



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation
Office

“Sea Fisheries: Strengthened Coordination to Combat Labour Exploitation and Trafficking in Fisheries in Southeast Asia”

Quick Facts

Countries: *Southeast Asia*

Final Evaluation: *3 September 2020*

Mode of Evaluation: *Independent*

Administrative Office: *ILO Country Office for Indonesia and Timor-Leste (CO-Jakarta)*

Technical Office: *ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team for East and South East Asia and the Pacific (DWT-Bangkok)*

Evaluation Manager: *Suttida Chaikitsakol*

Evaluation Consultant: *Eric Oldsman, PhD*

Project End: *31 July 2020*

Project Code: *RAS/16/11/USA (106132)*

Donor & Project Budget: *United States Department of State (USD 1,650,000)*

Keywords: *trafficking, forced labor, labour exploitation, migrant worker, fishing,*

and action plans to combat trafficking and labor exploitation in the fisheries sector for adoption at the regional level and at the national level in Indonesia and Thailand. However, resolutions or recommendations from the RCB pertaining to strategies/plans or any other matters would not be binding. Research would be carried out under the auspices of the SEA Fisheries project to provide a foundation for the development of strategies and action plans.

Present Situation of the Project

In April 2017, with the support of the US State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP), the ILO launched a project titled “SEA Fisheries: Strengthened Coordination to Combat Labour Exploitation and Trafficking in Fisheries in Southeast Asia,” hereafter referred to as the SEA Fisheries project. The project was originally scheduled to end on 31 March 2020 but was extended to 31 July 2020 under a no-cost extension approved on 25 March 2020.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purpose of the final evaluation is to assess the extent to which project objectives were achieved, identify lessons and emerging good practices, and provide a foundation for “future strategies, particularly in designing a potential follow-up to this project.” The principle audience for the evaluation includes the Steering Committee of the SEA Forum for Fishers, J/TIP Office, and ILO management in country offices in Southeast Asia.

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure.

The project aimed to “reduce trafficking and labour exploitation in fisheries by strengthening coordination at the regional and national level.” It centered on the establishment of a multi-stakeholder regional coordinating body (RCB), consisting of government authorities, employers’ organizations and workers’ organizations from the ten ASEAN countries. The RCB was expected to develop strategies

Methodology of evaluation

An international consultant based in the United States conducted the evaluation. It assesses the performance of the project with respect to relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and project management, impact and sustainability. The evaluation is based on qualitative research, drawing on an in-depth review of project files, written responses provided by project staff to questions posed by the evaluator, interviews with more than 42 key informants, and a literature review. A debriefing meeting (online) on preliminary findings was held for key stakeholders on 6 August 2020. A Draft Final Report was prepared and distributed to all individuals that were interviewed as part of the evaluation for review and comment. The evaluator addressed comments as warranted in the final version of the report. The evaluation adheres to the United National Evaluation Group (UNEG) evaluation norms, standards and ethical safeguards.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The project accomplished a great deal, particularly given the small staff and limited time and budget. However, momentum slowed after the Inaugural Plenary Meeting in September 2019 due to uncertainty about the sustainability of the initiative, the departure of the program manager, the shift in focus from establishing the regional coordinating body to the task of developing and implementing regional strategies, and the emergence of the novel coronavirus.

Principal conclusions with respect to each evaluation criterion follow:

- **Relevance.** The project aimed to tackle critical issues in the region and was consistent with constituent needs and priorities. While the original scope was defined as the “fisheries sector,” the focus was subsequently narrowed to commercial fishing vessels operating in ocean waters. Trafficking and labor exploitation in the commercial fishing sector in Southeast Asia has been well documented. Stakeholders stated that the SEA Forum for Fishers

addressed a need in the region and focused on the right issues. The SEA Fisheries project was aligned with the ILO strategic framework and policy outcomes.

- **Coherence.** Some, but not all, issues that need to be addressed to combat trafficking and labour exploitation in the fishing sector require coordinated action by multiple States. The implementation of regional strategies requires actions by nation states, but the project was not designed to offer necessary assistance to individual countries. The project was not allocated sufficient resources or time to accomplish its aims.
- **Effectiveness.** The project established a regional coordination body – SEA Forum for Fishers – which fostered greater awareness of the need to protect fishers and shared information on good practices. However, the extent of participation by countries and the sixty member organizations varied significantly. Research studies were undertaken as planned, but significant delays in publication reduced their utility in informing the development of the regional strategy and action plan; multiple channels were used to communicate with stakeholders. Elements of a potential regional strategy are reflected in agreed action plans for the Working Groups of the SEA Forum for Fishers, but much of the planned work is still to be done. National strategies and plans for Indonesia and Thailand were not developed and this component of the project was dropped in March 2020.

Efficiency and project management. It took five months to put the project team in place and subsequent staff turnover was significant. The project manager resigned effective 31 January 2020 – six months before the end of the project. The then current national project coordinator (NPC) was appointed as the officer-in-charge (OIC) but left at the end of March 2020. An individual who had been working on the project for two months as an external collaborator was named as the NPC/OIC for the remainder of the project. The project drew on ILO specialists in the DWT-Bangkok and Geneva for technical

assistance and collaborated with other ILO projects in the region.

Roughly 20 percent of available funds remained unspent at the end of the project. This was due to a number of factors, including staffing issues, the timing of the no-cost extension, and the emergence of the novel coronavirus. The pandemic effectively precluded conducting planned studies and holding in-person meetings after February 2020.

- **Impact and sustainability.** The SEA Forum for Fishers provided a foundation for regional coordination, but regional strategies were not adopted: the project has not resulted in changes in laws, policies, or practices that might have a beneficial impact on fishers. While effort was made to secure follow-on funding from J/TIP and other donors, the project ended on 31 July 2020 without a concrete plan for the continued operations of the SEA Forum for Fishers.

be coupled with on-the-ground support in individual countries.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations

J/TIP has not expressed an intention to fund a second phase of the SEA Fisheries project and ILO support for the SEA Forum for Fishers has ceased. Donors and/or countries that want to build on the foundation that has already been established may want to consider the following recommendations.

- Prepare a five-year strategy and annual work plan for the SEA Forum for Fishers.
- Establish a support office in each member country.

Lessons learned

There are two primary lessons that can be distilled from the results of the evaluation that have implications for ILO and other organizations that might be considering establishing a regional coordinating body: i) significant outreach and planning is required before launching a regional coordinating body (RCB); and ii) regional coordination needs to