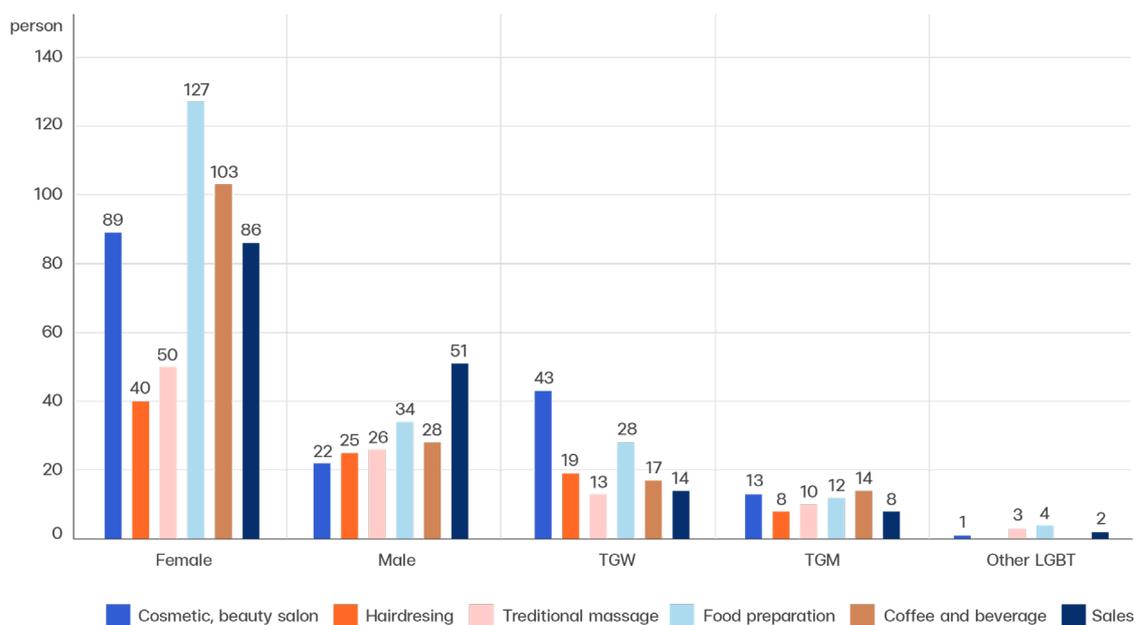
#### Demand for soft skills development



### Vocational skills training:

the most commonly identified areas for training were beauty/cosmetics (15%), food preparation (18%) sales/ retail (14%) and beverages (14%) The FGDs revealed the occupational limitations of the group.

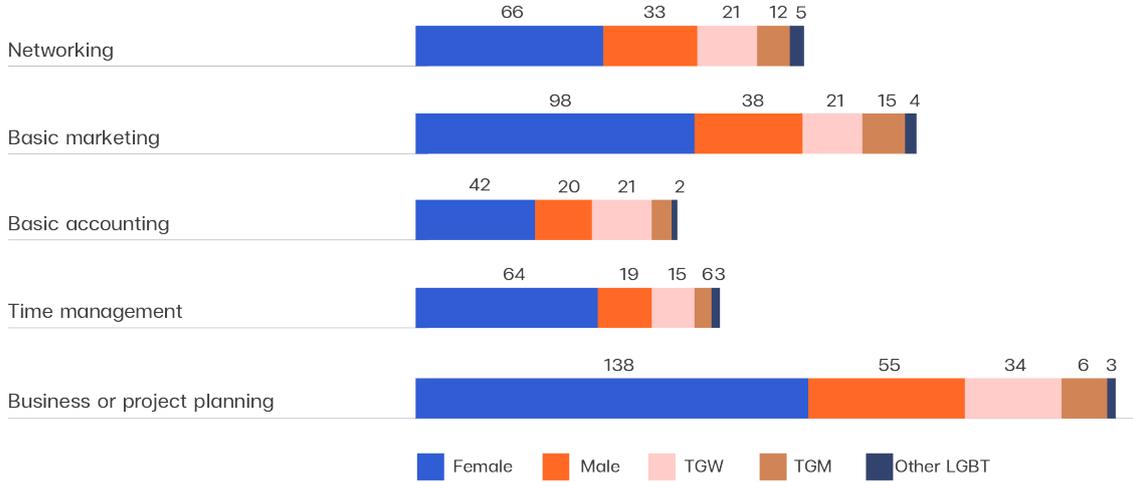
#### Demand for vocational training



**Entrepreneurship skills:**

84% of survey respondents felt they needed entrepreneurship skills including business/project planning skills (27%), networking (15%), time management (12%) marketing (20%) and accounting skills (10%).

Demand for entrepreneurship training



**Learning modalities:**

half of would-be learners (50%) wanted training in which skills are practised, while 16% would like lecture-based teaching. Around a fifth (18%) wanted on-line delivery and 16% wanted mentoring support.

Around a quarter (24%) preferred to learn with other sex workers or with sex worker organisations. Just under a half (45%) were happy to join other learners (i.e. not sex workers) in class. 31% had no preference.

**Qualifications:**

Qualifications were seen as essential by half of the respondents (48%) or very important (21%). 2% felt they were not needed.



© SWING  
Data collection of training needs assessment



© SWING  
Data collection of training needs assessment

## SECTION

# 4

# Mapping of training opportunities – THE SUPPLY SIDE

## 4.1 Methods

The range of skills training opportunities for adult learners was investigated through online searches. This search somewhat mirrors the approach that might be taken by potential trainees seeking to obtain information on-line. A search was conducted to obtain official descriptions of learning pathways for skills training in order to understand the system and ways of progression. A desk review was conducted on TVET, adult education, continuing education, non-formal education and informal education courses.

## 4.2 Limitations

Information on skills training is fragmented and partially available on-line. There is little guidance available on-line on navigating the training skills pathways. It appears to be important for the potential trainee to know exactly what the type of training he or she wants before pursuing options and making applications.

It was not possible to obtain detailed course syllabuses, prospectuses or any details of the courses on offer including information on labour market opportunities for trainees once the course has been completed. There were no details of course modularisation, which suggests that this is not a distinctive feature of available skills courses. Generally, the information available on training provider websites only includes course titles, duration and teaching shift schedules. This is very limited information for the purposes of informing potential applicants and in developing robust mapping of course availability.

It was not possible to visit any of the training providers in part due to COVID-19 restrictions.

## 4.3 Key findings

**Detailed training pathways for adult learners who wish to develop their skills and qualifications are lacking.**

Skills training for the world of work is provided through formal, non-formal and informal education sub-sectors as well as through the private sector, industry and business.

To make sense of the many training courses, it is necessary to be able to place them in the national skills development framework, which includes basic education, TVET and all forms of training. There should be clearly explained pathways that all trainees can follow to maximise their human potential.

The mission of TVET in Thailand is to develop skilled and technical human resources and to ensure that Thailand continues to play an important role in the international labour and economic market. The Vocational Act (2008) regulates the national TVET system. The Act establishes the various forms of TVET, and states that TVET is provided in: (i) colleges and institutes which form part of the formal TVET system; (ii) non-formal institutions which provide education and whose curricula and content are compatible with, and appropriate to, the needs of the various target groups; and (iii) with entrepreneurs and in-state enterprises and government agencies.

A literature search revealed that pathways are most clearly mapped for the formal education delivery of skills and this is clearly aligned with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The pathways to NQF level 8 were obtained from the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRN) report for Thailand (ASEAN, undated).

Figure 1 shows that formal education pathways are not differentiated until after lower secondary education (grade 9), when technical vocational education training constitutes a pathway to vocational tertiary education (2 years) in contrast to tertiary academic training (4 years undergraduate and 2 years (postgraduate)). Pathways to NQF level 8 (Doctoral level) are relatively clear. What is unclear from this structure is how those who leave formal education can obtain equivalent qualifications and progress up the NQF ladder should they wish. Pathways for non-formal and informal training do not appear to be mapped and appear as an undifferentiated box in the margin. It is therefore unclear how skills obtained through non-formal and informal education as well as training relate to the NQF. The contributions of the private sector and business/industry to qualification progression are also not clear in this mapping

Figure 1: Educational Structure of Thailand and NQF levels.

Thailand Educational Structure						
NQF level	Basic Education		Vocational and technical Education		Higher Education	Training, Non-formal, informal Education etc
8					Doctoral	
7					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher Graduate Diploma</li> <li>Master Degree</li> </ul>	
6			Bachelor Degree of Technology		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduate Diploma</li> <li>Bachelor Degree</li> </ul>	
5			Technical Diploma		Associate Degree	
4						
3	Upper Secondary + Vocational Skills		Vocational Certificate			
2	Upper Secondary (16-18 years old)					
1	Lower Secondary (13-15 years old)					
	Primary Education (7-12 years old)					
	Training, Non-formal, informal Education etc					

Lifelong learning is conceptualised as covering non-formal and informal learning and training – but not formal education. Learners can re-enter the formal education system up to NQF level 6 through the credit transfer system. There is also provision for recognition of prior learning/training and experience for workers who would like to acquire formal education qualifications as well as accreditation of training.

#### 4.3.1 Formal education skills delivery – the main delivery channel

The formal education sector is responsible for the delivery of the main qualifications in the NQF e.g. vocational education certificates, diplomas, higher diplomas in technical education, bachelor degrees and post-graduate qualifications. There are 416 institutions supervised by the Office of Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) to deliver these courses (e.g. technical colleges, commercial colleges, polytechnic colleges, fisheries, etc.) out of a total of 429 public colleges and 484 private colleges nationwide (Australian Government, 2019). These offer NQF levels 3-8, cover more than 350 subject areas and are long-term courses (2-3 years). There are nine major fields of study: industry, commerce and business administration, fine and applied arts, home economics, agriculture, fisheries, tourism and hospitality, the textile industry and ICT. The main function of the formal TVET system is to produce and develop skilled workers, technicians, professionals and technologists.

##### Box 1: The National Qualifications Framework

A Thailand NQF was developed and approved by the Cabinet in January 2013, and the Cabinet approved its implementation in November 2014. The NQF covers all of the education sectors (secondary education, TVET, higher education, etc.), as well as skills standards qualifications, and professional qualifications.

The NQF/ framework structure includes nine levels of qualifications, which are based on increasing complexity of learning outcomes and involve knowledge, skills, and attributes at every level. There are three parts: (a) qualifications components and levels, (b) connecting and benchmarking mechanism, and (c) learning outcomes per educational qualification level. Qualifications have not been unitized/modularized, but there plans to do so in the future.

#### 4.3.2 Short course skills training options exist for the target group

- **Ministry of Education provision**

There is provision for career development and special training with a curriculum that provides learners of different education levels with a wide range of short (5-6 hours), medium (30-120 hours) and longer courses (225 hours) at both entry and up-skilling levels. These programmes are targeted at those who have completed at least primary education and aims to provide vocational skills for either higher education or the labour market. OVEC occasionally offers short courses (1-4 hours) under the 108 careers curriculum programme to establish or improve business development. Certification is awarded after 3-5 years of short TVET courses.

- **Ministry of Labour: Department of Skill Development (DSD) provision**

DSD runs 25 Skills Development Institutes and provides 3 types of training course:

- Pre-employment training for trainees who want to find a job
- Skills upgrade training for unemployed persons
- Retraining to help unemployed persons to find a job

DSD runs 46 short courses including mechanics, English, hairdressing, international food, massage, and internet for e-commerce. These typically last 100-200 hours. The intake for each course is between 20 and 30 people. There appears to be strong demand for some courses as they are often listed as full.

- **Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) provision**

The BMA offers more than 200 short courses including mechanics, carpentry, electronics, foreign languages, internet and business development, food and nutrition, tailoring, beauty, and tourism, 10 at Vocational Learning Centres. Course duration is 200 hours and the class size is around 20.

- **Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MoSDHS) provision**

MoSDHS operates learning centres for the development of women and the family. There are 8 Centres outside of Bangkok – Nonthaburi, Chian Rai, Lamphoon, Lumpang, Srisaket, Chonburi, Khon Kaen and Songkla.

These offer vocational training courses in areas such as computing, tailoring, food preparation, hair cutting, beauty, massage, accounting, handicrafts, office management/administration, tourism, hospitality and nutrition.

Courses generally last 1-6 months. There are courses which run for up to 3 years for NQF level qualifications – diploma and higher diploma certificates. There are short courses that last a few days, e.g. handicrafts. There are no course fees.

- **CBO provision**

CBOs such as Empower and SWING provide short course vocational training for sex workers, e.g. English language, hair dressing, beauty and cosmetics with certification linked to NQF. Courses are irregular and ad hoc, depending on funding. Concerns were expressed about FGDs regarding labour market utility. SWING has recently piloted pre-employment training.

- **Private sector providers**

Private sector training organisations offer fee-paying courses which are largely targeted at professionals. There appears to be little on offer for low-skill or unemployed workers.

### 4.3.3 Non-Formal and Informal education and skills training – lack of clear linkages to the NQF and the labour market

Skills and lifelong learning are provided through non-formal education (NFE) and informal education which are the responsibility of the Office of Non-formal and Informal education (ONIE) at the Ministry of Education (MoE). Other public bodies and private organisations provide education programmes outside the formal education system. The NFE system is specifically designed to provide education for disadvantaged children, for example school drop-outs, adults in remote communities and ethnic minorities.

Non-formal and adult programmes are provided in a number of settings, which include the following:

- Occupational development programmes, which aim to develop students' vocational and occupation skills. The programmes emphasise the importance of the development of life skills in order to find employment and to meet community needs. Programmes are organised as follows: (1) short occupation training programmes for life skill development; (2) skills training for job employment; (3) group learning for students of the same occupation or trade; and (4) occupational development through the application of technology such as Information and Communications Technology (ICT).
- Non-formal vocational programmes which involve: (1) short training programmes; (2) group vocational courses; (3) vocational certificate programmes equivalent to lower secondary school; and (4) non-formal occupational certificate programmes.
- Informal TVET programmes are organised in a number of ways, for example at Community Learning Centres (CLC) and Science Centres for Education (SCE).

There are more than 8,600 CLCs, which are local education centres set up and managed by local people to provide various learning opportunities (literacy, income generation, vocational training, life skills and basic education based on local needs and contexts). They have limited funding and are generally self-reliant. CLCs may offer informal TVET programmes, but these are variable in quality and are context dependent. No course details were obtained.

#### **4.3.4 The problem of quality in the supply of skills development training for the world of work**

It was found that in the pathways, there is a close association between the levels of the education system and the levels of the NQF. The literature indicates that this may not be warranted as the formal education system, including TVET, struggles with quality service delivery and many graduates of the system do not have adequate or appropriate skills for the world of work (Australian Government, 2019; OECD and UNESCO, 2016; OECD, 2019). Consequently, individual employees are taking on the responsibility for skills development, particularly at the higher level. There is a general mismatch between education supply and labour market demands for skills, which is recognized by the government but is proving difficult to address.

The issue of school to work transition is not well-managed in the formal curriculum (OECD and UNESCO, 2016). The general curriculum has few references to key competencies and skills for the world of work and the workplace. Students are not prepared with the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to support their school to work transition.

Another problem is functional illiteracy which can be seen across various types of schools in Thailand, indicating that there are still system-wide issues affecting the quality of education (World Bank, 2015). Schools in cities, towns, and villages all produce students who are not functionally literate by the age of 15. The greatest concentration is found in villages, where 47 per cent of 15-year-old students are functionally illiterate. However, three-quarters of the functionally illiterate students in Thailand are found in schools located in cities, towns, or small towns where most of the student population is enrolled. Significant urban-rural differences in student performance indicate that students outside of a few elite schools in large cities are not acquiring the same level of mastery of key skills. Weaker performers tend to come from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Not only is socio-economic-related student performance inequality high, but it also has been rising over the last decade.

According to the World Bank (2015), improving educational outcomes among these poorer-performing students can have major impacts at the individual level and for Thailand's economic growth prospects. For individuals, being equipped with the necessary skills and competencies to obtain productive employment can help them to secure a better future and, for those who are poor, help them break out of the cycle of poverty. Having a workforce with stronger analytical reasoning and problem solving skills can help Thailand move up the value-added ladder to a more knowledge-based economy to improve its competitiveness, economic growth, and prosperity.

#### 4.3.5 The policy framework emphasises higher level skills

The policy framework includes education sector policy (e.g. basic, TVET, lifelong learning, non-formal education, etc), labour sector policies (e.g. skills policy), national strategies (e.g. 20-year national strategy, 2018-2037), national strategy on developing and strengthening human capital, Thailand 4.0 policy, etc.

#### 4.3.6 20-Year National Strategy (2018-2037)

Thailand has set out its long-term reform plans for attaining developed country status in the **20-Year National Strategy (2018-2037)**, which has a vision for it to become a developed country with security, prosperity and sustainability in accordance with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy.

The proposed reforms address six key strategic priorities: i) ensuring national security; ii) strengthening national competitiveness; iii) developing and strengthening human capital; iv) improving social cohesion and equity; v) developing towards a green economy and society; and vi) modernising public administration.

Included within the 20 Year National Strategy is the **National Strategy on Developing and Strengthening Human Capital** which includes lifelong learning and skills development (See box 2). This provides a broad framework for skills development that includes lifelong learning and skills for the world of work. The strategy sets out a vision for human capital but how to achieve this is not fully explained.

#### Box 2: The National Strategy on Developing and Strengthening Human Capital

The strategy aims to develop Thai people of all ages in a multidimensional manner to become good, skillful, and quality citizens. The scope covers promotion of physical, mental and intellectual qualifications, adequate multidimensional developments, sustainable welfare at Citizens are also expected to be frugal, generous, disciplined, and ethical, equipped with logical thinking and 21 century skills, communication skills in English and a third language. Furthermore, citizens are also encouraged to preserve local languages while encouraged to acquire lifelong learning and development habits. Developments following this Strategy will help promote modern innovators, thinkers, entrepreneurs, farmers, and so forth based on personal skills and abilities.

Developing lifelong learning systems by ensuring high quality and flexible education system and competency-based training system through various mechanisms such as open online learning system development, digital skill learning system development, experience based credit transfer system, educational credit-banking system, measures designed to incentivise people to participate in skill improvement and enhancement programs and professional qualification scheme promotion; developing accessible community learning systems, with focuses on developing communities' learning spaces into active and creative learning spaces and improving basic knowledge and skills

such as literacy and calculation, though participation and engagement of private sector and civil society; fostering learning attitudes and aspiration to instill learning disciplines and be aware of general surrounding; as well as encouraging application of knowledge in both employment and daily life.

Working-age population stage focuses on continuing working competency and skill development that is in accordance with individuals' expertise and labour market demands; decent work and employment as well as desirable organizational cultures promotion that can help enhance labour productivity; financial literacy enhancement that can help individuals effectively manage and plan their and household income, spending and saving; promotion of responsibility towards family, especially the parents; learning system development and knowledge attainment facilitation that can help Thai people excel their knowledge, skills, expertise, entrepreneurship skills and creative applications of their knowledge and skills; as well as working age extension consideration.

#### 4.3.7 Thailand 4.0 Policy

To support the implementation of the 20-Year National Strategy, the Thai government has further developed the **Thailand 4.0 policy** for sustainable growth. This aims specifically to support the development of the country from an economy previously reliant on agriculture (Thailand 1.0), light industry (Thailand 2.0), and heavy industry (Thailand 3.0) into an innovation-driven economy by 2036. The policy sets four overarching key objectives associated with more specific goals:

- i. **Economic Prosperity:** To create a value-based economy that is driven by innovation, technology and creativity. Specific goals include increasing Research and Development expenditure to 4% of GDP; increasing the economic growth rate to full capacity rate of 5 to 6% within five years; and increasing national income per capita from 5,470 USD in 2014 to 15,000 USD by 2032.
- ii. **Social Wellbeing:** To create a society that moves forward without leaving anyone behind (inclusive society) through the realisation of the full potential of all members of society. Specific goals include reducing social disparity by 2032; transforming to a social welfare system within 20 years; and developing at least 20,000 households into 'Smart Farmers' within five years.
- iii. **Raising Human Value:** To transform Thai citizens into 'competent human beings in the 21st century'. Specific goals include raising Thailand Human Development index to the top 50 countries within 10 years; ensuring that at least five Thai universities are ranked amongst the world's top 100 higher education institutions within 20 years.
- iv. **Environmental Protection:** To become a liveable, low-carbon society that possesses an economic system capable of adjusting to climate change. Specific goals include developing at least 10 cities into the world's most liveable cities and reducing terrorism risk.

Thailand 4.0 identifies 10 priority strategic industries: five to develop over the short to medium term); and the other five for longer-term development (See table 1 below).

Table 1: Thailand 4.0 - 10 Future Industries

Short and medium-term priority industries	Long-term priority industries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next-Generation Automotive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robotics</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smart Electronics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aviation and Logistics</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affluent, Medical and Wellness Tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biofuels and Bio-chemicals</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture and Biotechnology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical Hub</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food for the Future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital Technology</li> </ul>

### Policy gaps

The literature review identified a number of policy gaps, i.e. areas where policy was expected but not found, that are important to workforce skills training. These are:

**National Skills Policy:** Thailand appears to lack a clearly articulated national skills policy covering different types of skills (e.g. hard and soft skills, basic and intermediate level skills) and how these skills are to be acquired and assessed. Such a policy should be inclusive with skills development opportunities for all groups in society, including people with disabilities.

**Lifelong learning policy:** although the term is commonly used, a detailed policy on lifelong education was not found.

## SECTION

# 5

## Mapping of demand with supply for training opportunities

### 5.1 Demand side findings

#### 1. There is weak effective demand for skills training for alternative employment

While the great majority of sex workers who participated in the surveys and FGDs expressed a desire to find alternative employment and participate in related training, their ability to do so is highly constrained.

- The ability to participate in available training courses is constrained by lack of money and time (direct and opportunity costs);
- The availability of child care and travel concerns are other factors.

#### 2. Perceived lack of suitable jobs

There are a number of concerns that affect motivation and seeking alternative employment. There is a perception that there is a lack of suitable jobs for the target group. Allied to this is the concern that training might not lead to enhanced job market opportunities.

#### 3. The basic skills level of the group is low and many require basic skills upskilling

It was found that many of the survey respondents needed to be assisted in completing the survey questions. This was due to a combination of deficits in functional literacy, the ability to focus and stay on task and critical thinking skills. Around 50% of the survey sample had not progressed beyond lower secondary school and 20% had not gone beyond primary school, including 4% who had never attended school. The need for basic skills development, including literacy skills and basic IT skills, is reflected in the survey findings.

#### 4. There is an expressed need to improve the soft skills or core work skills of the group

Soft skills development is needed to build the confidence and self-efficacy of sex workers. The group recognise the value of developing core work skills such as communication skills and empowerment/self-efficacy skills. Vocational skills training should therefore be complemented with core work skills training.

#### 5. The demand for vocational skills training needs to be further explored

The survey data indicate that the respondents are limited in their vocational horizons and tend to opt for what they know e.g. food preparation, cosmetics/beauty and sales/retail. There may be options that would be of interest to the group that they are not currently aware of. They need to be exposed to other forms of training and livelihoods and to understand the benefits of working in these areas. The areas of interest in vocational training expressed by the participants appear to reflect gender stereotyping in the world of work and this constrains their decision making. Efforts need to be made to raise awareness of this issue with regard to sex workers and TVET provision more generally.

#### 6. There is demand for training to start up their own businesses

A large percentage of survey respondents (86%) were interested in obtaining training to start their own businesses. This needs further exploration as training alone will not be sufficient and other services including loans, mentoring and guidance will be necessary. However, there is scope for providing planning and financial management skills, which are transferable skills.

#### 7. The group has taken limited steps to obtain alternative employment and training

55% had not thought about participating in training for alternative employment. Among those, less than half had actually taken steps to obtaining training or alternative employment. The survey data suggest that apart from seeking help from friends, relatives and connections, there is limited awareness of what to do and how to go about doing it. This indicates the need for guidance services.

#### 8. There is a need to provide guidance and support services

88% of the survey respondents would like help in finding suitable training and work. Professional support services do not seem to exist for the target group. Exploratory work in the mapping of available training courses revealed that some relevant information is not routinely provided and it is difficult to understand what options exist.

#### 9. Qualifications matter to the target group

The majority of survey respondents felt that qualifications were either essential or very important (69%). In this regard, it is important for qualifications to be within the NQF. Only 2% felt that they were not needed.

#### 10. A quarter of sex workers would like to train with other sex workers

There is a preference among some sex workers (24%) to train together while 31% had no preference. This means there is a need for tailored training to be given specifically to sex workers while others can join mainstream training.

#### 11. This is a diverse group with varying assets, needs and wants

A differentiated approach is needed to cater for different levels of education and skills, different ages and different aspirations. There are different preferred learning styles. Some would opt for online courses. A single strategy would not suit all of those who need to develop skills for alternative employment.

## 5.2 Supply side findings

### 1. Excluded from higher level opportunities

The majority of sex workers who participated in this assignment appear to be excluded from higher level opportunities in formal education and training due to their current life circumstances and lack of skills/qualifications.

Training opportunities at NQF levels 4-8, which constitute the main skills and qualifications pathways for work, appear to be closed for most of the target group. They are unlikely to be able to make the transition to professional and skills worker status.

### 2. There are more options for sex workers who have completed secondary education

These sex workers may be better able to re-join the formal education pathways and obtain higher level qualifications. Sex workers who are university graduates may be best placed to obtain suitable training and alternative employment.

### 3. There are more options for those sex workers who have already had some form of vocational training

These sex workers may be able to use prior training and qualifications to improve their training options in terms of qualification level and entry requirements.

### 4. There are many short courses available for skills training, but these generally have not been designed with the target group in mind

Available short courses cover many of the areas for training that were suggested by the survey respondents and FGD participants. However, they tend to cover only vocational skills. There appear to be no available courses that combine basic and soft skills with vocational and entrepreneurial skills. The duration of many courses is problematic for many sex workers. Some sex workers are able to enrol on existing courses, but many are not able to and need a more tailored approach.

### 5. Migrant and stateless sex workers are unable to take up training and be awarded qualifications

There appears to be little scope for the inclusion of migrant and stateless sex workers in mainstream training courses. It may be possible to include them in CBO-delivered training.

### 6. Training (and alternative employment) is only one measure that is currently needed to help sex workers in the current COVID-19 crisis

The immediate need is for money to make up some of the loss in earnings resulting from the impact of COVID-19 on sex work. In the short run, attention needs to be given to enhancing social protection support to vulnerable households to address food insecurity and income poverty. In the longer term, the human capital of sex workers can be developed, but this needs to be included in the mainstream framework for training and skills development in a more elaborate lifelong skills development policy framework.



## SECTION

# 6

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Short term

The Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development and CBOs working with, and representing, sex workers should consider the following:

- 1** Putting in place **comprehensive information and guidance services** to help sex workers make informed choices about training, alternative employment and other issues. This could be developed by, and located at, CBOs that work with sex workers. Providing high-quality information and individualised advice and guidance services, and raising awareness on the benefits of learning can encourage greater and more inclusive participation in training.
- 2** Developing accredited **short pre-employment training courses** specifically tailored to sex worker life situations to enable them to better understand their livelihood options and to strengthen their core work skills. These can be delivered by government and non-government training providers.
- 3** Putting in place **incentive packages, including financial stipends**, to support selected sex workers through formal skills training courses.
- 4** Providing targeted support services to the most marginalized sex workers e.g. those with disabilities and those who are stateless or migrant workers.
- 5** Consider piloting an **"Individual Learning Scheme"** for sex workers that can also be applied to other non-standard workers. This could include individual learning plans (ILP) to improve access to adult learning and training for currently excluded workers. This type of approach, which is developed and piloted on one site should be offered to interested sex workers.
- 6** Collaborating with Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour to **support the development of modular training courses** that enable more flexible learning for sex workers who have time constraints.

## Long term

UNDP should consider the following:

- 1 Advocating with the Ministry of Education for the development of a strategy to address gender stereotyping in TVET provision.
- 2 Collaborating with other UN agencies, e.g. World Bank, ILO, UNICEF, UN Women to enable the government to routinely include data on sex workers in mainstream surveys and data gathering on the labour force, household poverty, etc.
- 3 Advocating with and providing support to, the government of Thailand with other UN agencies, e.g. ILO and UNESCO, to develop an inclusive National Skills Policy.
- 4 Advocating with all partners and stakeholders to take progressive steps to decriminalise all forms of sex work.



# BIBLIOGRAPHY



- ASEAN (undated). AQRF Referencing Report of Thailand. ASEAN.
- Asian Development Bank. (2016). The Social Protection Indicator. Assessing results for Asia. Manila: ADB.
- Australian Government (2019). Thailand: Vocational Education and Training Canberra: DESE.
- Empower Foundation. (2017). Sex Workers and the Thai Entertainment Industry. Submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Sixty-Seventh Session: 3-21 July, 2017.
- Fox, J. (2009). Sex laws in Thailand Part 2: Laws Regulating Commercial Sex and Entertainment Places. Thai Law Forum.
- Fudge J. and McCann D. (2015) Unacceptable Forms of Work. A Global and Comparative Study. Geneva: ILO
- Havocscope (2015). Black Market Crime. Prostitution: Prices and Statistics of the Global Sex Trade. Havocscope.
- ILO (2020). COVID-19 employment and labour market impact in Thailand. ILO Brief. June 2020.
- ILO (2013). Thailand. A Labour Market Profile. Geneva; ILO. wcms\_205099
- National Strategy Secretariat Office. (2018). National Strategy 2018-2037. Bangkok: NSSO.
- NSWP (2015). Sex Workers Demonstrate Economic and Social Empowerment. Regional report: Asia-Pacific. Edinburgh: NSWP.
- OECD/UNESCO (2016). Education in Thailand: An OECD-UNESCO Perspective. Reviews of National Policies for Education. Paris: OECD.
- Schaper, M. (2020). The Black Economy in South East Asia: Current Issues and Future Challenges. Issue 2020: Perspective: No 55. Singapore: Yusok Ishal Institute
- Surang J. et al. (2020) Protecting sex workers in Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic: opportunities to build back better. WHO South-East Asia Journal of Public Health. September 2020. 9(2). 100-103
- UNESCO-UNEVOC. (2015). World TVET database: Thailand. Bonn: UNESCO-UNEVOC.
- UNESCO (2008). Community Learning centres. Country Reports for Asia. Bangkok: UNESCO.
- Vandeweyer, M., Espinoza,R., Laura Reznikova, L., Lee M., and Herabat T. (2020) Thailand's Educations System and Skills Imbalances: Assessment and Policy Recommendations. Paris: OECD
- Villar, L. (2019). Unacceptable Forms of Work in the Thai Sex and Entertainment Industry. Anti-Trafficking Review 12 (2019) 108-126.
- World Bank. (2019). Taking the Pulse of Poverty and Inequality in Thailand. Bangkok: World Bank
- World Bank (2015). Thailand. Wanted: A Quality Education for All. Washington DC: the World Bank.

# Annex 1:

## Survey questionnaire

### Training needs assessment (TNA) questionnaire for service workers

#### Introduction

- Set the scene: We are here to get your ideas about work and training. We are looking at exploring opportunities for you to find different work and participate in training. It all depends on you.
- We need your thoughts and experience.
- We encourage everyone to be open and honest in expressing your thoughts.

#### I. Basic data

1. What is your name/nickname? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender
  - Female
  - Make
  - Transgender woman
  - Transgender man
  - Other LGBT
3. What is your nationality?
  - Thai
  - Stateless
  - Laos
  - Myanmar
  - Cambodia
  - Vietnam
  - Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your age?
  - <18
  - 18-24

- 24-40
- 40-60
- >60

5. What is your current monthly income?

- <5000 Baht
- 5,000-10,000 Baht
- 10,000-15,000 Baht
- >15,000 Baht

6. Which province are you from \_\_\_\_\_

7. Marital status

- Single
- Married
- Widow
- Divorced
- Seperated
- Living with partner

8. How many minor children (under 20 years old) do you have?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- More than 3

9. Who provides your child care?

- Self
- Family
- Friends
- Others

10. Are you able to continue with any sex work

- Yes
- No

If yes, how are you finding clients? (Can choose more than one)

- Regular customers
- Entertainment venues - bars, clubs
- Saunas and massage parlours
- Online
- Street
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

11. Do you have any disability, e.g. hearing impairment, mobility problems, eyesight impairment, etc?

No

Yes

If yes, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

## II. Education and Training

1. How far did you go in school?

I never attended school

Primary school

Secondary school

High school

College/Vocational school

University

2. Have you ever participated in any vocational training courses?

Yes

No

3. If yes, what training did you complete?

Hairdressing

Traditional massage

Handicrafts

Food preparation

Sales Auto mechanics

Plumber

Electrician

Construction

Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Not needed

4. Did you receive a certificate from the training you have attended

Yes

No

## III. Current employment needs

1. Are you currently looking for alternative employment?

No

Yes

2. Do you want to start your own business?

No

Yes

3. During the last 30 days, did you do anything to find a paid job or start a business?
- No
- Yes
4. If you are looking for alternative employment, how are you doing this? (Can choose more than one)
- Register with recruitment offices
- Seeking help from relatives, friends, others
- Checking at factories or work sites, e.g. shops, salons, etc
- Read job advertisements online or print
- Make job applications to prospective employers
- Saving money to start a business
- Seek financial help, e.g. loans, to start a business
5. Are there any obstacles to your gaining alternative employment? (You can choose more than one)
- Lack of money
- Lack of suitable jobs in the area
- Lack of time
- Lacking skills
- Lacking experience
- Having household or family responsibilities
- Lacking child care
- Lacking transportation
- Sex (e.g. being female)
- Sexual orientation or identity (e.g. gay, transgender, etc)
- Language barrier
- Lack confidence
- Lack motivation – tired of looking for jobs
- Other please specify \_\_\_\_\_
6. Would you be interested in getting help and advice in job searches?
- No
- Yes
7. What employment sector are you interested in?
- Agriculture/farming
- Beauty
- Health

- Food
- Sale
- Retail (services, 7 Eleven, shops)
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

#### IV: Training needs

1. Do you think you need further training for employment or self-employment?
  - No
  - Yes
2. What kind of training would you like to have?
  - 1) Basic skills (You can choose more than one)
    - Writing skills
    - Reading skills
    - Speaking skills
    - Numeracy skills
    - IT/computer skills
    - Not needed
  - 2) Vocational training (You can choose more than one)
    - Not needed
    - Hair cut/Hairdressing
    - Handicrafts
    - Food preparation
    - Sales
    - Agriculture/farming
    - Auto mechanics
    - Plumber
    - Electrician
    - Construction
    - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) Soft/personal skills (You can choose more than one)
    - Communication skills (listening and speaking)
    - Self-management skills (planning, organizing yourselves)
    - Self confidence and empowerment skills
    - Problem solving skills

Ability to focus/stay on task

Not needed

4) Entrepreneurship skills/Business skills

Job preparation

Business or project planning

Time management

Basic accounting

Basic marketing

Networking

Not needed

3. What would you like to see in a training programme? (You can choose more than one)

(Teaching/Learning style)

Classroom teaching/Lecture

Skills practice

self-study (online)

Mentoring support

4. What is your preference in terms of who you attend the training with?

Learning with others

Learning with sex worker friends/sex worker organisations

I don't have any preference

5. How important is it to have certificate/qualifications?

Essential (must have)

Very important

Important

Not very important

Not needed

-----  
Thank you for your participation.

# Annex 2:

## Focus group discussion guiding questions

### Training Needs Assessment Questionnaire – Focus group discussion

#### Introduction

- Set the scene: We are here to get your ideas about work and training. We are looking at exploring opportunities for you to find different work and participate in training. It all depends on you. We need your thoughts and experience.
- We encourage everyone to be open and honest in expressing your thoughts. Feel free to express different opinions. This is a safe space.
- Set the rules: I will start the conversation and jump in when I think I need to.
- Ask for consent for photography, recording.

First of all, I would like you to tell me/us about your interests in working.

1. Are you interested in finding alternative employment? Yes or No? If no, why not.
2. What work are you interested in (beyond sex work)? What type of employment are you interested in?
  - a. Part-time
  - b. Full time
  - c. Self-employment/business
3. In which area(s) would you be interested?
  - a. Agriculture
  - b. Handicraft
  - c. Food
  - d. Fashion and clothing/garment
  - e. Health and well-being
  - f. Sports
  - g. Retail
  - h. Other
4. What job experience do you have? (work experience – factory, farming, shop, telephone sale, driving)
5. Why did you leave that job(s)? (not enough money, not enough work, made redundant, bored, moved to another place, etc)
6. What would you be looking for in a job? (money, personal satisfaction, security, safety, meeting people, learning to do new things)

7. Are you or will you be actively looking for a job? If yes, how would you find a job?
8. Do you think you would benefit from any formal training? Do you think it would be helpful in helping you to find a job?
9. Can you think of any type of training you would like to participate in? (hands-on training courses, vocational school, community learning centre)
10. Are you aware of any training opportunities? (government, private sector, online, NGOs, etc) What are they? How do you know about them/where do you look?
11. Are there any obstacles or constraints that need to be addressed to enable you to participate in the training (lack of time, lack of transport, money, confidence, child care, stigma, disability, motivation, education level)
12. Do you need soft-skills training? (confidence building, motivation, conflict handling, communication skills, self-management, etc)
13. What would you like to see in a training programme? (e.g. teaching/learning style - classroom teaching, skills practise, self-study, mentoring – with others or among your friends? What would put you off in a training course? How important is it to have certificate/qualifications?
14. Would the provision of services to help you find a job be useful, e.g. job searches, job matching, job counselling, etc?
15. What personal strengths do you have and would help you in getting and keeping a job/work?
16. Any questions you would like to ask the group about training opportunities, etc?
17. Any statements you would like to make about finding work and training opportunities?

## Annex 3: Provincial site data

### Bangkok

#### Demographic data

A total of 144 respondents in Bangkok completed the survey. Among the survey respondents the majority were female sex workers (56%), with male sex workers (23%), transgender men sex workers (9%) and transgender women sex workers also represented (11%). In addition, one separate focus group discussion was conducted face-to-face with FSW (5), MSM (2) and TG (2). A total of 9 sex workers participated.

The majority were Thai nationals (98%) with representation from Laos (2%). All of the FGD participants were Thai nationals. Thirteen percent of the survey respondents reported that they had some form of disability.

The majority of the survey respondents were aged 24-40 years (60%), with 25% aged 40-60. A tenth (15%) were aged between 18 and 24 and 1% below the age of 18. Among the focus group discussion participants most FSW were in the 40-67 age group, MSM/TGP 30-47 years.

Eight per cent of survey respondents were married and ten per cent living with a partner. The remainder identified themselves as being single (7%), widowed (1%), divorced (7%) and separated (3%).

52% of the group had no children under the age of 20. 48% had children below the age of 20, with one child (29%), two children (10%), three children (7%) and more than three (1%). Of these, children 58% reported that they were cared for by the family while 35% reported looking after their children themselves. 7% reported that others looked after their children. 81% reported that they are currently supporting their parents.

#### Sex work

28% reported that they were able to continue doing sex work. 72% reported that they were unable to do so. Of those who were able to continue, 44% reported that their customers were regular clients and 18% met them online. A small number (5%) reported finding clients on the street. Some found customers in entertainment venues (e.g. clubs), spas or saunas (32%). Venues are now closed, but the owners still provide food and accommodation.

FGDs reported that the sex work market has been strongly dependent on both foreigners and Thai customers. Some sex workers have periodically worked abroad. High end sex workers reported Bt 70,000 to Bt 100,000 and have conspicuous consumption. The majority were earning Bt 30,000 to by 60,000 per month. Earnings were lower than at other sites. It was estimated that current earnings were 0-10% of pre-COVID 19 levels.

The reported current monthly income was below 5,000 baht for 17% of the respondents, rising to between Bt 5,000 and Bt10,000 for 40% and between Bt 10,000 and Bt 15,000 for 22%. A further 22% reported earning more than 15,000 baht a month. FGDs reported that savings were being used up and the outlook is grim for the next few months and coming year. All FGD participants reported that they were able to access Government safety net payments (3,000 baht/month). CBOs are also providing support services..

## Education and training

There is a broad spectrum of education attainment. 1% had never attended school and 19% had completed university. 11% percent had completed primary school and 25% lower secondary school only. 28% had attended high school (upper secondary school), while 15% had attended vocational school. FGDs reported that lack of money was a major factor in not continuing in education. Pressure on elder children to support parents was also reported. Some reported that they were not good at studying and did not like it.

Almost a third of the respondents (31%) reported that they had participated in some form of vocational training. The most frequently types of training were traditional massage (31%) food preparation (17%) tailoring (14%) cosmetics/beauty (7%). Certification was obtained in 78% of courses.

## Attitudes towards training

The majority of respondents (42%) reported that they had not thought about participating in any further vocational training courses while 58% reported that they had.

The reasons for not taking training included: lack of money (18%), lack of time (25%), not aware of training courses (12%), difficulties in travel (9%) and lack of confidence (7%) and no course of interest (6%)

The FGDs revealed that a few participants were largely aware of training opportunities. One had participated in training. Those who were aware emphasised the lack of time to take up training.

## Looking for alternative employment

More than three quarters of the survey respondents reported that they were looking for alternative employment (86%), and 14% were not.

83% of the survey respondents reported that they wanted to start their own business while 17% did not. In the FGD, many thought that starting a business now was impossible due to COVID-19 and the state of the economy.

During the previous 30 days, 50% of the survey respondents reported that they had taken steps to find a paid job or start a business while 50% had not. The most common approach was to seek help from relatives, friends and others (18%). 14% reported that they had registered with a recruitment office. A quarter (24%) reported having saved money and 9% had sought financial help such as loans to start a business. Some respondents had checked at factories or workplaces for opportunities (6%), 12% had made applications for jobs and 18% had looked at job advertisements. In the FGDs, it was mentioned that some were waiting until their savings were exhausted before going back home and working on the farm. Some had been able to migrate to other work such as delivery jobs.

Interest in different employment areas was reported with food preparation (21%), beauty and cosmetics (13%), beverages (20%) retail/sales (18%) with the most responses.

The majority of respondents (86%) reported that they would be interested in obtaining help and advice in job searches, with 14% reporting that they would not be interested.

## Barriers to gaining alternative employment

The most commonly cited barrier to obtaining alternative employment was lack of money (24%). This was followed by lack of experience (15%) and lack of suitable jobs in the area (13%). 12% of respondents mentioned family responsibilities as a barrier.

## Training needs

More than three quarters of survey respondents (73%) thought that they needed further training for alternative employment or self-employment. 27% felt that they did not need any more training.

95% of respondents thought that they needed basic skills development. Basic skills training was needed in the areas of speaking/communication skills (25%), basic IT skills (27%), reading (9%) writing (9%) and basic financial management (19%). 6% felt they needed numeracy skills development.

96% felt they needed soft skills development. Empowerment/self-efficacy (20%), self-management skills (20%) and focus skills (22%), were the most commonly identified as needing development. This was followed by communication skills (19%), and problem solving skills (15%).

Regarding vocational skills training, the most commonly identified areas for training were beauty/cosmetics (19%), food preparation (20%) sales/retail (12%) and beverages (18%).

92% of survey respondents felt they needed entrepreneurship skills. Among these were business/project planning skills (25%), networking (20%), time management (12%) marketing (23%) and accounting skills (12%).

Regarding learning modalities, 46% wanted training in which skills were practised, while 15% would like lecture-based teaching. Around a quarter (24%) would like on-line delivery and 15% would like mentoring support.

A quarter (25%) would prefer to learn with other sex workers or with sex worker organisations. 37% would be happy to join other learners (i.e. not sex workers) in class. 38% had no preference.

Qualifications were seen as essential by half of the respondents (55%) or very important (19%). 1% felt they were not needed.

# Chiang Mai

## Demographic data

A total of 127 respondents in Chiang Mai completed the survey. Among the survey respondents the majority were female sex workers (30%), with male sex workers (45%), transgender men sex workers (5%) and transgender women sex workers also represented (19%). In addition, three separate focus group discussions were conducted by Zoom with FSW (10), MSM (6) and TG (8). Three of these were stateless. A total of 24 sex workers participated.

The majority were Thai nationals (82%) with representation from Myanmar (6%) and other 3%. Nine per cent were stateless. All of the FGD participants were Thai nationals. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was not possible to conduct FGDs with migrant sex workers. Five percent of the survey respondents reported that they had some form of disability.

The majority of the survey respondents were aged 24-40 years (51%), with almost a third aged 40-60 (17%). A quarter (25%) were aged between 18 and 24, with 6% aged under 18. Among the focus group discussion participants, most FSW were in the 30-40 age group, MSM 40-45 years and TGP.

Two per cent of survey respondents were married and seventeen per cent living with a partner. The remainder identified as being single (69%), widowed (4%), divorced (5%) or separated (4%).

85% of the group had no children under the age of 20. 15% had children below the age of 20, with one child (13%) and two children (2%). 42% reported that their children were cared for by the family while 42% reported looking after their children themselves. 16% reported that the children were being looked after by others. 58% reported that they are currently supporting their parents.

## Sex work

Less than half of survey respondents (37%) reported that they were able to continue doing sex work. The majority (63%) reported that they were unable to do so. Those who were able to continue reported that their customers were regular clients (40%) or they met them on the street (5%). A third (45%) found customers online while some found customers in entertainment venues (e.g. clubs), spas or saunas (8%). The venues are now closed, but the owners still provide food and accommodation. FSWs felt that online sex-work was risky.

FGDs reported that the sex work market has been strongly dependent on Malaysian, Chinese and Singaporean as well as Thai customers. Some sex workers had periodically worked in KL and Singapore. High end sex workers reported Bt 70,000 to Bt 100,000 and had conspicuous consumption. The majority were earning Bt 15-30,000 per month. Earnings were lower than at other sites. It was estimated that current earnings were 0-10% of pre-COVID 19 levels.

The reported current monthly income was below 5,000 baht for 36% of the respondents, rising to between 5,000 and 10,000 for 38% and between 10,000 and 15,000 for 17%. A small proportion (9%) reported earning more than 15,000 baht a month. FGDs reported that savings were being used up and the outlook is grim for the next few months and coming year. All FGD participants reported that they were able to access Government safety net payments (3,000 baht/month and cost sharing scheme (50%). Those excluded from the schemes had not been able to register in time. CBOs are also providing support services.

## Education and training

There is a broad spectrum of education attainment. The respondents included those who had never attended school (9%) and those who had completed university (16%). Ten percent had only completed primary school or lower secondary school (28%). A quarter (24%) had attended high school (upper secondary school) while 12% had attended vocational school. FGDs reported that lack of money was a major factor in not continuing in education. Pressure on elder children to support parents was also reported. Some reported that they were not good at studying and did not like it.

Almost a third of the respondents (34%) reported that they had participated in some form of vocational training. The most frequently reported training was for traditional massage (17%), followed by beauty/cosmetics (14%). Other training courses involved hairdressing (11%), tailoring (5%), food preparation (15%), beverages (6%), sales (12%), handicrafts (6%) and agriculture (2%). 11% had taken vocational training in construction/plumbing etc. Certification was obtained in 65% of courses.

## Attitudes towards training

The majority of respondents (52%) reported that they had not thought about participating in any further vocational training courses while 48% reported that they had. The reasons for not taking training included: lack of money (26%), lack of time (24%), not aware of training courses (5%), nobody to care for children (4%), difficulties in travel (11%), lack of qualifications (11%), lack of confidence (10%), lack of motivation (3%), no course of interest (10%) and issues with sexual identity (2%). Other reasons given were language limitations (2%) and physical difficulties (1%).

The FGDs revealed that participants were largely unaware of training opportunities. Those who were aware emphasised the lack of time to take up training.

## Looking for alternative employment

More than three quarters of the survey respondents reported that they were looking for alternative employment (82%), and 18% were not. The FGDs revealed that many were not really interested, especially FSW and TGPs, who were more interested in continuing sex work. They were not interested in either government or CBO provided training.

61% of the survey respondents reported that they wanted to start their own business while 39% did not. In the FGD, many thought that starting a business now was impossible due to COVID-19 and the state of the economy.

During the last 30 days, 42% of the survey respondents reported that they had taken steps to find a paid job or start a business while 58% had not. The most common approach was to seek help from relatives, friends and others (29%). 11% reported that they had registered with a recruitment office. 16% reported having saved money and 6% had sought financial help such as loans to start a business. Some respondents had checked at factories or workplaces for opportunities (6%), 12% had made applications for jobs and 20% had looked at job advertisements. In the FGDs, it was mentioned that some were waiting until their savings were exhausted before going back home and working on the farm. Some had no idea about what to do and lived day-by-day.

Interest in different employment areas was reported in regard to food preparation (20%), traditional massage (10%), beauty and cosmetics (9%), technical work e.g. plumbing (10%), beverages (12%) retail/sales (14%) hairdressing (7%), tailoring (5%) and agriculture (4%),

The FGDs indicated that the respondents had not seriously thought through their future plans. They still did not understand the situation or its duration.

The majority of respondents (83%) reported that they would be interested in obtaining help and advice in job searches, with 17% reporting that they would not be interested.

## Barriers to gaining alternative employment

The most commonly cited barrier to obtaining alternative employment was lack of money (23%). This was followed by lack of experience (15%), lack of required qualifications (13%), lack of skills (10%) and lack of suitable jobs in the area (9%). 6% of respondents mentioned family responsibilities as a barrier. Also mentioned were lack of confidence (8%), lack of motivation (4%), language barriers (4%) being female (3%) and sexual orientation (3%)

## Training needs

More than three quarters of the survey respondents (83%) thought that they needed further training for alternative employment or self-employment. 17% felt that they did not need any more training.

89% of respondents thought that they needed basic skills development. Basic skills training was needed in the areas of speaking/communication skills (19%), basic IT skills (26%), reading (10%), writing (10%) and basic financial management (16%). 8% felt they needed numeracy skills development.

89% felt they needed soft skills development. Empowerment/self-efficacy (23%) were the most commonly identified as needing development. This was followed by focus skills (19%), communication skills (17%), problem solving skills (17%) and self-management skills (13%)

Regarding vocational skills training, the most commonly-identified areas for training were food preparation (18%), sales/retail (14%), beverages (13%) traditional massage (10%). 10% were interested in construction/plumbing etc. The FGDs revealed the limited occupational horizons of the group.

82% of survey respondents felt they needed entrepreneurship skills. Among these were business/project planning skills (23%), networking (17%), time management (12%) marketing (21%) and accounting skills (9%).

Regarding learning modalities, the majority of would-be learners (43%) wanted training in which skills were practised while 19% would like lecture-based teaching. 16% would like on-line delivery and 22% would like mentoring support.

Around a third (30%) would prefer to learn with other sex workers or with sex worker organisations. 34% were happy to join other learners (i.e. not sex workers) in class. 36% had no preference .

Qualifications were seen as essential by half of the respondents (52%) or very important (21%). Only 1% felt they were not needed.

## Pattaya/ Chonburi

### Demographic data

A total of 102 respondents in Pattaya completed the survey. Among the survey respondents, the majority were female sex workers (44%), with male sex workers (33%), and transgender women sex workers also represented (22%). In addition, three separate focus group discussions were conducted face-to-face with FSW (12), MSM (3) and TG (6). A total of 21 sex workers participated.

The majority were Thai nationals (99%) with representation from Laos (1%).

All of the FGD participants were Thai nationals. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was not possible to conduct FGDs with migrant sex workers. Two percent of the survey respondents reported that they had some form of disability.

The majority of the survey respondents were aged 24-40 years (57%), with 33% aged 40-60. A tenth (10%) were aged between 18 and 24. Among the focus group discussion participants, most FSW were in the 20-67 age group, MSM 45-50 years and TGP 30-32 years.

Seven per cent of survey respondents were married and nine per cent living with a partner. The remainder identified as being single (79%), widowed (3%), divorced (1%) and separated (1%).

78% of the group had no children under the age of 20. 22% had children below the age of 20, with one child (10%), two children (10%) and three children (2%). 68% reported that the children were cared for by the family while 32% reported looking after their children themselves. 75% reported that they are currently supporting their parents.

### Sex work

34% reported that they were able to continue doing sex work. 66% reported that they were unable to do so. Those who were able to continue reported that their customers were regular clients (33%) or on the street (12%). 14% found customers online while some found customers in entertainment venues (e.g. clubs), spas or saunas (40%). The venues are now closed, but the owners still provide food and accommodation. FSWs felt that online sex-work was risky while transgender women felt more comfortable migrating to online.

FGDs reported that the sex work market has been strongly dependent on foreigners. Some sex workers have periodically worked abroad. High end sex workers reported Bt 70,000 to Bt 100, 000 and had conspicuous consumption. The majority were earning Bt 50-70,000 per month. Earnings were lower than at other sites. It was estimated that current earnings were 0-10% of pre-COVID 19 levels.

The reported current monthly income was below 5,000 baht for 47% of the respondents, rising to between Bt 5,000 and Bt10,000 for 29% and between Bt 10,000 and Bt 15,000 for 17%. A small proportion (7%) reported earning more than 15,000 baht a month.

FGDs reported that savings were being used up and the outlook is grim for the next few months and coming year. All FGD participants reported that they were able to access Government safety net payments at the second round (3,000 baht/month and cost sharing scheme (50%). Those excluded from the schemes had not been able to register in time. CBOs are also providing support services.

## Education and training

There is a broad spectrum of education attainment. 1% had never attended school and 10% had completed university. 18% percent had completed primary school and 32% lower secondary school only. 15% had attended high school (upper secondary school), while 25% had attended vocational school.

FGDs reported that lack of money was a major factor in not continuing in education. Pressure on elder children to support parents was also reported. Some reported that they were not good at studying and did not like it. A few female sex workers reported sexual abuse pushed them to leave home

29% reported that they had participated in some form of vocational training. The most frequently reported training was for traditional massage (21%), food preparation (18%), tailoring (12%), cosmetics/beauty (12%), sales/retail (9%), agriculture (6%), handicrafts (6%), and hairdressing (3%). Certification was obtained in 37% of courses.

## Attitudes towards training

The majority of respondents (60%) reported that they had not thought about participating in any further vocational training courses while 40% reported that they had. The reasons for not taking training included: lack of money (26%), lack of time (26%) and not aware of training courses (24%),

The FGDs revealed that participants were largely unaware of training opportunities. Those who were aware emphasised the lack of time to take up training.

## Looking for alternative employment

More than three quarters of the survey respondents reported that they were looking for alternative employment (78%), but 22% were not.

The FGDs revealed that many were not really interested, especially FSW and TGPs, who were more interested in continuing sex work. They were more enthusiastic with the idea of CBO provided training.

76% of the survey respondents reported that they wanted to start their own business while 24% did not. In the FGD, many thought that starting a business now was impossible due to COVID-19 and the state of the economy.

During the previous 30 days, 58% of the survey respondents reported that they had taken steps to find a paid job or start a business, while 42% had not. The most common approach was to make applications for jobs (29%). 7% reported that they had registered with a recruitment office. 14% reported having saved money and 2% had sought financial help such as loans to start a business. Some respondents had checked at factories or workplaces for opportunities (5%), 22% had sought help from relatives, friends and others and 20% had looked at job advertisements.

In the FGDs, it was mentioned that some were waiting until their savings were exhausted before going back home and working on the farm. Some had no idea about what to do and lived day-by-day.

Interest in different employment areas was reported for food preparation (19%), cosmetics/beauty (18%), sales/retail (16%), hairdressing (11%) and traditional massage (11%).

The FGDs indicated that the respondents had not seriously thought through their future plans. They were still unable to understand the situation and its duration.

The majority of respondents (95%) reported that they would be interested in obtaining help and advice in job searches, with 5% reporting that they would not be interested.

### Barriers to gaining alternative employment

The most commonly cited barrier to obtaining alternative employment was lack of money (29%). This was followed by lack of experience (14%), lack of skills (12%) and lack of suitable jobs in the area (12%).

### Training needs

More than three quarters of survey respondents (88%) thought that they needed further training for alternative employment or self-employment. 12% felt that they did not need any more training.

85% of respondents thought that they needed basic skills development. Basic skills training was needed in the areas of speaking/communication skills (11%), basic IT skills (15%), reading (4%) writing (37%) and basic financial management (13%). 5% felt they needed numeracy skills development.

66% felt they needed soft skills development. These included: empowerment/self-efficacy (15%) communication skills (17%) and self-management skills (21%).

Regarding vocational skills training, the most commonly-identified areas for training were sales/retail (18%) food preparation (18%), and cosmetics/beauty (15%).

The FGDs revealed the limited occupational horizons of the group.

65% of survey respondents felt they needed entrepreneurship skills. Among these were business/project planning skills (28%), time management (14%) and accounting skills (10%).

Regarding learning modalities, the majority of would-be learners (64%) wanted training in which skills were practised while 20% would like lecture-based teaching. 11% would like on-line delivery and 5% would like mentoring support.

11% would prefer to learn with other sex workers or with sex worker organisations. Almost a half (40%) would be happy to join other learners (i.e. not sex workers) in class. 49% had no preference.

Qualifications were seen as essential by half of the respondents (54%) or very important (18%). None felt they were not needed.

# Songkla (Hat Yai and Dan Nok)

## Demographic data

A total of 105 respondents in Hatyai and Dan Nok districts, Songkla completed the survey. Among the survey respondents, the majority were female sex workers (74%), with male sex workers (13%) and transgender women sex workers also represented (12%). In addition, three separate focus group discussions were conducted by Zoom with FSW (10), MSM (6) and TG (8). A total of 24 sex workers participated. The Zoom calls were organised and supported by RSAT.

The majority were Thai nationals (90%) with representation from Lao PDR and Myanmar (4% and 6% respectively). All of the FGD participants were Thai nationals. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was not possible to conduct FGDs with migrant sex workers. None of the respondents or FGD participants reported that they had any type of disability.

The majority of the survey respondents were aged 24-40 years (58%), with almost a third aged 40-60 (31%). Ten per cent were aged between 18 and 24, with 1% age over 60. Among the focus group discussion participants, most FSW were in the 30-40 age group, MSM 40-45 years and TGP.

Ten per cent of survey respondents were married and 2 per cent living with a partner. The remainder identified as being single (71%), widowed (8%), divorced (8%) or separated (2%).

More than half of the group had no children under the age of 20 (56%), perhaps a reflection of the older respondents. 44% had children below the age of 20, one child (23%), two children (14%) and three children 7%. None of the respondents with younger children had more than three. 52% reported that the children were cared for by the family while 41% reported looking after their children themselves. 72% reported that they are currently supporting their parents.

## Sex work

Almost a half of respondents (44%) reported that they were able to continue doing sex work. The majority (56%) reported that they were unable to do so. Those who were able to continue reported that their customers were regular clients (46%) or they met them on the street (23%). A small percentage found customers online (14%) while some found customers in entertainment venues (e.g. clubs), spas or saunas (16%). The venues are now closed, but the owners still provide food and accommodation. FSWs felt that online sex-work was too risky for them.

FGDs reported that sex work market has been strongly dependent on Malaysian, Chinese and Singaporean as well as Thai customers. Some sex workers had periodically worked in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. High end sex workers reported Bt 70,000 to Bt 100,000 and had conspicuous consumption. The majority were earning Bt 15-30,000 per month. Earnings were lower than at other sites. It was estimated that current earnings were 0-10% of pre-COVID 19 levels.

The reported current monthly income was below 5,000 baht for 50% of the respondents, rising to between 5,000 and 10,000 for 30% and between 10,000 and 15,000 for 13%. A small proportion (6%) reported earning

more than 15,000 baht a month. FGDs reported that savings were being used up and the outlook is grim for the next few months and coming year. All FGD participants reported that they were able to access Government safety net payments (3,000-5,000 baht/month for 3 months and cost sharing scheme). Those excluded from the schemes had not been able to register in time. CBOs are also providing support services.

## Education and training

There is a broad spectrum of education attainment. The respondents included those who had never attended school (7%) and those who had completed university (12%). A fifth had only completed primary school (21%) or lower secondary school (32%). A fifth had attended high school (upper secondary school) while 9% had attended vocational school. FGDs reported that lack of money was a major factor in not continuing in education. Pressure on elder children to support parents was also reported. Some reported that they were not good at studying and did not like it.

Almost a third of the respondents (28%) reported that they had participated in some form of vocational training. Of these, the most frequently reported training was for traditional massage (40%), followed by beauty/cosmetics (17%). Other training courses involved hairdressing (9%), tailoring (9%), food preparation (6%), beverages (6%), sales (6%), handicrafts (3%) and agriculture (3%). Certification was obtained in 52% of courses.

## Attitudes towards training

The majority of respondents (64%) reported that they had not thought about participating in any further vocational training courses while 36% reported that they had. The reasons for not taking training included: lack of money (27%), lack of time (27%), not aware of training courses (11%), nobody to care for children (6%), difficulties in travel (6%), lack of qualifications (6%), lack of confidence (5%), lack of motivation (3%), no course of interest (3%) and issues with sexual identity (2%).

The FGDs revealed that participants were largely unaware of training opportunities. Those who were aware emphasised the lack of time to take up training. The participants expressed a strong wish to continue with sex work rather than invest in training.

## Looking for alternative employment

Three quarters of the survey respondents reported that they were looking for alternative employment (74%) while a quarter were not (26%). The FGDs revealed that many were not really interested, especially FSW and TGPs who were more interested in continuing sex work. They were not interested in either government or CBO provided training.

Three quarters of the survey respondents reported that they wanted to start their own business (75%) while a quarter did not (25%). In the FGD, many thought that starting a business now was impossible due to COVID-19 and the state of the economy.

During the previous 30 days, 44% of the survey respondents reported that they had taken steps to find a paid job or start a business while 56% had not. The most common approach was to seek help from relatives,

friends and others (31%). Around a fifth reported that they had registered with a recruitment office (19%). 15% reported having saved money and 6% had sought financial help such as loans to start a business. Some respondents had checked at factories or workplaces for opportunities (12%), 9% had made applications for jobs and 7% had looked at job advertisements. In the FGDs, it was mentioned that some were waiting until their savings were exhausted before going back home and working on the farm. Some had no idea about what to do and lived day-by-day.

Interest in different employment areas was reported with sales/retail (21%), beauty and cosmetics (19%) with the most responses followed by food preparation (16%), beverages (12%), traditional massage (9%) and hairdressing (7%). The FGDs indicated that the respondents had not seriously thought through their future plans. They were still unable to understand the situation and its duration.

The majority of respondents (81%) reported that they would be interested in obtaining help and advice in job searches, with 19% reporting that they would not be interested.

### **Barriers to gaining alternative employment**

Among those unable to take up training, the most commonly cited barrier to obtaining alternative employment was lack of money (45%). This was followed by lack of required qualifications (14%), lack of experience (13%), lack of suitable job in the area (11%) and lack of skills (7%).

### **Training needs**

Three quarters of survey respondents (75%) thought that they needed further training for alternative employment or self-employment. A quarter (25%) felt that they did not need any more training.

97% of respondents thought that they needed basic skills development. Basic skills training was needed in the areas of speaking/communication skills (26%), basic IT skills (19%), reading (17%), writing (14%) and basic financial management (13%). 7% felt they needed numeracy skills development.

96% felt they needed soft skills development. Communication skills were most commonly identified (by 31% of respondents) as needing development. This was followed by empowerment/self-efficacy (21%) and self-management skills (20%). Problem solving skills and focus skills were at 13% and 12% respectively.

Regarding vocational skills training, the most commonly-identified areas for training were beauty/cosmetics (20%), food preparation (19%) and sales (16%). These were followed by beverages (12%) and traditional massage (10%). The FGDs revealed the limited occupational horizons of the group.

89% of survey respondents felt they needed entrepreneurship skills. Among these were business/project planning skills (36%), networking (9%), time management (17%) marketing (17%), and accounting skills (10%).

Regarding learning modalities, the majority of would-be learners (49%) wanted training in which skills were practised, while 13% would like lecture-based teaching. Around a third (26%) would like on-line delivery and 12% would like mentoring support.

Around a third (32%) would prefer to learn with other sex workers or with sex worker organisations. Almost a half (46%) were happy to join other learners (i.e. not sex workers) in class.

Qualifications were seen as essential by half of the respondents (49%) or very important (19%). Only 6% felt they were not needed.

# Sra Keaw

## Demographic data

Only survey data were available for this analysis. A total of 105 respondents in Sra Keaw completed the survey. Among the survey respondents, the majority were female sex workers (79%), with male sex workers (17%), transgender men sex workers (1%) and transgender women sex workers also represented (3%).

The majority were Thai nationals (86%) with representation from Laos (7%) and Cambodia (8%) None of the survey respondents reported that they had some form of disability.

The majority of the survey respondents were aged 24-40 years (62%), with 27% aged 40-60. A tenth (11%) were aged between 18 and 24.

Seven per cent of survey respondents were married and four per cent living with a partner. The remainder identified as being single (70%), widowed (1%), divorced (15%) and separated (3%).

48% of the group had no children under the age of 20. 52% had children below the age of 20, with one child (32%), two children (12%) and three children (8%). 75% reported that the children were cared for by the family, while 22% reported looking after their children themselves. 4% reported others looking after their children. 81% reported that they are currently supporting their parents.

## Sex work

More than half of survey respondents (63%) reported that they were able to continue doing sex work. 37% reported that they were unable to do so. Those who were able to continue reported that their customers were regular clients (57%) or they met them online (20%) or the street (2%). 21% found customers in entertainment venues (e.g. clubs), spas or saunas.

The reported current monthly income was below 5,000 baht for 61% of the respondents, rising to between Bt 5,000 and Bt10,000 for 31% and between Bt 10,000 and Bt 15,000 for 5%. A small proportion (3%) reported earning more than 15,000 baht a month.

## Education and training

There is a broad spectrum of education attainment. 8% had never attended school and 5% had completed university. 32% percent had only completed primary school and 35% lower secondary school. A tenth (9%) had attended high school (upper secondary school), while 11% had attended vocational school.

Almost a third of the respondents (31%) reported that they had participated in some form of vocational training. The most frequently reported training was for traditional massage (38%) cosmetics/beauty (14%) and food preparation (11%). Certification was obtained in 42% of courses.

## Attitudes towards training

The majority of respondents (69%) reported that they had not thought about participating in any further vocational training courses while 31% reported that they had. The reasons for not taking training included: lack of money (19%), lack of time (22%), not aware of training courses (8%), nobody to care for children (16%), and lack of confidence (16%).

## Looking for alternative employment

More than three quarters of the survey respondents reported that they were looking for alternative employment (81%), but 19% were not. 80% of the survey respondents reported that they wanted to start their own business while 20% did not.

During the previous 30 days, 59% of the survey respondents reported that they had taken steps to find a paid job or start a business while 41% had not. The most common approach was to seek help from relatives, friends and others (25%). 11% reported that they had registered with a recruitment office. A quarter (25%) reported having saved money and 24% had sought financial help such as loans to start a business. Some respondents had checked at factories or workplaces for opportunities (6%), 5% had made applications for jobs and 4% had looked at job advertisements.

Interest in different employment areas was reported with food preparation (20%), traditional massage (9%), beauty and cosmetics (17%), beverages (16%) retail/sales (22%) with the most responses followed by hairdressing (5%), handicrafts (1%), health (1%), tailoring (2%) and agriculture (5%),

The majority of respondents (91%) reported that they would be interested in obtaining help and advice in job searches, with 9% reporting that they would not be interested.

### Barriers to gaining alternative employment

The most commonly cited barrier to obtaining alternative employment was lack of money (53%). This was followed by lack of experience (17%) and 8% of respondents mentioned family responsibilities as a barrier

## Training needs

More than three quarters of survey respondents (81%) thought that they needed further training for alternative employment or self-employment. 19% felt that they did not need any more training.

72% of respondents thought that they needed basic skills development. Basic skills training was needed in the areas of speaking/communication skills (23%), basic IT skills (22%), reading (7%) writing (6%) and basic financial management (10%). 4% felt they needed numeracy skills development.

72% felt they needed soft skills development. Empowerment/self-efficacy (21%) communication skills (22%), and self-management skills (20%) were those most frequently selected.

Regarding vocational skills training, the most commonly-identified areas for training were beauty/cosmetics (21%), food preparation (23%) sales/retail (15%), and beverages (17%). 69% of survey respondents felt they needed entrepreneurship skills. Among these were business/project planning skills (28%), and marketing (25%) were those most frequently selected.

Regarding learning modalities, the majority of would-be learners (67%) wanted training in which skills were practised, while 13% would like lecture-based teaching. 16% would like on-line delivery and 3% would like mentoring support. 22% would prefer to learn with other sex workers or with sex worker organisations. Two thirds (69%) would be happy to join other learners (i.e. not sex workers) in class. 8% had no preference.

Qualifications were seen as essential by half of the respondents (27%) or very important (26%). 4% felt they were not needed.

# Udon Thani

## Demographic data

A total of 106 respondents in Udon Thani completed the survey. Among the survey respondents, the majority were female sex workers (47%), with male sex workers (33%), transgender men sex workers (15%) and transgender women sex workers also represented (2%). In addition, one separate focus group discussion was conducted by Zoom with FSW (10), MSM (1) and TG (1) aged 33-55 years old. A total of 12 sex workers participated. The Zoom call was organised by Udonthani Hospital and Empower.

The majority were Thai nationals (95%) with representation from Laos (5%) All of the FGD participants were Thai nationals. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was not possible to conduct FGDs with migrant sex workers. One percent of the survey respondents reported that they had some form of disability.

The majority of the survey respondents were aged 24-40 years (49%), with 12% aged 40-60. A third (36%) were aged between 18 and 24, with 3% aged under 18. Among the focus group discussion participants, most FSW were in the 30-40 age group, MSM 40-45 years and TGP.

Seven per cent of survey respondents were married and one per cent living with a partner. The remainder identified as being single (82%), widowed (2%) and divorced (8%).

72% of the group had no children under the age of 20. 28% had children below the age of 20, with one child (20%), two children (7%) and three children (1%). 33% reported that the children were cared for by the family, while 67% reported looking after their children themselves. 70% reported that they are currently supporting their parents.

## Sex work

Less than half of survey respondents (42%) reported that they were able to continue doing sex work. The majority (58%) reported that they were unable to do so. Those who were able to continue reported that their customers were regular clients (41%) or they met them on the street (7%). 39% found customers online while some found customers in entertainment venues (e.g. clubs), spas or saunas (10%). The venues are now closed, but the owners still provide food and accommodation. They reported being able to continue sex work through social media including LINE and Grinder but the number of clients was much lower than before. They also reported continuing with their regular foreign and Thai clients .

FGDs reported that prior to COVID-19, the sex work market had been strongly dependent on both foreign and Thai customers. Sex workers reported having had a monthly income of between Bt 10,000 to Bt 30,000 per month. It was estimated that, for some, their current earnings were 0-10% (Bt 1,500-3,000) of pre-COVID 19 levels.

From the survey, the reported current monthly income was below 5,000 baht for 23% of the respondents, rising to between Bt 5,000 and Bt10,000 for 42% and between Bt 10,000 and Bt 15,000 for 24%. A small proportion (12%) reported earning more than 15,000 baht a month. FGDs reported that savings were being used up and the outlook is grim for the next few months and coming year. All FGD participants reported that they were able to access Government safety net payments (3,000 baht/month and cost sharing scheme

(50%). Those excluded from the schemes had not been able to register in time. CBOs are also providing support services.

## Education and training

There is a broad spectrum of education attainment. 27% had completed university. 8% percent had only completed primary school or lower secondary school (17%). A fifth (20%) had attended high school (upper secondary school) while 27% had attended vocational school. Most FGDs reported that lack of money was a major factor in not continuing in education. Pressure on elder children to support parents was also reported. Some reported they did not like it and preferred to work to be able to support family.

Almost a third of the respondents (30%) reported that they had participated in some form of vocational training. The most frequently reported training was for food preparation (16%), handicrafts (14%), traditional massage (12%), and beauty/cosmetics (12%). Other training courses involved hairdressing (9%), tailoring (4%), beverages (9%), sales (10%) and agriculture (3%). 7% had taken vocational training in construction/plumbing etc. Certification was obtained in 59% of courses.

## Attitudes towards training

The majority of respondents (54%) reported that they had not thought about participating in any further vocational training courses while 46% reported that they had. The reasons for not taking training included: lack of money (19%), lack of time (15%), not aware of training courses (16%), nobody to care for children (1%), difficulties in travel (11%), lack of qualifications (7%), lack of confidence (6%), lack of motivation (5%), no course of interest (5%), language barrier (4%), and issues with sexual identity (2%).

The FGD revealed that all participants were largely unaware of training opportunities. Those who were aware emphasised the lack of time to take up training. Some of the training courses seemed to require fees and qualifications and pre-requisite.

## Looking for alternative employment

More than three quarters of the survey respondents reported that they were looking for alternative employment (92%), but 8% were not. The FGDs revealed that many were not really interested, especially FSW and TGPs, who more interested in continuing sex work. They were not interested in either government or CBO provided training.

88% of the survey respondents reported that they wanted to start their own business while 12% did not. In the FGD, many thought that starting a business now was impossible due to COVID-19 and the state of the economy.

During the previous 30 days, 54% of the survey respondents reported that they had taken steps to find a paid job or start a business while 46% had not. The most common approach was to seek help from relatives, friends and others (18%). 14% reported that they had registered with a recruitment office. 17% reported having saved money and 10% had sought financial help such as loans to start a business. Some respondents had checked at factories or workplaces for opportunities (12%), 14% had made applications for jobs and

15% had looked at job advertisements. In the FGDs, it was mentioned that some were waiting until their savings were exhausted before going back home and working on the farm. Some had no idea about what to do and lived day-by-day. A few were able to obtain government loans while most was not aware of it.

Interest in different employment areas was reported with food preparation (13%), traditional massage (11%), beauty and cosmetics (11%), beverages (17%) retail/sales (15%) with the most responses followed by hairdressing (8%), handicrafts (7%), tailoring (5%), health (5%), agriculture (5%), and technical work e.g. plumbing (2%)

The majority of respondents (92%) reported that they would be interested in obtaining help and advice in job searches, with 8% reporting that they would not be interested.

## Barriers to gaining alternative employment

The most commonly-cited barrier to obtaining alternative employment was lack of money (29%). This was followed by lack of required qualifications (6%), lack of experience (11%) or skills (9%), lack of suitable jobs in the area (9%). 6% of respondents mentioned family responsibilities as a barrier. Also mentioned were lack of confidence (9%), lack of motivation (6%), language barrier (10%) being female (2%) and sexual orientation (2%)

## Training needs

More than three quarters of survey respondents (85%) thought that they needed further training for alternative employment or self-employment. 15% felt that they did not need any more training.

92% of respondents thought that they needed basic skills development. Basic skills training was needed in the areas of speaking/communication skills (24%), basic IT skills (18%), reading (13%) writing (5%) and basic financial management (23%). 8% felt they needed numeracy skills development.

93% felt they needed soft skills development. Empowerment/self-efficacy (24%) was the most commonly identified area needing development. This was followed by focus skills (22%), communication skills (19%), and problem solving skills (15%) and self-management skills (14%).

Regarding vocational skills training, the most commonly-identified areas for training were beauty/cosmetics (13%), food preparation (15%) sales/retail (15%), beverages (16%) traditional massage (10%), tailoring (6%), handicrafts (6%), health (5%), and agriculture (5%). 2% were interested in construction/plumbing etc. The FGDs revealed the limited occupational horizons of the group.

95% of survey respondents felt they needed entrepreneurship skills. Among these were business/project planning skills (27%), networking (22%), time management (10%) marketing (22%) and accounting skills (13%).

Regarding learning modalities, the majority of would-be learners (41%) wanted training in which skills were practised while 17% would like lecture-based teaching. 15% would like on-line delivery and 26% would like mentoring support.

23% would prefer to learn with other sex workers or with sex worker organisations. Around a half (50%) were happy to join other learners (i.e. not sex workers) in class. 27% had no preference.

Qualifications were seen as essential by half of the respondents (49%) or very important (24%). None felt they were not needed.



UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations to build integrated, lasting solutions for people and planet.

United Nations Development Programme Thailand  
12th Floor United Nations Building  
Rajadamnern Nok Avenue  
Bangkok 10200, Thailand  
Email: [undp.thailand@undp.org](mailto:undp.thailand@undp.org)  
Tel: +66 2 288 3350

 @UNDPThailand

 @UNDPThailand

 UNDP Thailand

 undpthailand

 undp-thailand

 Clubhouse @UNDPThailand

 Tiktok @UNDPThailand

