

12 june 2016



WORLD DAY
AGAINST
CHILD LABOUR

END CHILD LABOUR IN

**SUPPLY
CHAINS**

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International
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Organization

SOUTH EAST ASIAN SEAFOOD INDUSTRIES ADDRESSING CHILD LABOUR

BACKGROUND

With increased public attention being given to significant labour rights violations, including child labour and forced labour, in the South East Asian seafood supply chain, the industry has come under increasing pressure to put immediately into place robust and sustainable systems to ensure that all labour right violations are prevented and if identified, properly addressed. The violations have been found all along the chain- from the fishing vessels, to land-based aquaculture, through to primary and secondary seafood processing. Addressing these labour issues in a supply chain that is so widespread, complex and mobile – where boats can be at sea for months on end – is a challenge. Poorly regulated migration, and poorly functioning labour market institutions exacerbate these problems.



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ACTION AND RESULTS

The ILO, in collaboration with the Royal Thai Government and industry representatives, have developed and put into place the Good Labour Practices (GLP) programme, a voluntary industry improvement initiative that seeks to eliminate child labour and improve respect for all fundamental labour rights in the seafood supply chain. In the 175 factories and primary processing units where the programme has been implemented, employers and workers together have taken practical steps to improve working conditions and to use social dialogue to build a culture of compliance with national and international labour standards.

Under the GLP programme, enterprise management and workers are trained on labour rights, and work together to develop action plans to address labour rights violations and improve working conditions and productivity. Highly skilled facilitation services that foster a sense of cooperation and mutual trust and bring a deep understanding of child labour and labour rights are critical to the success of the programme. After an initial, intensive training, and the development of an action plan, the trainers/facilitators periodically return to the seafood work site to check on implementation.

Some of the practical improvements achieved to date include:

- translation of employment contracts and signage into Burmese;
- more effective occupational safety and health measures;
- introduction of age verification systems to prevent child labour;
- inclusion of migrant workers from Myanmar in worker welfare councils;
- increased cooperation between workers and employers;
- increased wages as piece rate payment systems are complemented by a guarantee of the minimum wage.

At the national level, a tripartite GLP Task Force oversees the implementation of the programme. It offers a forum for discussion and identification of strategies to address labour rights violations in the seafood supply chain in Thailand. Originally, the GLP Task Force was established as an ad-hoc committee bringing together the Department of Labour, the Department of Fisheries and employers in the seafood industry, with a mandate to oversee the development of training materials developed for the GLP programme.



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1 Funding support has been provided through public private partnership arrangements with key industry partners and by the US Department of Labour.

It became rapidly apparent that the GLP Task Force had the potential to become a key forum for dialogue, and that for the GLP to remain credible and sustainable it required a more permanent and transparent governance structure. In response, the GLP Task Force was expanded to include trade union and NGO representatives, and buyer representatives and the ILO were given “active observer” status. The GLP Task Force thus became an inclusive forum for dialogue.

A roadmap was created for the expansion of the GLP programme to extend it from primary processing units into factories and in to aquaculture and fishing vessels, and the

establishment of a complaints mechanism for fishers. The development of the roadmap presented a unique opportunity for dialogue among stakeholders, such as migrant workers from Myanmar and multinational seafood buying companies, who had not previously engaged with each other.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- ➡ Child labour does not occur in isolation of other fundamental labour rights and can be more effectively addressed while addressing all fundamental labour rights; forced labour also occurs in the seafood supply chain, for example, and workplace cooperation can support age verification systems.
- ➡ An approach that addresses all parts of the supply chain is most effective for developing a holistic solution. Parts of the supply chain such as peeling sheds, that receive less attention relative to others, such as vessels, nonetheless face serious challenges and need support to develop solutions that will meet their needs. A whole value chain approach, from boats to table, is needed.
- ➡ Engagement with different parts of government is essential to ensure justice and remediation for cases involving forced labour, and to ensure access to public education and other public services as part of a strategy to eliminate child labour.
- ➡ The creation of tripartite mechanisms to tackle child labour in supply chains supports sustainable change. Social dialogue and mature systems of labour relations are critical to ensure that workers have the means to defend their own interests.
- ➡ Child labour can serve as an entry point for dialogue on related policy issues such as safe migration and broader labour market policies.



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