

Progress in implementing the Action Plan for Fisheries and Human Rights

Yi-Hsien CHIU

Abstract

1. Bordered by the sea, Taiwan boasts a highly developed fisheries sector. Like many other fishing nations, Taiwan depends on foreign fishers to supplement its workforce, particularly due to the demanding working conditions and labor-intensive nature of onboard tasks.

2. In recent years, with the increasing global awareness of human rights, the rights and welfare of fishing vessel crew members have garnered significant attention both at home and abroad. This is very relevant for Taiwan-flagged distant-water fishing vessels, which often recruit (and dismiss) foreign fishing workers from overseas. As a response, in 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture implemented regulations to safeguard the rights and welfare of foreign maritime workers. Yet a small number of fishing vessel operators have violated the rights of their crew members. These incidents have seriously affected the reputation of the country and the distant-water fishery industry. In response, the Taiwan government has conducted an in-depth review and incorporated opinions from all parties, taking into account international conventions and norms, and adopted the "Action Plan for Fisheries and Human Rights" in 2022. The Action Plan has outlined seven key strategies: enforcing proper working conditions, improving living conditions and social protections, strengthening intermediary management, upgrading monitoring capabilities, enhancing oversight of flag of convenience fishing vessels, establishing and deepening international cooperation, and fostering partnerships for the common good. Major improvement measures are being implemented across three main areas: worker rights, onboard facilities, and onshore facilities. The government has also worked to improve the legal framework, bolster monitoring capabilities, and strengthen intermediary/broker management to ensure that fishery workers can work in dignity within a safe and conducive environment. With the support of the state, both industry and civil society can jointly promote the rights and welfare of foreign fishery workers.

3. As we look ahead, there is a growing trend in the international trade of aquatic products towards incorporating practices of human rights protection, corporate responsibility, due diligence, and the prevention of forced labor. To ensure that we can continue to smoothly export our aquatic products to the international market, the government and industry must demonstrate determination and collaborate closely to ensure that the fisheries sector aligns with international human rights requirements. The "Action Plan for Fisheries and Human Rights" underscores the progress we have made in Taiwan. Through collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors, our dedication to fostering the common good, and concerted supervision and cooperation, we are committed to further enhancing the protection of human rights for foreign fishers,

**2024 International Forum on Fisheries and Human Rights:
Challenges in Implementing the ILO Work in Fishing Convention
15 April 2024 | Fisheries Agency, Ministry of Agriculture**

while simultaneously advancing the industry and promoting sustainable management practices.

Speaker Profile

Mr. Yi-Hsien Chiu, born and raised in a small fishing village in South Taiwan, his parents are both fishermen engaged in coastal fishing and aquaculture. He holds a master degree from National Taiwan Ocean University. He joined the Taiwan Fisheries Agency in 2000 and served as a fisheries inspector of fishery patrol vessel, technical specialist and section chief, responsible for the management of fishing vessel construction, search and rescue, firmly believes that his enthusiasm and professionalism qualify him for any role.

In 2019, he participated 2019 The Next Generation Leader Program held by the McCain Institute on the recommendation of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) . In November 2020, he was transferred to section chief of distant-water fisheries, with the organizational restructuring in September 2023, reassigned as a senior specialist, continued to work on the fisheries labor rights in the Fisheries Manpower Division.