



# Evaluation Summary



International  
Labour  
Office

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Office

## *Combating the worst forms of child labour in shrimp and seafood processing areas of Thailand – Independent Final Evaluation*

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** Thailand

**Final Evaluation:** July 2015

**Evaluation Mode:** *Independent*

**Administrative Office:** *CO Bangkok*

**Technical Office:** *IPEC*

**Evaluation Manager:** *Peter Wichmand*

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**Project Code:** *THA/10/50/USA*

**Donor(s) & Budget:** *USDOL (US\$ 9,000,000)*

**Keywords:** *child labour, forced labour, social protection, food production, fishing industry*

### From the executive summary

The project “*Combating the worst forms of child labour in shrimp and seafood processing areas of Thailand*” is a 4.5-year program funded by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), which began on 30 December 2010, and will finish following a six-month extension on 30 June 2015.

The Project follows some 20 years of IPEC programming in Thailand, including the previous project implemented from 2006 to 2010, called “*Support for National Action to Combat Child Labour and its Worst*

*Forms in Thailand*”. This project provided support to the Royal Thai Government’s (RTG) efforts to develop their national plan on child labour, called National Plan and Policy (NPP), which became known as NPP1. The final evaluation of that project noted that while the development of the NPP was an important achievement, implementation is a challenge. A persistent gap between education policy and practice in regard to difficulties posed for migrant children’s access to education was one area identified as particularly problematic.

The current project focuses on child labour specifically in the shrimp industry, where both Thai and migrant child labour is found. It features three components, as outlined below in Figure 1, with the following development objectives:

- *Immediate Objective 1:* Policy and implementation frameworks strengthened to protect the rights of Thai, migrant and stateless children in relation to labour, education, employment and social protection.
- *Immediate Objective 2:* Enterprises across the shrimp industry supply chain comply with national labour laws, with special emphasis on child labour and forced labour, and institute good practices in working conditions.
- *Immediate Objective 3:* Area-based education, social protection and livelihood services provided to migrant and Thai children and their families in targeted shrimp industry areas.

### **Methodology**

The evaluation team focused primarily on the collection of qualitative data as well as relying in part on analysis

of the quantitative data in the project database on children assisted. The team also undertook a desk review of relevant project documents and reports. The evaluation team used the following methods to collect data:

- Semi-structured interviews with 20 key informants at the national level in Thailand; with an additional 3 interviews with ILO HQ and USDOL informants.
- Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with 14 key informants at 4 of the 5 project areas in central and southern Thailand, spending on average one-half day to one full day onsite.
- Stakeholder validation workshop on 23 March with more than 30 participants representing the MOL, MOA, MFA, NGOs, industry associations, the employer's association, trade unions, and researchers involved in the project.
- Presentation of very preliminary findings to ILO IPEC project staff for further reflection and feedback.

The evaluation team carried out analysis of the qualitative data through identifying trends and patterns emerging, and supplemented this with interviews and desk review. The evaluation team identified the following limitations to the evaluation:

- Given scheduling constraints, the evaluation team spent a total of 15 days in country collecting data, and meeting for just 1 day each with 4 of the 5 partners implementing education services outside Bangkok. More time in country would have better.
- The evaluation team as a whole was well experienced in the education sector in Thailand, but more limited in its overall knowledge on industry improvement.
- An overview of the project and full briefing to the evaluation team was not possible until beginning of the second and final week of data collection due to scheduling conflicts, impacting interviews during the first week.
- Although statistical data of the DBMR was available to the team, the database of case descriptive data implemented by DPU was not available to the evaluation team at the time of evaluation.

- The project itself was affected by staff turn-over from the donor down to the community level, a factor impacting project performance, as discussed below, as well as the evaluation itself and the quality of data collected.

### **Findings - Relevance of project design**

- The project design effectively supports both RTG laws and policies on education and labour, while also contributing toward ILO programming objectives in Thailand.
- Little data existed on the prevalence and nature of Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) in the shrimping industry affecting how effective the project design could be informed (some previous studies on selected geographical areas, areas, specific studies related to value chain and stakeholder consultants provided some basis for design);

### **Delays to project implementation: management mishaps and insufficient political will and understanding of complexity**

- Activities contributing toward only four desired outputs among a total of 15 were fully complete by the time of the evaluation, with delays due to both external and internal factors;
- Among a range of project stakeholders, the lack of political will to address the problem of child labour and the insufficient understanding of the complexity of the factors contributing to child labour, delayed project implementation, thus impacting both outputs and outcomes achieved.

### **Varying levels of ownership and understanding among stakeholders: uncertain relationships and roles**

- The project was effectively implemented in a siloed approach with unilateral partnerships between IPEC and the stakeholders carrying more influence and purpose than the project task force itself chaired by the MOL.
- A lack of full participation in the GLP, while deemed necessary in order to move the process of its development along, resulted in the realization of a product that does not have full ownership by stakeholders.

### **Extent of objectives and overall goal achieved: achievements and challenges**

- Despite delayed project implementation and the current status of activities, the evaluation team can point to some outputs achieved, and more broadly areas of achievement and challenges going forward.
- A significant output of the project is the GLP, which currently has high levels of enthusiasm and buy-in from the DOF and industry associations, and may well be an effective tool for raising awareness and changing business practices
- Another significant output is the implementation of various models for education access at the local level.
- Significant challenges to achieving the development objective include reaching small-scale businesses and unregistered enterprises within the shrimping supply chain, the real risk of the GLP serving interests of image over genuine change; and the actual identification and withdrawal of children working in the WFCL in the shrimping industry, which were minimal (although this reflects the actual magnitude as determined by the baseline of those children engaged in work needing withdrawal versus those at risk needing prevention services).

### **Collaborations on child labour at the local level: possible sustained efforts going forward**

- The project has given impetus to local initiatives and collaborations that, while small in value given the size of the shrimping industry, are positive..
- The collaboration between NGOs and schools at the community level and the NFE enhances the sustainability of education services provided by the project.

### **Conclusion**

The project represents a new generation of USDOL-funded child labour programming for ILO IPEC, with a combined effort at addressing both industry improvement and direct services to children. The project's 3 components focused on policy, industry improvement, and area-based direct services were intended to collectively contribute toward its development objective to eliminate WFCL in the shrimping industry. The evaluation found that activities implemented in support of this overall objective, while

delayed in their implementation, did to some extent contribute toward its realization.

While these certain outputs and outcomes were achieved, the project experienced certain challenges that impede real progress toward realization of the development objective more fully. These include:

- ***The risk of the GLP to serve interests of image over genuine change.*** The continued insistence of the industry and the DOF to use the GLP as both an awareness raising and capacity building tool as well as a voluntary self-audit tool could impede the realization of the project development objective unless a good balance between learning and enforcement is established
- ***The lack of a clear approach to withdrawing migrant children from WFCL.*** The educational services facilitated and/or provided by partner NGOs to migrant communities proved to be effective as a preventive measure, yet additional models targeting younger migrant teenage workers who are at greatest risk of WFCL is needed.
- ***The need to better link policy to practice.*** Linking Components 1 and 2, and 1 and 3 proved to be challenging, especially with regard to education. From the design of the project, the separation of the implementation of policy measure from direct service provision had limited the linkage and impacts.

The evaluation team had found that achievement of project outcomes was based on several assumptions that did hold true at the project end. These related to partners' acknowledgement of the existence of child labour in the shrimp supply chain; and the political will to address the problem. Denial of the child labour problem was found at the community level, impacting activities and resulting in delays, as well as with industry actors, resulting in delayed participation in development of the GLP.

### **Recommendations**

1. ***The RTG National Statistics Office should implement a national study on child labour.*** An official study on the prevalence and nature of child labour, to include all children -- Thai, stateless, and non-Thai -- is crucial in addressing the problem going forward. Efforts to address the problem of child labour are hampered by lack of data and government commitment.

2. ***A CLM system should be properly established and developed to include Thai, stateless and non-Thai children.*** Where in the RTG this CLM system should be housed should be carefully considered and planned.

Based on learning from the project, an approach to data collection and case management should be housed within communities with support provided to volunteers from those communities to collect data.

3. ***Identification of appropriate models for older migrant children ages 14 and above.*** A new strategy to protect children over age 14 from entering the labour force is needed, as well as a strategy to provide an alternative for those who want to leave child labour.

#### **Specific recommendations on the GLP:**

4. Develop clear directions on how GLP could be used, measured and integrated with existing standards, together with all stakeholders around the table.

5. ***Active pursuit of promoting migrant workers' voice and inputs into the GLP going forward.*** The MWRN was holding three sessions with migrant workers, soliciting their inputs to the GLP. Receiving these inputs and seriously engaging with the MWRN and migrant workers in a legitimate, transparent and effective manner is imperative to the operationalizing the GLP.

6. ***Non-formal sector shrimp processing businesses must be accessed.*** The trade unions - to complement government authorities at provincial and national level such as labour inspection functions - must take a more active role in finding ways to access the small non-formal businesses in their supply chain and implement incentives for their compliance to standards.

#### **Specific recommendations for the MOE:**

7. ***Full commitment of the MOE in budgeting for implementation of the migrant curriculum and cooperation efforts at the local level.*** As discussed above, there is effort by the NFE to provide Thai language class as part of the Primary Education Curriculum for migrant children and persons without Thai nationality aged 6-15 years.

8. ***Full commitment of the MOE on scaling up good practices from the project.*** Good practices, especially the mainstreaming of transitional education to ensure a systematic approach in preparation of children and parents can only be executed with the full involvement and commitment of MOE.

9. ***Consider alternatives to Thai formal education for migrant children.*** The learnings from the project

suggest that a Thai-oriented formal education should not be the sole option for migrant education since migrant children have varying needs.

10. ***Persistent engagement of the parents of migrant children is important to any education strategy.*** Since parents are the main decision-makers for their children's education, it is important to work with parents to keep them informed about the activities at school and the performance of their children, through semester orientation and monthly meetings, in order to reduce the dissatisfaction that could lead to children dropping out of children from school.

#### **Specific recommendations for ILO-IPEC:**

11. Consider carrying out further more thorough analysis of the child migrants' realities within their countries as part of a needs assessment (to complement already carried out surveys).

12. ***Strengthen the Task Force function to ensure a more cohesive approach among the three components, and to enable greater levels of transparency.*** A stronger Task Force mandated to oversee all project components and activities would benefit the project.

13. ***For similar types of programmes going forward, ensuring that the project set-up has sufficient project staff with the required expertise for each of the three components from the start of project implementation (for instance by consider devoting at least one project staff to each component).***

14. ***Facilitate furthering among stakeholders the development of the GLP, or another corresponding tool, to effectively achieve the overall aim of fostering accountability within the shrimping industry.*** While the GLP effectively serves some interests, specifically as an awareness raising tool, more comprehensive effort on behalf of the RTG and industry must be made to both eliminate child labour and improve overall work conditions.

15. ***Explore application of the GLP as part of a comprehensive approach to other industries.*** The complexity of the child labour problem goes beyond the shrimp and seafood processing industry. In order to address the child labour problem, education services are helpful to eliminate numbers of child labourers and should cover many sectors of industry. While the GLP has been designed for specifically the shrimp and seafood processing industry, its broader application could and should be looked into.