

# Roundtable Meeting on “Out of the Silence: Fighting Violence Against Women in Thailand”

Introductory Remarks by  
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Good morning. It is an honor for the World Bank to host this important event, and I thank you all for your generous participation.

The pamphlet you have before you, titled [\*“Out of the Silence: Fighting Violence Against Women in Thailand”\*](#), was produced jointly by the Office of the National Commission on Women’s Affairs, the Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Prime Minister’s Office, and the World Bank. I would like to also acknowledge the courage and dignity of the four women who have shared their painful experiences. Each of their stories makes it clear that the survivors of such crime do not fit into any stereotype. What they do share is their experiences of being powerless and vulnerable.

The report brings to public light not only an age-old issue – that is, physical abuse perpetrated against women – but it also underscores the cultural and gender barriers which perpetuate and even protect such crime. Most societies are still reluctant to discuss this openly. Of course, violence against women is not a problem unique to Thailand. Unfortunately, it is a global phenomenon. As cited in the report, domestic violence is more common in the United States than in Thailand. However, since the onset of the Asian economic crisis over 2 years ago, when many Thais lost their jobs or had their wages severely reduced as a result, the absolute number of women as well as children who are abused at home and in communities has increased. (For more information, see the [Thailand Social Monitor: Social Capital and the Crisis](#).)

Reasons and statistics notwithstanding, it is clear that we must focus our efforts on the survivors of such abuse, many of whom suffer quietly and in shame. We also need strengthen the existing formal avenues that are woefully inadequate in identifying violence against women as a crime, and in protecting the victims and bringing legal action against the perpetrators.

It is our hope that today’s frank discussion would further push forward this ambitious and very urgent agenda: First, by raising public awareness, and second, by promoting a wider public policy debate among many stakeholders in the process. The World Bank is committed to assisting the Thai government and civil society organizations explore some of the critical issues that confront the policymakers and social workers. Indeed, as an institution, the Bank has much to learn from the Thai experience, and we look forward to a continued partnership in this regard.

Now, I would like to introduce Dr. Prisana Pongtadsirikul, Director of the Office of the National Commission of Women's Affairs, and Dr. Pensri Phijaisanit, Professor Emeritus of Mahidol University, who will give us an overview of the report. First, Dr. Prisana. Welcome.