



PRESS RELEASE

Ship to Shore Rights

Measuring progress towards decent work in Thai fishing and seafood industry

New ILO report on labour conditions of fishers and seafood workers in Thailand provides an overview of the latest progress and remaining challenges.

BANGKOK (ILO News) – The ILO Ship to Shore Rights Project (funded by the European Union) assessed working conditions in the fishing and seafood industry in Thailand, a subject of intense global scrutiny in the last three years.

“Baseline research findings on fishers and seafood workers in Thailand” is the first research conducted in Thailand to cover in detail both fishing and seafood processing including aquaculture.

The survey includes the result of interviews conducted in 2017 with 434 workers —predominantly migrant workers— from a mix of large and smaller employers across 11 provinces from Thailand. It covers recruitment practices, wages, hours, safety and health, support services, complaint mechanisms, living conditions, forced labour indicators, and legal compliance levels.

While not designed to be representative, the study reveals a mix of progress and remaining challenges among workers surveyed, and ends with specific recommendations for more effective enforcement of Thai law to prevent and end unsatisfactory labour practices for migrant workers.

Key findings

The evidence of progress includes

- Fewer reports of physical violence
- Few workers (less than one per cent) under 18 years old
- 43% of fishers reported having written contracts (43%), up from four years ago
- Higher average real monthly wages (before deductions) for some fishers

The persistent unsatisfactory labour practices include

- 34% of workers reported being paid less than the minimum wage (before deductions)
- A wide gender pay gap with 52% of women reporting pay below the legal minimum
- 24% of fishers saw their pay withheld by vessel owners, some for 12 or more months,
- 34% reportedly did not have access to their identity documents

The ILO report concludes with specific recommendations for the Royal Thai Government, employer organizations, unions, civil society organizations, and global seafood buyers designed to turn recent and promised changes in Thai law into effective enforcement actions and an industry moving towards decent work.

Mr Jarin Jakkaphak, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour stated that “the baseline research on fishers and seafood workers is a collective efforts from all partners to drive and measure progress to raise living and labour standards in the fishing and seafood sectors in line with international standards and achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8. It will also contribute to achieving decent work, economic growth, and sustainable development without leaving ‘No one behind.’ Ethical global supply



chains that is just and based on decent work is the essential centrepiece of sustainability and key policy of the Royal Thai Government.”

Mrs Luisa Ragher, Chargé d’Affaires a.i. of the EU Delegation to Thailand, stated that “The EU adheres to the promotion of decent work covering job creation, guarantee of workers' rights, social protection and an inclusive social dialogue. The EU welcomes the substantive and rapid progress accomplished by the Royal Thai Government, in particular on the legal and regulatory framework, to create better working conditions in the fisheries and seafood sectors for migrant and Thai workers alike. Further challenges remain and the EU stands ready to assist the Government in achieving its objectives.

Mr Graeme Buckley, ILO Country Director for Thailand, Cambodia, and Lao PDR, notes that “With so much at stake for workers, employers, regulators and buyers of Thai-produced seafood, tracking real progress towards decent work with this report is vital. We want competitiveness in the global seafood trade to mean more than low prices and high quality. We want it to mean decent work for all the industry’s workers from the boat to the retailer.”

Note: The results of this study cannot be extrapolated to the entire fishing and seafood processing industry in Thailand given that the selection of respondents did not follow probabilistic sampling principles.

Background

The EU-funded ILO Ship to Shore Rights Project aims to prevent and reduce forced labour, child labour and other unacceptable forms of work, and progressively eliminate the exploitation of workers, particularly migrant workers, in the Thai fishing and seafood processing sectors by cooperating with the Ministry of Labour (MOL), other government agencies, and social partners. Full report and project details can be found at www.shiptoshorerights.org

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