

The M.V. PLALUNG I of SEAFDEC serving as Model for Thai Trawlers

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When the Government of Thailand was confronted with the need to address the pressing international requirements on labor in the fisheries sector, more particularly in trawl fisheries, SEAFDEC offered its 17-GT Thai-style trawler, the M.V. PLALUNG I as a demonstration boat as it resembles that of a typical Thai trawler. The M.V. PLALUNG I was acquired by SEAFDEC in 1982 through funds provided by the Government of Thailand, and was intended to be used by the SEAFDEC Training Department (TD) during its conduct of onboard practical training on fishing technology, navigation, onboard fish handling, seamanship, marine engineering, and fishing vessel operation in general. As a demonstration fishing boat, the M.V. PLALUNG I would showcase the efforts of the Government of Thailand in providing fishers and fishing vessel crew decent working conditions onboard fishing vessels. However, such action called for the modification of the design and structures of the M.V. PLALUNG I to be able to serve as a model for Thai trawlers. Thus, the Department of Fisheries (DOF) of Thailand collaborated with SEAFDEC, the Thai Union Group, and Nestlé Thailand to pursue the three-year project (2016-2018) aimed at modifying the design and reinstalling the structures of the M.V. PLALUNG I with financial and technical support provided by the Thai Union Group and Nestlé Thailand.

Fisheries is important to the socio-economic development of Thailand, as it generates big revenues not only for the Government coffers but also to the people engaged in the fisheries sector. In 2015, the country exported fishery products with a total value of USD 5,947.3 million (DOF Fisheries Statistics, 2015 cited in Yenpoeng, 2017 (unpublished)). Also in 2015, Thailand had 10,382 registered commercial fishing vessels, of which about 9,300 were fishing in Thai waters while the rest are operating outside of the Thai waters (DOF Fisheries Statistics, 2015 cited in Yenpoeng, 2017 (unpublished)). Therefore, Thailand had been exerting efforts to be able to conform to the minimum requirements of the United Nations for work onboard fishing vessels as stipulated in the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 or C188. Although applicable for vessels measuring 24 meters in length and over, C188 could still be applied to fishing vessels measuring below 24 meters in length if the country so desired as practical. C188 is also not compulsory for countries that have not yet ratified it, nonetheless, many countries in the Southeast Asian region have already adjusted their respective national laws to conform to the provisions in C188, such as minimum age of fishers, fisher's work agreement, number of hours of work, and so on (Kaewnuratchadasorn and Sulit, 2016). The progress of development in the Southeast Asian region

with regards to the improvement of working conditions of fishery labor including recruitment and treatment of migratory labor had been discussed and summarized during the First Regional Technical Consultation (RTC) on Labor Aspects within Fishing Industry in the ASEAN Region organized by SEAFDEC in February 2016 with support from the SEAFDEC-Sweden Project (SEAFDEC, 2016).

In an effort to address labor concerns in the country's fisheries sector, concerned national agencies in Thailand with the cooperation of the private sector, developed in 2016 the Guidelines for Good Labor Practices (GLP) to comprise provisions on the existing standards based on Thai labor laws and regulations as well as those related to international labor standards. Four GLP Guidelines have been established, such as the GLP for Primary Processing Workplaces, GLP for Shrimp Farms, GLP for Seafood Factories, and GLP for Fishing Vessels. Specifically, the GLP for Fishing Vessels covers the "fundamental labor rights (e.g. forced and child labor, discrimination), working conditions (e.g. compensation, benefits and welfare, contract and human resources, workplace cooperation and communications, occupational safety and health, workplace hygiene, maternal health), and general workers' welfare among others" (Kaewnuratchadasorn and Sulit, 2016). It is under the GLP for Fishing Vessels that the Government of Thailand has pursued the need to develop a model for Thai trawlers, the design of which would be promoted throughout the country.

Work in Fishing Convention, 2007

The Work in Fishing Convention (C188), which was adopted during the 96th International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2007 and came into force on 16 November 2017, is aimed at ensuring that "fishers have decent conditions of work onboard fishing vessels, especially in terms of the minimum requirements for work onboard, conditions of service, onboard accommodation and food, occupational safety and health protection, medical care, and social security" (ILO, 2007). Applicable to all fishers and fishing vessels engaged in commercial fishing operations, C188 also includes provisions on the "responsibilities of fishing vessel owners and skippers" (**Box 1**) with respect to the safety of the fishers on board and the safety of the vessels, minimum age for work onboard fishing vessels and assignment to certain types of activities, medical examination and certification

Box 1. Responsibilities of fishing vessel owners, skippers and fishers (ILO, 2007)

Article 8

1. The fishing vessel owner has the overall responsibility to ensure that the skipper is provided with the necessary resources and facilities to comply with the obligations of this Convention.
2. The skipper has the responsibility for the safety of the fishers on board and the safe operation of the vessel, including but not limited to the following areas:
 - (a) providing such supervision as will ensure that, as far as possible, fishers perform their work in the best conditions of safety and health;
 - (b) managing the fishers in a manner which respects safety and health, including prevention of fatigue;
 - (c) facilitating on-board occupational safety and health awareness training; and
 - (d) ensuring compliance with safety of navigation, watchkeeping and associated good seamanship standards.
3. The skipper shall not be constrained by the fishing vessel owner from taking any decision which, in the professional judgement of the skipper, is necessary for the safety of the vessel and its safe navigation and safe operation, or the safety of the fishers on board.
4. Fishers shall comply with the lawful orders of the skipper and applicable safety and health measures.

required for work on fishing vessels with the possibility of exceptions for smaller vessels or those at sea for short periods, manning and hours of rest, crew lists, fishers' work agreements, repatriation, recruitment and placement of fishers and use of private employment agencies, payment of fishers, and protection in the case of work-related sickness, injury or death (through a system for fishing vessel owners' liability or compulsory insurance, workers' compensation or other schemes)."

While Thailand has not yet ratified C188, the Government has already complied with some provisions in it. In fact in December 2014, Thailand adopted the Ministerial Regulation on Protection of Workers in the Sea Fishing Sector under the country's Labour Protection Act B.E. 2541 (1998). This development was supported through the technical cooperation between Thailand's Department of

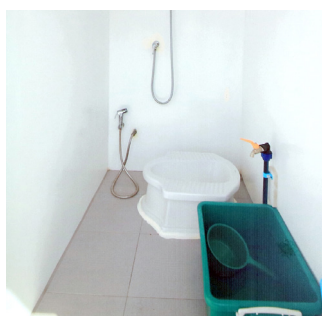
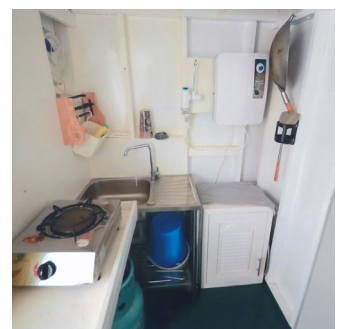


Labour Protection and Welfare of the Ministry of Labour, and the ILO Project on Tripartite Action to Protect Migrant Workers within and from the Greater Mekong Sub-region from Labour Exploitation or the ILO GMS TRIANGLE I Project (ILO, 2017).

Modification of the M.V. PALUNG I

In order to serve as model for Thai trawlers, the original design M.V. PLALUNG I with length overall (LOA) of 17.5 meters and capacity of 35 GT had to be modified. The process involved replacing the original superstructures with larger ones to be able to accommodate additional navigational equipment, such as RADAR, GPS, plotter, and echo sounder, as well as top-of-the-line communications equipment (e.g. single sideband (SSB) and very high frequency (VHF) radio systems). Renovations were also made including improvement of the service areas, such as the galley, sleeping quarters to accommodate individual crew members, mess room, and toilet. Moreover, the net drum for trawl net operation was re-installed at the stern deck behind the superstructure to facilitate easy retrieving of the trawl net by minimal number of fishers. A sewage tank was also installed in the engine room to treat all wastes prior to disposal.

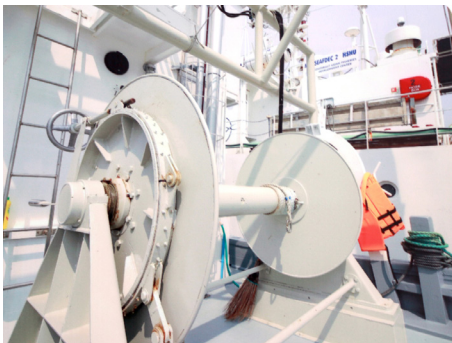
As agreed among the Parties involved in the Modification Project, SEAFDEC would support the conduct of training on safety at sea and energy optimization. During the first demonstration and training on 30 November-4 December 2017 organized by TD in the Eastern Gulf of Thailand, the important issues raised by the fisher-trainees related to the remodeled superstructure were subsequently addressed by



Renovation of the sleeping quarter, mess room, toilet, and galley in compliance with C188



The original M.V. PLALUNG I (above) and the C188-compliant remodeled M.V. PLALUNG I (below)



Net drum installed at the rear part to reduce the number of crew involved in fishing operations

the Parties involved in the Project to make sure that the M.V. PLALUNG I could accommodate the relevant requirements stipulated in C188 and to be able to serve as a demonstration fishing vessel and as a model for Thai trawlers.

Way Forward

The Parties involved in the Project expect that the designs of typical trawlers operating the waters of the Southeast Asian region should also be modified to ensure that the working conditions and safety at sea of fishers and fishing vessel crew members are considerably improved. Such modifications however, are not only directed to Thai trawlers but also for other trawlers in the Southeast Asian region.

While SEAFDEC had agreed to support the conduct of onboard demonstration and training for fishers and fishing vessel crew members, Verité, a global, independent and non-profit organization has also committed to support the training about the aspects of labor and human rights. During the inauguration of the remodeled M.V. PLALUNG I, the Parties expressed the desire to promote the redesigning of existing trawlers in the region to ensure that labor issues in fishing operations are addressed as well as fishing technologies are improved that would guarantee the welfare of fishers and fishing vessel crew members, and eventually comply with the requirements and provisions stipulated in C188.

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