Thailand Annual Report 2018
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1. Operating Context

At the beginning of 2018, Thailand remained under significant international pressure to improve its record on combatting human trafficking as well as illegal, unreported and undocumented (IUU) fishing, as illustrated by the European Union Yellow Card and US State Department Tier 2 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Watch List status it still found itself under. This pressure continued after the release of a Human Rights Watch report in January and the Thailand CSO Coalition on Ethical and Sustainable Seafood report in May. Both reports highlighted that, despite on-going reforms, much more needs to be done to eliminate forced labour and human trafficking in the seafood sector. Throughout the year, the government continued in efforts to reform, including ratifying the Protocol to ILO Convention on Forced Labour and agreeing to ratify of the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188), becoming the first country in Asia to do so. The Royal Thai Government has drafted domestic enabling legislation to ensure the requirements of the Convention are in national Thai law, including provisions relating to working and rest hours, standard of accommodation, food and water on vessel board and other improved condition of fishery workers on the commercial fishing vessels. At the end of 2018, this legislation had not been passed.

The Royal Thai Government has drafted domestic enabling legislation to ensure the requirements of the Convention are in national Thai law, including provisions relating to working and rest hours, standard of accommodation, food and water on vessel board and other improved condition of fishery workers on the commercial fishing vessels. At the end of 2018, this legislation had not been passed.

In response to on-going reform efforts, in June 2018, the US State Department upgraded Thailand to the ranking of Tier 2 of the Trafficking in Persons Report and hence removed the Watch List status, stating that the Thai government had demonstrated “increasing efforts” to meet minimum standards. At the end of 2018, there were significant indications that it was likely that the European Union would remove its Yellow Card on IUU. However, it is noted that, whilst progress has been made in some areas, Thailand has still not ratified core ILO treaties and amended domestic law that would enable migrant workers to form and lead unions. Additionally, there are gaps in relation to implementation of reforms, particularly regarding the identification and support of those affected by forced labour or human trafficking.

The new migrant worker registration scheme established under the ‘Royal Proclamation on Managing the Work of Aliens’, required all migrant works to be registered by 30 June 2018. The scheme reflects the government’s intention to bring all migrant workers under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) systems that had been established with its neighbouring countries. The Proclamation also introduced high fines/punishments for businesses hiring unregistered/undocumented migrant workers, as well as fines and punishment for workers that were unregistered. Whilst the Proclamation also introduced a 100,000 Baht fine and six-month jail penalty for any employer confiscating a worker’s work permit, it hasn’t resulted in many positive changes for workers: many businesses simply closed, often without paying wages and/or termination compensation and there were reports of widespread corruption when migrant workers flocked to the Myanmar and Cambodian borders. The Ordinance also makes it difficult for workers to leave their place of employment, as they are required to find a new job within a short period of time and obtain a new work permit.

For the fishing sector in particular, migration policies and MOUs were under discussion in 2018, due to a labour shortage in the fishing sector. At the end of 2018, the National Fisheries Association of Thailand was stating that there was a shortage of workers, with Thai employers claiming that there still a need for as many
as 27,800 workers. Migration policies alone will not address the labour shortage however, rather transforming the fishing and seafood sectors into decent work will attract workers and encourage retention.

Looking forward to 2019, there are two big political events of note: there will be a general election in March and the Royal Thai Government will be serving as chair of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). In relation to the election and newly appointed government, focus will be on ensuring that the new domestic laws to give effect to the Forced Labour Protocol and the Work in Fishing Convention are implemented comprehensively on the ground, as well as to continue to push for improved freedom of association, migrant worker protections and rights for victims of trafficking and forced labour. In relation to ASEAN, Thailand can use this opportunity to drive for better regional standards and cooperation on sustainability, good governance and rights protections in the fisheries sector.
2. Progress Towards Systems Change

Throughout 2018, significant progress was made towards changing systems that, in various ways, act to increase vulnerability and risk to forced labour and human trafficking in the seafood sector. Progress was made on improving legislation and policy and implementation on the ground, in pushing business to take action and through collective action of workers to address change.

In relation to legislation, international and local civil society organisations conducted evidence-based advocacy to key representatives of both Thai and international governments which was critical in maintaining pressure and spotlight on the issue. It led to the ratification of both international laws, as well as the implementation into domestic law, big steps towards improving Thailand’s response to cases of forced labour and reducing vulnerability to forced labour.

In June 2018 the Royal Thai Government ratified the protocol to the ILO Convention on Forced Labour. Ratification of Protocol P29 requires Thailand to take effective measures to both prevent and eradicate forced labour, including education campaigns, legislation and regulation, adequate labour inspection schemes, protection of vulnerable populations particularly migrant workers, supporting due diligence by both government and private actors and effective measures to address root causes. Thailand is also required to provide victim protection and access to effective remedies and to develop a national policy and plan of action to address forced labour in consultation with both employers’ and workers’ organisations. In order to meet these requirements, Thailand began to work towards amending domestic law. Whilst originally agreeing to pass a stand-alone comprehensive law to address forced labour, the government shifted focus and instead decided to amend the existing Anti-Human Trafficking Act. The amendment to the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, criminalises forced labour, increases penalties and includes new protection for whistle-blowers. The amendment to strengthen the law was approved by the National Legislative Assembly in early 2019 (outside the reporting period of this report).

In November 2018, the Parliament agreed to ratify the ILO Work in Fishing Convention, which sets working and living condition standards for certain vessels. Again, the government has drafted a domestic implementing legislation to enable the provision of the international law to be met in Thailand.

In relation to government implementation of relevant policies, the hotspot continues to monitor this and make progress to ensure better implementation on the ground. One hotspot partner has worked to provide technical expertise to the Department of Fisheries in establishing a strong vessel monitoring system. By the end of 2018, an advanced electronic vessel monitoring system had been established, enabling identification of vessels that m within Thailand waters that require inspection. Progress was also made to establish a system of automatic alerts to the Port-In and Port-Out (PIPO) centres, so that these teams can inspect boats docked at their ports. Whilst this is progress, various international and local hotspot CSO partners continue to work to improve inspections conducted by PIPO labour officials, particularly the interviewing of migrant workers and identification of any forced labour practices.

In the private sector arena, some seafood businesses have mapped parts of their labour supply chain and taken action to reduce worker recruitment fees and related debt. One company has ensured third-party...
monitoring from a local migrant worker led and focused civil society organisation. This has prompted other seafood companies to consider their own recruitment practices. This shift is likely to be due, to some degree, to the constant monitoring of company progress and advocacy from both local Thai-based and international civil society partners. In addition to advocacy, one hotspot partner, Verite, has provided technical expertise in this area, helping commercial seafood operators in Thailand understand recruitment fees, laws and policies in different labour migration routes.

In addition to influence on recruitment practices, there has been progress towards systems change due to community and worker organisation. Local Thai-based partners have had an impact on pay and worker organising in factories. In one example, a worker organisation supported by a hotspot partner (MAP Foundation) filed a complaint on wages that were below the minimum wage. In early 2018 the factory owner as well as the main buyer from the factory based in Bangkok, were ordered by the Labour Protection Office to pay workers 25 million baht ($766,469 USD). MAP Foundation outreach workers have since learnt that three factories in the vicinity raised wages of workers at their request, a good example of collective action of workers resulting in improved working conditions, reducing vulnerability to forced labour or other forms of severe labour exploitation. Whilst this success was achieved in a garment sector factory, this type of step change will help to stimulate progress for migrant workers across industries. Other local hotspot partners have continued to support the development of strong migrant community networks, and one partner continues to build a migrant worker led movement, specifically providing advice on workplace collective action and workplace complaints.
3. Hotspot Outputs & Outcomes

3.1 Headline Results

In 2018, the hotspot continued to work towards improving the legal and regulatory framework to address forced labour and improve working conditions for seafood processing workers and fishers at sea. At the community level, partners worked to support migrant worker community networks and leaders, building skills and knowledge to enable migrant worker leaders to assist and represent their community moving forward. Partners also directly supported migrant workers facing high vulnerability or exploitation at work through provision of legal and social services.

**Two international legal instruments ratified and domestic legislation developed**

Thai government ratified Protocol to the ILO Convention on Forced Labour and agreed to ratify the ILO Convention on Work in Fishing, as well as drafting legislation to implement the obligation in domestic Thai law. Many international and Thai partners were involved in advocacy to government pushing for these outcomes.

**Monitoring implementation of reforms on the ground**

Partners worked to independently monitor implementation of reforms including: monitoring Port-In and Port-Out vessel inspections; Thai CSO Coalition on Ethical and Sustainable Seafood publish a report, “Falling through the Net: A survey of basic labour rights among migrants working in Thailand’s fishing sector”, on labour conditions in fishing and advocate to government and business to close remaining gaps; monitoring and publishing findings on government handling of trafficking cases.

**Migrant worker networks strengthened through specialised training**

3,213 members of migrant worker networks were trained on labour rights and leadership, strengthening the ability of migrant workers to both collectively seek change and provide support to each other.

**Providing services to migrant workers affected by or vulnerable to forced labour**

10,065 migrant workers were provided with legal and social services when either affected by a situation of forced labour or vulnerable to forced labour. These services included: providing legal assistance with human trafficking, labour rights and immigration legal matters; working with government authorities in suspected human trafficking cases; assisting workers in cases at the labour or criminal courts; providing temporary shelter to those that had to leave their workplace and are vulnerable.

3.2 Progress towards hotspot objectives

Hotspot Objective 1: To incentivise and support the private sector to improve transparency and adopt ethical labour practices leading to an eradication of forced labour in the seafood supply chain.

Throughout 2018, the hotspot undertook a range of activities aimed at incentivising the private sector to reform.

A range of evidence-based advocacy projects have placed pressure on the private sector to continue to reform. The CSO Coalition on Ethical and Sustainable Seafood, coordinated by Oxfam, and constituted of five
of the hotspot local Thailand partners as well as local environmental groups, undertook 300 interviews with migrant workers as part of on-going monitoring of. The data collated by the partners was analysed and published in the report *Falling Through The Net: A survey of basic labor rights among migrants working in Thailand’s fishing sector*, in May 2018. The report finds that, despite on-going reforms in the sector and some positive improvements towards regularising the sector, workers are still being forced to work longer hours than what is provided for by law, two-thirds are having their identity documents retained by employers, 39% can’t remember signing a contract and 95% of workers are not provided a copy of a contract, 30% were paid on a ‘lump-sum’ basis despite the fact the vast majority would prefer monthly payments, illegal deductions were made and the majority of workers do not have access to information regarding their labour rights at work. In addition to advocacy to Government (detailed under Objective 3 below), the CSO Coalition called for business to become more engaged in the protection of labour rights, to promote fair employment and decent wage, to eliminate recruitment fees being paid by workers, to uplift safety standards on board the vessel, and to allow workers to have more access to information about their basic rights. Buyers abroad were called upon to favour seafood suppliers/exporters who place more importance on promoting workers’ rights and environmental sustainability.

At the international level, Oxfam also launched the *Behind the Barcode Campaign*, campaigning for large international supermarket retailers, who have enormous market buying power, to ensure decent working conditions and fair wages in their food supply chains.

In an attempt to monitor progress of the private sector to implement reforms in Thailand, the hotspot commissioned research to assess progress of both private sector actors and the industry-led body, the Seafood Task Force. The assessment will be completed and published in 2019.

In order to share learning and promote ethical recruitment in the seafood processing industry in Thailand, the hotspot commissioned an assessment of the Thai Union Ethical Recruitment Program. Thai Union is one of the biggest seafood companies in Thailand and the largest producer of canned tuna in the world. It is hoped that the findings from this assessment, available in 2019, will help other companies replicate good ethical recruitment programs in future. Whilst some research and evaluation projects were not finalised at the end of 2018, Freedom Fund believe the impact of evidence-based advocacy, research into progress made and evaluation of pilot ethical recruitment projects, has spurred both suppliers based in Thailand and international retailers to think more deeply about making and supporting reforms in their supply chains. However, it is difficult to assess what various companies are doing due to a continued lack of transparency. It remains unclear how many actors have mapped their full product and labour supply chains and taken action to address risk areas, including supporting smaller retailers and farmers in food supply chains to make changes as required.

In terms of challenges, in Thailand there have been a number of strategic litigation against public participation (SLAPP) cases lodged by companies against activists and workers claiming labour and human rights abuses. Companies have lodged criminal defamation and other cases against both workers and activists. Whilst workers and activists continue to raise concerns and lodge claims, unfortunately the cases have created fear of reprisal and criminal charges against those working to uphold rights. To address this challenge, Freedom Fund have supported the legal defence of partners and workers facing SLAPP cases – discussed further below.
Hotspot Objective 2: To strengthen civil society organisations to monitor the situation on the ground and to empower migrant workers. Migrant workers will be better able to access relevant services and those who escape forced labour will be more likely to seek and access compensation and redress.

Over the course of 2018, the Thailand hotspot continued to support grassroots organisations to assist migrant workers in claiming their rights, identify specific advocacy asks for government and private stakeholders and generate attention to the situation of migrant workers in the seafood sector. Key progress made against the objectives is summarised below.

Conducted case monitoring and documentation to generate awareness and identify migrant worker needs. As noted above, hotspot partners undertook 300 interviews with migrant workers as part of on-going monitoring of conditions in the seafood and fishing sector and presented findings to government and the private sector under the umbrella of the CSO Coalition on Ethical and Sustainable Seafood. Based on the findings noted in the report, the CSO Coalition provided several recommendations to government and business stakeholders (see Outcomes 1 and 3). The Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF) published a report which collated and analysed the response of the justice system to human trafficking cases over a number of years. The report recommended that the government revise the anti-trafficking policy to improve the protection of victim’s rights, guarantee the right to receive a compensation for trafficked victims and implement an integrative assistance approach. HRDF also finalised a human trafficking manual for lawyers that will be used by the lawyer network established under the hotspot.

Provided shelter and legal aid to migrant workers and survivors of labour exploitation. Overall in 2018, the six hotspot partners provided legal and social services, including shelter, to 10,065 workers vulnerable to, or affected by, forced labour. Some highlights from the year include:

- In the Ranong-Kawthoung border area of Thailand and Myanmar, implementing partner Foundation for Education and Development (FED) provided emergency assistance for two cases that involved 145 undocumented workers. FED collaborated with government officials, volunteers, and CSOs on both sides of the border to assist the workers.
- HRDF assisted in a number of long-term strategic litigation cases. In the Kantang case, whilst a conviction and order for compensation for four trafficked fishermen was obtained in 2017, HRDF worked consistently in 2018 to ensure that the relevant government departments authorised payment of the compensation to the Myanmar victims. Victims very rarely receive compensation in practice, and it is vital that those that do go through the legal system obtain their due compensation. In the Ao Noi case, HRDF obtained an order for payment of back wages for female trafficked fishing pier workers. All four workers successfully received their wages in their accounts. In relation to the male fish processing workers, a case had to be filed at the Labour Court for payment of back wages; whilst the fishers were successful in obtaining some of their wages, they were not successful in receiving the entire sum claimed. The criminal aspect of the case (trafficking), and related victim compensation, is on-going at the end of 2018 and HRDF has been accepted as co-plaintiff to assist the prosecution.

Building migrant worker peer leaders and raising awareness of migrant worker rights. Throughout 2018, partners continued to build sustainable migrant worker peer leaders and networks, leveraging off and building on already existing community networks. This is vital for worker empowerment and representation, as migrant worker-led unions are not allowed under the law in Thailand. Over the course of the year, 3,213 workers were provided specialised training in their peer network, to foster leadership skills and improve knowledge of labour rights, migrant rights and processes in Thailand. Some examples include:
Stella Maris provided training to 488 workers on fishing vessels and in seafood processing factories to raise awareness of labour rights and provide information about ways to protect themselves against harm. For those working on fishing vessels, training covered topics related to healthcare and hygiene, safety while onboard a ship, and first aid in case of accidents. Furthermore, the training covered important topics related to human trafficking and labour rights, workers benefits according to Thai law, and information on how to use an ATM card if receiving wages via bank transfer.

MWRN provided training and labour and migration laws and policies to a large number of workers, reaching large numbers of workers that work in seafood processing factories in particular. MWRN also provide training on organising to workers, including conducting some training with the State Enterprise Workers’ Relations Confederation, as well as supporting workers to form and lead effective worker welfare committees within seafood factories.

The Labour Promotion Network (LPN) continued to train migrant peer networks, training over 1,000 members in 2018, and establishing 7 new migrant support networks.

In Mae Sot, one of the most populous border crossing areas between Thailand and Myanmar, implementing partner Migrant Assistance Program Foundation (MAP Foundation), provided training to migrant worker representatives so they are better equipped to share information and learn from one another regarding migrant rights. These leaders are then a resource for other migrant workers within their local networks.

Both MAP Foundation and FED provide labour and migration awareness raising to migrants at two of the largest border crossings from Myanmar into Thailand, ensuring migrant workers are aware of key rights and services before they begin work in Thailand.

Hotspot objective 3: Increase pressure on the Thai government to reform the regulatory framework, uphold migrant rights, and challenge the impunity of traffickers.

In 2018, the hotspot made significant progress on pushing the Royal Thai Government to reform laws to improve rights for fishers and seafood processing workers. Most notably, as discussed earlier in the report, the government ratified the Protocol to the ILO Forced Labour Convention and the ILO Work in Fishing Convention and drafted enabling legislation to implement the provisions of the international treaties in domestic law. In relation to both sets of laws, international and local civil society organisations conducted evidence-based advocacy to key stakeholders, to ensure these important laws were ratified and passed. To highlight a few partners:

- The Thai CSO Coalition on Ethical and Sustainable Seafood made key recommendations to government through its *Falling Through the Net* report regarding laws, policies and processes.
- The Environmental Justice Foundation, also funded through the hotspot, prepared a number of briefings on critical topics and undertook strategic advocacy to international governments and the Royal Thai government.
- The Thai Seafood Working Group, coordinated by the International Labour Rights Forum, and made up of almost 60 labour, environmental and human rights organisations, advocated to industry and government to ratify the conventions.

Whilst these are important for closing existing gaps in legislation, there are still areas of regulation which increase migrant worker vulnerability to forced labour. For example, it is still illegal for migrant workers to form or lead trade unions in Thailand, and different aspects of the formal migration system tie workers, in varying degrees, to employers. Recruitment pathways into fishing and seafood can also be problematic, with workers going into debt to brokers to facilitate migration. Partners continue to highlight these gaps and advocate for reform in these areas. For example, the report of the Thai CSO Coalition also recommended that the government legislate to prohibit brokers from charging fees from the workers, to promote inspection by
government agencies and to ratify the ILO Conventions relating to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Implementation of law and policy is another area in which the hotspot partners made progress in 2018, but which continues to require attention moving forward. In terms of progress, OceanMind assisted the Royal Thai Government in implementing a vessel-monitoring system, which enables the government to monitor vessels and take corrective action. The Environmental Justice Foundation worked with the government Command Centre to Combat Illegal Fishing (CCCIF) to monitor the effectiveness of the Port-In and Port-Out system which inspects vessels over 30 gross tonnes. At these PIPO centres, officials are meant to interview migrant workers to ensure no exploitation or forced labour has occurred. However, PIPO interviews and inspections have been weak to date. To improve identification, hotspot partner UN University has developed an identification app to be used by officials.

Local Thai-based partners also worked to monitor the reform process and advocate for the Royal Thai Government, and border country governments, to improve. For example, the Foundation for Education and Development (FED) held a number of roundtables with officials from Thailand and Myanmar to discuss challenges faced by migrants and gaps in migration policies that need to be addressed.
4. Supporting a Community of Practice

In 2018, hotspot partner collaborative efforts focused on promoting and improving coordination both with external groups (various agencies, CSOs and worker organisations) and within the hotspot partners themselves in relation to mental health and legal cases.

Building hotspot capacity to address mental health

In previous years of the hotspot, Freedom Fund had noted the frequency of mental health problems among survivors, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, PTSD and substance abuse. On the basis of this, Freedom Fund commissioned a study by a noted Thai psychologist to scope the available resources, individuals and organisations with expertise in the field, and mental health interventions appropriate to survivors of slavery and trafficking in the fishing industry. The study found that the lack of knowledge, expertise and skills in mental health interventions that would be appropriate for survivors of trafficking and forced labour posed unique challenges. As a consequence of this groundwork in late 2017 and the first half of 2018, Raks Thai coordinated work to establish regional networks of organisations and individuals with expertise and experience in mental health to act as a resource for and provide support to survivors and the CSOs in those regions. Additionally, combined trainings and individual partner mentoring was organised to build capacity of partner staff to provide trauma-informed care to victims of exploitation. Partner staff reported an increase in understanding and confidence in applying a trauma-informed approach to migrant workers using their services.

Building legal capacity

Technical assistance provider, the Social Responsibility Law Office (SR Law), continued to provide capacity building assistance on legal matters to implementing partners. In 2018, SR Law organised four trainings throughout the year for partners on relevant laws and policies, including the newly adopted Royal Ordinance concerning the Management of Employment of Migrant Workers, the Anti-Trafficking Act, the Ministerial Regulation concerning the Protection of Work in Sea Fishing, the Labour Protection Act, Workmen Compensation Act, Guidelines on the identification of human trafficking victims and practical training on fact finding and evidence gathering. During the training, partners also had the opportunity to share from their experiences and collectively identify ways in which they could address legal challenges within the distinct areas in which they work.

SR Law also reviewed and finalised a practical handbook for civil society organisations to use when working on human trafficking and forced labour cases. The handbook covers basic knowledge and awareness of vulnerability, roles of CSOs in assisting victims of trafficking, in victim identification, prosecution process and victim protection. In addition, Handbook discusses challenges faced in prosecuting human trafficking cases. Relevant laws are listed and can be made as reference to the provision of legal assistance to victims of trafficking.

SR Law also provided legal technical assistance to partners on a variety of cases related to labour rights, human trafficking, work accidents, access to legal rights and support, among others. During 2018, SR Law assisted in legal cases relating to 62 people. Of this 35 people were subject to a compensation claim for human trafficking (35 separate cases were lodged due to differing compensation required). At the time of writing, an order on this matter had not been made. SR Law also assisted partners with 19 labour rights
violation cases as well as a number of strategic litigation cases that may set helpful precedents. In one such case, SR Law assisted LPN in a human trafficking case involving an official accused of trafficking migrant workers from Myanmar. The court convicted the employer and found in favour of the victims, however the employer appealed. Whilst on bail, the employer absconded to Myanmar. After this situation, the Anti-Human Trafficking Act was amended to ensure the defendant reports to the court whilst on bail. After being extradited from Myanmar to Thailand, in June 2018 the Supreme Court finally sentenced the defendant to 8 years and 9 months’ imprisonment and 900,000 Thai Baht of compensation to the victims. SR Law, LPN and Ministry officials are working on a plan for executing the judgement and seizing the defendant’s property to enable compensation to be paid.
5. Case Study

There are an estimated 61,000 fishery crews for commercial fishing in Thailand, with two thirds of these workers being migrant workers from Myanmar and Cambodia. Many fishery crews do not have much fishing experience and do not receive proper job training before joining the sector. Stella Maris, Freedom Fund partner in southern Thailand, has worked with fishers and seafarers for many years, and over the course of this experience, realised that injuries and accidents are often due to limited knowledge and lack of adequate training for fishers on health and safety. Over the years, to address such concerns, Stella Maris provided first aid boxes and outreach to fishers on vessels, as well as providing medical care in their port-based centres. Through outreach and service provision to fishing workers, Stella Maris could establish a relationship of trust and also provide information on labour rights, migration matters and, when necessary, human trafficking and forced labour.

In 2018, Stella Maris decided to actively engage with vessel owners about a more detailed health and safety training. Stella Maris shared their health and safety concerns with the Songkhla Fishery Association and explained how vessel owners have a duty to their employees to reduce risk and prevent accidents. To improve safety for workers, and reduce business risks for owners, Stella Maris suggested that vessel owners allow workers to be trained on first aid and other health and safety matters. Not only would this be useful for employers and employees on vessels, it would enable compliance with one of the requirements of the Work in Fishing Convention that Thailand had promised to ratify. This Convention requires crews on commercial fishing vessels to be trained on first aid, as well as other requirements regarding working and rest hours, standards of accommodation and food and water requirements.

Stella Maris developed a health and safety curriculum with technical support from the Faculty of Medicines of Songkhla Nagarin University and the Hospital of Songkhla. After discussion of the training curriculum with the Songkhla Fishery Association, many vessel owners agreed to their fishing crews being part of the training program. Stella Maris, vessel owners, the fishery industrial association and the local health service provider are now working together to train fishery workers in Pattani and Songkhla provinces. The course is mixed method between theory and practice so workers can learn from simulation exercise. At the end of training, workers will receive the training certificate and it helps to upskill of workers. At the end of 2018, five trainings had occurred and 150 workers were trained.

Vessel owners have stated that they appreciate these activities as it helps them to prepare for compliance with new laws and regulations. If workers are not trained, the business could not operate. Workers themselves are very keen to participate, as many have experienced a near-serious injury occurrence or heard of very serious accidents happening to other fishing workers.

In addition to these specific first aid trainings, in 2018 Stella Maris continued with outreach and training to fishers on labour rights (wages, working hours, what constitutes forced labour), human trafficking and health and safety. For example, in just one quarter, Stella Maris reached 13 fishing vessels, training 171 fishers, all of whom were Cambodian.
6. Independent Research and Evaluation

After the first three years of the project, an assessment was undertaken to evaluate the extent to which the hotspot had progressed towards its second objective: to strengthen civil society organisations and empower migrant workers, to help shape the next phase of work as Freedom Fund had been partnering with six Thai implementing partners for three years and, before was preparing to extend the project for a further two-year period. In particular, Freedom Fund wanted to hear the views of the migrant workers as to what needs and support they valued. To conduct the assessment, Freedom Fund partnered with the Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM) at Chulalongkorn University. ARCM reviewed historic hotspot documents to understand the variety of projects and approaches being implemented by CSO partners, conducted in-depth discussions with implementing partners and interviewed 108 migrant workers. The key findings from these research activities are summarised below.

CSOs provide valuable services to migrant workers. Through interviews with workers, ACRM identified that services most valued by migrant workers were (1) assistance in resolving disputes with employers and (2) providing advice on migration and related documents required. Other services noted for their value were support with labour cases as well as education and outreach services provided by CSOs. Almost all respondents also noted that prospective migrants should be given the names and contact of information of CSOs in all parts of Thailand who could assist them. Although CSOs play an important supportive role for migrant workers, the research also highlighted some of the challenges to CSO-provided services. Access to CSOs can still be limited due to a variety of factors including: fear of retribution from an employer, limited free time for workers, lack of knowledge/poor communication about local CSOs and inability for migrant workers to travel to CSO offices.

Hotspot model shows promise to have a sector impact. The research noted that the hotspot approach was likely to lead to sustained progress due to its focus on partnering with local CSOs, who are best placed to gain trust of workers, provide sustained support over the long-term and monitor government and business practice on the ground. Although the engagement with local communities was noted as effective, the assessment reflected whilst cooperation among local partners was evident through the provision of referrals, it could be strengthened through improved collective programming.