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International  
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## Combatting Unacceptable Forms of Work in the Thai Fishing and Seafood Industry

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PROJECT NEWSLETTER

### Supporting focused labour enforcement

Mahachai--Visits to Samut Sakhon, a major seafood exporting zone along the northern coast of the Gulf of Thailand, in late June 2016 to meet Thai civil society organizations and again in November to observe the Ministry of Labour's special inspection team were part of this EU-funded project's 'inception' work on two core objectives--Strengthening Enforcement and Supporting Migrant Workers.

In meetings with the ILO, leaders from the State Enterprises Workers' Relations Confederation (SERC), the Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF), Labour Rights Promotion Network (LPN), and Migrant Worker Rights Network (MWRN) welcomed recent changes to Thai law but reported wage-withholding, minimum wage and overtime pay violations, excessive and involuntary overtime, unsafe working conditions, and a lack of organizing rights in seafood and fishing.

In Mahachai, Songkla, and Rayong, the ILO project team has joined more than a dozen port-side and at-sea labour inspections in 2016. The field visits included briefings with senior Royal Thai Navy/CCCIF and MOL officials, Stella Maris and other civil society leaders, seafood processing plant briefings at PFP, Golden Prize, and Thai Union--as part of a Thai Tuna Industry Association's GLP assessment--plus extensive on- and off-site interviews with Cambodian, Myanmar, and Thai workers.

The team shared its preliminary observations and recommendations to strengthen enforcement with the project's Task Force 2 in December 2016 and will present detailed recommendations to the Thai government and the ILO Project Steering Committee at year's end. One critical investment called for by the ILO--interpreters for port-in/port-out (PIPO) and seafood processing labour inspections--is now underway.

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## Next Steps on Legal Framework: Gap Analyses on Forced Labour and Work in Fishing Conventions

Bangkok--Strengthening the Thai legal framework for work in fishing and seafood is a third core objective of the project, and the ILO presented in November 2016--after extensive consultations--its initial analysis of gaps between Thai law and the Forced Labour Protocol (P. 29, 2014). A 'validation' meeting with government, unions and civil society, and employer associations in January 2017 will be followed by legal drafting by a government-appointed tripartite committee.

The ILO's analysis of the Work in Fishing Convention (C. 188, 2007) follows a similar pattern and is due to be presented to the government and social partners in January 2017. The Thai government repeated in November 2016 its intention to ratify both conventions in 2017, as well as the possible ratification of the Convention on the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining (C. 98, 1949).

## Revising Good Labour Practices (GLP) for 2017

Bangkok--A week's worth of consultations in November and December 2016 with union and civil society leaders, industry leaders (fishing, aquaculture and seafood processing), and Thai labour officials brought consensus on the project's fourth core objective--the need for more rigor in GLP programmes, including expansion from seafood processing to vessels and aquaculture, and attention to the impact of sourcing practices on upstream supplier labour

practices. Project staff will also consult with global buyers and labour NGOs in December and January before drafting a plan and leading a final round of consultations to settle on the shape of an expanded and more robust GLP.



## **ILO Director General Guy Ryder hears Thai Tuna President at U.N.**

New York--At the invitation of the project, Dr Chanintr Chalisarapong of the Thai Tuna Industry Association joined a June 2016 ILO/United Nations event in New York on ending forced labour. Dr Chanintr argued that the media attention, pressure from CSOs, and the risk of trade restrictions have been the main drivers for the Thai government and industry “to accept our problem and make corrective actions with the help from ILO. The key point is that the ILO links all stakeholders to join hands together to solve the problem in sustainable way.”

The challenge for the industry will be to get ahead of these worker rights issues so that change is driven not by global media attention but by sustainable systems: strong due diligence and transparent reporting, social dialogue, effective enforcement, and prompt remedies.

## **Broad-based labour consensus at ILO/BSCI event**

Bangkok--The ILO and BSCI brought together in May 2016 more than 100 international seafood buyers and major suppliers, Thai government representatives, workers and employers' organizations, delegations from the EU, German and American embassies, and United Nations agencies. Despite divergent starting points, participants managed to find consensus on several key recommendations:

- Ratifying and implementing the ILO Conventions on Freedom of Association (No. 87) and the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining (No. 98)
- Implementing a sustainable and long-term migration policy and regulating fair recruitment practices
- Building a more responsible and transparent supply chain by rewarding good labour practices and working with producers to meet standards

The project plans a similar event for mid-2017 in Bangkok.

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