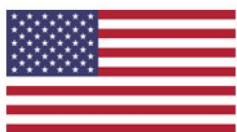


## OUTCOME DOCUMENT

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TO PREVENT  
LABOUR EXPLOITATION AND PROTECT  
MIGRANT FISHERS IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA



**IOM**  
UN MIGRATION

ASIA  
REGIONAL  
MIGRATION  
PROGRAM



Protecting People and Planet



Indonesia's NGO Coalition for  
International Human Rights Advocacy



# OUTCOME DOCUMENT

## REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON STRENGTHENING COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TO PREVENT LABOUR EXPLOITATION AND PROTECT MIGRANT FISHERS

BANGKOK, 9-10 DECEMBER 2024

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### OVERVIEW

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On 9-10 Dec 2024, 18 organizations gathered in Bangkok, Thailand to discuss and collaboratively develop key recommendations for the Southeast Asian countries in response to the publication of the [ASEAN Guidelines on the Placement and Protection of Migrant Fishers](#) ('ASEAN Guidelines') during the ASEAN Summit on 14 October 2024, we are reminded of the fundamental principles that uphold the dignity and rights of every individual. In particular, we highlight the plight of migrant fishers, whose contributions to the global economy often come at the cost of their own lives and rights.

Southeast Asia (SEA) contributes 20% to global fish production (\$50 billion) whilst employing millions of workers across their commercial fishing industries. SEA is also one of the largest origin regions for migrant fishers employed within the fishing industries of East Asian economies including those of the People's Republic of China, Japan, and Republic of Korea.

Migrant fishers play a crucial role in the fishing industry, yet they are among the most vulnerable and exploited workers. They often endure harsh working conditions, low wages, and limited access to legal and social protection. Investigations conducted by the Environmental Justice Foundation in 2024 across the region have revealed the prevalence of indicators of forced labour such as physical and verbal abuse, excessive working hours, document retention, and poor living and dangerous working conditions. In both SEA and distant water fishing industries, these challenges are exacerbated by wages to the volume of seafood available to process.

In Southeast Asia, ASEAN Member States have continuously strengthened their regional policies to enhance the protection of migrant fishers within Southeast Asia and beyond. Most recently, ASEAN published the ASEAN Guidelines. While we acknowledge and appreciate this progress, improvements are still needed to ensure that migrant fishers within and/or from the region are protected throughout their entire migration cycle.

We, representatives of 18 organizations, call on Southeast Asian states to implement ASEAN Guidelines with the aim of ensuring decent working and living conditions, fair recruitment practices, access to justice, and enhancing accessibility of safe and regular migration pathways for migrant fishers.



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## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. **Recognize the universality of human rights**, which means that human rights must be upheld throughout the migration cycle of migrant fishers, including while they are working at sea and recognize migrant fishers as migrant workers, making sure that they are afforded the same rights and protections.
2. **Review and strengthen their national policies and regulations aligned with international standards**, ratify relevant international human rights and labour conventions, including ILO Convention No. 188 on Work in Fishing and Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention, and mainstream gender sensitive and responsive approaches into the migration policies and response.
3. **Establish compulsory and comprehensive pre-departure and post-arrival orientations** tailored for the specific context and needs of migrant fishers. Orientation should be delivered by relevant government agencies in close coordination with non-government organizations, workers organizations, education institutions, and/or vocational institutions. These orientations should mainstream right-based approaches, gender sensitivity and responsiveness, and cultural sensitivity.
4. **Facilitate access to justice, and ensure the safe and dignified return, readmission, and reintegration** of migrant fishers and apply the non-punishment principle on those who are at risk of trafficking and forced labour. This commitment should apply regardless of their migration status, and extend across countries of transit, destination, flag, and/or port states.
5. **Develop and strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation**, including but not limited to bilateral labor agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoU), to ensure fair and ethical recruitment, prevent labour abuses and trafficking, establish data sharing cooperation, cross-border law enforcement, and facilitate their access to protection mechanisms in countries of origin, transit, destination, flag, and port states.
6. **Expand the cooperation with non-governmental agencies** including civil society organizations, faith based-organizations, research institutions and universities, and media, in addition to the tripartite mechanism amongst government, worker organizations, as well as employer organizations within and outside the region.
7. **Capacitate the relevant government agencies**, including law enforcement agencies, **at national and sub-national levels** to develop and/or implement policies related to migrant fishers aligned with the ASEAN Guidelines and international standards.



8. **Monitor and review the implementation of ASEAN Guidelines** through developing monitoring tools and facilitating national and regional consultative forums, which involve relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies, worker organizations, faith-based organizations, and civil society organizations.
9. **Advance the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) objectives** by developing and implementing national action plans that address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration. The plans should focus on facilitating fair and ethical recruitment, ensuring decent work conditions, preventing and combating trafficking in persons, and enhancing pathways for regular migration. In addition, they should ensure access to safe and dignified return and readmission for vulnerable migrants.

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## CONCLUSION

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To reiterate, on this Human Rights Day, we call on Southeast Asian states to prioritize the rights and protection of migrant fishers. By implementing the ASEAN Guidelines, ratifying international conventions, and developing national action plans, expanding its cooperation with partners, including non-government actors at national, regional, bilateral, and multilateral levels, we can create a safer and more dignified environment for migrant fishers. Let us work together to uphold the human and labour rights of all migrant fishers and ensure that their contributions are recognized and valued.

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