



This is our second project update for the ILO's EU-funded project.

Thai law on Forced Labour

Bangkok—ILO staff presented in January 2017 its analysis of gaps between the ILO Forced Labour Protocol (P.29) and Thai law to government, worker and employer organizations, and civil society groups. With the finalization of the ILO's analysis, the action shifts to the government's tri-partite drafting and ratification committees. A similar analysis for the Work in Fishing Convention (C.188) was wrapped up in January 2017 after consulting the Thai government and more than a dozen union, civil society, and employer organizations. A final round of consultations is due in February/March 2017. (The P.29 analysis will be available at the ILO [Ship to Short Rights project website](#) in February).

Rayong vessel owners and workers on recruiting, wages

Rayong—Recruiting, credentialing, and retaining fishers topped the list for Rayong leaders of the Provincial Fisheries Association of Thailand (PFAT) in a portside meeting in January 2017. Labour inspection, enforcement, and wage payment issues were also covered, ending with an ILO commitment to report on the workings of the 'regular' (MOU) channels and their impact on migration from Cambodia and Myanmar for work in fishing and seafood. A series of separate conversations between ILO project staff and Cambodian fishers and families around the Rayong port focused on pay issues, and wage withholding in particular.

Strengthening labour inspection in fishing, seafood

Bangkok—The Ship to Shore Rights Project Steering Committee, including unions, employers, government, and civil society groups, met again in late December for an update on findings from ILO field visits to at-sea, port-side, and factory labour inspections. New investments in port-in/port-out inspections led the list of changes—including the addition of Myanmar- and Cambodian-speaking interpreters. The ILO’s analysis calls out the need to make a substantial investment in thorough-going worker interviews to identify labour abuses in fishing and seafood processing, including forced labour. As part of the project, the ILO supports the Ministry of Labour, CCCIF, Department of Fisheries, and other partners to revise inspection tools and protocols, planning, and training to focus on the most urgent issues safety and health, payment issues, and forced labour indicators. (The Steering Committee minutes for this and previous meetings are on [the project’s website](#)).



Revising GLP

Bangkok—A half-dozen sessions were needed in late November/early December to collect reactions to a revised Good Labour Practices (GLP) programme. The consensus view—from groups including Thai Tuna Association, Thai Shrimp Association, SERC, HRDF, the Department of Fisheries and Department of Labour Protection and Welfare—was that a voluntary global labour standards programme has to include robust measures of progress that focus on the strength of management systems rather than just legal compliance. A revised GLP must also include tri-partite governance and independent, public reporting on progress to be credible both inside and outside Thailand.

A December 2016 round of calls with global buyers of Thai seafood—the first of a series of planned updates—also took up the GLP questions. The ILO will roll together the results, bring a draft plan back to these groups in March 2017 and, assuming agreement on a formula for the programme, organize a rollout in late May at Thaifex.

New Field Office Opening in March

Phang-nga—After a survey of potential sites and groups at work on labour issues around Thailand, the project has settled on Phang-nga Province near Khao Lak to set up its field office. Two project staff will direct field work from there within easy reach of fishing communities along the Andaman Sea and hot spots including Phuket, Chumphon, Songkla, and Pattani. The new office will be operational starting in March.

Recognizing Migrant Workers

bangkokbiznews.com

กรุงเทพธุรกิจ

Opinion editorial on fishing and seafood

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The United Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO) jointly commemorated 18 December to mark the contributions that migrant workers make to the global economy. It is also an opportunity to focus on the struggles many migrant workers have to find decent work.

Fairness and dignity for migrant workers is particularly important for Thailand because the number of migrant workers here is growing—the most recent UN estimate puts the total number of migrant workers in Thailand at 3.5 to 4 million people. Their labour makes a vital contribution to the success of the Thai construction and seafood industries, as well as other sectors.

The struggles and abuses experienced by both Thai and migrant workers in Thailand's US\$7 billion fishing and seafood industry have been reported in graphic detail around the world. This global attention has helped to produce some important changes in Thai labour law and new efforts to protect the rights of the hundreds of thousands of Thai, Cambodian, and Myanmar people in the industry.

But recent reports make it clear that more changes in Thai fishing and seafood processing are needed to prevent the abuse of migrant workers. The ILO's new project (funded by the European Union) to combat labour abuses in the industry is dedicated to helping the Thai government, employers, and workers' organizations make the necessary changes. These include better labour law enforcement, the prevention of forced labour and child labour, organizing migrant workers into unions, and greater efforts throughout the industry to meet global labour standards.

Respect for the fundamental rights of workers—both Thai and migrant—is not just about basic human rights and complying with Thai law. It is also about business and competitiveness. Many of the buyers of Thai seafood around the world now look for decent work in their supply chains. As Thai seafood suppliers plan for the future they see that remaining competitive in this global industry means more than low prices and high quality. It also means decent work.

The views expressed are those of the author alone and do not necessarily reflect the position of the ILO or any of its members or constituents, or constitute any kind of endorsement.

[The original column in Thai Rath, Thailand's leading daily, is [here](#).]

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