

Addressing Worst Forms of Child Labour in Shrimp and Seafood Processing Areas in Thailand

Eliminating child labour in the shrimp and seafood processing industry has been identified by the Royal Thai Government and the International Labour Organization (ILO) as an area requiring attention. The industry plays an important role in the country's economic development - it contributed approximately 2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2009 - and the sector has great potential to improve and expand. Because it is labour intensive it creates a significant number of jobs for Thai citizens as well as attracting a large number of migrant workers from neighbouring countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, and especially Myanmar).

Child labour in the shrimp production value chain is most commonly found in small-scale informal enterprises that do primary processing (i.e. sorting, peeling, and deveining). However, the employment of children in the industry supply chain, both under and above the legal working age, in hazardous working conditions is not always captured by existing monitoring and enforcement systems. Child labour has been observed predominantly among migrant workers in shrimp and seafood processing in the Samut Sakhon area; but it also involves Thai children in the southern coastal areas of Songkhla and Nakhon Si Thammarat, where children have been observed sorting seafood on the docks, and working in small-scale seafood processing units. Shrimp aquaculture and seafood processing are also found on the coast of Surat Thani and Songkhla provinces but the nature and extent of child labour in these is yet to be determined.



T. Faksa, ILO 2006

Because of the economic importance of the industry, and the employment it generates, a concerted effort is needed to address issues related to its labour market governance, structure and regulation, especially in its extended value chain. The common use of sub-contracting makes the industry vulnerable to poor working conditions and breaches of national laws and international labour standards relating to child labour, labour exploitation and abuse. Existing product quality and labour monitoring systems need to be improved to cover the full extent of the value chain. It is also necessary to reach out to shrimp farmers and processing establishments to ensure they understand and apply regulations relating to child labour.

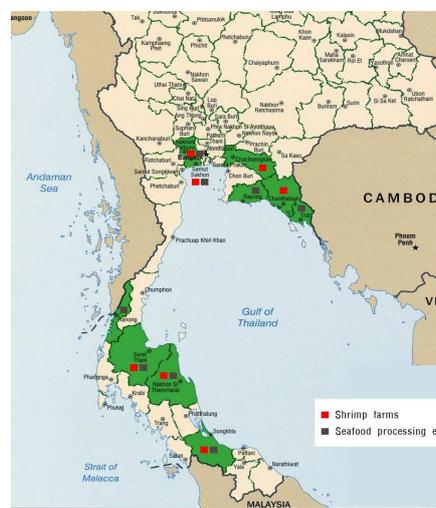
All forms of employment for children under the age of 15 are prohibited; and restricted conditions of employment for children aged 15-17 years apply, including restrictions on overtime work and work which is hazardous to children's health. *Labour Protection Act Thailand B.E. 2541 (1998 and 2008)*

Hazardous Child Labour is work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. *ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No.182)*

The project aims to create an industry that is free of child labour and offers decent working conditions and opportunities. It will focus on selected geographical hubs for shrimp and seafood processing such as Samut Sakhon, Surat Thani and Songkhla. This is a four-year initiative (2011-2014) with funding provided by the United States Department of Labor.

Project objectives:

- Strengthen policy and implementation frameworks to protect the rights of Thai, migrant and stateless children in relation to labour, education, employment and social protection.
- Ensure enterprises throughout the shrimp industry supply chain comply with national labour laws and international labour standards, in particular those relating to child labour and forced labour; and introduce good practices in working conditions.
- Provide accessible education, social protection and livelihood services to migrant and Thai children and their families in the targeted shrimp industry areas.



Project strategy:

- To achieve sustained improvement in the child labour situation in the shrimp and seafood processing industry, the project will take a systemic approach to creating structural improvements alongside an enabling policy and implementation environment. It will work with the industry to implement good practice models that will improve both production and working conditions.
- It will actively work towards enhancing effective implementation of policies on labour protection, migration, education and social protection; and towards improving the governance, working conditions and regulation of the shrimp industry supply chain. It will also look at gaps in education and social services for vulnerable Thai and migrant communities.
- The project is grounded in the ILO's mandate for social partner dialogue. It will engage government, employers' and workers' organizations, and civil society groups in action and advocacy that aim to eliminate child labour in the industry. Key partners will include the Ministry of Labour, Department of Fisheries, Thai Frozen Foods Association and others.

A Commitment to Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labour

The Royal Government of Thailand has adopted and implemented a comprehensive legal and policy framework to address child labour. This includes ratification of the following international standards:

- ✓ ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 2001, (No.182)
- ✓ ILO Convention on the Minimum Age, 2004, (No. 138)
- ✓ ILO Convention on Forced Labour, 1969, (No.29) and on the Abolition of Forced Labour, 1969, (No.105)
- ✓ ILO Convention on Employment Policy, 1969, (No.122)
- ✓ ILO Convention on Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation), 1968, (No.19)
- ✓ UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, (*signed*)

A number of national instruments are also in place:

- ✓ Thai Constitution (2007)
- ✓ Labour Protection Act (1998 and 2008)
- ✓ Anti-trafficking in Persons Act B.E.2551 (2008)
- ✓ National Policy and Plan on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and establishment of the multi-agency National Committee on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (2009)
- ✓ ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers 2007
- ✓ Immigration Act (1979) and Alien Employment Act B.E.2551 in 2008
- ✓ Bilateral Memoranda of Understanding with Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar.

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