

Horrors at Sea

Calling on the Thai Government to take immediate action against the Human Trafficking crisis



Photo Credit: theguardian.com

Thai Fishing vessels used for the Human Trafficking in the Andaman Sea

Human trafficking has infiltrated the Thai fishing industry. In this brief, new policy recommendations are outlined to help the government fight the human rights violations.

The magnitude of slavery in Thailand's fishing industry has recently been unveiled. With the increasing world awareness of the issue, Thailand has attempted to clean up its act in order to continue exporting its seafood to western countries. Several new policies have

been implemented to resolve the human rights issue. As a result of these new constraints on fishers, the industry has shifted from slavery fishing to blatant human trafficking, which is much more lucrative. Rohingya migrants fleeing conflict in Myanmar have been the main targets of this newly evolving human trafficking ring. Enduring deplorable living conditions, being held for ransom, and in worse case murder [1], it is vital that the Thai Government implement new policy to manage this human rights issue.

What can be done?

1. **Subsidies** for small-scale fishers
 Implications: decrease the economic burden on small-scale fishers

2. Adequate **screening** and **monitoring** processes at sea
 Implications: more enforcement vessels with adequate technology and no officer corruption

3. **Restrictions** of fuel
 Implications: limited access to fuel ensures trafficking boats are not at sea constantly



Migratory route used by Rohingya migrants fleeing conflict zones. Photo Credit: theguardian.com

What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking occurs when a person's movement is controlled by some means for the purpose of exploitation [3]

BIOL 420: Ocean Conservation and Sustainability

Policy Brief Assignment

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Results and Conclusions

A recent Guardian investigation interviewed many stakeholders in the trafficking community. The seafood industry is short ~60,000 maritime laborers every year, which fuels the demand for slaves [2]. The government has taken many measures to combat slavery at sea, including corruption investigations, large fines, and GPS-boat monitoring [3]. However, new policy must now be enforced to stop the subsequent human trafficking issue. Small-scale fishers are moving from shrimping to human

trafficking because it is no longer economically viable for them to catch seafood without slave labour [1]. Fishers have also been forced out of the industry due to fines imposed by the new regulations. A fisher was quoted saying "I earned 30,000 baht (\$900) [through fishing], but if they [transport people] they earn 100,000 baht (\$3,000)" [1]. Incentives to get fishers back into the fishing industry and out of illegal trafficking are essential for the elimination of human trafficking.

Recommendations

1. Subsidies for small-scale fishers

This would decrease the economic burden on the fishers during the transition into sustainable fisheries practices and away from human trafficking as a source of income [1].

2. Adequate screening and monitoring processes at sea

Increasing the enforcement and monitoring at sea is critical for arresting human

traffickers and rescuing migrant victims. Adequate technology and officers free of corruption are required for effective screening and monitoring.

3. Restrictions of fuel

Limiting the amount of fuel fishers could access would force the mother boats with migrants to dock rather than constantly being at sea. This could increase the rate of arrests and rescues.

References

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[3] Macfarlane, D. The Slave Trade and the Right of Visit Under the Law of the Sea Convention: Exploitation in the Fishing Industry in New Zealand and Thailand. *AsianJIL* 1-30 (2015).