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**Embracing Multistakeholder
Collaboration to Positively
Impact Workers in
Thailand's Seafood Supply
Chain and Beyond**

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ACRONYMS

CBO	Community-Based Organization
CTIP	Counter Trafficking in Persons
DISAC	Diocesan Social Action Center
DOF	Department of Fisheries
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ILO	International Labour Organization
IUU	Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported
MDC	Migrant Development Center
MOL	Ministry of Labor
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PDPA	Personal Data Protection Act BE 2562
PIPO	Port In Port Out
RDMA	Regional Development Mission for Asia
SBCC	Social Behavioral Change Communication
SFT	Seafood Task Force
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This learning product highlights the activities, outcomes and lessons learned stemming from a collaboration aimed at reducing exploitative labor practices in Thai fishing supply chains, improving worker wellbeing, and inciting meaningful change through collective action at the industry level. It was co-designed and supported by Mars Petcare and implemented by two Counter Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) projects funded through the United States Agency for International Development's Regional Development Mission for Asia (USAID RDMA). The document aims to provide a deep dive into the mechanics, activity streams, outcomes, promising practices, and lessons learned related to Phase 1 of the collaboration (which is ongoing and currently in a subsequent phase of implementation).

Human rights risks are seen as endemic in the Thai fishing sector, and migrant workers on vessels are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. To reduce risk of unfair labor practices among seafood workers in Thailand, in 2018, Mars Petcare teamed up with the USAID Asia CTIP regional project and the USAID Thailand CTIP project (collectively referred to throughout this brief as "the team") to design a pilot project to support the protection of fishermen and advance respect for human rights in the Thai fishing sector. Fishermen can face increased risks while at sea, and irregular recruitment and employment of migrant workers from neighboring countries creates vulnerabilities to bonded labor and exploitation. This collaboration aims to help migrant fishermen understand and access regular migration status, provide them with a mechanism to communicate back to shore while at sea, and connect them with an established response protocol to properly address their requests for help.

Activities and Outcomes

The four collaboration workstreams and their respective results and outcomes are as follows:



Workstream 1 – Improve workers' voice on vessels by enabling connectivity at sea.

The team identified and tested a technology solution that enables affordable, reliable, two-way communication with workers on vessels via an application installed on their mobile devices. The technology was piloted on 20 fishing vessels in Phuket in collaboration with local stakeholders, including a community-based organization (CBO), technology providers, local government, and vessel owners and captains. Essential to this workstream is the development of a business model to support sustainability and scale of the Connectivity at Sea pilot activities beyond the life of the USAID CTIP projects.



Workstream 2 – Establish an effective response protocol for the industry.

The team conducted a robust response protocol mapping exercise—the first of its kind in Phuket—through which they identified and documented the landscape of stakeholders—from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and CBOs to employers and government actors—who have a role in the policies, support services, legal mechanisms, and other aspects of migrant worker protection and empowerment. The mapping includes process flows in responding to worker grievances and different stakeholders' roles and responsibilities in supporting migrants, with a focus on Phuket province. The team documented the response protocol in a clear and accessible booklet (available in Burmese, Khmer, and Thai) that is being disseminated to migrant workers, organizations that support them, and relevant government agencies.



Workstream 3 – Promote responsible recruitment.

To address the complex challenge of responsible recruitment in seafood supply chains in Thailand, the team engaged technology provider Diginex Solutions to develop and test a blockchain-powered digital application called Doc2Work for use by migrant fishers to better understand and navigate the process to legally stay and work in Thailand. Doc2Work helps users identify the documentation needed to achieve regularization status, safely and securely store personal documents, and access support services and important information about their rights and the regularization process. Achieving regularization status affords them full protection under the law, thus reducing their vulnerability to exploitative labor practices.



Workstream 4 – Drive scale and impact through industry and government engagement.

Cross-cutting in nature, this workstream focuses on engagement with relevant government agencies and other industry actors who source seafood from the region to increase the scale, impact, and sustainability of the collaboration and its activities. The team continuously engaged with relevant local government agencies to gain their support, buy-in, and feedback related to collaborative activities. They also engaged with other global brands through the Seafood Task Force (SFT), and this will constitute a primary focus of future work.

Promising Practices and Lessons Learned

The team attempted creative approaches and navigated various challenges during activity implementation, resulting in some promising practices and lessons learned, as follows:

BEHAVIOR CHANGE IS NEEDED TO REACH THE INTENDED AUDIENCE FOR THE CONNECTIVITY AT SEA PILOT.

It was challenging to recruit vessels to participate in the Connectivity at Sea pilot. One unexpected challenge was that vessel owners were, in general, unwilling to grant workers access to the communications application, agreeing only to test it among senior vessel staff. To gain trust and buy-in from vessel owners, and to convince them to allow their workers (the target audience) to access the application, it will be important to conduct a social behavioral change communication (SBCC) campaign through future work on connectivity.

GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT EARLY AND OFTEN IS CRITICAL TO GAIN BUY-IN AND SUPPORT.

From the outset, the team made a deliberate effort to meet with and engage relevant local and national government agencies. Not only did cultivating relationships and communicating regularly with these authorities give the team credibility and “license to operate” among government and vessel owners, but various government actors also helped to support joint activities by offering feedback, making connections, and volunteering to get involved. In this way, the team is paving the way for relevant government agencies to continue to use—and even manage—the applications, systems, and tools produced through the collaboration.

FURTHER INDUSTRY SUPPORT IS NEEDED TO INCREASE SCALE, IMPACT, AND SUSTAINABILITY.

Additional funding and support from other major brands and industry actors could help scale collaborative activities in different geographies and value chains. For example, by accessing other brands’ suppliers and supplemental funding, the team could expand the connectivity at sea application to other vessels and ports in Thailand or could launch Doc2Work in sending countries or among additional sectors beyond seafood. To amplify impact and sustain collaboration activities and outputs beyond the life of the USAID CTIP projects, it will be important for the team to focus on engaging new industry stakeholders through future work.

LOOKING AHEAD

Through the next phase of collaboration (November 2021 – July 2022), Mars Petcare and the USAID CTIP projects will focus on further developing and scaling pilot activities. Efforts will include expanding user access to the connectivity at sea application to workers on vessels, disseminating and raising awareness about the response protocol mapping, promoting uptake of Doc2Work by industry and other relevant actors, and amplifying industry engagement to scale impact and reach of collaborative activities.

Embracing Multistakeholder Collaboration to Positively Impact Workers in Thailand's Seafood Supply Chain and Beyond

Mars Petcare, one of the world's leading companies in pet health and nutrition, and the United States Government both seek to make meaningful strides in eradicating human trafficking and forced labor risks in global supply chains. To attempt to conquer such a complex problem, multistakeholder collaborations, such as that between Mars Petcare and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), are critical to learn, scale and expand across sectors.

This learning product highlights Phase 1 of the flagship collaboration launched and implemented by Mars Petcare and two counter trafficking in persons (CTIP) projects supported through USAID's Regional Development Mission in Asia (RDMA) and implemented by Winrock International with support from Resonance and local stakeholders in Thailand (introduced below). It explores the team's mutual interests and incentives that sparked such a collaboration; overviews the collaboration's four workstreams and their respective activities, promising practices, and lessons learned; and paves the way for future collaboration as the team looks to scale and sustain their efforts.

BACKGROUND

According to the most current statistics published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2017, an estimated 40.3 million people are trapped in situations of modern slavery worldwide—approximately 16 million of them are exploited in the private sector.¹ Seafood is just one of many industries particularly rife with human rights abuses and trafficking in persons (TIP) throughout the complicated and multitiered supply chain. As the third-largest seafood exporter and the leading shrimp exporter globally,² Thailand's fishing industry, which employs Thai workers as well as a significant number of migrants from Cambodia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and other southeast Asian countries, is particularly vulnerable to TIP and forced labor.³ Workers in the sector report instances of wage withholding, debt bondage, excessive work hours, unsafe or unsanitary work and living conditions, confiscation of identification or work documents, physical and emotional abuse, isolation, deception, and more.⁴

Three distinct phenomena characteristic of the fishing sector in Thailand that exacerbate worker vulnerability to exploitation and TIP include: 1) exploitative recruitment practices, particularly for irregular migrant workers; 2) lack of connectivity at sea for workers on vessels; and 3) limited understanding and use of response protocol by workers to address their grievances.

EXPLOITATIVE RECRUITMENT

Thailand currently hosts more migrant workers than any other ASEAN state, including approximately 2.9 million documented, low-skill workers from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Lao PDR.⁵ In 2002 and 2003, the Thai government signed bilateral Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Myanmar, and with Vietnam in 2015, to regulate the process through which foreign workers legally obtain work permits, passports, and visas.⁶

1 <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang--en/index.htm>

2 <https://www.ethicaltrade.org/programmes/thailands-seafood-industry>

3 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/01/23/hidden-chains/rights-abuses-and-forced-labor-thailands-fishing-industry>

4 https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/TIP_Report_Final_20210701.pdf

5 https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_740400.pdf

6 ibid

The Thai Government has taken further steps to facilitate regularization of migrants, including revising the MOUs and developing a more comprehensive legal framework between 2015–2018, instituting options to regularize on the jobsite, and seeking opportunities to streamline the process for self-regularization.

Despite this well-intended approach to streamline and formalize procedures, most migrants opted to enter Thailand through irregular channels to avoid the perceived complex and expensive process involved in obtaining legal work status. In 2019, 63 percent of the 2.9 million documented workers from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Lao PDR entered Thailand through irregular channels. They eventually became regularized through the semiannual registration windows coordinated by the Thai Government in an effort to regularize large swaths of irregular migrants who have entered Thailand.⁷ There is still an unknown number of irregular migrants living in Thailand.⁸

Migrant workers in Thailand, particularly those who lack legal status, are extremely vulnerable to abuse and exploitation during the recruitment process, including well-documented evidence from the fishing sector.⁹ The recruitment and job-placement process for migrant job-seekers in Thailand is rife with abuse, including coercion, indentured servitude, and forced labor. Many migrant workers pay exorbitant fees to recruitment agents and/or employers in exchange for job placement and to procure work documents, making them vulnerable to debt bondage and limited freedom of movement.¹⁰ Employers may confiscate worker documents, and many workers do not have employment contracts in place, or do not have access to them.¹¹

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns and travel restrictions have exacerbated employer-led restrictions to worker movement.¹² Both regular and irregular migrants are subjected to abuse and exploitation during the recruitment process—even those documented workers who enter Thailand through the formal MOU process often have limited freedom in choosing or changing their employers.

Irregular workers face heightened vulnerability; they are not offered the same protections under Thai labor law as documented migrants, and they are less inclined to report abuse or seek help from law enforcement and authorities, for fear of being deported.

LACK OF CONNECTIVITY AT SEA

Human rights risks on Thai fishing vessels are well documented.¹³ According to various research reports published in 2019 and 2020, 14–18 percent of migrant fishermen were subjected to forced labor in the Thai fishing industry, translating to thousands of affected fishermen.¹⁴ The ILO and other public sources have found that workers on Thai fishing vessels are subjected to beatings, threats, and intimidation by boat captains, as well as wage theft, confiscation of documentation, isolation, long working hours, and more.¹⁵

Select commercial fishing vessels, such as trawlers, are often out at sea for extended periods—sometimes weeks at a time. Lack of connectivity options at sea means that workers are unable to contact authorities or family to call for help in the event of an emergency, which greatly increases worker risk for abuse and exploitation while at sea. Two-way communication technologies that are functional at sea, such as satellite options, tend to be incredibly expensive and therefore not commercially viable for a vessel owner.

NEED FOR DOCUMENTED, ACCESSIBLE RESPONSE PROTOCOL

To assist migrant workers in understanding their rights, navigating the landscape of authorities and resources available to support them, and comprehending the steps and protocol in filing a complaint and seeking remediation, the team sought to develop a standard, documented, and accessible protocol in terms of navigating, processing, and remediating complaints and grievances filed by workers.

7 https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_740400.pdf

8 Ibid.

9 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/01/23/hidden-chains/rights-abuses-and-forced-labor-thailands-fishing-industry>

10 https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_740400.pdf

11 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/01/23/hidden-chains/rights-abuses-and-forced-labor-thailands-fishing-industry>

12 <https://www.dt-institute.org/dt-institute-and-dt-global-release-report-entitled-pandemic-impact-on-human-trafficking-in-the-greater-mekong-subregion/>

13 https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_740400.pdf

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.



A COLLABORATION IS BORN

Mars Petcare is one of the global leaders in pet health and nutrition through its more than 50 global brands such as Pedigree, Whiskas, and Royal Canin.¹⁶ The company is invested in understanding its supply chain and the nature of human rights risks within it through collaboration and engagement with its suppliers, as well as on building trusted relationships with civil society, governments, and industry stakeholders. As such, Mars Petcare teamed up with the USAID Asia CTIP regional project and the USAID Thailand CTIP project (both implemented by Winrock, with private sector collaborations led by Resonance) in 2018 to codevelop and support an ambitious, shared value collaboration that seeks to empower and protect workers (particularly migrants) on Thai vessels. Together, these three stakeholders (collectively referred to throughout this brief as “the team”) aim to improve worker safety and well-being in the seafood supply chain and to reduce the incidence of TIP in the fishing industry in Thailand.

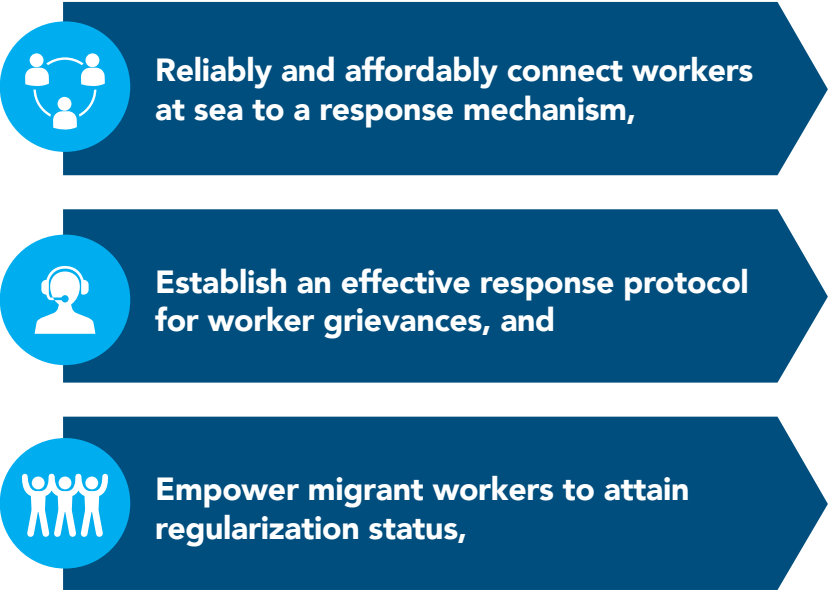
This collaboration represents “shared value” in that it supports mutual collaborator interests. The USAID CTIP projects seek to reduce incidence of TIP in Asia (and Thailand specifically), in part by working with the private sector to combat TIP in supply chains. Mars Petcare seeks to increase supply chain transparency and advance respect for human rights – aligned with its Thai Fish Human Rights Action Plan – along with ensuring quality of its products and building trust among consumers as the leading pet care company worldwide. The team codeveloped and coordinate the collaboration, share in its associated risks and rewards, contribute resources, and hold accountability for outcomes and results.

Through cocreation workshops and design sessions, Mars Petcare and the USAID CTIP projects developed a collaboration theory of change, as depicted in **Figure A**.

16 <https://www.petfoodindustry.com/articles/10368-top-pet-food-companies-headquartered-in-the-us>

Figure A – Collaboration Theory of Change

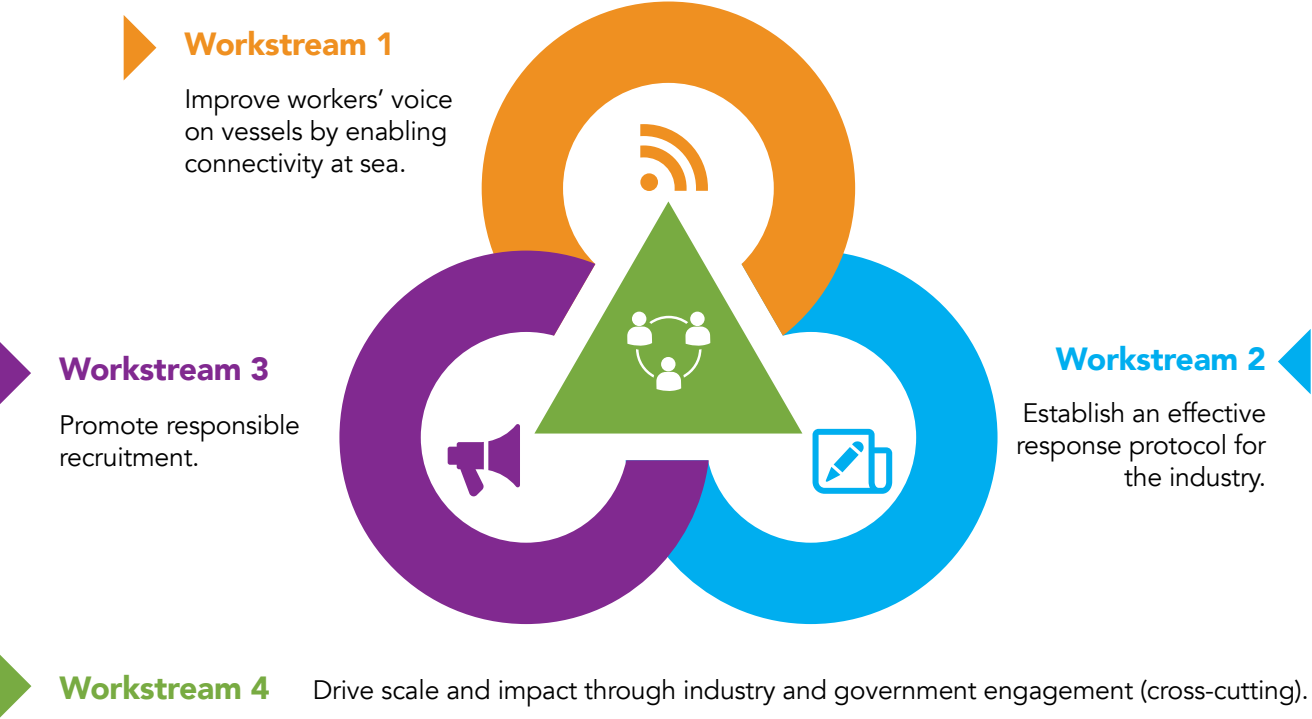
IF WE CAN:



THEN



To support this theory of change, the team devised four complementary workstreams, each containing its own set of activities and collaborators:



In addition to Mars Petcare and the USAID CTIP projects, a number of local stakeholders were engaged in the implementation of these four collaboration workstreams, including technology providers Etneca, Nauticomm, and Diginex; Thai community-based organization (CBO) Diocesan Social Action Center (DISAC); and numerous local fishing vessel owners and captains in Phuket port. Various Thai Government agencies also served as key informants and collaborators. The four workstreams and their respective activities, outputs, and preliminary promising practices and lessons learned are explored in the following sections of this learning product.

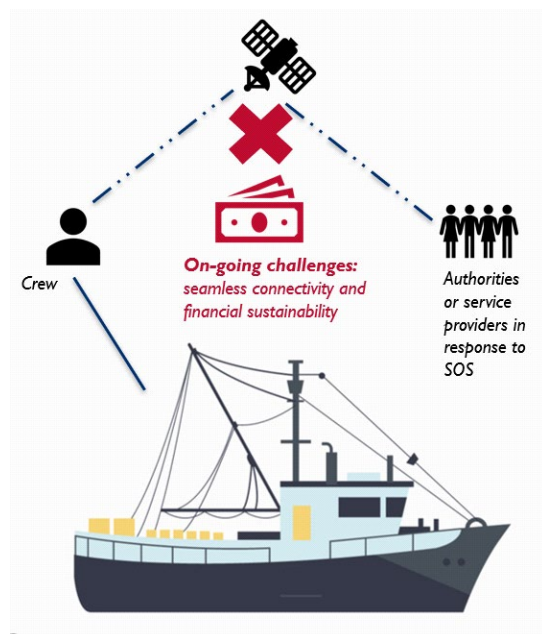


WORKSTREAM 1 – IMPROVE WORKERS’ VOICE ON VESSELS BY ENABLING CONNECTIVITY AT SEA.

As illustrated above, workers on fishing vessels are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, particularly when vessels travel deep out to sea, beyond the reach of mobile network service zones. The industry lacks a common technology that can provide two-way communication at sea at a commercially viable price.

Mars Petcare and the USAID CTIP projects wanted to explore this unaddressed gap further, and hence, this workstream came to life as one of the first activities pursued through the collaboration. It supports the collaboration theory of change in that: **“If we can reliably and affordably connect workers at sea to a response mechanism, then migrant workers on fishing vessels will be less vulnerable to TIP.”**

The solution – an affordable two-way communications technology at sea



First, the team had to identify a technology option that offered all the necessary functions and capabilities—namely, two-way, real-time, reliable communication while at sea that is affordable, already licensed by the Thai Government to operate in Thailand, and offers promise in terms of scalability and sustainability. The options were slim. The team engaged socially conscious technology consultant Geeks Without Frontiers to assess possible technology options to pilot among vessels in Phuket. Following a rigorous technology assessment, the team decided to pilot a two-way “plotter technology,” deemed to offer the most economical, feasible, sustainable, and scalable solution. The technology enables direct access to fishing crews and/or workers via their mobile devices, functionality at sea beyond cellular range using a combination of satellite broadband and satellite tracking, affordable equipment and operational costs, and appeal to vessel owners in that it leverages the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) that every Thai vessel is already mandated to carry.

Government engagement from the onset of this activity was an important and deliberate effort to gain the trust, buy-in, and support of the Thai Government. After internal selection of the communications technology, the team consulted with relevant

government agencies, such as the Department of Fisheries (DOF) and Port In Port Out (PIPO), to update them on the pilot and to ensure that the technical specifications of the selected technology option complied with government regulations.

The team enlisted two local plotter equipment providers already operating in Phuket—Etneca and Nauticomm—to install the technology on vessels, and they developed a shared value business model, including reduced pricing for packaged SMS bundles at economies of scale and in-kind support to install the plotter equipment. Mars Petcare helped pay for the necessary upgrade in VMS systems on pilot vessels, serving as an enticing proposition for vessel owners and an attractive business opportunity for Etneca and Nauticomm to scale this work beyond the pilot.

Cultivating trust and buy-in from vessel owners and captains

Next came recruitment of vessel owners and captains to join the pilot. Gaining trust and buy-in among these stakeholders entailed ongoing relationship building, careful messaging, and a unique value proposition. Given sensitivities regarding the topic at hand, communications and messaging had to be judicious and delicate. Representatives from Mars Petcare's Thailand team and the USAID CTIP projects traveled to Phuket port to engage with vessel owners and captains directly, communicate the incentives to participating in the pilot, and answer their questions. The project team built relationships with these individuals over time. They also appealed to the interests of the vessel owners and captains, such as highlighting the fact that participation in the pilot would entail a free upgrade to the vessel's VMS system (this upgrade was already mandated by that government), as well as illustrating how captains could use the communications app themselves for business purposes (e.g., to communicate with counterpoints on shore about their catch etc.).

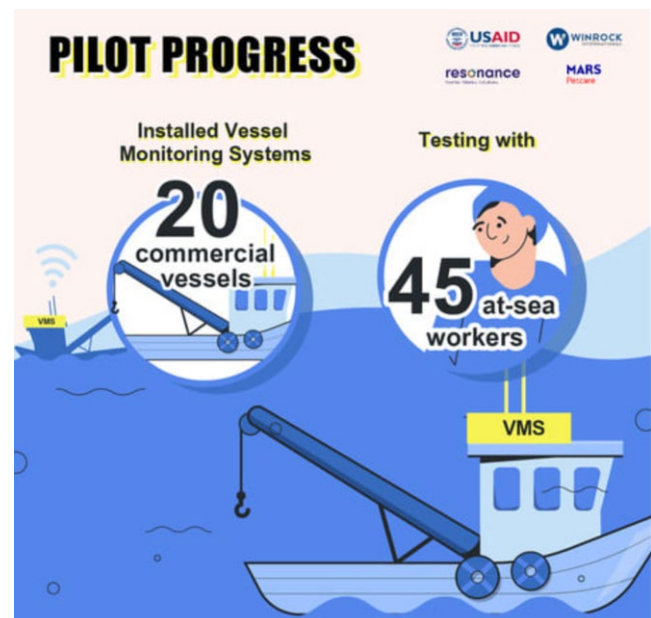
Ultimately, the team successfully engaged 20 vessels in the pilot, fulfilling the goal they had set out to achieve. These 20 vessels included a combination of purse seiners, which operate near shore and have access to mobile networks most of the time during fishing trips; trawlers who go deep out to sea for up to three weeks at a time and often lack mobile connectivity; and trawlers that do both near-shore and long-distance trips, and therefore have connectivity some of the time (see **Figure B**).

Trawlers and other types of vessels who make long-distance trips and lack connectivity all or some of the time were identified as the primary audience for the connectivity at sea application, as they would find it most useful. Since it was very challenging to gain participation of vessel owners in the pilot, the team focused on recruiting as many vessels as possible rather than solely focusing on those making long-distance fishing trips. For the purposes of the pilot, the team agreed that testing the functionality of the application, confirming usage by different types of vessels, and socializing the technology among vessels and their crew were the overarching objectives.

Figure B – Pilot Vessel Profiles

Type of vessel	Description	Number of vessels in pilot
Purse Seiners	Short fishing trips close to shore (connectivity most of the time)	8
Trawlers	Long fishing trips deep at sea (no connectivity)	6
Trawlers	Both long and short fishing trips (some connectivity)	6

An unexpected outcome was that most of the vessel owners and captains were not willing to grant workers access to the technology. Some misunderstood that the application would enable two-way internet connectivity (when in fact it merely supports two-way messaging and not unlimited access to the internet). They expressed concerns that the workers would spend too much time on the internet rather than resting during off hours. Others feared the risk of data leakage that could jeopardize the vessels' competitiveness—such as revealing the location of the vessel and details about its catch. Therefore, vessel owners agreed to pilot the application among senior-level vessel staff (namely, captains and secretaries). This wasn't the intended approach, as making the application accessible to workers is critical for the collaboration vision and theory of change. It did, however, allow the team to test the technology itself and would perhaps afford an opportunity over time to convince vessel owners and captains of the benefits in allowing workers to use the technology. This challenge and future efforts to address it are discussed further in the sections below.



FACEBOOK POST ANNOUNCING THE LAUNCH OF THE CONNECTIVITY AT SEA PILOT

The pilot is launched

By end of summer 2020, plotter equipment was successfully installed on all 20 participating vessels, and Nauticomm and Etneca held a series of workshops to install their communication applications (called PORA and E-chat, respectively) on participating users' phones (two to three users per vessel, for a total of 45 users). Both applications link to the plotter technology, enable two-way SMS messaging at sea, and are now available in Khmer, Burmese, and Thai. Messages may be sent through the application to shore within 15–30 seconds, for an average of three to five Thai Baht per message (approximately \$.09–\$.15). The local technology providers then conducted a series of trainings to ensure

vessel owners, captains, and application users understood the technology and how to use and maintain it.

In tandem with the tech pilot, the USAID Thailand CTIP project established a Migrant Development Center (MDC) in Phuket port, which is staffed and run by one of its local grantees, DISAC, a CBO that supports migrant workers in Thailand. The MDC offers resources and support to migrant fisherfolk, such as providing information about their rights as workers and connecting them with services like psychosocial support and legal support. The MDC is a key stakeholder in work-stream 2, and its role is further detailed below. The team worked with Etneca and Nauticomm to install the connectivity application on MDC staff phones and to train them on its functionality so that the MDC staff could field worker grievances and calls for help to the appropriate authorities.

With the pilot up and running and the connectivity technology being tested on 20 vessels, the primary focus of the team turned to monitoring results and user experience, tweaking the technology accordingly to be more user-friendly, and continuing to socialize the benefits of the application among vessel owners and captains to ultimately convince them to allow their workers access to it. Members from Mars Petcare's local team and the USAID CTIP teams traveled to Phuket port after the pilot launch to conduct collaborative design sessions with application users, gather promising practices and lessons learned, and continue to cultivate relationships with key stakeholders. This effort was hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the team collaborated to devise innovative approaches and solutions to accomplish the tasks at hand (see below lessons learned).

Through a promising development, during a collaborative design session, the USAID CTIP projects identified a "champion vessel owner" who consented to test the chat application among 15 Burmese workers on one of his six vessels. The USAID CTIP teams extended the pilot for an additional three months (from June to August 2021) to train workers to use the application and test

its usage among workers on the vessel. One of the key activities envisioned for future work is a social behavioral change communication (SBCC) campaign, led by the USAID Thailand CTIP project, to better understand the perspective and interests of vessel owners and motivators to permit workers on vessels to access the chat application. The team is hopeful that the champion vessel owner has blazed the path to encourage other vessel owners to follow suit. As this learning brief is being published, another vessel owner has enabled his workers to access the application, and numerous others have committed to doing the same.

Looking ahead – applying lessons learned and scaling up

After completion of the pilot phase in August 2021, the team began assessing learnings to inform improvements and scale-up of pilot activities. The USAID CTIP projects engaged a consultant to conduct an evaluation of the pilot, with the aim to map outputs, outcomes, and indicators to support the pilot's theory of change. High-level evaluation findings are highlighted in box 1, and were instrumental in informing the design of the subsequent phase of the collaboration, which is currently underway.

BOX 1 Key Findings from the Connectivity at Sea Pilot Evaluation

- Workers perceived communication at sea as important and are willing to pay to stay connected.
- Connectivity technology is not the sole enabler of a worker's capacity to be connected to shore. Rules applied on vessels and device capacity are also factors.
- On average, the communications technology piloted through this collaboration prevented three to four unconnected days for users on vessels.
- Vessel owners recognized the benefits of using the technology themselves, but have a low willingness to pay for it; however, positive user feedback could demonstrate value and increase willingness to pay.
- Vessel owners do not recognize the value in expanding user access to workers on vessels.

What worked well – collaborative design approach

The team applied a user-centric design when developing and tweaking the PORA and E-chat applications to ensure the technology would be functional and useful for workers. Monthly surveys were conducted among application users involved in the pilot to gain feedback on which features they found valuable and which they did not. When user data demonstrated that participants were not using the application frequently, the team coordinated a collaborative design session to gather feedback, provide additional training, and answer questions. The team worked with tech providers Etneca and Nauticomm to apply feedback to adjust the application design to be relevant to different users.

For example, captains noted that it was difficult for them to text while at sea due to waves (this could also be a foreseen challenge for workers), so the team adjusted the application to include emojis, stickers, and preformed sentences ready for transmittal. Application of a user-centric design allowed the team to adapt the technology accordingly to resonate with users, thereby increasing uptake.



USAID CTIP TEAMS CONDUCTED A COLLABORATIVE DESIGN SESSION WITH USERS IN PHUKET.

What worked well – exercising sensitivity in engagement of vessel owners and captains

The team was thoughtful and deliberate when engaging vessel owners and captains in pilot activities. As participation in the pilot was completely optional, the team was careful to effectively frame the issue, clearly articulate the tool's benefit to vessel owners and workers, and demonstrate cost-effectiveness.

Second, numerous policy changes enacted in recent years designed to reduce illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing in Thailand¹⁷ translated to increased costs borne by vessel owners, who already have tight margins. Vessel owners are hesitant to shoulder additional expenses, particularly if they do not see the business value. Hence, the team had to appeal to business incentives, such as a free upgrade to the VMS, capacity to communicate back to shore about the catch, etc.

While there are many lessons learned and future work to be done in making a strong value proposition and building trust among vessel owners and captains (see below), the fact that the team was able to cultivate relationships with these stakeholders over time and to successfully recruit 20 vessels to participate in the pilot was seen as an achievement. It enabled the team to test the functionality of the application and to gain a sense of the barriers that must be navigated to successfully pursue the collaboration theory of change.

LESSON LEARNED

More work must be done to make the business case and to grant workers access to the application.

Vessel owners expressed concerns that providing workers direct access to the application would cause distractions and lower productivity. During Phase 1 of the collaboration, only one “champion vessel owner” permitted his workers to access the application for the purposes of the pilot. This at least allowed the team to test the application among the target audience (migrant workers) and to collect preliminary learnings. As this learning brief is being finalized, another vessel owner has enabled his workers to access the application, and others have expressed interest in doing so as well.

There is a strong business case to be made regarding worker well-being and productivity—one that has been thoroughly documented through research.¹⁸ The team learned that vessel owners were interested in more straightforward ties to business outcomes, so framing the issue effectively, articulating the benefits of the tool, and demonstrating cost effectiveness were key when engaging vessel owners. Cultivating trust and identifying trailblazers like the champion vessel owner to drive systemic change is critical, but does not happen overnight. Initial findings from the pilot evaluation conducted by an external consultant demonstrate that vessel owners do not see a clear business case to use the connectivity at sea technology—in fact, usage among many owners and captains was low. The fact that usership was low doesn't necessarily yield conclusions in terms of the functionality and relevance of the application for the target audience (migrant workers on vessels).

For example, user testing sessions unveiled that many of the captains and senior staff who held user accounts were older (50+) and did not use chat applications as part of their day-to-day life. Migrant workers on vessels tend to be younger and more tech savvy; those who were surveyed for the evaluation expressed value in accessing such a communications technology on days when vessels do not have any connectivity. Additionally, many of the vessels engaged through the pilot ended up taking fewer long-distance trips, and had mobile connectivity when they were close to shore. Hence, they did not need to use the application often.

The fact that multiple vessel owners have expressed willingness to allow their workers to access the application while at sea during the subsequent phase of this collaboration is a positive development. More must be done through future work to engage vessel owners and captains to grant their workers access to the application to test the user experience among the intended audience. The planned SBCC campaign is an important activity for this purpose. Additionally, it is recommended that the application be further tested among vessels that make long-distance trips beyond the range of mobile connectivity, as this target group may be more inclined to utilize the technology while out at sea.

¹⁷ Said policy changes imposed by the Thai Government were brought about in response to the European Union's issuance of a “yellow card” to Thailand in April 2015 as a warning to increase action to combat IUU.

¹⁸ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/colleenreilly/2020/06/09/wellbeing-positively-impacts-firm-performance/?sh=478b6c267cc9>

LESSON LEARNED

Adaptive management in the face of setbacks is key.



The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant challenges in the implementation of the Connectivity at Sea pilot, resulting in delays. Originally, it was envisioned that the pilot would launch in April 2021, but due to government mandated lockdowns, social distancing measures, and travel restrictions, it was pushed to June/July 2021. The pandemic impacted the ability of the team, including Thailand-based Mars Petcare team members, USAID CTIP staff, and local technology providers, from traveling to Phuket port to collaborate with the MDC, meet with vessel owners and captains, collect user feedback on the functionality of the communications application, and troubleshoot technical challenges. Additionally, the MDC had to close its physical office for a period when COVID-19 cases increased, limiting intake to phone and online queries only. What's more, a number of workers on pilot vessels contracted COVID-19, resulting in delayed activation of their accounts and additional setbacks.

Despite these challenges, the team was determined to forge ahead and to apply creative approaches to move activities forward. For example, when travel restrictions prevented representatives from Mars Petcare, the USAID CTIP projects, and Bangkok-based representatives from technology team member Etneca from traveling to Phuket to train users on the functionality of the application and to troubleshoot technical issues, project staff coordinated a hybrid workshop with in-person and virtual support. Etneca staff based in Phuket and MDC staff met workers in person with a Burmese interpreter, while Bangkok-based representatives from Mars Petcare, the USAID CTIP projects, and Etneca provided remote assistance. This approach had its challenges, as the local representatives were not as well-versed in the pilot activities, but it nonetheless helped to move efforts forward.

Other technical challenges arose when users struggled to activate their accounts or failed to download the communications application via Google Play Store since they did not have email addresses. In addition, some users had misconceptions about the chat application, namely that it functioned similarly to other social media applications (*i.e.*, allowing workers to send pictures and voice messages), and that it allowed full Internet connectivity while at sea. The team worked to address misconceptions and to rectify technical challenges through user consultations and strategic engagement of local tech providers and the MDC. Ultimately, flexibility and adaptive management were critical in doing so, as many of these challenges were unanticipated and had significant implications for the pilot.

To mitigate these types of technical challenges, the team will spend more time in Phuket (or other ports where the application is used) developing the capacity of local team mem-



LOCAL TECHNICIAN INSTALLING THE CONNECTIVITY DEVICE ON A VESSEL IN PHUKET PROVINCE

bers (such as the MDC) to ensure that they have a strong understanding of the connectivity at sea activity and the communications application and that they can be champions in terms of outreaching and involving migrants. The team will also develop more promotional materials and guidance documents to ensure local team members are equipped to engage migrant workers in activities. These may include informational flyers that summarize the connectivity at sea activity and approach, guidance documents (in migrants' spoken languages) on usability of the application, and talking points for the local team members to engage with migrants.



WORKSTREAM 2 – ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE PROTOCOL FOR THE INDUSTRY.

While collaboration workstream 1 enables workers on vessels to submit work-related grievances, call for help in times of need, and maintain communication with family and authorities on shore, workstream 2 provides a response mechanism to address complaints and queries filed by workers. Thus, workstream 2 supports the collaboration theory of change in that:

“If we can establish an effective response protocol for worker grievances, then migrant workers on fishing vessels will be less vulnerable to TIP.”

To support workers and connect them to appropriate authorities and resources, the USAID Thailand CTIP project established the MDC in Phuket port, run by grantee DISAC, and completed a response protocol mapping exercise. The MDC is the first point of contact on the other side of the line when workers file grievances, calls for help, and queries via the connectivity at sea e-chat application. MDC staff field such outreach to appropriate authorities such as the Coast Guard, legal experts, the Ministry of Labor (MOL), etc. and assist in addressing matters appropriately (see Case Study 1, below¹⁹). The MDC also offers information and resources (e.g., regarding labor laws and worker rights), and referrals to access support services (e.g., psychosocial support, legal support, etc.) to workers who visit the MDC in person or contact them via phone or social media channels.

The USAID Thailand CTIP project and DISAC also conducted a robust mapping exercise through which they identified and documented the landscape of stakeholders—from NGOs and CBOs to employers and government actors—that have a role in the policies, support services, legal mechanisms, and other aspects of migrant worker protection and empowerment. The mapping includes information about process flows in responding to worker grievances, the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in supporting migrants, and how these roles complement or relate to one another. The team designed a clear and straightforward booklet to summarize the response protocol mapping for migrants and other relevant stakeholders, which was developed in Thai and translated into Khmer and Burmese, and is now being distributed by DISAC and the MDC.

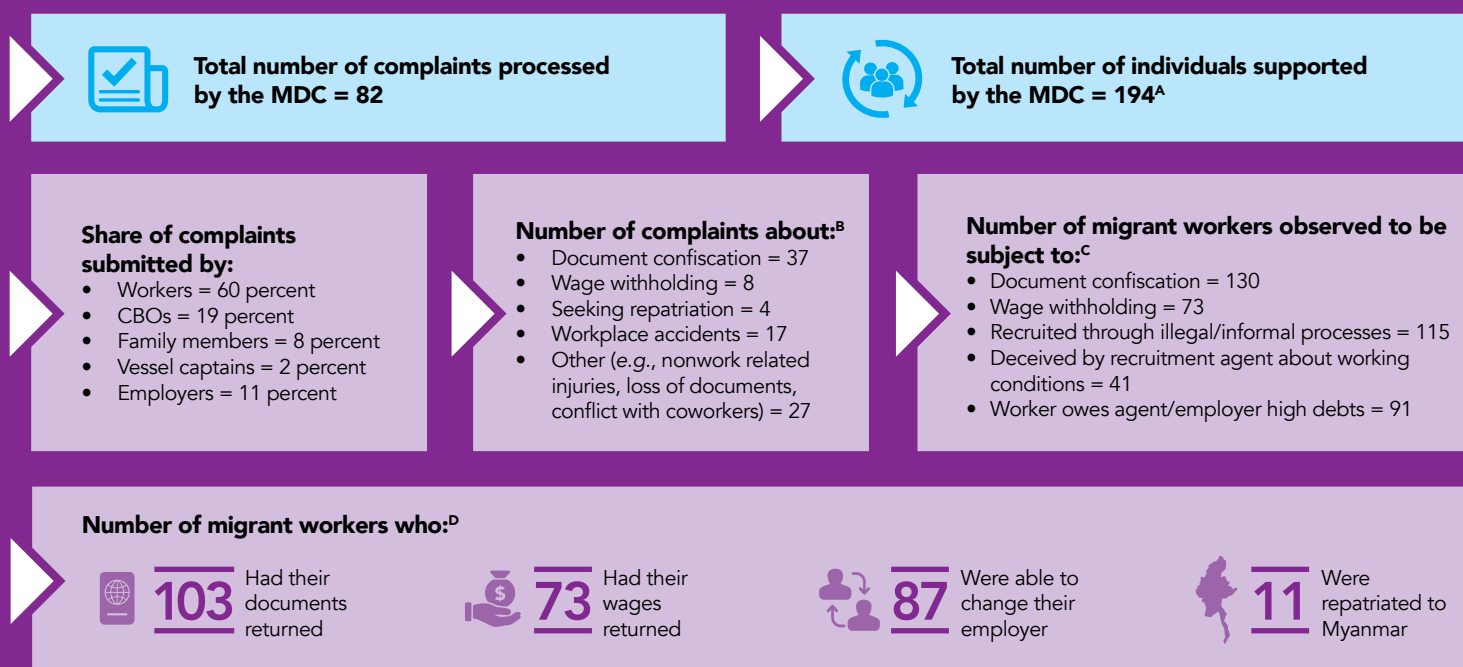
CASE STUDY 1 – THUYA

Thuya is from Myanmar and works in the fishery industry in Phuket. His employer illegally withheld part of his wages, justifying that it was needed to cover Thuya's recruitment costs. His employer also confiscated his personal identification documents, so when Thuya tried to find a new job, he was rejected by other employers. Thuya visited the MDC and voiced a complaint. Noting that this case bears some indicators of forced labor, the MDC contacted PIPO in Phuket to raise this complaint and seek guidance in addressing it. PIPO coordinated with other relevant agencies to process the complaint and led a mediation session attended by Thuya, his employer, and MDC staff.

As a result of the mediation, the employer agreed to return Thuya's personal documents and reimburse him for the deducted wages. This allowed Thuya to leave his employer and find a new job, as he had wanted.

19 Case study subject names have been changed to pseudonyms

FIGURE C – COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE MDC DECEMBER 2019—SEPTEMBER 2021*



Remarks:

A The information shown in this page represents complaints received by the MDC between December 2019 – September 2021.

B Some complaints had more than one issue of complaint and/or more than one migrant worker affected.

C Through preliminary victim identification screening, the MDC identifies rights issues and indicators of forced labour that may not have been the primary reason for the complaint. Some migrant workers may have more than one issue identified.

D Migrant workers with more than one issue of complaint and/or violation identified through the screening may have more than one outcome.

What worked well – dynamic approaches for accessing migrant workers

The MDC is able to field worker-filed grievances and inquiries through a variety of mediums, including in-person at the Center or through phone calls, letters, social media channels, or the connectivity at sea e-chat application. This variety and flexibility in communication channels allows the MDC to target and reach more migrant workers and to demonstrate responsiveness to migrant preferences and needs. During COVID-19, when the MDC was physically closed for some time during lockdown, the ability to continue operations and communicate readily with migrants via virtual channels such as social media was critical.

The MDC also collaborates closely with migrant networks and community groups to broaden its reach to target populations. Many migrants are connected to the MDC through personal connections with MDC staff, which is beneficial for trust-building. By maintaining strong relationships with the community, the MDC has become a trusted source for the local migrant community to seek help on a variety of issues, although some of these issues are not directly related to labor rights or trafficking. For example, the MDC supports pregnant

women with translation services and access to medical care—instances of trafficking are often surfaced through these cases. As another example, during the COVID-19 pandemic when employers sought help from the MDC in securing quarantine locations for their workers, some cases of document confiscation were identified. This phenomenon is demonstrated in **Figure C** above which overviews complaints and violations received by the MDC between December 2019–September 2021. For example, 43 migrants visited the MDC for reasons other than trafficking, but instances of forced labor were identified through these visits.

What worked well – documenting response protocols for dissemination

The project's local grantee, DISAC, has extensive practical experience navigating worker grievance resolution processes, working with government, employers, and other authorities. The team sought to develop a documented, clear response protocol accessible by migrants that includes relevant authorities and actors and outlines the various grievance resolution pathways. As part of this collaboration, the USAID Thailand CTIP project mapped the response mechanism landscape and processes in a clear, straightforward booklet available in Khmer, Burmese, and Thai that can be shared

with migrant workers, NGOs and CBOs, communities, employers, and other relevant stakeholders. By demystifying the system, the team hopes to encourage workers to report cases of human trafficking, forced labor, or other labor rights violations and to empower employers to respond to grievances effectively and responsibly.

What worked well – engaging government authorities and employers in remediation

The MDC acted as an intermediary between relevant government agencies and employers to help resolve migrant worker grievances. The MDC helped increase migrants' confidence in reporting rights abuses, strengthen their understanding of their rights as migrant workers, and better navigate the government processes and mechanisms related to grievance resolution. MDC staff also assisted workers in gathering evidence to substantiate their claims and filing complaints with government agencies.

In certain instances, MDC staff identified that worker grievances were caused by employers' lack of awareness regarding labor laws and standards or by employer negligence (see case study 2, below).²⁰ In such instances, the MDC and affected workers were able to resolve disputes internally by educating employers about worker rights and labor laws, thus affecting their treatment of workers and improving well-being and safety for the entire workforce.

CASE STUDY 2 – AUNG

Aung is from Myanmar and works in the fishery industry in Phuket. Although she has worked for her employer for many years, he would not hire her under a permanent contract. Instead, he kept her as a temporary worker, which prevented her from accessing social security benefits. Furthermore, Aung was paid below the minimum wage, and became an "illegal" worker after her employer refused to help her with the work permit extension process.

Upon discussion, Aung and her coworkers who were in a similar situation visited the MDC to seek help. The MDC registered their grievances, submitted them to the Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, and requested action on behalf of the Department.

Upon contacting and meeting with Aung's employer, the Department found that he lacked awareness and understanding of relevant labor laws, so the Department educated him about these laws and the rights of his employees. Following the meeting, the employer switched all of his workers to permanent contracts, helped extend their work permits, and increased their wages to align with minimum wage standards.

LESSON LEARNED

Application of best practices to manage egregious incidents is critical.

When extreme incidents are reported by workers, it is necessary to engage external authorities, such as government agencies responsible for prosecution and law enforcement, to screen the case. If the case is determined by authorities to be egregious, mediation with employers is not suitable and there must be intervention from law enforcement. However, in practice, the majority of worker disputes are handled by employer-led mediation internally and are not reported to proper authorities, and therefore they go undetected. The MDC claims that complaints with indicators of forced labor (e.g., document confiscation, unpaid wages, and forced overtime without compensation, etc.) are oftentimes not formally identified and registered as cases of forced labor. The United States Department of State TIP Report 2021²¹ confirms challenges caused by evolving manifestations of worker abuse and inadequate labor inspections in the Thai fishery sector. There remains a gap between legislation and monitoring (e.g., effective labor inspections) to adequately enforce the law. The team is exploring how findings from the MDC can be used to engage government agencies on the evolving nature of worker abuse, and to identify and address cases of exploitation and forced labor.

²⁰ Case study subject names have been changed to pseudonyms

²¹ https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/TIP_Report_Final_20210701.pdf



WORKSTREAM 3 – PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE RECRUITMENT.

Given the challenges in obtaining regular work status and the heightened vulnerabilities to exploitation that irregular migrant workers face in the recruitment process in Thailand, the third workstream supports the collaboration theory of change in that:

“If we can empower migrant workers to attain regularization status, then migrant workers on fishing vessels will be less vulnerable to TIP.”

Employer-led approaches to responsible recruitment such as the “Employer Pays Principle” are not new. Over the last decade, particularly since the launch of the Dhaka Principles for Migration with Dignity²² in 2012, companies have embraced these concepts and approaches in their quest to tackle unfair labor and reduce TIP risks in their operations. Through this collaboration, Mars Petcare and the USAID CTIP projects wanted to explore a different angle to responsible recruitment, starting with migrant workers themselves. While it is important to continue to advocate for a legally sound, straightforward, cross-border system to migrate and work in Thailand, it is urgent to help protect and empower the many irregular/semi-regular migrants working on fishing vessels and to help them to navigate the complex pathways to regularization while avoiding exploitation. Employers also stand to gain if their employees have the documents and status to legally work in Thailand. Workstream 3 focuses on informing and empowering job-seeking migrants to navigate the regularization process by providing them with the tools, information, and guidance to achieve regular working status in Thailand, thereby decreasing their own risk of labor exploitation.

The solution – an innovative, blockchain-powered application

To address the complex challenge of responsible recruitment in seafood supply chains in Thailand, the USAID CTIP projects engaged Diginex Solutions, a Hong Kong-based technology provider, to harness the power of innovation and technology. In close collaboration with project team members, Diginex designed a blockchain-powered digital application compatible with Android mobile phones called Doc2Work for use by migrant fishers, particularly from Myanmar and Cambodia, to better understand and navigate the process to legally stay and work in Thailand. Achieving regularization status affords migrants full protection under the law, thus reducing their vulnerability to exploitative labor practices.

22 <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/SRMigrants/ConsultationRecruitment/DhakaPrinciples.pdf>



Collaboration workstream 3 focuses on designing and piloting Doc2Work, with Diginex responsible for technology development and the USAID CTIP projects responsible for testing the application with workers and collecting feedback, establishing evidence of the app's viability and impact, and creating a foundation to potentially scale efforts in Thailand. Mars Petcare provided financial support for the pilot as well as insight and guidance during all stages.

To inform the design of Doc2Work, starting in August 2020, the team conducted extensive desk research and consultation with local team members such as government authorities and NGOs that support migrant workers to ensure the app reflects ground realities and constantly shifting regulatory requirements. The USAID CTIP projects applied findings to carry out a mapping exercise of the document pathways for migrant workers holding different identity documents (e.g., certificate of ID card holder versus pink card holder).

User-centered approach to inform design

Similar to workstream 1, the team utilized a user-centered approach by enlisting migrant workers as target users to provide direct feedback to inform the design of Doc2Work. The USAID CTIP projects engaged a local Thai NGO who work directly with migrant workers to organize user testing sessions and focus group discussions (FGDs) at various stages in the design process.

One such session was facilitated in February 2021 in Phuket during the initial app design to collect informa-

Figure D – FGD Participant Profiles

Chiang Rai			
Sector	Male	Female	Age Range
Fruit processing factory	8	2	22-47
Surat Thani			
Sector	Male	Female	Age Range
Domestic work, agriculture	4	6	36-62
Phuket			
Sector	Male	Female	Age Range
Construction, domestic work, fisheries	8	2	17-37

tion from 20 Burmese fishers on the desired functions and usability of the app. After the Doc2Work application was launched and then expanded to include sectors beyond fishing, a second series of three FGDs was organized in June 2021 in Chiang Rai, Phuket, and Surat Thani among 30 Burmese workers from diverse sectors—agriculture, fisheries, domestic work, construction, and factories (see **Figure D**). Feedback solicited through these sessions on Doc2Work's content and functionality informed improvements and updates to the app.

BOX 2

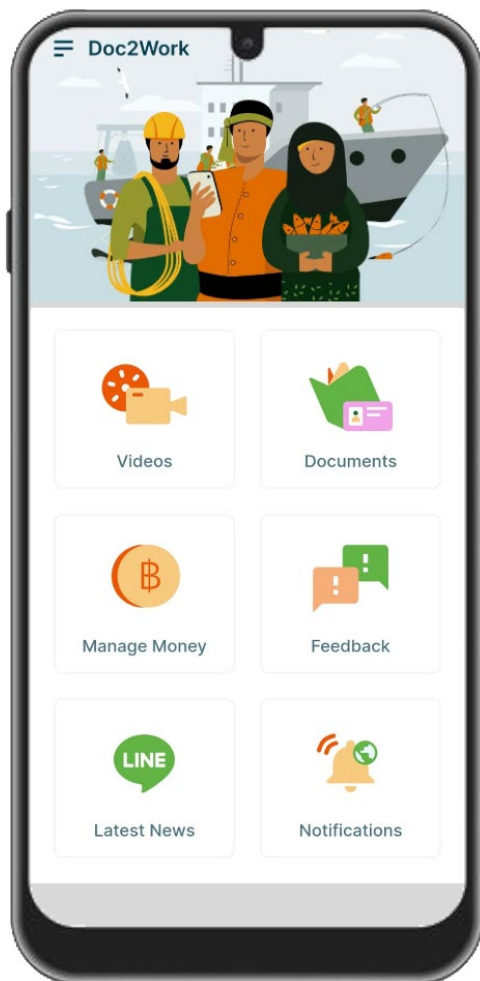
Select Findings from Worker Focus Group Discussions

- All participating migrants have smart phones, and approximately half already use their phones to take and store photos of their work/ID documents (February 2021 Focus Groups).
- Employers often engage brokers/agents to prepare employment documents and deduct the cost from workers' salaries. Workers want to understand those costs and deductions to avoid being overcharged (February 2021 Focus Groups).
- Participants liked the feature to "Share Documents" with others to seek help either from an experienced friend in their network or a knowledgeable, trusted actor (February 2021 Focus Groups).
- Participants found the "Get Your Document" feature and the "Manage Money" feature particularly useful, although they did not understand the purpose of the "Share Your Thoughts" feature (June 2021 Focus Groups).
- Few migrants use email, so registration must be supported via Facebook and Line (popular user mediums) and registration/log-in processes must be simplified (June 2021 Focus Groups).

Launch of the Doc2Work application

In mid-May, 2021, Doc2Work was soft launched in Google Play Store in Thai, Khmer, and Burmese languages. The app included the following five functions, which were informed through user testing and consultation sessions:

KEY FEATURES OF DOC2WORK 1.0



Guidance on documentation process: Doc2Work provides a practical document checklist and step-by-step guidance on the process to obtain required work documents to gain employment in Thailand. This includes visas, work permits, pink cards, and seabooks (for fishermen).



Secure document storage: Doc2Work enables workers to upload and digitally store all their important identification and work documents for future reference (e.g., passport, visas, work permits, seabooks, etc.). Workers may opt to be connected to each other or to trusted individuals (e.g., NGOs) to facilitate verification of their documents. Workers also have the option of inputting expiry dates of their documents, and they will receive notifications to renew prior to the expiration dates.



Videos for eLearning: Doc2Work features educational videos in Thai, Khmer, or Burmese on topics of specific interest to workers, such as explaining the importance of work documents, COVID-19 safety information, how to change employers, etc.



Link to MayDay for current information: To ensure workers have access to up-to-date information, the app links to the Line application "MayDay" chat group, which is a program maintained by the USAID Thailand CTIP project. MayDay provides workers with current news and support from migrant communities, offers accurate information about COVID-19 precautions and preventive measures, and enables workers to raise questions in the Line chat.



Budget calculator: Based on feedback from migrant workers, a budget calculator feature was incorporated to help them estimate costs associated with the regularization process, compare with actual costs requested by agents or employers, identify wage deductions, and manage their finances.

The USAID CTIP projects launched a Facebook post along with two online boosting rounds in June and September 2021 to increase page views to mark Doc2Work's soft launch on Google Play Store and to raise awareness about the app among potential migrant users and other industry actors. Following the second round of user testing and consultation sessions in June 2021, the team made improvements and adjustments to Doc2Work to address migrant feedback. On July 31, 2021, the new and improved version 2.0 was released to the public through Google Play Store.

After a successful and informative pilot phase, Mars Petcare, the USAID CTIP projects, and Diginex applied lessons learned from the pilot to develop Doc2Work 3.0 from October-December 2021. This enhanced version of the app features improved user experience and broadens the target audience to migrants beyond the fishing industry. Doc2Work 3.0 was launched on Google Play Store on December 15, 2021.

As of December 31, 2021, Doc2Work registered 592 active users from the Google Play Store, defined as one who has turned on the device on which the app is installed at least once in the previous month.

INITIAL IMPRESSIONS OF WHAT WORKED WELL

Initial design, testing and rollout of Doc2Work was successful, overall. Beyond development of the application itself, the flexibility and real-time troubleshooting that the team employed were instrumental to the success of this workstream. A number of key considerations and approaches were deemed useful throughout this process:

Blockchain as a tech solution. Blockchain is widely recognized as a frontier technology to support transparency in instances where many parties may access and alter information. Since important migrant employment and identification documents repeatedly change hands between workers, agents, and employers throughout the recruitment process, blockchain can act as a tool to ensure immutable copies of worker documents are securely stored and accessible by workers themselves. Thus, blockchain offers a powerful tool to enhance worker agency and improve transparency and accountability through its application in this pilot.

User-centered approach to ensure relevance and functionality of the app. It was of utmost importance to the team to engage migrant workers at various points throughout the design and rollout of the Doc2Work application to ensure its applicability, relevance, and functionality were in step with the needs and realities of the target population. Feedback and input gathered from migrant workers through 1:1 interviews and FGDs organized by the USAID CTIP projects within various locations in Thailand during the application design and beta phases were utilized by Diginex to adjust and improve the app to be more functional and relevant for the target population (see below Case Study 3).²³ A user-centered approach such as this helps ensure that the technology meets the needs of intended users, and is therefore more apt to be relevant, useful, and sustainable over time.



MIGRANT WORKERS PARTICIPATED IN AN FGD CONDUCTED IN SURAT THANI

CASE STUDY 3 – HLA MYINT AND TIN WIN

In using the Doc2Work application to renew his employment documents, Mr. Hla Myint learned that he (and not his employer) was legally entitled to retain his original documentation. Hla Myint found the app useful in guiding him through the process to obtain the necessary employment documentation to successfully extend his stay in Thailand, including renewing his work permit and obtaining a health certificate. He would therefore recommend the app to migrants working in the fishing sector as well as in other sectors.

Mr. Tin Win also found the app helpful, especially the “Manage Money” feature. Both Tin Win and Hla Myint mentioned that this feature empowered them to track employment fees and negotiate with their employers about overcharged work permit fees. The workers refused to pay the overcharged fees to renew their work permits after comparing their actual fees with official employment fees provided on the app, in consultation with DISAC. Since employers rely on other agencies/brokers to facilitate the documentation renewal process, this was an opportunity for the employers to learn about official legal employment rates.

Tin Win and Hla Myint suggested improvements to the app could include further information on human trafficking, forced labor, and migrant worker policies; features to link migrant workers directly with authorities to report cases of abuse; and information on employment fee fluctuations when workers change jobs.

²³ Case study subject names have been changed to pseudonyms

Leaning on local networks. Coordinating in-person interviews and FGDs with migrant workers through a user-centered approach proved to be a challenging feat with the constantly changing COVID-19 situation and related travel restrictions. Thus, the team relied heavily on close relationships with local NGOs, which were leveraged to coordinate field trips on short notice when travel windows opened. When a prolonged domestic travel ban in Thailand prevented the USAID CTIP teams from physically attending the second round of FGDs, local NGOs helped convene migrants in-person, with the project team joining remotely to conduct the session. This hybrid approach required extensive coordination and preparation with local NGOs to ensure understanding of activities and alignment with objectives. It would not have been possible without the preexisting close relationships the team had with local networks.

Aligning with government approaches to help address gaps. The team deliberately demonstrated their commitment to aligning with and fortifying the Thai government's current MOU approach by supporting irregular migrant job-seekers to successfully attain the proper documentation required by law to achieve regular working status. Rather than work outside the current system or propose a new approach to migrant regularization, the team decided they would be most effective and efficient in their efforts if they were able to gain buy-in from local government to use the Doc2Work application by demonstrating that the app supports users in navigating the government's regularization procedures. Thus, the collaboration aims to help the Thai Government improve its MOU system by generating and analyzing data about regularization processes to improve social outcomes among migrant job-seekers. This analysis is currently being conducted and will also examine the role of recruitment agencies to potentially inform relevant government regulations and approaches. The team is also initiating opportunities to include the government in project activities to encourage acceptance and recognition of Doc2Work by government agencies. For example, the team is working with the responsible agency within the MOL to develop a service provider directory to be integrated into Doc2Work that includes key authorities and contacts so workers may file complaints directly.

LESSON LEARNED

From the Doc2Work pilot phase

The collaboration team encountered two unanticipated considerations related to migrant data collection, which resulted in important lessons learned:

Privacy safeguards are critical. A key feature of Doc2Work is the ability for users to securely upload sensitive employment and identification documents. Any data uploaded through the app is secure and only accessible to the user and whoever he or she chooses to share it with. The team treats the issue of user privacy extremely seriously and fully understand that, should this information get into the wrong hands, the consequences could be disastrous for already vulnerable migrant workers. While migrant workers engaged through interviews and FGDs did not vocalize privacy concerns (and they have successfully uploaded documents using Doc2Work), CBOs and migrant representatives in Thailand expressed fears that nefarious actors (including in their home countries) may gain access to these sensitive documents and exploit them and/or expose their irregular status. The team is currently exploring means to strengthen Doc2Work's privacy safeguards, and adding such features to the new version of the app. For example, recent updates enable users to delete their accounts after registering. The team is also taking steps to ensure migrants are informed about their rights to privacy. For example, the USAID Thailand CTIP project is organizing training and developing videos for its grantees (including DISAC and the MDC staff) regarding the privacy laws stipulated in Thailand's Personal Data Protection Act BE 2562 (PDPA) to ensure they are equipped to inform migrants of their privacy rights. Subsequent work should include an educational component for migrants to be able to recognize forged or illegitimate documentation and to choose registered recruitment agencies rather than unregistered agencies that do not stand to lose their license or to face as high stakes if it is uncovered that they are forging documents or exploiting workers.

Data collection approaches must be iterative and consultative to encourage user participation. Doc2Work has two separate features to solicit user inputs, including: 1) "Share Your Thoughts," where users can provide direct feedback regarding the MOU process, which the USAID CTIP teams will share and incorporate into advo-

cacy activities; and 2) “Manage Money,” where users can log fees paid as part of the regularization process and can track illegal wage deductions they may be subjected to. While users readily contributed to the “Manage Money” feature, there were user interface–related challenges the team had to navigate to ensure the most relevant inputs were solicited for the data to be meaningful. In addition, user inputs to the “Share Your Thoughts” feature were lacking in the pilot phase. To address this problem, the team attempted several iterations of the survey questions to ensure strategic framing and encourage user uptake. Depending on the availability of future funding, the team may explore the possibility of tying incentives to survey completion.

Continued advocacy with the government remains critical. To ensure the future sustainability and success of Doc2Work, it is important that the Thai Government recognize and utilize the application as a tool to support and facilitate their regularization process. For this to happen, more work must be done in the next phase of the collaboration to socialize the app among relevant government agencies, educate members of government on its benefits and value to them, and train them on how to use it.

Looking ahead to scale reach and impact

Newly launched Doc2Work 3.0 will be promoted as part of a multichannel promotional campaign that engages government stakeholders such as the MOL. For instance, after the anticipated reopening of the borders in Thailand, the team plans to distribute flyers and posters detailing the Doc2Work application at post-arrival offices for migrants to increase adoption and reach. The team is in discussion with Diginex about developing a next iteration of Doc2Work (version 4.0) which may include features such as linkages to help centers to provide assistance in navigating worker grievances and support in job placement.

It will be important for the team to develop a feasible sustainability plan for Doc2Work to ensure commercial viability of the application beyond the life of the USAID projects. Development and continuous implementation of digital applications and activities to harness technological innovation in general are typically expensive and require upfront infrastructure costs as well as subsequent ongoing investments in maintenance. To this end, the team intends to develop a sustainability strategy that explores different options for the transition of maintenance of the Doc2Work platform to other stakeholders, such as the Thai Government.





WORKSTREAM 4 – DRIVE SCALE AND IMPACT THROUGH INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT.

Cross-cutting in nature, collaboration workstream 4 supports all aspects of the theory of change by aiming to increase the scale, impact, and sustainability of the overarching collaboration and its activities. This workstream focuses on two primary aspects: 1) engagement with relevant government actors; and 2) engagement with other relevant brands that source seafood from the region.

What worked well - government engagement to gain legitimacy and support

Learnings from a previous collaboration involving Mars Petcare, the USAID Oceans project, Thai Union conducted in 2017, which focused on seafood traceability in Thailand, indicated that keeping relevant local government actors informed and engaged on collaboration activities is crucial to gaining buy-in, avoiding bottle-necks, and even amplifying collaborative activities. From the outset of the collaboration, the USAID CTIP projects and Mars Petcare made a deliberate effort to meet with and engage government agencies, such as PIPO, Port Authority, DOF, Phuket Fisheries Association, MOL, Marine Department, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and Division of Anti-Trafficking in Persons, and others. Not only did cultivating relationships and communicating regularly with these authorities give the team credibility and “license to operate” among government and vessel owners, but various government actors helped to support collaborative activities by offering feedback, making connections, and volunteering to get involved.

For example, through guidance provided by DOF in Bangkok during consultations conducted since the inception of the Connectivity at Sea pilot, the team was able to ensure that technical specifications of the communications technology complied with government regulations. Additionally, DOF Bangkok saw potential to expand usage of the pilot’s chat application and suggested the team consider adding features to support both business and safety purposes, such as sharing of vessel locations and including alert buttons for when vessels approach territories. In another example, as part of the response protocol mapping effort for the Connectivity at Sea pilot, PIPO volunteered to be included on the contact list for connectivity technology users to allow users to directly communicate with them while out at sea. Representatives of Thai Government agencies also facilitated connections to vessel owners and captains to aid their participation in the Connectivity at Sea pilot, and provided the team with relevant industry insights and guidance to inform communication, stakeholder engagement, and approach.

In support of the Doc2Work pilot as part of workstream 3, the USAID CTIP teams engaged with Thailand’s MOL to fortify and aid the current government-led approach to migration, streamline efforts, and keep apprised of related developments and initiatives. MOL was receptive of Doc2Work, and expressed interest in collaborating in the future.

LESSON LEARNED

Further industry engagement is needed to increase scale, impact and sustainability

Over the past year, as activities were implemented and began bearing results and lessons learned, the team started communicating publicly about the collaboration and seeking additional stakeholders to join. In late 2020/early 2021, the USAID CTIP projects and Mars Petcare publicly launched the collaboration through a series of initiatives including a [press release](#), a [video](#) showcasing collaboration objectives and activities, and a social media campaign²⁴ to raise public awareness regarding activities and initial results. Additionally, USAID and Mars Petcare cohosted, an online event titled “A New Decade: Partnering for Action to Counter Trafficking”²⁵ held on January 22, 2021 to engage relevant actors in the CTIP space and explore how private sector

24 Social media posts may be accessed at the following links: [Connectivity at Sea posted Dec 12, 2020](#); [Connectivity at Sea 2 posted Dec 13, 2020](#); [Response Protocol posted Dec 15, 2020](#); [Responsible Recruitment posted Dec 17, 2020](#)

25 <https://winrock.org/collaborating-to-fight-human-trafficking/>

engagement for CTIP will evolve in the coming decade. Again, the event helped gain public recognition for the collaboration.

The team also ramped up efforts to engage additional brands and companies that source seafood and other raw inputs from the region. The idea is to encourage industry stakeholders to pool more resources, access additional supply chains, and expand to new geographies so as to increase scale and impact of collaboration activities. For example, expanding uptake of the connectivity at sea technology to hundreds—or even thousands—of new vessels in other parts of Thailand and beyond; or broadening the use of Doc2Work to new sectors such as agriculture, construction, or domestic work by encouraging suppliers and their recruitment agents to use the application. Once the USAID CTIP projects conclude, it will be important that these activities are commercially viable and impactful to corporate stakeholders so they are incentivized to assume ownership and accountability, and continue to sustain and implement them.

To this end, Mars Petcare invited the USAID CTIP projects to engage with the Seafood Task Force (SFT), a membership-based industry organization comprised of leading seafood processors, feed producers, buyers, retailers, governments, and NGOs working together to address sustainability issues in the seafood sector. USAID CTIP project leadership attended a SFT meeting to present to members about the collaboration and have since engaged with numerous members who have expressed interest in joining the collaboration.

Pre-competitive industry support and engagement is needed to expand upon collaborative activities and results, increase scale and impact, and drive sustainability. As the USAID CTIP projects and Mars Petcare have already undertaken the most challenging phase of the work—design, launch, and implementation of pilot activities—other industry actors may easily join without having to reinvent the wheel. This offers an enticing and cost-effective opportunity for companies looking to reduce risk of TIP in their supply chains and to move the needle at the industry level through collective action. Engaging new industry actors will be critical through any future work.





CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LOOKING AHEAD

The collaboration between Mars Petcare and the USAID CTIP projects showcased in this learning product demonstrates what's possible when multistakeholder actors collaborate to solve extremely complex challenges. In this case, each team member could not have accomplished the same results acting alone. The USAID CTIP projects benefited from Mars Petcare's supply chain knowledge and access in the sector, connections to industry actors, inputs to collaboration design and governance efforts, and financial support. Mars Petcare in turn benefited from USAID CTIP staff input in the collaboration design and day-to-day activity implementation, contribution of CTIP knowledge and expertise, leveraging of local stakeholders such as government and NGOs that support migrant workers, management of relationships with technology providers, and contribution of financial and in-kind project resources.

Importantly, multistakeholder collaborations such as this encourage risk-taking and innovation, as team members combine ideas and resources, and as they share in the risks and rewards together. Through this ambitious, multi-pronged collaboration, Mars Petcare and the USAID CTIP projects attempted new approaches and solutions for long-standing, complex challenges, such as lack of connectivity at sea and insufficient transparency regarding the migrant regularization process. Of course, successful, impactful, replicable, and scalable results are the goal for any pilot, but to take risks and solve complex problems, team members must be adaptive in navigating roadblocks and unanticipated outcomes, and apply lessons learned to improve efforts going forward. This collaboration resulted in several achievements and lessons learned that pave the way for future collaboration, which the team is currently planning. They include:

Affordable, reliable, two-way, connectivity option that functions at sea. The plotter technology-enabled communication application piloted on vessels through this collaboration to improve worker voice was novel in the industry. While the team has work to do in terms of accessing their target audience of migrant workers on vessels (see below recommendations for the subsequent phase), the pilot demonstrates promise that, with additional testing, the technology will prove to be functional, reliable and affordable.

Comprehensive, accessible response protocol mapping. The response protocol mapping developed through this collaboration is a valuable resource to help migrant workers, NGOs working in the CTIP space, employers, government, and other stakeholders to navigate and access the pathways and resources to respond to their needs.

Establishment of a Migrant Development Center. The MDC serves as a response mechanism to link migrant workers with relevant authorities and support services to address their grievances and needs. It offers a physical resource hub with qualified staff and complements the Connectivity at Sea pilot and response protocol mapping.

Innovative, user-centered application to help migrant workers navigate the regularization process.

Through an approach that emphasizes migrant workers at its core, the collaboration developed a dynamic application to help irregular migrants navigate the regularization process to decrease their risk to exploitative recruitment and labor practices. This activity aims to empower workers to reduce their own risks to TIP.

Looking ahead – further development and scale-up of four collaboration workstreams

Through the ongoing phase of collaboration (November 2021–June 2022), Mars Petcare and the USAID CTIP projects are focusing efforts on further developing and scaling activities related to the four collaboration workstreams, factoring in lessons learned from the pilot phase. Specifically, they aim to: 1) expand user access to the connectivity at sea application to workers on vessels, 2) operate the MDC in alignment with best practices gleaned from the response center research, 3) promote the uptake of Doc2Work by industry and other relevant actors, and 4) amplify industry engagement to scale impact and reach of collaboration activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL FUTURE COLLABORATION EFFORTS INCLUDE:

Enable workers to access the connectivity at sea technology. Invest in promotional activities, social media, marketing and trust-building among vessel owners/captains and workers to encourage vessel owners/captains to allow workers to access the application and to increase worker interest in the application.

Engage industry actors to drive scale-up of pilot activities. Additional funding and support from other major brands and industry actors could help expand the connectivity at sea application and Doc2Work beyond Phuket and in different value chains. For example, by accessing other brands' suppliers and supplemental funding, the team could expand the connectivity at sea application to other vessels and ports in Thailand or could launch Doc2Work in sending countries or among additional sectors beyond seafood. The team should expand efforts to engage SFT members in collaborative activities.

Develop the capacity of the MDC. Strengthen the MDC's capacity to support migrant workers in filing grievances and seeking remediation, in alignment with best practices stemming from response center research. Additionally, improve the MDC's capacity to collect and analyze data on issues facing migrant workers and their experiences engaging with collaborative activities (e.g., usage of Doc2Work). Assist MDC staff in successfully communicating collected data and impact stories to collaborators, donors, and other relevant audiences through case studies and success stories.

Support policy advocacy to strengthen the current MOU system. Collect data and document learnings and best practices from the Doc2Work pilot to inform recommendations for relevant government authorities to improve the MOU system and its functionality for migrant workers. Empower the Thai government to be able to utilize Doc2Work to facilitate their regularization pathways and processes.

Develop a sustainability strategy for each workstream. Such a strategy would transition activity management from the USAID CTIP projects to industry actors so that activities may continue and grow beyond the life of the USAID projects.

Practice adaptive management. Flexible, alternative options must be considered for each workstream so that team members may remain agile and adaptive in the event of policy changes or other circumstantial shifts that might affect collaboration activities and approaches.

Through teamwork, strong communication, and innovative thinking, Mars Petcare and the USAID CTIP projects have set the stage for a long-standing collaboration that delves deep into the drivers and manifestations of TIP and human rights abuses in the complex seafood industry in Thailand. Complicated problems call for big ideas and large-scale commitments. This collaboration aims to significantly impact the industry at large, working with local, national, regional, and global stakeholders to drive collective action. We all look forward to witnessing just what's possible in coming years.



Photos by Luke Duggleby for USAID Thailand CTIP



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