



LABOUR RIGHTS IN INDONESIA'S SEAFOOD SECTOR

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Indonesia, international migrant fishers have been a focus of much attention for government and activists alike. Little heed has been paid to Indonesian nationals who are employed to fish in Indonesian and international waters and who face many of the same risks. Even less of a focus are the workers, mostly women, who process the catch. However, a small group of unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are trying to organise, claim rights, improve working conditions and access remedies for a broader range of seafood sector workers with support from the Freedom Fund and Humanity United.

In 2022–23, the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre (SSEAC) at the University of Sydney was contracted to conduct a study to help guide this hotspot program. The goal of the work associated with this report was to support hotspot partners' efforts to improve their effectiveness in mobilising and protecting the rights of seafood sector workers.

For the purposes of this study, the seafood sector is defined as:

- Export-oriented seafood processing in Indonesia.
- Export-oriented commercial fishing (typically using vessels that are 30 gross tonnes and over) in Indonesian waters and adjacent areas on the high seas.
- Commercial seafood workers currently in Indonesia who are due to migrate outwards to, or returning from, jobs overseas.

The terms of reference excludes supervisors and managers, seafood farming workers, workers in small-scale seafood processing, artisanal fishers, Indonesian seafood workers working overseas, and seafood workers in Indonesia who are migrants from other countries.

Data used in the report were collected by the three investigators, all of whom have a native or near-native level of fluency in Indonesian. In the first phase, we conducted a desk review of materials from Indonesia and other relevant countries and a total of 30 key informant interviews in Indonesia and internationally. We also conducted initial consultations with Humanity United's partner, the Indonesian Fisheries Workers Union (Serikat Pekerja Perikanan Indonesia, SPPI) and five of the Freedom partners, namely:

- Destructive Fishing Watch (DFW)
- The Indonesian Fishing Workers Association (Asosiasi Pekerja Perikanan Indonesia, AP2I)
- The Indonesian Fisheries Workers Union (Serikat Pekerja Perikanan Indonesia, SPPI)
- The Migrant Workers Union of Indonesia (Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia, SBMI)
- The North Sulawesi Fishers Union (Serikat Awak Kapal Perikanan Bersatu Sulawesi Utara, SAKTI Sulut)
- The Surabaya Labour Solidarity Institute (Institut Solidaritas Buruh Surabaya, ISBS)

In the second phase, members of the team visited key sites of engagement for a selection of hotspot partners, where we observed their activities, engaged in intensive discussions with them about their hopes for the future and the challenges they faced, and conducted semi-structured group interviews with 72 fishers with local and overseas experience and 60 seafood processing workers.

FINDINGS

The report identifies **current practices and promising approaches for worker organising and collaboration** within the sector and the broader Indonesian labour movement that could be adapted for this purpose. Its key findings are as follows:

1

A **key point of difference** between the Freedom Fund hotspot initiative and the many other international initiatives that engage with Indonesia's seafood sector is its focus on organising as a long-term strategy to promote labour rights. This approach is welcome in a field dominated by market-based approaches. However, it does require a long-term commitment since organising work is much more painstaking, and takes longer to show results, than either advocacy or servicing. This fundamental difference should also be recognised when assessing the relative contributions of hotspot partners that employ different strategies and allocating support to them.

2

The seafood sector is a challenging one for labour organising because of the structure of the industry and the nature of work involved. However, seafood sector workers have succeeded in organising in other countries. The experience of Thailand in particular demonstrates that **even the most precarious of seafood workers can organise**, and that local NGOs and local unions, but also international NGOs and unions, have an important role to play in supporting that organising work. Moreover, while seafood workers face some specific challenges, the barriers to organising are not necessarily any greater than those experienced by many other groups of factory-based workers in Indonesia.

3

Supporting workers to organise is ultimately the most successful way to achieve long-term, grassroots-driven change in the seafood sector. Through worker-driven unions or associations, workers can themselves advocate for better wages, improved working conditions and other labour rights. Having a recognised union – even in cases where unions are quite conservative and service-oriented – gives workers additional leverage because it allows them to engage in structured collective bargaining and access formal industrial relations mechanisms.

4

This does not mean that NGOs have no place in organising work. While unions and worker associations are best equipped to organise workers, **collaboration between workers' organisations and NGOs** has proven successful in Indonesia in other industries (for example, garment manufacturing in the 1990s) and in neighbouring countries including Thailand. NGOs can provide resources, support and networks to enhance the capabilities of workers' organisations in the seafood sector, as we can see in the case of DFW's work with SAKTI Sulut and ISBS's work with the Kedungrejo Workers Association. It is important, however, that NGOs create space for workers, not only as implementers but also as leaders and strategists, and to support workers to succeed in these tasks.

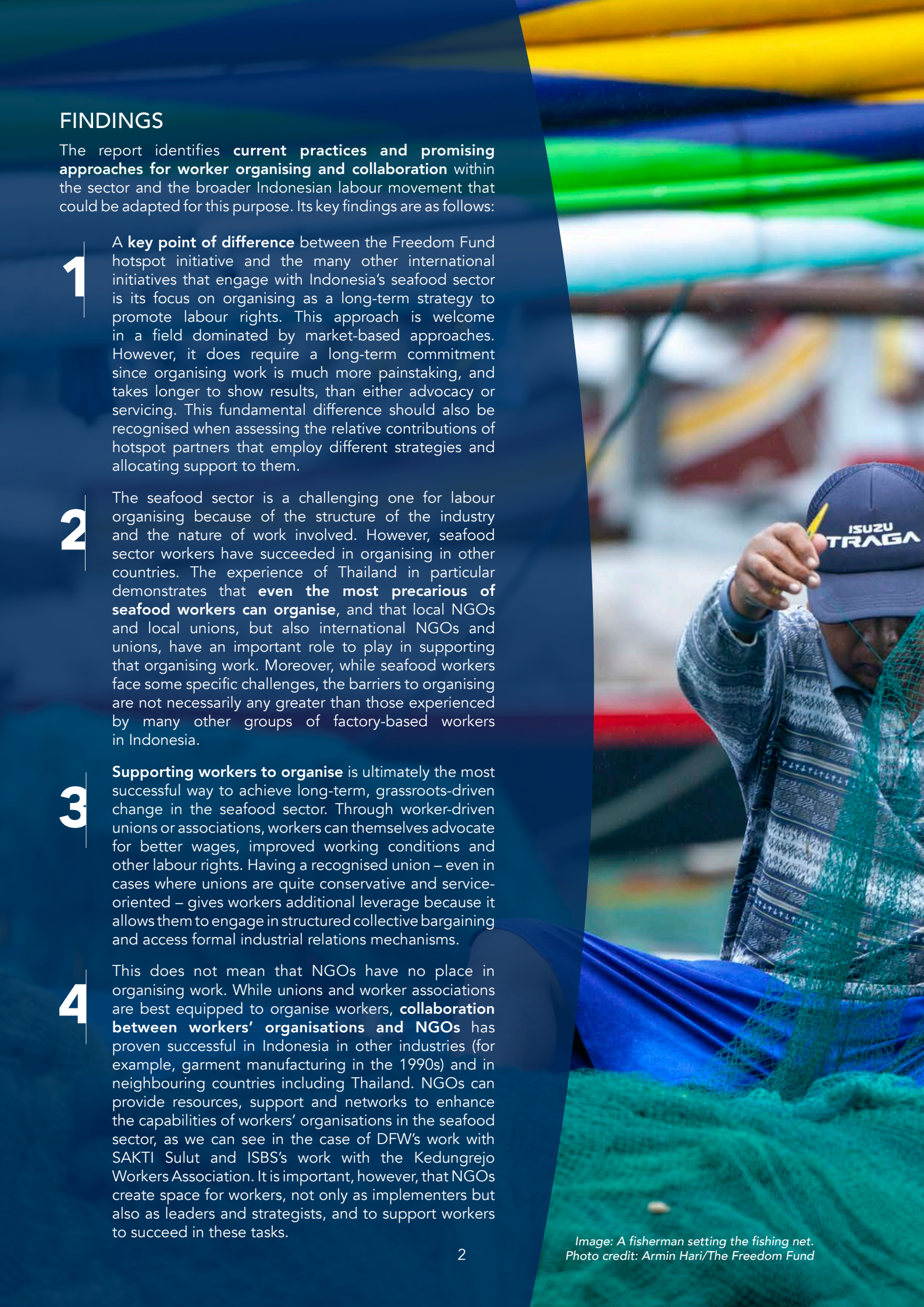


Image: A fisherman setting the fishing net.
Photo credit: Armin Hari/The Freedom Fund

- 5 Opportunities for **organising** are potentially greatest in **seafood processing** because of the concentrated and grounded nature of seafood processing work. In Banyuwangi and Bitung, hotspot partners are encouraging seafood processing workers to form unions outside of their respective companies as a first step towards establishing unions inside them. Enterprise-level organising is more challenging among **fishers**, but the geographical concentration of the local industry around a series of major ports offers potential for regionally based organising as a step towards enterprise engagement with large employers. SAKTI Sulut has already begun experimenting with this two-pronged approach. Even more limited are opportunities to form effective workers' organisations for **migrant fishers** because they are deployed to companies scattered around the globe. This necessarily limits the capacity of Indonesian regulators and unions to influence their practice. However, SPPI's strategy of establishing representative posts in key port countries is currently focused on servicing but could be leveraged for organising.
- 6 In terms of **servicing**, the hotspot partners engage in a range of activities for workers, their families and their communities. Servicing for **local fishers and seafood workers** includes case handling and education and training, as well securing access to affordable healthcare and other public services. It also includes efforts to negotiate collective bargain agreements (CBAs) on behalf of **migrant fishers**. There is room for a concerted push to ensure that these CBAs fully represent migrant fishers' interests and do not just replicate legal minimums, and that they establish mechanisms for effective implementation. Other forms of servicing, such as providing support for migrant fishers' families, may be socially useful but – in contrast to organisationally focused forms of education and effective case management – are unlikely to contribute to organising.
- 7 Hotspot partners representing **local fishers** on medium and larger vessels should be strongly encouraged to negotiate CBAs on behalf of their members to complement and strengthen the individual contracts required by government. While this constitutes a more difficult challenge in the first place because they are not specifically required by government, monitoring and enforcement of them is potentially more effective than for overseas-focused CBAs because of the geographical concentration of the local industry.
- 8 Unions, NGOs and advocacy networks are already playing an important role in **advocating** for better policies and practices. Nevertheless, the hotspot partners have collective opportunities for strengthening joint evidence-building and influencing activities that are currently underutilised. A potential hurdle in this respect is the level of trust among organisations in the sector, including the hotspot partners, driven by differing perspectives, the structural differences between land-based and sea-based organisational structures, and the different imperatives associated with organising workers employed in Indonesia and abroad.
- 9 **International pressure and support** can also play a significant role in improving labour conditions in the seafood industry. However, it is important for international players to consider the implications of pursuing their agendas in any given country. While international pressure can be a catalyst for improvements in labour conditions, it also has the potential to create unintended negative consequences, particularly for employers who are the primary targets of such advocacy. There may be instances where companies respond to international pressure by seeking ways to silence workers rather than engage with them. It is therefore vital that international advocacy aimed at improving labour conditions is coupled with a constructive dialogue focused on developing sustainable strategies that benefit workers without negatively affecting employers in the longer term.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen the hotspot partner program's impact and drive positive change in the seafood industry, we make the following recommendations, which are explained in detail in Section 8:

For the hotspot partners

1. Consider developing a hybrid workplace/ regional unionisation strategy for grassroots organising.
2. Focus on playing to their own strengths.
3. Incorporate an industrial relations approach in servicing strategies for local workers.
4. Grow strategic alliances with mainstream unions and environmental organisations.
5. Strengthen joint evidence-building and campaigning

For the Freedom Fund and Humanity United

1. Establish a model that better differentiates between advocacy, servicing and organising, and that better supports organising work.
2. Support specialisation.
3. Help partner unions and worker associations hone or acquire organising skills.
4. Support the development of meaningful links with mainstream unions and labour NGOs.
5. Promote strategic collaboration among partners.

A detailed analysis of the activities of each of the partner organisations, and specific recommendations for them, was provided to the Freedom Fund, Humanity United and the hotspot partners in a companion report.

*Image: Worker in a fish processing factory.
Photo credit: Fauzan Azhima/ILO*



GLOSSARY

| | |
|-------------|--|
| AP2I | Asosiasi Pekerja Perikanan Indonesia (Indonesian Fishing Workers Association) |
| AP2HI | Asosiasi Perikanan Pole & Line dan Handline Indonesia (Indonesian Pole & Line and Handline Fisheries Association) |
| ATLI | Asosiasi Tuna Longline Indonesia (Indonesian Longline Tuna Association) |
| CBA | Collective Bargaining Agreement |
| DFW | Destructive Fishing Watch |
| EEZ | Exclusive Economic Zone |
| FPPI | Federasi Pekerja Pelabuhan Indonesia (Indonesian Port Workers Federation) |
| FSPMI | Federasi Serikat Pekerja Metal Indonesia (Federation of Indonesian Metalworkers Unions) |
| FTUSA | Fair Trade USA |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IOJI | Indonesia Ocean Justice Initiative |
| ISBS | Institut Solidaritas Buruh Surabaya (Surabaya Institute for Labour Solidarity) |
| ITF | International Transport Workers' Federation |
| KAMIPARHO | Federasi Serikat Buruh Makanan Minuman Pariwisata Restoran Hotel dan Tembakau (Federation of Food, Beverage, Tourism, Restaurant, Hotel and Tobacco Workers) |
| KASBI | Kongres Aliansi Serikat Buruh Indonesia (Indonesian Trade Union Alliance Congress) |
| KKP | Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan (Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries) |
| KP3I | Kesatuan Pelaut dan Pekerja Perikanan Indonesia (Indonesian Association of Seafarers and Fishers) |
| KPI | Kesatuan Pelaut Indonesia (Indonesian Seafarers' Union) |
| KSBSI | Konfederasi Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (Confederation of Indonesian Prosperous Labour Unions) |
| KSPI | Konfederasi Serikat Pekerja Indonesia (Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions) |
| KSPSI | Konfederasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia (Confederation of All-Indonesian Workers Unions) |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MWRN | Migrant Workers Rights Network |
| NGOs | Non-governmental organisations |
| SAKTI | Serikat Awak Kapal Transportasi Indonesia (Indonesian Transportation Ship Crews Union) |
| SAKTI Sulut | Serikat Awak Kapal Perikanan Bersatu Sulawesi Utara (The North Sulawesi Fishers Union) |
| SBK | Serikat Buruh Kerakyatan (People's Labour Union) |

| | |
|-------|---|
| SBMI | Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia (Indonesian Migrant Workers Union) |
| SPPI | Serikat Pelaut Perikanan Indonesia (Indonesian Fisheries Workers Union) |
| SPSU | Serikat Pelaut Sulawesi Utara (North Sulawesi Seafarers' Union) |
| SSEAC | Sydney Southeast Asia Centre |
| SSFA | Samae San Fishermen's Alliance |
| WFTU | World Federation of Trade Unions |

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, the Indonesian seafood sector has attracted considerable international attention around exploitation and forced labour. Responding to these issues, in 2021, the Freedom Fund, in partnership with Humanity United, established a hotspot program in Indonesia that supports several organisations working to help Indonesian seafood sector workers organise, claim rights, improve working conditions and access remedies.

In 2022–23, the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre (SSEAC) at the University of Sydney was contracted to compile a report to help guide this hotspot program. The study involved a desk review of materials from Indonesia and other relevant countries, a total of 30 key informant interviews, partner consultations, site visits and semi-structured group interviews with 72 fishers with local and international experience and 60 seafood processing workers (an overview of the methodology can be found in Annexes A and B).

The goal of this investigation was to support hotspot partners' efforts to improve their effectiveness in mobilising and protecting the rights of seafood sector workers in Indonesia. For our purposes, the **seafood sector** is defined as:

- Export-oriented seafood processing in Indonesia.
- Export-oriented commercial fishing (typically using vessels that are 30 gross tonnes and over) in Indonesian waters and adjacent areas on the high seas.
- Commercial seafood workers currently in Indonesia who are due to migrate outwards to, or returning from, jobs overseas.

The terms of reference excludes supervisors and managers, seafood farming workers, workers in small-scale seafood processing, artisanal fishers, Indonesian seafood workers working overseas, and seafood workers in Indonesia who are migrants from other countries.

The report itself identifies current practices and promising approaches for worker organising and collaboration within the seafood sector and the broader Indonesian labour movement that could be adopted or adapted. In doing so, it addresses four key questions:

1. What are promising approaches and lessons learnt – drawing on the evolution of the labour movement in Indonesia, in other comparable Indonesian industries and in neighbouring geographies — for connecting with and mobilising workers in wild capture fishing and land-based seafood production?
2. Aside from the six hotspot partners, who are other important actors in the broader Indonesian labour rights movement who are potential future allies to amplify the partners' messages and influence? Where do the interests of these different actors *intersect and diverge*? What are potential entry points for the hotspot partners to engage more meaningfully with other influential labour rights actors?
3. Collectively across the six hotspot partners, what are the opportunities for strengthening their joint evidence-building and influencing activities? What additional knowledge/skills/social capital (such as credibility with policymakers), or additional organisational partners, could be added to the hotspot program as grantees or collaborators?
4. For each of the hotspot partners, what are the promising approaches that they could look to adapt or scale-up over the next one to two years, considering each organisation's history of work, subject expertise, technical skills and operational capacity, as well as their appetite for growth?

Improving conditions for fishers and seafood processing workers does not happen in a vacuum. Opportunity structures to promote change are influenced by a wide range of organisations not only within Indonesia but also internationally. National trade unions and other labour movement actors – and even industry associations – are also important, and underutilised, potential allies when it comes to

amplifying hotspot partners' messages and influence. They are also influenced by actors with no direct interest in labour or, indeed, even in global seafood supply chains.

Having outlined some key concepts, the report begins with some background information on the challenges faced by seafood sector workers and the organisations that represent and support them. It then outlines the hotspot partners' current focus, structures and strategies before turning to a discussion of promising approaches and lessons learnt from (a) attempts to organise workers in other industries and seafood sector workers in other countries and (b) to exert influence among a wide range of stakeholders. The report concludes with a discussion of potential refinements to the broad approach and specific strategies taken by the hotspot partners and by the Freedom Fund and Humanity United. The report concludes with a series of general recommendations. A detailed analysis of the activities of each of the partner organisations and specific recommendations for them was provided to the Freedom Fund, Humanity United and the hotspot partners in a companion report.



2. KEY CONCEPTS

This study identifies models of labour organising and promising approaches for worker mobilisation and collaboration that could be adapted for different groups of seafood sector workers. Doing so requires an understanding of the different kinds of organisations involved in the sector and the different approaches they use.

2.1 AN ORGANISATIONAL TYPOLOGY

There are two main groups of organisations that engage directly with workers in Indonesia. The first of these consists of formally registered unions and less formal worker associations. The second consists of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

From outside, unions and associations can look quite similar – and sometimes unions can in fact be called associations. The key difference is, however, that **registered unions** (regardless of what they are called) are permitted to bargain collectively for their members and participate in the formal industrial relations system in other ways. **Unregistered worker associations** are easier than unions to establish, but they cannot engage with formal industrial relations mechanisms in the same way. In practice, though, there may be little or no difference between a union and an unregistered worker association, especially if the union is not focused on workplace-level collective bargaining.

A lack of financial independence is especially likely when the organisation does not have a robust mechanism for collecting membership dues. In some formal-sector workplaces, dues are collected through a so-called “check-off system,” through which member contributions are automatically deducted from workers’ pay checks and transferred directly to the union. In some circumstances, check-off systems can work against democratic unionism, as was the case during the Suharto period (1967–98) when the single state-sanctioned union had access to a check-off system or where a company-favoured union is granted access to automatic dues deductions, but an independent union is not (Ford 2009). However, they are an effective mechanism for dues collection in many established industrial democracies.

After the fall of the Suharto regime, some Indonesian unions have maintained, or established, access to a check-off system. Many others, however, have had to establish alternative mechanisms for dues collection. In best-case scenarios, members agree to automated electronic transfers. In many others,



union officials continue to collect dues manually. In most cases, however, the level of dues collected – if they are collected at all – are insufficient to cover running costs and are supplemented by fees-for-service, worker cooperatives, or external support from, say, a labour NGO (Ford 2006a). While worker associations may also collect contributions from members, they are generally more likely to rely on other forms of income generation or on external support.

When it comes to influence, financial sustainability and collective bargaining, size matters. Small unions may benefit from a close understanding of their membership and their interests, but large unions are potentially more robust and are better positioned to engage effectively with employers and government. They are also more likely to have established governance procedures and mechanisms for renewal at the leadership level. In theory, all unions are funded by their members through the collection of membership dues, although large unions would ostensibly be more likely to be able to achieve financial independence. However, in practice, many Indonesian unions both large and small have struggled to achieve financial independence.

Reliance in part or even in whole on external funding brings both risks and benefits. Where external funding is supplementary, it can enable labour movement organisations to achieve much more than they would otherwise. It can also be crucial in the early years of an organisation's existence. However, when external funding constitutes the primary form of income beyond the start-up phase, there is a risk that it can skew organisations' accountability relationships away from their members and towards their funders (Ford 2006a). In such cases, it can cause unions to deprioritise member recruitment and engagement, which require considerable effort, in favour of less onerous tasks.

While there are many similarities between unions and worker associations, both these organisational forms are clearly distinguished from NGOs with an interest in the sector. Whereas unions and worker associations are member-based organisations designed to serve their members' interests, NGOs are closed membership organisations that are generally staffed by non-workers. As such NGOs are generally more flexible than either unions or worker associations in that they are not accountable to a large number of members and can change direction or focus relatively quickly.

Generally speaking, NGOs, unions and worker associations all have different strengths and weaknesses, which have implications for the contribution they are likely to be able to make in relation to both fishers and seafood workers (Table 1).

Table 1. Strengths of NGOs, worker associations and unions

| Characteristic | NGOs | Associations | Unions |
|--|------|--------------|--------|
| Understanding of worker issues | ? | ✓ | ✓ |
| Lived experience of worker issues | ? | ✓ | ✓ |
| Collective power and solidarity | – | ✓ | ✓ |
| Legitimacy as workers' representative | – | ? | ✓ |
| Capacity to engage with formal industrial relation processes | – | – | ✓ |
| Ability to communicate with policymakers | ✓ | ? | ✓ |
| Understanding of broader context | ✓ | ? | ? |
| Ability to stage a campaign | ✓ | ? | ? |
| Ability to communicate with external parties | ✓ | ? | ? |
| Flexibility | ✓ | ? | ? |
| Financial resources | ✓ | ? | ? |
| Ability to meet donor reporting requirements | ✓ | ? | ? |

Key: present (✓) absent (–) ambiguous (?)

The strengths of unions and worker associations lie in the fact that (in theory, at least) democratic organisations that are directly governed and directed by their members – as well as being answerable to them. As such, they are more likely to adopt priorities that reflect the needs and aspirations of the workers than NGOs, for which supporting workers may be part of a broader portfolio of activities or in response to donor priorities. They also have a greater claim than NGOs to legitimately speak on behalf of workers by virtue of their status as member-based organisations. They are also in a better position to be able to leverage workers' collective power. By nurturing solidarity among their members, unions and worker associations can demand better working conditions and redress through collective action where worker rights have been violated. In the case of unions, legitimacy and influence is further strengthened by their formal role in the industrial relations system, where, subject to regulatory requirements, they have the right to organise workers within workplaces, represent them in collective bargaining processes and other bipartite negotiations, and also participate in tripartite bodies at the local, provincial or national level.

In many cases, workers' organisations in developing country contexts like Indonesia's are driven by an individual or even a small leadership group. Strong leadership can produce results, but democratic practice sits at the heart of a healthy workers' organisation. It is vital to develop a democratic and participatory culture to ensure that member interests are represented and that there is potential for leadership regeneration. In the absence of such a culture, workers' organisations are little different from labour NGOs.

NGOs also have specific strengths. These may include a strong understanding of the broader context but also their flexibility, the relatively high level of education of their staff, their ability to write competitive proposals, their relatively good knowledge of and capacity to meet donor reporting requirements, and their superior access to financial resources. They may also have better links to policymakers and external stakeholders and a stronger knowledge of the broader context – for example, in the cases of the seafood sector and of international supply chains – and indeed better networks internationally and even nationally.

These strengths can, however, easily become weaknesses. NGOs' dependence on external funding can affect the focus they identify, the strategies they decide to use, or the timeline they choose for a particular goal or series of activities (Ford 2006a). In the Indonesian context, for example, many organisations that were initially focused on sex worker rights adopted an anti-trafficking lens when the United States stopped funding the former (Ford and Lyons 2012). In some cases, NGOs can also tend to prioritise their own understanding of the problems faced by workers in a particular sector over workers' own lived experience. This is understandable, as the balance between helping workers understand their reality in a different way and imposing a world view is a delicate one, but it is a tendency that even the most effective labour NGOs constantly struggle with.

At the same time, NGOs can play an important role in promoting worker rights. NGOs for whom worker engagement has been a primary focus have a history in Indonesia of making an extraordinary



Image: Fishers at a port in Central Java.
Photo credit: Pichit Phromkade/ILO

contribution to the labour movement (Ford 2009). For other NGOs, labour may be simply one among a much broader range of focus issues. In the seafood sector, the latter is true for most NGOs, which have emerged from concerns around environmental sustainability; their challenge is to look beyond their established frames of reference and develop a worker-centred perspective.

Moreover, collaboration and coordination between member-based organisations and labour NGOs can be advantageous, since both types of organisations bring distinctive strengths and perspectives to the table. By combining their efforts and knowledge, they can work towards the common objective of enhancing the rights and well-being of workers.

2.2 A TYPOLOGY OF STRATEGIES

In discussing organisations' engagement with workers, it is helpful also to distinguish between three primary types of strategies, namely organising, servicing and advocacy (Ford 2013, 2019). **Organising** involves the recruitment of workers into an existing organisation or with the purpose of establishing a new one. It implies a commitment to making space for workers to contribute to the collective formulation of the organisation's priorities and strategies and to equipping members to do so. It is by far the most challenging of the three strategies and many unions in Asia have few resources to organise and support new constituencies.

As Teerakowitkajorn (n.d.) notes, it is useful to distinguish between organising and mobilising, whereby mobilising involves "technicians such as lawyers and activists more than workers." Organising, by contrast, requires more active participation of workers in 1) "building larger power bases," 2) "conducting power structure analysis" and 3) "designing strategies to achieve an outcome themselves." The key difference here is that organised workers act on their own behalf while mobilised workers respond to the urgings or offers of support from an external impetus. Crucially, while mobilising can be spontaneous, organising is a structured process designed to build long-term relationships among workers. It is also important to note that even where workers are organised they cannot always be mobilised around issues of concern to the groups seeking to mobilise them.

Organising is difficult work in any context, but especially in countries like Indonesia, where the culture of unionism is weak and largely confined to a few key sectors. For historical reasons, the seafood sector is not one of them. Unlike, for example, Australia – where maritime workers are relatively highly organised and very militant – maritime workers in Indonesia are not. Even merchant seafarers, who globally are the most organised of sea-based workers, are not particularly well-represented in Indonesia.

The second key strategy, **servicing**, involves the provision to workers of different kinds of support; for example, legal aid, emergency shelter or even access to benefits negotiated as part of a collective bargaining process. Another element of servicing is education and training, which may serve purposes such as professional skills acquisition, raising awareness of labour rights or developing strategies and techniques for running a democratic workers' organisation. Historically in Indonesia, many labour NGOs engage in servicing activities in sectors where unions are weak or simply not present. However, unions, too, can choose to prioritise servicing approaches, either targeting their members or a broader cohort of workers. In some cases, servicing work can be used as part of a broader organising strategy. However, in and of itself, it does not constitute organising, although many organisations confuse the two.

Meanwhile, **advocacy** – or what the Freedom Fund describes as influencing – involves knowledge production and dissemination through campaigns to bring about change in international norms, government policy and public opinion (Ford and Gillan 2015). Advocacy initiatives may be sustained, but they may also be sporadic and incidental; for example, publicising particular cases in which workers have experienced abuse. In best-case scenarios, advocacy campaigns can lead to substantive changes in policy or approach, as illustrated by some international campaigns for responsible seafood production. However, their success depends very much on the capacity of organisations to create networks, mobilise public opinion and leverage strategic connections.

There are many organising, servicing and advocacy strategies that can be used separately and together across multiple sectors. At the same time, there are certain obvious examples that apply to seafood workers and local and migrant fishers (Table 2).

Table 2. Examples of advocacy, servicing and organising

| | Organising | Servicing | Advocacy |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Seafood processing workers | Convincing seafood processing workers to establish or join a union or worker association and to use that structure to fight for their rights and interests | Providing legal aid to workers who have been dismissed without cause | Lobbying government to increase factory inspections |
| Fishers within Indonesia | Convincing fishers to establish or join a union or worker association and to use that structure to fight for their rights and interests | Helping small-scale fishers establish a cooperative | Lobbying companies to sign up to certification schemes |
| Migrant fishers | Convincing migrant fishers to establish or join a union or worker association and to use that structure to fight for their rights and interests | Supporting migrant fishers’ families while their relatives are working overseas | Establishing a social media campaign drawing attention to the plight of migrant fishers |

It is also important to note here that these strategies can be employed separately or together (Ford 2013; Ford 2019). For example, direct forms of service provision such as case management of disputes around pay or working conditions are extremely resource-intensive for unions and may be difficult to sustain if they are not tied directly to policy advocacy or the recruitment of union members. They may also be applied by one organisation or a network. For example, an advocacy campaign promoting freedom of association might be run by a coalition of unions and labour NGOs, or a union hotline might direct distressed workers to an NGO-run counselling service.

It is no surprise, given the challenging nature of the sector, that most organisations with an interest in the seafood sector focus primarily on advocacy, or at best service provision, rather than organising. The temptation to focus on advocacy, or even service provision, can be a highly rational one. Worker organising is a complex process that depends greatly on the history and political economy of the society and industry in which that organising takes place. This does not mean, however, that it is sufficient to use advocacy or servicing (even aspects of servicing that can contribute to organising, such as case management or training) as a substitute for organising if the long-term goal is to empower seafood sector workers to lead the fight for better wages and better, more humane working conditions.

3. BACKGROUND

The world's largest archipelagic state, Indonesia incorporates 2.8 million square kilometres of water within its national boundaries (Cribb and Ford 2009). It is also the world's third-largest source of marine catch, producing 6.7 million tonnes in 2018 (FAO 2020). The sector produces around US\$4.1 billion annually in export earnings (Anggoro 2020). Most fish are caught from relatively small boats. According to the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, just 1.6 percent of Indonesia's 390,728 motorised fishing vessels are over 30 gross tonnes (GT) (KKP 2023a).

The sector is an important source of employment, responsible in total for more than 7 million jobs (Anggoro 2020). As is the case globally, there is a gendered division of labour, whereby harvesting is a male role and processing a largely female one (for Chile, see Núñez and Melillanca 2021; for Norway, see Gerrard 2018). This is true in Indonesia, where the commercial fishing workforce consists exclusively of men and the seafood processing workforce consists mostly of women. As of 2021, there were 2,925,818 fishers employed in Indonesia, of whom 2,359,264 were recorded as marine fishers (KKP 2023c). Statistics on the number of workers employed in seafood processing plants, large or small, are not readily available. We do know that as of 2019 almost 99 percent of seafood processing plants were small businesses (KKP 2023b), which generally offer lower wages and poorer working conditions than medium to large employers.

Yet while this is important in terms of both the income it generates and jobs it provides for both men and women, the sector has been largely ignored by policymakers and labour activists alike. As discussed below, this can be explained by the challenges associated with working and organising in the sector, but also by historical factors affecting the level of engagement of mainstream unions. Before discussing these issues, it is important to establish the organisational landscape within the sector itself.

4. THE ORGANISATIONAL LANDSCAPE

There are several different organisations that are currently involved in the sector, including membership-based organisations and NGOs, with a focus on either fishers (working in Indonesian waters or overseas) or seafood processing workers. While mainstream unions are virtually absent from the sector, there are a number of membership-based organisations engaging in service provision or, to a lesser extent, in organising. In addition, NGOs play an important role in advocacy and service provision in the sector, as well as in some cases supporting organising efforts.

4.1 THE HOTSPOT PARTNERS

The Freedom Fund partners with several of the key NGOs and worker organisations that engage in advocacy and servicing activities – and in some cases organising – of local and migrant fishers and seafood processing workers, namely:

- Destructive Fishing Watch (DFW)
- The Indonesian Fishing Workers Association (Asosiasi Pekerja Perikanan Indonesia, AP2I)
- The Indonesian Fisheries Workers Union (Serikat Pekerja Perikanan Indonesia, SPPI)
- The Migrant Workers Union of Indonesia (Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia, SBMI)
- The North Sulawesi Fishers Union (Serikat Awak Kapal Perikanan Bersatu Sulawesi Utara, SAKTI Sulut)
- The Surabaya Labour Solidarity Institute (Institut Solidaritas Buruh Surabaya, ISBS)

This sub-section outlines the work that each of these organisations do. Also discussed is the Indonesian Fisheries Workers Union (Serikat Pekerja Perikanan Indonesia, SPPI), which is supported directly by Humanity United and the Indonesia Ocean Justice Initiative (IOJI), another of the Freedom Fund's partners, which was not included in this study.



Image: Fishermen preparing the vessel.
Photo credit: Armin Hari/The Freedom Fund



Destructive Fishing Watch (DFW)

DFW is an NGO that focuses on the protection and empowerment of coastal communities, particularly those residing on Indonesia's outermost small islands. The organisation's constituents are primarily these coastal communities, which include workers in the fishing industry.

While DFW is not well-positioned to directly organise workers, it is well-suited to supporting the partners that are engaged in grassroots organising through servicing and by conducting research on global supply chains and advocacy. Its **servicing** activities currently include training, case mediation and facilitating dialogue between workers and government agencies. DFW staff believe that it is necessary to equip workers with the skills and knowledge required to navigate the process of improving their working conditions. Regarding case mediation, DFW provides legal assistance, handles complaints, and supports workers dealing with employment contract-related issues. It also provides information and education for fishers through its National Fishers Centers in Bitung and Tegal.

An important aspect of DFW's servicing work is the support it provides for joint inspections, which have been instrumental in promoting transparency and accountability in Bitung. Inspection teams include representatives from various government departments, unions, media and other stakeholders. In addition to bringing unions into the process, this collaborative approach allows for effective coordination between government agencies, namely the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, and the Ministry of Transportation. These joint inspections have also created a platform for open dialogue and information sharing. This approach has been recognised as a best practice and is now being considered as a model for other locations in Indonesia.

DFW also engages through public **advocacy** on issues related to the sector through media releases, webinars and Instagram posts. Its staff also actively participate in discussions, act as resource persons and collaborate with partners to address the challenges faced by fisheries workers. Through these activities, DFW aims to amplify the voices of seafood sector workers in order to bring about positive changes in policies and regulations, promoting social dialogue and influencing decision-making processes to create a more equitable and just fishing industry.

DFW collaborates with the Indonesian Pole & Line and Handline Fisheries Association (Asosiasi Perikanan Pole & Line and Handline Indonesia, AP2HI) and the Indonesian Longline Tuna Association (Asosiasi Tuna Longline Indonesia, ATLI), to promote constructive dialogue between NGOs and the fishing industry regarding workers' situations. AP2HI has officially pledged support for DFW's National Fishers Centers through a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and has helped provide insight into the sustainable supply chain process in fisheries and is now developing a relationship with ATLI in the hope of establishing a similar arrangement.



The Indonesia Ocean Justice Initiative (IOJI)

IOJI is a think-tank and policy advocacy organisation dedicated to achieving effective protection, sustainable use and equitable welfare in Indonesia's marine governance. Founded in January 2020, IOJI is staffed predominantly by former members of the Presidential Task Force 115, a specialised task force instituted under Presidential Decree 115/2015 with a mandate to address and mitigate illegal fishing and associated criminal activities within Indonesia's jurisdictional maritime boundaries. It works to strengthen the network among government institutions, academia and civil society to influence decision-making processes and promote sustainable and equitable ocean policies.

Regarding **advocacy**, IOJI is engaged in public policy analysis, scholarly publications and educational seminars and workshops. It has also established alliances with both national and sub-national governmental entities. For example, it has established an MoU with the local government to support marginalized marine-dependent communities in Central Java, inclusive of migrant and small-scale fishers. In collaboration with DFW and SBMI, IOJI is also actively advocating for the expeditious issuance of derivative regulations stemming from Government Regulation No. 22/2022 concerning the Placement and Protection of Migrant Commercial Ship Crews and Migrant Fishing Ship Crews.



The Indonesian Fishing Workers Association (Asosiasi Pekerja Perikanan Indonesia, AP2I)

AP2I is a registered union established in 2021 by a group of experienced labour activists led by Imam Syafi'i, a former victim of human trafficking who was part of a successful class action against Kartigo. It currently has 1,500 members. AP2I is primarily a servicing organisation. Its **servicing** activities include programs in migrant supplier villages to educate prospective members about the essential documents required to work on an international fishing vessel. AP2I also enters into collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) with manning agents with the aim of improving working conditions and negotiate for better wages.

AP2I also provides case-based assistance to members. For example, it successfully fought for the return of placement fees amounting to Rp 80,000,000 (US\$5,333) to eight prospective migrant workers who were unable to depart through PT Jaya Frans Abadi (JFA) Tegal branch. In another example, AP2I succeeded in securing Rp 740,000,000 (US\$49,324) in compensation payments and insurance for the family of a migrant fisher who died while working on a Taiwanese fishing vessel. When dealing with disputes, AP2I prioritises advocacy over criminal proceedings because its main aim is to achieve concrete outcomes for members. If direct approaches to a company fail, they attempt to use bipartite processes and the Industrial Relations Court. Only when these efforts fail do they resort to filing criminal charges.

A key focus of AP2I's **advocacy** work relates to the inclusion of migrant fishers in Government Regulation No.22/2022 concerning the Placement and Protection of Migrant Commercial Ship Crews and Migrant Fishing Ship Crews. AP2I believes that migrant fishers are seafarers who work on fishing vessels and should therefore be regulated under the Ministry of Transportation. AP2I is advocating for a judicial review of Law No.18/2017 (for which Government Regulation No.22/2022 is an implementing regulation) to clarify the status of sailors on commercial and fishing vessels. AP2I staff believe that the current narrative tends to overemphasise the poor working conditions of migrant fishers, which systematically excludes efforts to create better employment relations through a robust industrial relations system.

AP2I is affiliated with the Indonesian Trade Union Alliance Congress (Kongres Aliansi Serikat Buruh Indonesia, KASBI) and through it to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). It is working towards becoming a federation with the ultimate goal of building a registered confederation. It believes that doing so will position it to improve industrial relations in the sector and gain representational status in the Industrial Relations Court.



The Indonesian Fisheries Workers Union (Serikat Pekerja Perikanan Indonesia, SPPI)

SPPI is arguably the strongest registered union that focuses on organising migrant fishing vessel crews in Indonesia. Established in 2013, SPPI is currently led by Achdiyanto Ilyas Pangestu. Its stated mission is to safeguard the welfare of both local and migrant fishers by enhancing their working conditions and securing their rights. However, to date it has focused exclusively on migrant fishers. Currently, SPPI has approximately 11,000 members.

Like AP2I, SPPI is currently primarily a servicing organisation, though it also has a strong record in advocacy. Most of SPPI's **servicing** activities are concentrated in Pemalang, Central Java, where they have a branch office. SPPI has links to a training centre that provides fishers with the technical skills necessary to secure a Basic Safety Training (BST) certificate. Fishers who participate in the training program are required to join SPPI and pay a membership fee. In addition, like AP2I, SPPI negotiates CBAs with manning agencies to ensure fair working conditions and wages. To date, SPPI has negotiated CBAs with 43 agents. SPPI has established posts in several locations in South Korea and Taiwan, which greatly add to its capacity to monitor its CBAs and provide other support to migrant fishers once abroad.

In terms of **advocacy**, SPPI actively engages in efforts to promote the rights and welfare of fishers through its relationships with various governmental and non-governmental entities, including the Ministry of Manpower, the Head of the Agency for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BP2MI), the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the local level, it has advocated for various issues, including fair wages, safe working conditions, social protection and improved labour rights enforcement. They have also highlighted the need for comprehensive health

tests, including kidney tests, due to health issues experienced by workers drinking distilled water. SPPI has also been involved in pushing for policy changes at the national level, where they have sought to address the systemic challenges faced by fisheries workers and to improve their overall well-being.



The Migrant Workers Union of Indonesia (Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia, SBMI)

SBMI is a registered union that advocates for migrant workers' rights and supports their communities. It is currently led by Hariyanto. Established in 2005, it traces its roots back through a number of precursor organisations supported by the American Center for Labour Solidarity (Ford 2006a). SBMI has gained significant recognition, including an award from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for its impactful work. SBMI's primary focus is on migrant domestic workers, but it has recently expanded this focus to migrant fishers and, to a much lesser extent, to local fishers and seafood processing workers.

In terms of **servicing**, SBMI uses a village-based approach. It provides training with the aim of equipping intending migrant workers with the necessary knowledge and skills to advocate for their well-being. It has experimented with establishing cooperatives to provide sustainable financial support for the organisation. SBMI also engages in case handling and assistance to their members, particularly in addressing issues related to employment contracts and potential violations of workers' rights. Unlike AP2I and SPPI, SBMI does not engage in CBA negotiations. SBMI acknowledges the importance of CBAs as a tool for building equitable social dialogue while forefronting the challenges associated with negotiating and implementing CBAs.

SBMI's **advocacy** efforts encompass a broad range of issues faced by migrant workers at the local and national levels. At the national level, it has strong partnerships and actively participates in governance discussions through audience series and social dialogue. Locally it works with village authorities to include migrant workers' interests in Medium-Term Village Development Plans (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Desa, RPJMDs) and to establish relevant village regulations. It also has a strong media presence.



The North Sulawesi Fishers Union (Serikat Awak Kapal Perikanan Bersatu Sulawesi Utara, SAKTI Sulut)

Founded in 2021, SAKTI Sulut addresses the challenges faced by fishing crew members and strives to improve their working conditions, ensure fair wages and provide legal protection. SAKTI Sulut's formation was influenced by the experiences of its founders, including Arnon Hiborang, the current chair, who personally encountered significant challenges when working on foreign and local fishing vessels. Dissatisfied with the level of responsiveness of existing unions, SAKTI Sulut's founders decided to organise independently to address their problems. With a demonstrated commitment from domestic fishing vessel crews, SAKTI Sulut has emerged as a leading voice for this crucial workforce.

In terms of **organising**, SAKTI Sulut operates most like a mainstream union than any other hotspot partner. SAKTI Sulut has a clear, time-based mechanism for collecting member dues and established a clear link between membership and access to union services. In terms of servicing, SAKTI Sulut offers legal assistance, handles complaints and runs empowerment programs to support fishing crew members and their families. It has also collaborated with the City of Bitung Marine and Fisheries Polytechnic to coordinate safety training and skills certification programs. Another important aspect of its work is the fact that it is the only hotspot partner to pursue local fishers' interests through the formal industrial relations system.

In terms of **advocacy**, SAKTI Sulut is firmly focused on the local level, where it collaborates with DFW to engage with provincial-level policymakers and local authorities. During our visit to Bitung it was clear that the organisation had excellent relationships with the local manpower office and port authority. Its relationships at the provincial level have been strengthened by its involvement in DFW's joint inspection program. SAKTI Sulut also actively communicates the concerns of fishing crew members to the public through local media and its social media platforms.

In February 2023, SAKTI Sulut established a worker association called Srikandi, which focuses on female seafood processing workers. As of March 2023, Srikandi had 50 members. The decision to focus on women is due to their significant representation in the processing industry, which in Bitung employs around 90 percent women. The ultimate goal is to position Srikandi as a strong and independent union for women workers in the seafood processing industry in Bitung.



The Surabaya Labour Solidarity Institute (Institut Solidaritas Buruh Surabaya, ISBS)

ISBS was established in 2013, filling the gap left by a number of previously very active labour NGOs in East Java. The organisation’s roots trace back to 2004 when it operated as an outreach arm of the Surabaya Catholic Diocese. Its current head is Domin Dhamayanti.

In terms of organising, ISBS has adopted a community-based approach. ISBS has a long-term relationship with a small independent union called the People’s Labour Union (Serikat Buruh Kerakyatan, SBK), which focuses on organising and advocating for manufacturing workers, for example, in the case of Maya Muncar, which furloughed 58 workers indefinitely in 2010. ISBS has already established the Kedungrejo Workers Association (Asosiasi Buruh Kedungrejo, ABK), a community-based union involving seafood processing workers. ISBS’s organising work is supported by servicing activities including legal assistance, education and training programs, and support in forming and managing labour unions. In interviews, workers who had engaged with ISBS had a very strong sense of their labour rights and of the benefits of unionisation.

In terms of advocacy, ISBS’s main objectives revolve around advocating for workers’ rights and promoting social dialogue among workers, employers and the government. ISBS actively engages with various stakeholders, including the government and village heads, and it has negotiated with village governments to secure social benefits for workers. ISBS adopts a supply chain approach, strategically targeting companies like Bumi Mentara Internusa and Central Protein Prima to minimise union busting and maximise impact. It is also part of the Sustainable Seafood Alliance Indonesia.



Image: Fishers working at a port in Central Java. Photo credit: Pichit Phromkade/ILO

4.2 OTHER MEMBER-BASED ORGANISATIONS IN THE SECTOR

The key mainstream union in seafood processing is the **Federation of Food, Beverage, Tourism, Restaurant, Hotel and Tobacco Workers** (Federasi Serikat Buruh Makanan Minuman Pariwisata Restoran Hotel dan Tembakau, KAMIPARHO), a KSBSI affiliate. KAMIPARHO has long-established member unions in seafood processing in three locations in Indonesia: North Jakarta, Bitung and the Aru Islands. In the last few years, KAMIPARHO has been working closely with the International Labour Organization on a project promoting women workers' rights in the sector.

There is no national-level organisation, trade union or otherwise, that has a specific interest in labour conditions of domestic fishers. The **Indonesian Seafarers' Union** (Kesatuan Pelaut Indonesia, KPI) is a Suharto-era legacy union that restructured itself in 2000 with support from the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). KPI represents four key groups of seafarers, including fishers, but its primary focus is on merchant seamen. When interviewed, a KPI representative made it clear that their (relatively minor) interest in fishers extended only to migrant fishers. Our informant stated that the KPI currently has no interest in organising local fishers due to the lack of clarity in the legal framework but also the difficulty of actually implementing regulations concerning employment relations when it comes to local fishers.

One of the sectoral unions within the **Federation of Indonesian Metalworkers Unions** (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Metal Indonesia, FSPMI) – the most powerful of KSPI's affiliates and a key player in union renewal in Indonesia – also claims to have a nascent interest in organising fishers. Now known as the Shipping and Maritime Services Workers Union (Serikat Pekerja Perkapalan dan Jasa Maritim, SPPJM), the union initially focused on dock and shipbuilding and repair workers. According to its President, in 2021 it broadened its focus to include crews on various kinds of ships, including fishing vessels, as well as aquaculture workers. To date, though, it has yet to make substantive inroads into the sector due to limits on its internal resources and the challenges of organising new groups of workers during the pandemic.

The Indonesian Association of Seafarers and Fishers (Kesatuan Pelaut dan Pekerja Perikanan Indonesia, KP3I) claims to represent the interests of sailors and fishery workers. Previously known as KP2I, KP3I is closely linked to ATLI. KP3I is active in Benoa Port, where it ensures a steady supply of workers and collaborates with a local training institution to ensure that new recruits are work-ready. It mediates salary-related disputes and provides compensation to employers if crew abscond with their cash advances (kasbon). It has also established a hotline that workers can use to report cases of abuse.

The Indonesian Seafarers' Transportation Union (Serikat Awak Kapal Transportasi Indonesia, SAKTI), based in Jakarta, focuses on local and migrant seafarers. SAKTI is affiliated with the Indonesian Port Workers Federation (Federasi Pekerja Pelabuhan Indonesia, FPPI), a registered affiliate of the ITF. SAKTI has asserted that by working through FPPI, they can benefit from the ITF's global influence. Its main activities include conducting workshops and socialisation efforts, handling workers' complaints and providing legal aid. SAKTI intends to enhance welfare, protection, empowerment and legal rights of migrant and local seafarers. SAKTI has been active in advocating against forced labour and human trafficking amongst Indonesian migrant seafarers, including fishers.

The North Sulawesi Seafarers' Union (Serikat Pelaut Sulawesi Utara, SPSU), based in Bitung, focuses on local and migrant seafarers. The organisation currently boasts a documented membership of 500 individuals, consisting mostly of merchant seafarers and local fishers. SPSU wants to improve the welfare and rights of Indonesian and domestic seafarers by advocating for them, assisting them, educating them and increasing their economic power. Its main activities include handling workers' complaints, providing legal aid, making policy recommendations, conducting workshops and trainings, organising public campaigns and publishing reports.

Transparency House (Rumoh Transparansi) focuses on local and migrant fishers in Aceh. Its main activities include making policy recommendations, organising public campaigns, conducting socialisation and providing other services. Rumoh Transparansi seeks to improve the lives of local and migrant fishers and bring attention to modern slavery and has lobbied the government to create an adequate legal framework for domestic and migrant fishers.

4.3 EMPLOYER ASSOCIATIONS AND MARKET-DRIVEN INITIATIVES

The Indonesian Association of Pole and Line and Handline Fishing (Asosiasi Perikanan Pole & Line dan Handline Indonesia, AP2HI) was founded in 2012. One of the world's largest tuna providers, AP2HI spans the entire tuna processing chain. AP2HI's stated mission is to develop sustainable and well-managed fisheries, promote pole and line and handline fishing as a sustainable capture method for eco-label certification, engage with the government and NGOs, and expand market access based on the traceability principles. AP2HI owns the brand for one-by-one caught tuna (Tuna Indonesia). It also works on capacity-building programs to improve the competency of stakeholders in the skipjack tuna fisheries, including fishers.

A second industry association, the **Indonesian Longline Tuna Association** (Asosiasi Tuna Longline Indonesia ATLI), was established in 2009 to represent and support the interests of the Indonesian longline tuna industry. It consists of 14 longline tuna capture and processing companies that operate more than 250 longline vessels and spearheads the Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP). In collaboration with the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership and Yayasan LINI, ATLI launched the National-Level Longline Tuna Fishery Improvement Project in 2020. This initiative covers albacore, yellowfin and bigeye tuna within Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and international waters, as well as yellowfin and bigeye tuna caught using longline fishing methods in the Archipelagic Waters and Indonesia's EEZ. The ultimate goal of this project to set a precedent for responsible and sustainable longline tuna fishing practices, meeting the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)'s certification standards and improving the competitiveness of Indonesian longline tuna on an international scale.



Image: Fish-reseller ("Tibo-Tibo") preparing the fish.
Photo credit: Fauzan Azhima/ILO

Image: Fishermen working at a port in North Sulawesi.
Photo credit: Armin Hari/The Freedom Fund



5. CHALLENGES FACED

The seafood sector is a challenging one for the workers employed within it, as well as for regulators, advocates and labour activists. There are, however, also significant differences between the organisation of work and the experiences of workers and labour activists within each of its sub-sectors. The various challenges faced by seafood sector workers, along with the challenges associated with attempts to organise them (and engage with mainstream unions), are discussed in the sub-sections that follow.



*Image: Fishers unloading fish from the vessel at a port in North Sulawesi.
Photo credit: Armin Hari/The Freedom Fund*

5.1 CHALLENGES FACED BY SEAFOOD SECTOR WORKERS

Fishers frequently encounter tremendous problems that affect many facets of their lives. Most have low levels of formal education, high levels of debt and ambiguous working relationships. The majority of fishers have at best a junior high school education, which limits their work options. Several of the fishers we spoke to felt trapped in the industry, where they worked out of necessity rather than choice or aspiration. A low level of formal education also prevents them from working legally on foreign-flagged fishing vessels, which generally offer better earnings and working conditions than local vessels.

Debt is also a problem for many of them. The cash advances (*kasbon*) provided by the owners of many local fishing vessels provide for fishers' families while fishers are at sea, but fishers frequently become trapped in a crushing cycle of debt. Since their earnings are frequently insufficient and the amount charged for their costs at sea are high, they can survive on land for only a month or two before they must restart this cycle.

Perhaps even more problematic is the level of ambiguity around fishers' employment status. Indeed, it is only recently that the government has begun regulating employment in commercial fishing. Most commercial fishing is seen as "traditional," meaning that it is not regulated as standard employment. In part, that perception is due to the narrow legal definition of an employment relationship under Article 1(15) of Law No. 13/2003 on Manpower, which defines the relationship as having three features: employment, wages for that employment and an instruction to perform that employment. In 2016, the government decreed that payment to fishers could include a monthly wage. Five years later it decreed that it should.

However, local vessel owners generally use informal patron–client relationships to recruit local fishers and prefer not to use Sea-based Employment Contracts (*perjanjian kerja laut*). As a consequence, fishing workers are denied access to labour standards stipulated in the Manpower Law No. 13/2003 (hereafter the Manpower Law) and related laws but also access to employer-subsidised accident and health insurance under the national insurance scheme. In short, employment conditions in the bulk of the Indonesian commercial fishing industry have more in common with small-scale fishing than with large-scale fishing elsewhere.

“Most people here want to work overseas but don't have the necessary paperwork ... you need to have a junior or senior high school diploma, right? Most of the [fishers working here] dropped out of school.”

Local fisher, Bitung

“It's not really about the energy the job takes. It's more about the time away. Let's say we have a one-year contract, or ten months. It's quite a long time. What would our families do if we didn't get a cash advance before we left. What would they eat?”

Local fisher, Jakarta

“It's easier to manage the fishers who come from the north coast of Java. It's hard to get the local fishers to follow the law because they are subject to local practices and informal authority structures.”

Harbourmaster at Mayamuncar and Masami Ports, Banyuwangi

The government has made other efforts to regularise the sector. Through the same sector-specific implementing regulation, the government not only set minimum labour standards for employment in commercial fishing but also established a procedure for handling labour disputes that included recourse to the Industrial Relations Court. The final stage in the labour disputes settlement process mirrors procedures stipulated in Law No. 2/2004 on Industrial Disputes Settlement, which regulates disputes in standard employment.

In practice, the fact that most fishers receive a share of the profit from the catch rather than wages means that most disputes are settled using informal community-based processes. In an attempt to improve implementation, the government required the technical agencies that control access to fishers' workplaces and that have expertise in inspecting labour standards to engage in joint labour inspections in 2022. To date, however, joint inspections remain rare.

Our interviews with key informants in government confirm that it tends to prioritise Indonesian migrant workers, regardless of industry, when considering workers at risk of forced labour. While conditions on local boats may be worse, it is true that **fishers on foreign-flagged vessels** are disadvantaged by the nationally oriented nature of industrial relations systems, which are ill-equipped to deal with workers located outside their national boundaries. For migrant fishers then, the biggest obstacle is accessing their rights and assistance when problems arise. Accordingly, the formation of unions is critical for migrant fishing vessel crews in order for them to work legally on the high seas.

Seafood processing workers face a number of the same difficulties. Many also have low levels of education, which restrict their opportunities to secure employment. In North Jakarta, for example, all that is required to work as a shrimp peeler is a national identity card (Kartu Tanda Penduduk, KTP). In Banyuwangi, too, many workers employed in large seafood processing factories have little education. A number of women we interviewed there had not finished primary school. This leaves them vulnerable, with few opportunities for advancement.

Although workers in large seafood processing factories should benefit from labour regulations banning repeated short contracts, in reality most have little more protection than fishers. Many seafood processing workers are employed on an informal basis and are paid according to the quantity of fish and shrimp processed. When the catch is minimal, they find themselves in competition with their co-workers, sometimes leading to verbal and even physical conflict.

“ We are paid monthly based on a profit-sharing basis ... 50 percent goes to the owner then the captain gets two-thirds of the rest and the crew shares one-third. So, for example, if the captain gets 20 million, the crew gets 10 million. That 10 million is divided among the crew. ”

Local fisher, Bitung

“ Local boats can't pay their workers because catches are uncertain. Sometimes we catch a lot but sometimes we don't catch anything. So pretty much all of them use a profit-sharing system ... But if you are working on a foreign boat, you'll definitely get a wage even if the catch is down. ”

Migrant fisher, Pematang

“ I finished primary school. It was like that then. People had a lot of kids. If you wanted to continue, too bad. Your parents told you to get a job in the market or wherever. Going to high school wasn't an option. ”

Seafood processing worker, Banyuwangi



Image: Work hygiene conditions in a tuna-fish factory.
Photo credit: Fauzan Azhima/ILO

Because of their role in the family, some women prefer piecework because it allows them to respond to unanticipated demands, such as sickness or unreliable childcare. This is in part because women employed in the sector tend not to identify primarily as workers. Even where they are the primary breadwinner, they tend to see their waged work as supplementing their husband's earnings.

Most seafood processing workers with more formal work arrangements are nevertheless employed on rolling short-term contracts, which means that they do not have access to the benefits accorded to permanent employees even in cases where they have been doing the same work in the same factory for a decade or more.

In addition, there is very little oversight of workplace safety. Workers reported frequent hand injuries due to inadequate safety precautions. In some workplaces they even had to purchase their own personal protective items. Those without long-term contracts frequently lacked access to employer-subsidised accident and health insurance under the national insurance scheme. This condition compels them to labour while ill in order to maintain their income.

While these kinds of infringements are also common in other factory-based sectors in Indonesia, the seafood sector has not been a strong focus for government or for national-level unions. As a consequence, rights violations in Indonesia are more likely to go unchallenged. Indeed, many workers believe that there is no way to report or lodge complaints. They frequently feel powerless and tend to resign if they have a problem rather than seek a resolution.

“The workers on annual contracts get a 13-month bonus. But if you're on a three-month contract you don't get it.”

Seafood processing worker, Bitung

“I am employed by the hour. Our pay depends on how many hours we work. We get Rp. 8000 for every hour we work. It's better than when I was doing piecework, when you're competing with other workers [for fish and cans].”

Seafood processing worker, Banyuwangi

“I took on this job to help my husband.”

Seafood processing worker, Bitungi

“As far as I know, no one complains or rebels. Perhaps they're afraid of losing their position. They threaten us with that.”

Seafood processing worker, Banyuwangi

5.2 CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH ORGANISING

Organising among seafood processing workers is no different in theory to organising in other kinds of manufacturing. But in fact, it is quite challenging. While they have the same access to industrial relations mechanisms as, say, workers in garment factories, low union density in the sector and the approaches taken by the unions that are present mean that in practice their ability to engage with the industrial relations system is limited. An additional challenge in both sub-sectors is the involvement of large numbers of workers who are not in any kind of formal employment relationship, be they fishers with profit-sharing arrangements or seafood processing workers who deliver processed product to the factory rather than producing it there.

The fact that the seafood processing plants receive little attention from trade unions may in part be due to geography: most plants are located in relatively isolated locations. In addition, most manufacturing unions have traditionally had narrow sectoral foci and the food and beverage unions tend to be quite weak. The situation is further complicated by the fact that although some seafood processing factories have unions, a lack of concrete action on workers' behalf has given rise to a perception among workers that unions are at best passive and at worst that they side with employers.

The challenges posed to unions by the nature of **commercial fishing** are even greater. Sea-based workers are very difficult to organise by virtue of the relatively small and isolated nature of their workplaces, their high level of mobility and the length of time they spend offshore. In addition to the characteristics of sea-based workplaces, the level of jurisdictional complexity associated with work at sea even *within* Indonesia makes it difficult for unions to identify collective bargaining partners and bargaining arenas.

By virtue of the nature of their employment and legal structures, even local fishers who receive a regular wage are positioned very differently from other groups of formal sector workers in relation to Indonesia's industrial relations system. Further complicating this effort is the division between corporate and individual ownership and operation of fishing vessels. In one location, 70 percent of fishers were employed on individually owned fishing vessels, which have a well-deserved reputation for their sub-standard working conditions.

“It's like this. In Banyuwangi we're still in the organising phase. Why? Seafood workers are really hard to organise because their working hours and working relationships are really unclear.”

Activist from Federasi Serikat Buruh Kerakyatan

“Unions are supposed to protect workers' rights. But up to now, the unions in our factories don't do that.”

Seafood processing worker, Bitung

“We need to educate them about unions. I'm sorry to say but they think that unions are like a toilet that they only need when they have an upset stomach. Or like a lawyer. Someone reports something, someone's subpoenaed, the case is dealt with, you get a certain percentage. They can't see the point in joining a union before they go to sea. It's even more tricky when you're dealing with local fishers.”

AP21 activist

However, even on larger commercial boats, many local fishers do not have an employment contract. In general, employment conditions are regulated under the Manpower Law. However, this law is supplemented by a series of specific regulations for the fisheries industry issued by the Ministry for Marine Affairs and Fisheries. As such, the provisions in the Manpower Law are overridden by more specific regulations for the fisheries industry.

One consequence of this arrangement is that, while the Ministry of Manpower retains the authority to regulate industrial relations in the sector and to assist in the settlement of labour contract disputes, the sea-based employment contracts of fishers do not use the Manpower Law as their legal basis. Rather, these contracts invoke Marine Affairs and Fisheries Ministerial Regulation No. 33/2021 on Fishing Logbooks, Monitoring Onboard Fishing Vessels and Fish Transporting Vessels, Inspection, Testing and Marking of Fishing Vessels, and Personnel Management of Fishing Vessels, which gives authority to the Director General of Capture Fisheries to facilitate disputes settlement between the fishers and boat owners.

The situation is quite different for Indonesian fishers who work abroad. On the one hand, current regulations require that **migrant fishers** be covered by a CBA, which creates an opportunity for unions and worker associations to recruit them during the pre-departure phase, when they have an opportunity to make migrant fishers aware of their rights under Indonesian law and the law of the flag state. According to Minister of Transportation Regulation PM 59/ 2021, ship owners or their representatives and seafarers' associations are required to establish a CBA, which must be co-signed by the Ministry of Transportation's Director-General of Sea Transportation.

There is no legal minimum standard for these CBAs, which means that the parties can include any clause that does not conflict with the Ministerial Regulation. A CBA we saw covered a wide range of topics, including workplace safety, unauthorised fishing activities, job duration and individual contracts. The agreement also outlined wages, overtime, holiday pay and healthcare and insurance benefits. It also stipulated conditions for job transfers, promotions and terminations, and outlined mechanisms for complaint resolution and dispute settlement. Additional clauses focused on payment procedures and union membership.

“The Manpower Law should be the point of reference. But there are special regulations for work at sea. That’s what makes it confusing. They tend to work things out directly rather than bringing their issues to us.”

Ministry of Manpower, Mediator

“The issues that we deal with are all covered by government regulations. Every time we deal with a problem, we consult the regulations to work out what our demands should be. From that we work out what we should be discussing and what we should demand of the company. It’s all in the regulations!”

SAKTI Sulut activist, Bitung

“In my opinion, lots of CBAs are just ‘selling a stamp’. What do I mean by selling a stamp? The owner needs a CBA so the boat can get permission to sail. We have no idea what happens if there’s a problem, whether the union actually defends its members. It’s an open question.”

Syofyan, Serikat Awak Kapal Transportasi Indonesia



Image: Fisherman selling fish.
Photo credit: Fauzan Azhima/ILO

The CBA model has three main strengths. First, unions can leverage them to negotiate wages, compensation, social security and healthcare. Second, it creates a forum for management, employees and third parties (e.g., representatives from the Ministry of Transportation) to engage. Third, the CBA creates a mechanism through which union dues can be directly deducted by the company, effectively creating a check-off system that ensures the union's sustainability.

At the same time, the current CBA model has several weaknesses. First, by their very nature, CBAs cover only union members, leaving non-union members uncovered and unavailable. This is effectively a closed shop arrangement, which can provide an opportunity for organising but also opens the door to fake unions. Second, companies can use CBAs to exert control over unions, especially where they advance member dues. Third, because of the structure of the industry, a single agent can have multiple CBAs with various unions, leaving individual unions with little power to enforce their CBA and reducing the opportunity to use CBAs as an organising mechanism. Fourth, conflicts of interest may arise, particularly if the union signing the agreement is not trustworthy.

After fishers depart, unions established in Indonesia have very few channels through which to organise and support them. One way is to work through the ITF, the Global Union with jurisdiction in the sector. Another is to collaborate with a union in the destination country, offering reciprocal membership or access to services and protection. A third is, as SPPI has done, to establish a presence in destination countries. Whether these activities constitute organising (as opposed to servicing) is, however, another question, the answer to which is evident only in the actions of the fishers themselves once they leave Indonesia's shores.

Faced with this challenging situation, established unions seeking to engage with seafood sector workers – and NGOs seeking to support the establishment of seafood sector unions – must make several strategic decisions.

“The manning agencies want to follow the rules, actually. They want to play it safe. But sometimes they have difficulty finding boat owners who are willing to sign a CBA. They're the cases that have problems. If there's a CBA everything is clear – how much insurance there is, what the owner's rights and responsibilities are in relation to the crew. If there's a CBA, the owner knows what they need to do.”

KPI representative, Jakarta

“There are always problems on the ship. They're not interpersonal, they're to do with our work. For example, our wages aren't paid in full. We tell the union so they can handle it.”

Migrant fisher, Pematang

“Perhaps when there's a problem on a ship, unions can get help from an international union to deal with it. We investigated what international unions might want to accept us as an affiliate. We succeeded in securing an affiliation with WFTU.”

AP2I activist, Tegal

Key among these is the decision on whether to focus on organising or service provision. For example, fishers frequently seek out an NGO or union only when they encounter a problem. While seafood processing workers may have more knowledge of unions and unionism, this may not work as an incentive to organise. For example, in Banyuwangi, there have been instances of workers fighting collectively for their rights who have as a consequence experienced union-busting and other forms of intimidation, and still have not had their issues resolved. Indeed, according to one organisation, the greatest obstacle to organising is overcoming the trauma associated with unionisation.

The dilemma is, then, whether the NGO or union concerned puts its energies into addressing immediate problems through servicing or into the longer-term, more strategic work of supporting worker-led organising at the local level. In Indonesia, most organisations choose to provide services such as training or case intervention in the hope that employees will recognise the benefits and choose to join a worker-led organisation.

5.3 CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH ENGAGING MAINSTREAM UNIONS

One of the most significant challenges facing the small number of organisations in Indonesia that are actively trying to organise fishers and seafood processing workers is the challenge of integrating into the established labour movement. There are two main reasons for this. The first is the general weakness of Indonesian unions and their relatively narrow focus on traditional industrial and service sector workers. The second challenge is the temptation to work independently of established unions based on the logic that those mainstream unions are not interested in working in the seafood sector. While this logic is sound, the failure to unionise carries with it the risk that work done is merely palliative. Without formal union status, organisations cannot access institutional mechanisms for collective bargaining and collective action or engage with government in a systematic way on behalf of workers.

Currently there are **three major national confederations** in Indonesia: the Confederation of All-Indonesian Workers Unions (Konfederasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, KSPSI), the Confederation of Indonesian Prosperous Labour Unions (Konfederasi Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia, KSBSI) and the Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions (Konfederasi Serikat Pekerja Indonesia, KSPI). KSPSI is the confederation that grew out of the legacy state-sanctioned union of the Suharto period, while KSBSI has its roots in the most influential of three alternative unions that had emerged in the 1990s.¹ KSPI, meanwhile, was formed to bring together the breakaway sectoral unions established by progressive members of the state-sanctioned union of the Suharto period in the early years of the democratic period.

The **Global Unions** are a group of international labour organisations consisting of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and nine Global Union Federations (GUFs). Meanwhile, each of the GUFs acts as an international umbrella organisation for national-level unions in a particular sector or sectors. They also support affiliates, including through organising initiatives, engage in campaigning work and seek to influence global labour governance structures (Ford and Gillan 2022). The two GUFs with jurisdiction in the seafood sector are the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) (Ford 2019). These, like other GUFs, deal almost exclusively with their affiliates. The ITUC, which is structured as an international umbrella organisation for selected national trade union centres, including KSPI and KSBSI, represents workers at the International Labour Organization (ILO) and several other international forums, engages in campaigns on relevant issues and advocates on its members' behalf, and supports weaker affiliates through capacity-building.

An additional benefit associated with affiliation to one of the two internationally linked confederations is access to ILO programs targeting the sector. The first of these is the Ship to Shore Rights Southeast Asia program, run in collaboration with the European Union, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This program focuses on strengthening legal frameworks, protecting labour rights and ensuring safe working conditions for migrant workers. It targets migrant workers and their families, involving stakeholders such as government authorities, workers' organisations, recruitment agencies and civil society organisations in an attempt to fill protection gaps in the migration process, promote safe migration and address the impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers. A second program is the 8.7 Accelerator Lab, which aims to accelerate the eradication of forced labour and child labour through a network of six Indonesian confederations including KSBSI, KSPI and KSPSI. Established in June 2022, the network's aim is to conduct monthly coordination and capacity-building trainings, to support the organising of fishers by sectoral affiliates in fishing, and to engage with government on the reform of law and policy that regulates fishing.

There are a number of other national-level federations and confederations. One of these is the Congress of Indonesian Unions Alliance (Kongres Aliansi Serikat Buruh Indonesia, KASBI), a small federation to which AP2I is affiliated and ISBS has links. KASBI has links to a rival international confederation called the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and works hard to distinguish itself from what it sees as more conservative unions. AP2I and ISBS value its overarching approach to labour issues. At the same time, however, they acknowledge that KASBI has no more knowledge of the seafood sector than other mainstream unions.

¹ Both of these confederations have splintered in different ways at different times.



Image: Fish being processed. Photo credit: ILO/Fauzan Azhima

In our consultations, two hotspot organisations (AP2I and SAKTI Sulut) explicitly expressed a desire to either affiliate to existing trade unions or to create new regionally based unions in collaboration with other local unions. There are advantages and disadvantages to both these approaches. In terms of advantages, affiliation with a national union federation or confederation increases the opportunity to influence national-level policy debates. There are, however, also some risks associated with joining a national-level union. Most importantly, the fisheries sector is not a prominent one and affiliating with a national-level union would not guarantee visibility even within that union, let alone beyond it. The creation of a regionally based union federation (as opposed to a regional union) may be a more fruitful longer-term option. Experience in the garment industry in the 1990s and early 2000s suggests that regionally based unions can become quite powerful if they are well-run and well-connected and can recruit a critical mass of members in a particular port or in selected factories. Given the geographical concentration of both fishers and seafood processing workers, there is significant potential in this regard.

6. CURRENT FOCUS, STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES

A key point of exploration in our discussions with the hotspot partners, our field site visits and our interviews with local and migrant fishers and seafood processing workers was the current focus, structures and strategies of the partners with a view to clarifying the current situation and identifying opportunities to strengthen or redirect their efforts. This section provides a general overview of our findings in this regard.

6.1 CURRENT FOCUS

With regard to current focus, our **first key finding** is that one of the biggest challenges for most hotspot partners is a perception that they need engage with more than one constituency. Our investigations revealed that in most cases hotspot partners were struggling to deal with other constituencies, since each of the three sub-sectors (local fishers, migrant fishers and seafood processing workers) require very different approaches. Specialisation within a given sub-sector (and possibly on just one or maybe two of the three broad strategies identified in this report) is more likely to yield results.

Our **second key finding** relates to the issue of balance in focus across the program. Most hotspot partners are focused almost exclusively on migrant fishers and/or their families. While a number of organisations in this category aspire to expand their focus, at this point they engage only tangentially, if at all, with local fishers or seafood workers (and then only for the reasons outlined above).

Our **third key finding** concerns the fact that (with the exception of SAKTI Sulut) hotspot partners that engage at all with local fishers work primarily with fishers on boats below the 30+ GT range identified as a target by the Freedom Fund. Similarly, the hotspot partners engaging with seafood processing workers are doing so primarily with workers in precarious employment (including pieceworkers). For seafood processing workers in particular, a step towards a more sustainable model of organising would be to engage also with those who are in permanent employment, who are able to lend the power associated with their (comparatively) strong position in the workplace to less secure workers.

6.2 CURRENT STRUCTURES

Our key finding on hotspot partner structures pertains to the extent to which different organisations reflect worker interests. NGOs, by their very nature and closed-membership structures, are not representative. This does not mean that they cannot play an important role in the labour movement, but rather that they must take steps to ensure that they make space for worker voices to be heard rather than speaking on behalf of workers. A worker-centred perspective, as evidenced by ISBS, is an excellent starting point in this respect.

6.3 CURRENT STRATEGIES

With regard to the hotspot partners' current strategies, our **first key finding** is that most hotspot partners spend most of their time and effort in advocacy and servicing, not organising. As discussed above, advocacy and servicing are not only important, and certainly easier to carry out than organising, but they are less sustainable than organising as a long-term strategy.

As noted above also, an important feature of most NGOs currently involved in Indonesia's seafood sector is that they are focused primarily on the seafood sector rather than on workers per se. The background of these NGOs, but also their organisational structures as NGOs, has implications for the strategic decisions they take in relation to their approach to supporting seafood sector workers.

While we do not recommend that all hotspot partners should be engaged in organising, the distinction between different strategies needs to be clearly made so that the organisations best placed to engage in particular ways are supported to do so and a better balance across hotspot partners can be achieved.

Our **second key finding** is that it is easy to confuse service provision – case management, training, certification and so on – with organising. Provision of such services can be highly beneficial to individual workers or even groups of workers. However, in and of itself, it does not empower workers to act collectively. An important point to make here is that educating workers can make a valuable contribution to organising but is proxy for it. In addition, there is a difference between training that relates to workers' capacity to do their jobs, training that raises workers' awareness of their labour rights, and training that equips workers to act collectively. All three are important, but collective capacity is key to the long-term sustainability of workers' movements.

This confusion between service provision (especially education) and organising in part reflects a broader elision of the two in the Indonesian context. It also is partly a result of the fact that hotspot partners face a demand for quick, tangible results, making service provision activities more appealing than organising, which requires a long-term investment with few immediately visible outcomes.

Another contributing factor is a fundamental misunderstanding of what organising actually entails. While both service provision and organising can benefit workers, the latter aims to empower them to act collectively for systemic change. When organisations lack a clear understanding of this distinction, they tend to conflate the two, erroneously believing that they can achieve sustainable long-term impact through service provision alone.

Our **third key finding** relates to the absence of workplace-based organising strategies. A strategy used by a number of hotspot partners (most notably SBMI but also DFW) is the neighbourhood or village approach. Some organisations are engaging in advocacy at the level of village administration to secure worker benefits.

Some hotspot partners, most notably SBMI, have long been committed to the village-based approach, an approach that, recognising the difficulties of supporting migrant workers while abroad, seeks to build understanding among intending migrant workers and their families. Originally developed for migrant domestic workers, SBMI has sought to extend this approach to migrant fishers and their families, with the aim of engaging in village-level advocacy for changes to conditions for fishers and seafood processing workers.

This approach has some benefits, as village leaders are close to the workers/families involved. However, the strategy has many downsides, including the fact that companies may perceive it as a threat and attempt to exert influence over village leaders, but also because village leaders have many priorities, little leverage over company policy and no role in formal industrial relations structures and processes. In short, a significant weakness of the village-focused approach is its emphasis on changing village-level policies rather than workplace practices.

This is not to say, however, that there is no place for strategies that are not directly targeted on the workplace. Community-based organising can be a useful intermediate strategy even for seafood processing workers working in medium to large factories, especially in contexts where employers are suspicious of unions. As a long-term strategy, however, it is self-limiting, since external advocacy is demonstrably less effective than organising on a factory basis when it comes to changing company policy and practice. And, even as an intermediate strategy, community-based organising should be focused on changes within workplace labour relations rather than on generating benefits for communities more broadly.

Our **fourth key finding** relates to the use of CBAs. One of the great benefits of organising in the workplace is the capacity to negotiate CBAs that are driven by the common interests of members. Currently, only two hotspot organisations even attempt to negotiate CBAs, and in both cases those CBAs are negotiated on behalf of workers rather than by workers. Because the law mandates that migrant fishers have a CBA before they can be legally employed abroad, the companies concerned have no choice but to engage. As such, these CBAs are not truly CBAs in the sense understood in the labour movement (i.e., a product of organising), but rather a form of service provision. Perhaps even

more seriously, entering into CBAs that are not based on member input can give rise to perceptions (even the reality) of co-optation.

However, even the very fact that organisations with an interest in worker rights are involved in the process of CBA negotiation and implementation is a better outcome than if manning agents were just expected to follow the law. What is more, their involvement offers an opportunity to move towards more member-driven agreements that produce better outcomes for workers. The Freedom Fund hotspot program should support partners to (a) better engage members in determining bargaining priorities and (b) negotiate CBAs that exceed the legal safety net.



Image: Fishing vessels parked in a Fishery Port in North Sulawesi.
Photo credit: Armin Hari/The Freedom Fund

7. PROMISING APPROACHES AND LESSONS LEARNT

When identifying promising approaches to organising and influencing, it is helpful to look to the experiences of comparable organisations in other contexts. Of particular relevance are organisations that engage with or represent fishers and seafood processing workers in other national contexts and organisations that represent workers in other sectors within Indonesia.

7.1 PROMISING APPROACHES TO ORGANISING

Other national contexts provide examples of successful organising initiatives targeting workers in fishing and seafood processing, although it is important to note that – despite the high profile of the fisheries sector internationally – there is very little understanding of what strategies work best to support workers in this sector and of the fact that most of what does exist focuses heavily on international (sometimes local) interventions on behalf of migrant workers in a handful of locations.

Hotspot partners can also learn from the experience of Indonesian workers in other sectors that share some of the characteristics of the seafood sector. These comparable industries provide lessons on how to organise labour in sectors where informality and mobility are significant challenges.

From other countries

There is a paucity of literature on labour organising in the fisheries. Moreover, the literature that is available is distinguished by both its geographical and sectoral focus. The literature on Norway, for example, focuses on organising in small-scale fisheries, while the literature on Chile focuses primarily on organising aquaculture workers.

The only countries for which there is a significant literature on organising in large-scale industrial fishing fleets are Taiwan and Thailand, but there are also relevant studies on work conditions and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing of the Chinese fleet in West African fisheries. The literature on organising seafood processing workers focuses primarily on Thailand, where it is part of an attempt to understand labour rights abuses in supply chains that connect seafood processing sites in the Global South to export markets in the Global North.

There are, however, some valuable lessons about approach and impact from other cases (Table 3). The literature on **small-scale fisheries** focuses primarily on Norway. Under pressure from fishers, in 1938 the Norwegian parliament intervened by legislating for cooperative sales organisations in response to the growing power of processors.



Image (left to right): worker at a tuna processing factory, Photo credit: Armin Hari/The Freedom Fund; worker assigned to arrange same-sized fish before storing it in the freezer, Photo credit: Fauzan Azhima/ILO

The key lesson here is that collective action is required to drive policy change. It is unlikely that this legislation would be passed in contemporary Norway, as neoliberal logic now defines much of how the fisheries operate and introducing a price-setting mechanism would go against the grain. But this historical development makes it clear that poverty, marginalisation and exploitation of fishers can be alleviated when backed by law and a proactive state (Jentoft and Finstad 2018).

The experience of small-scale fisheries in Norway shows that collective action by fishers can drive policy change. However, such strategies are not necessarily directly transferrable to other national contexts. In the 1950s, Norway attempted to copy and implement the cooperative sales organisations in Kerala, India, to address the power imbalance between fishers and fish processors in the fisheries value chain (Kurien 1985). This initiative failed, primarily because it was no longer of fishers but for fishers (Jentoft and Finstad 2018).

In Kerala, the intervention catalysed price spiralling at the time when the industry was also transitioning to a focus on exports. As a result, affordable seafood was no longer available to the local population. This experiment failed because (a) of context-specific factors and (b) the act of transferring them turned a movement of workers into an intervention for workers, which had unintended consequences for the workers and their communities.

Table 3. Summary of promising approaches from other countries

| Example | Approach | Key Lessons Learnt |
|---|--|---|
| Organising | | |
| Norwegian/Indian fishers'/fishers' wives' cooperative | Self-organised to put pressure on the government | Community-based approaches can work when they are driven by fishers and their families. The Indian experience suggests that the model may not be transferrable because of lack of ownership when cooperatives are driven from outside. |
| Taiwanese migrant fisher-focused NGOs and migrant fishers' unions | NGOs supported workers to form a registered union, but union has no links to broader labour movement | There is an open question about how much ownership members of the Taiwanese migrant unions have and how much power they have to drive the organisation (and, even though formally registered as a union, to engage with employers). |
| Thai migrant fishers' and seafood processing worker associations in collaboration with NGOs and mainstream unions | Works with international NGOs and unions; supported by mainstream union in a different sector | Even though migrant-only unions are illegal in Thailand, migrant worker associations (with mainstream union support) have demonstrated impact in the seafood processing sector and use their collective power to negotiate with employers. |
| Servicing | | |
| Taiwanese migrant fishers' unions and migrant fisher-focused NGOs | Work in geographically defined communities to provide mutual aid or support | Links to NGOs encourage a servicing model. Servicing can provide a useful starting point for organising but there is a risk that that servicing becomes the end-goal rather than an entry-point for organising, which is required to secure more systemic change. |
| Thai migrant associations in collaboration with NGOs and mainstream unions | Help solve visa and permit-related issues, provide education | If used strategically, servicing can provide a useful entry-point for organising, but it is only ever the first step. |

| Example | Approach | Key Lessons Learnt |
|--|---|--|
| Advocacy | | |
| Norwegian/Indian fishers'/fishers' wives' cooperative | Lobby government to create a system where small-scale fishers could set their prices | Community-based approaches can work when governments prioritise welfare. The Indian experience suggests that the model may not be transferrable because of (a) different government structures and (b) the nature of modern seafood supply chains. |
| Taiwanese migrant fisher-focused NGOs and unions, in collaboration with international NGOs | Migrant-only unions collaborate with NGOs to lobby government | Links to NGOs (national and international) can be powerful in terms of lobbying for change in the sector. Research and an international voice have played an important role in effective advocacy. |
| Thai migrant fishers' and seafood processing worker associations in collaboration with NGOs, mainstream and international unions | Migrant worker associations collaborate with NGOs, mainstream unions and international actors | Links to NGOs (national and international) and the international labour movement can be powerful in terms of lobbying for change in the sector. Research and an international voice have played an important role in effective advocacy. |

Another feature of the Norwegian industry that has resonance for Indonesia is the strong division of labour between men and women on the boats (Gerrard 2018, 8). Recognised roles of women include “baiting long-lines, maintaining boats, helping deliver catch, and assisting their fisher husbands in the administration of the boat” (Gerrard 2018, 9). As a consequence of the assumption that “fishing is a male occupation,” unionising efforts are usually around the roles of men (Gerrard 2018, 8). By contrast, when women fishers organise, it is usually for other more community-focused purposes. This gendered division in labour organising is also apparent in Indonesia, as the wives and mothers of male fishers organise in the places of origin in response to issues affecting the workers, which then have a secondary impact on the left-behind community (Yea 2019).

The key lesson here is that, whereas men organised primarily to achieve objectives related to working conditions in the fisheries, women fishers were more globally focused on the “economic and social life of the fishery households and communities” (Gerrard 2018, 9). The question is, then, whether community-based organisation is sufficiently targeted to address conditions in larger-scale fishing operations.

There is another note of caution in relation to current efforts in Indonesia, namely that the interests of women as fishers' wives and stalwarts of fishing communities are not the same as their interests as seafood workers. Although many Indonesians – including many female seafood processing workers – see married women's work as secondary to that of their husband, women's interests as workers do not necessarily coincide with the interests of their husbands or even of their households. The risk of a combined focus on women as fishers' wives and processing workers risks subordinating the latter to the former.

Studies of **large-scale industrial fishing** in Taiwan and Thailand have revealed specific ways in which international migrant fishers organise in response to poor working conditions. Much of this collective action is spontaneous. For example, fishers working onboard distant-water fishing vessels, which spend long periods at sea, undertake “vessel-based collective action” when they experienced “physical and mental abuse,” threatening to stop working or leave the vessel in port (Vandergeest and Marschke 2021, 4). More structured forms of collective action are generally driven by “group associations on individual vessels, port-based associations, sectoral worker associations including unions, and migrant worker organisations that include fishing workers” (Vandergeest and Marschke 2021, 4).²

² Migrant worker organisations in sending countries also play an important supplementary role. For example, the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia, SBMI), one of the Freedom Fund's hotspot partners, advocates for migrant fishers while supporting their families.

In Thailand, large-scale fishing relies heavily on international migrant fishers with 90 percent – some 60,000 – of Thailand’s fisheries workers originating from Myanmar or Cambodia (Winrock n.d.). As the Thai government prohibits migrant workers from legally forming trade unions, migrant workers can unionise only if a Thai union (a) has a presence in a particular sector and geographic location and (b) if they are open to recruiting migrant workers (Ford 2019). Activists have circumvented this restriction by forming non-union member-based organisations for migrant fishers: the Fishers’ Rights Network (FRN) and the Samae San Fishermen’s Alliance (SSFA). These organisations provide services as a pathway to organising (Hartough 2021; ILO 2020). Their long-term goal is to establish a trade union of migrant workers to represent them, but in the meantime these “union-like” organisations have managed to secure some real improvements in wages and conditions. For example, SSFA members received training from a Thai trade union and used their new skills to negotiate an additional 30 Thai Baht (US\$1) per kilogram of fish (ILRF 2020). A key lesson here is that mainstream unions can be powerful allies for migrant fishers – and, by extension, engagement with mainstream unions may help local fishers to organise.

The ITF has worked the seafood sector in several Asian countries, including Thailand and Taiwan (Interview with ITF official, August 2015). As part of its program of work, in 2010 it signed a Memorandum of Agreement with IUF which committed the GUFs to a joint organising program that focused on workers on fishing boats and in fish processing factories. In 2018, the ITF worked with Thailand-based organisations to launch the Fishers Rights Network. The network issued nine demands, including that the Thai government amend national law to allow migrant workers to form trade unions, and that it to ratify the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188). Thailand ratified C188 in 2019 but continues to restrict the right of migrant workers to form trade unions.

The case of Taiwan is also instructive. Migrant fishers working on Taiwanese-owned vessels can form or join trade unions. However, migrant-only fishers’ unions have struggled to move beyond a servicing/advocacy model, in part because of their lack of connection with mainstream unions. Instead, they focus largely on activities such as providing access to insurance and assisting workers who abandon their boats, engaging in charitable activities such as sourcing winter clothes and campaigning to improve access to potable drinking water on board the vessels (OHCHR 2019). Although they may support individual workers in cases where there is conflict with employers or brokers, there is little evidence of actual organising work. (Ford 2019). In this case, stronger links with mainstream unions, such as those found in Thailand, may have increased their capacity to organise.

In terms of **seafood processing workers**, the best-known examples of organising in Southeast Asia are found in Thailand. Key among organising initiatives is the Migrant Workers Rights Network (MWRN), which has received support from several Indonesian labour movement actors including the ITF. MWRN originally focused on migrant workers employed in a variety of sectors, but seafood processing has become a key focus for its activities. By mid-2013, the MWRN had 1,400 members, each of whom paid dues of one baht per day (US\$0.03) (Mills 2014). In 2014, it formally registered as a foundation of a mainstream Thai union in order to circumvent the ban on migrant-led unions. By that time, it claimed to have more than 3,700 individual members (Ford 2019). One of the MWRN’s key strategies is to provide legal aid to workers experiencing difficulties in order to encourage them to become members. There is recognition, however, that this approach to strengthening their membership base is unsustainable as the organisation grows (Teerakowitkajorn n.d.).

Responding to this challenge, MWRN has sought to develop more sustainable organising strategies. These have included supporting workers at one of the largest shrimp factories in Samut Sakhorn to negotiate a settlement over forced leave (Mills 2014). In another example, it coordinated the collection of names and signatures of the necessary number of workers at Unicord, part of the Sea Value Group, so that they could engage in formal collective bargaining (ILRF 2020). From 2016, MWRN also succeeded in establishing Welfare Committees in three seafood-processing factories of the Thai Union Group, a leading global seafood company. While these committees do not have the powers of a union, they have achieved some success, including negotiating longer bathroom breaks and the provision of adequate parking and designated areas for rest periods, as well as additional fans in summer (ILRF 2020). Thai Union Group is also represented in Indonesia, so there may be an opportunity to engage the company there as well.

More generally, the Taiwanese and Thai experiences with large-scale fishing show that collective action on the part of fishers is often spontaneous and that resistance is often vessel-based, largely because the vessels spend long periods at sea. But there are also examples of more structured forms of collective action that include (a) associations on vessels, (b) port-based associations and (c) sectoral associations that include fishers.

The Taiwanese experience sounds a note of caution for the Indonesian context, where NGOs have also led efforts to engage with workers and that Indonesian NGOs, like their Taiwanese counterparts, are much more familiar and better equipped to engage in advocacy and servicing than in organising. It also shows the limits of even formally registered small unions if they do not have links to larger, more powerful unions. However, the Thai example shows that fishers can be organised even in situations where the law imposes restrictions on the formation of migrant-led unions. It also suggests that, with the help of migrant worker-focused organisations and mainstream unions, member-based organisations of fishers can work to improve the working and living conditions of their members.

In addition, the seafood processing sector in Thailand offers some good practices that could be emulated in Indonesia. The prevalence of migrants on the factory floor means that migrant support groups have played a key role in both organising and addressing issues with working conditions in seafood processing. But as with large-scale fishing, the involvement of a mainstream union helps to scale up the activities of member-based organisations that are not recognised as unions and put pressure on government to engage more with issues of migrant workers employed in the sector. While the Freedom Fund's hotspot project deals with Indonesian nationals working in seafood processing within Indonesia, the importance of links to larger unions, and also the *possibility* that workers in much more difficult circumstances than Indonesia's seafood workers can in fact be organised, are both salient.

From other sectors

Around the world, many land-based workers – including migrant workers, informal sector workers and workers in the gig economy – have trouble accessing national industrial relations institutions. This is the case even in the advanced economies of the Global North. The situation is worse in the Global South, where states have limited capacity (and often little incentive) to extend the coverage of their industrial relations systems beyond workers in traditional, formal-sector jobs (Ford and Gillan 2016). And Indonesia is of course no exception. As such, labour organising in less formalised industries, such as the production of palm oil, the provision of platform services and domestic work, also offers lessons for activists seeking to organise in Indonesia's fisheries and seafood processing sectors.

A number of large mainstream unions, and some smaller ones, have a presence in Indonesia's **oil palm** sector. Yet organising among oil palm workers is at best nascent. There are several reasons for this, many of which are also evident in commercial fishing and seafood processing:

- 1) The isolation of plantation work, which gives management enormous power over the everyday lives of plantation workers and especially their capacity to connect with outsiders.
- 2) The presence of large numbers of casual workers affects levels of unionisation, not because the law prohibits unionisation, but because most unions focus on permanent or at least contracted workers (Assalam and Parsaoran 2018, 24).
- 3) A growing number of oil palm plantation workers are not employed directly but through labour hire companies. Employers often use this distinction to avoid providing equal benefits to directly employed and outsourced workers, based on the fact that the labour hire company employs them (TPOLS 2020a, 2).
- 4) The denial of freedom of association. As is common in other sectors in Indonesia, plantation management sometimes supports the formation of "yellow" union to prevent independent unions from gaining a foothold in the workplace (TPOLS 2020b, 10). In other cases, management has actively interfered with freedom of association, for example paying members of the local community to undermine organising among the plantation workforce (Amnesty International 2016, 82; TPOLS 2020a, 2-3).



Image: Workers on a fishing vessel.
Photo credit: Armin Hari/The Freedom Fund

The lesson offered by this case is that the presence of a union is not enough: any organisation attempting to support or organise workers in non-standard sectors requires sector-specific approaches.

Labour organising amongst **gig workers** in the platform-based transportation sector is another case that can provide lessons for the seafood sector. There is a clear distinction between workers in the traditional formal sector, a proportion of whom are represented by trade unions, and those in digital labour, who tend to be unaware that trade unions can be a vehicle for them to improve their wages and conditions (Rahayu 2023). In several advanced economies, including the US and the UK, attempts to secure recognition for digital platform-based workers have had at least some success (ILO n.d.). There have also been some breakthroughs in less developed economies, such as in Nigeria, where the government has allowed platform drivers to form a sector-specific trade union (Solidarity Center 2023).

In Indonesia, there has been less progress in terms of legal recognition. Law No. 21/2000 on Trade Unions defines trade unions very narrowly, requiring that workers must have a formal employment relationship in order to form a union. Gig workers are positioned as partners (*mitra*) of their employers, making it difficult for them to form their own union. Instead, gig workers in Indonesia rely predominantly on community-based organisations rather than on formal unions. In 2021, there were more than 1,000 such communities in Jakarta alone, including Community Mobil Online Tambut, Sahabat 212 Bedahan Sawangan Depok and Gojek Grab Saudara (Fair Work 2022). There are also communities for women drivers, such as Srikandi, Lady Grab Jabodetabek, Lady Leader and Lady Merah Putih.

These driver communities tend to act as mutual aid associations, focusing their energy and resources on welfare and social activity (Ford and Honan 2019). Their organising approach is mostly organic. They target potential members, who gather in the community rest areas to charge their smartphones and purchase food. In addition, these driver communities have coalesced in driver associations, which successfully pressured the Indonesian government to permit platform-based employment despite pressure from established taxi companies. Between 2015 and 2016, the Indonesian government at first banned app-based transport workers, a move it later retracted in response to public outrage and widespread demonstrations by platform workers (Ford and Honan 2017).

Members of driver communities and associations have engaged in collective action to challenge threats to their livelihoods (Ford and Honan 2017; Ford and Honan 2019). Their tactics have included legal challenges, negotiation, large-scale demonstrations and no-bid actions, which operate in a similar way to a strike. Between September 2015 and February 2016, there were at least 50 protests, including one in which hundreds of platform workers demonstrated outside the platform's office. Members have also been known to protest about employment-related issues through no-bid actions, which add weight to workers' calls for change.

The strategies used by these worker associations are far more effective than the approaches to gig work taken to date by traditional unions – which tend to focus their limited resources on organising workers with permanent and fixed-term contracts – when attempting to engage with workers in less formal parts of the economy. Unions have a mandate to engage with workers whose income generation activity is consistent with employment as it is defined in the Manpower Law, namely that there is 1) employment (pekerjaan) 2) an order (perintah) and 3) wages (upah). It is the third component especially that prevents platform workers (and many commercial fishers) from being able to transition to employee status.

Table 4. Summary of promising approaches from other sectors

| Example | Approach | Key Lessons Learnt |
|--|---|--|
| Organising | | |
| Oil palm: mainstream unions, smaller unions, local and international NGO networks. | Attempts to organise independent unions in the oil palm sector. | Even with support from NGO networks and the involvement of some mainstream unions, challenges in the sector mean that organising has proven very difficult. |
| Platform-based workers: driver communities and associations. | Independent organising outside the industrial relations system. | Organising has been successful because the mutual aid approach responds quickly and directly to worker priorities, but absence of links to formal unions limits long-term impact. |
| Domestic workers: NGOs and NGO-supported worker organisations in Indonesia. | Prayer circles established as a vehicle for raising awareness of worker rights and to try to organise domestic workers. | Ways of attracting worker interest do not have to relate directly to their interests as workers, but training on rights in and of itself is of limited benefit if it does not generate mechanisms for exerting collective pressure, noting that the latter is very challenging in non-formal working contexts. |
| Overseas domestic workers: migrant-only unions supported by NGOs and mainstream unions in Hong Kong. | Prayer circles and ethnic associations used to raise awareness, later registered as formal unions. | Hong Kong's relatively open legal system meant that migrants could form their own unions while links to mainstream unions meant that domestic worker unions could achieve change even for workers in non-formal working situations (though noting that migrant domestic workers are more formalised than domestic workers within Indonesia); lessons are particularly salient for migrant fishers. |
| Servicing | | |
| Platform-based workers: driver communities and associations. | Mutual aid approach driven by driver communities themselves. | External support is not necessarily required for mutual aid, and mutual aid has certainly provided drivers with a reason to join these communities. |
| Domestic workers: NGOs and NGO-supported worker organisations in Indonesia. | Provided information about jobs and advice when needed. | Servicing can be a tool for organising, especially when part of a broader range of strategies. |
| Overseas domestic workers' unions supported by NGOs and mainstream unions in Hong Kong. | Provided temporary accommodation and handled labour cases (with support of NGOs). | Links to NGOs in particular were vital for resourcing service provision in this context. |

| Example | Approach | Key Lessons Learnt |
|---|---|--|
| Advocacy | | |
| Oil palm: mainstream unions, smaller unions, local and international NGO networks. | Networks have attempted to harness international concern about oil palm. | Has raised attention to the issue globally, but has not yet translated into better conditions for workers. |
| Platform-based workers: driver communities and associations, also mainstream unions. | Attempts to secure recognition for platform-based workers as workers. | Driver associations have had some success influencing government policy, but efforts have stalled due to lack of institutional power. |
| Domestic workers: NGOs and NGO-supported worker organisations in Indonesia. | NGO network advocated for national law; domestic worker organisations secured space for domestic workers to meet. | Law is on the agenda for the lower house (after considerable time), shows success of targeted advocacy for legal change; also shows the benefits of lobbying other powerholders such as local religious leaders. |
| Overseas domestic workers: migrant unions supported by NGOs and mainstream unions in Hong Kong. | Migrant-only unions advocated with union and NGO allies for policy change. | Secured a day off for domestic workers and a range of other protections, including around freedom to organise. |

The strategies driver communities have used to organise drivers, provide mutual aid and engage in legal advocacy have been relatively successful. But, as Ford and Honan (2019) argue, they must be complemented through closer articulation with registered trade unions – which are the only recognised form of worker representation within the formal industrial relations system – if driver associations and communities are to have any chance of achieving substantive, long-term change. Without a seat at the table, worker organisations cannot participate in the processes through which policy is made, nor formally represent workers in collective bargaining or disputes settlement processes.

A third sector that can provide lessons on organising techniques among seafood sector workers, including migrant fishers, is **domestic work**. Domestic workers are considered informal sector workers and are thus denied access to the minimum wage, paid rest days and work-related social protection such as health insurance. But this exclusion does not mean that there is no advocacy to change the status quo or that there is no organising among domestic workers.

In Indonesia itself, the National Advocacy Network for Domestic Workers (Jaringan Nasional Advokasi Pekerja Rumah Tangga, Jala PRT) has facilitated the creation and maintenance of domestic worker organisations in Yogyakarta, including Sapu Lidi, which expanded its membership base from 140 in 2014 to 2,035 in 2017, of whom 60 percent paid dues (ILO n.d.-a). Sapu Lidi provides three kinds of services for members, including providing information on job opportunities and offering consultations regarding contractual rights and obligations, as well as offering assistance when members are involved in legal cases. The Sapu Lidi case suggests that even poorly paid workers are prepared to make a financial contribution to an organisation where they see value in doing so.

Another group supported by Jala PRT began providing Muslim religious classes (pengajian) for domestic workers living in the Griya Arga Permai housing estate in Yogyakarta. At first, employers were willing to grant domestic workers time off so they could attend the meetings. But once they learned that the domestic workers also discussed labour rights at the classes, they stopped allowing the classes to take place at their homes, where the domestic workers also lived. The class then enlisted the help of religious leaders (imam) to speak with the employers, who then agreed to the resumption of the classes. This example demonstrates the benefits of alliance-building and networking.

Attention to these different sectors provides valuable lessons for organising seafood processing workers and fishers. First, attempts to organise oil palm plantation workers reveals four key challenges that impact organising:

- 1) Workers are often physically isolated, meaning that it is difficult for labour organisers to reach and maintain regular contact with workers.
- 2) Employer attitudes towards independent unions are discouraging, with management favouring employer-controlled unions and penalising workers.
- 3) It is particularly difficult to organise workers who do not have a direct relationship with their employer, a challenge that is especially difficult because of increasing levels of outsourcing in the sector.
- 4) The nature of the work means that traditional unions tend not to focus on this group of workers, choosing instead to direct their limited resources to organising workers with permanent or fixed-term employment.

Efforts to organise workers in the plantation sector are still in a nascent stage and it is as of yet difficult to identify practices that could be replicated. However, organising attempts among platform workers provides some good practices that have helped to overcome these challenges. Traditional unions have generally had difficulty organising platform workers, largely because of the nature of their work, which is not understood as employment according to the Manpower Law but also because the mobile nature of platform-based work, which poses a challenge to factory-based models of organising.

Independent of the large unions, platform-based transport workers have established mutual-aid communities and associations that have been influential in providing mutual aid and even in government-focused advocacy. These efforts have led to significant collective responses to the platforms, such as no-bid actions and negotiating outside of a formal industrial relations framework. A key drawback of this organising model is, however, that without trade union status these organisations have limited opportunity to engage with government and employers through the formal industrial relations system.

Organising activity in the domestic work sector also offers valuable lessons. Much like platform work, domestic work is not covered by the Manpower Law. Both types of workers do not have employers as they are defined and interpreted in Indonesian law. But even though the law has done so, domestic workers have still been able to organise outside formal structures, such as after-work meetings and through ethnic and religious networks. However, as the case with platform-based workers, domestic worker unions (where they exist) need to be connected to mainstream unions in order to have any chance of achieving broad, systemic change.



*Image: Fishermen working on a vessel.
Photo credit: Armin Hari/The Freedom Fund*



7.2 PROMISING APPROACHES TO INFLUENCING

Other countries and other sectors also offer valuable insights and lessons in terms of influencing. Key among them are the need to: (a) engage critically with market-led approaches, the vast majority of which ignore or pay lip service to worker rights, and (b) identify concrete and achievable targets for lobbying and advocacy campaigns.

Internationally

Internationally, efforts have been made to promote worker rights through campaigning. One approach taken has been a **market-based approach** tied to global supply chains and certification systems. In addition to supporting organising, the ITF runs the Justice for Fishers campaign, which advocates for labour and human rights worldwide (ITF n.d.). The campaign focuses on two countries: Thailand and Ireland. Labour exploitation and human rights abuses of fishers in Thailand is well-documented, but they are less well-known in relation to the Irish fisheries. But in both countries, the fishers are international migrants, which is reflective of employment in other foreign fisheries and fleets, including Taiwan. However, the situation in Indonesia is different in the sense that the fishers are not international migrants, but Indonesian nationals.

In addition, **international NGOs** such as Oxfam International and the Sustainable Seafood Alliance Indonesia have launched campaigns to bring human rights within seafood supply chains into focus. One of their primary targets is supermarkets, highlighting their responsibility to ensure that their supply chains are free from human rights and labour law violations. These advocacy groups believe that large supermarket chains, such as Costco, Kroger, Walmart, Tesco, Lidl and others, have the power to exert considerable pressure on producers of seafood. (Oxfam International and Aliansi Pangan Laut Berkelanjutan Indonesia 2018).

Most international certification mechanisms are concerned primarily with environmental sustainability, hygiene and quality control. One that focuses more on social criteria is Fair Trade USA (FTUSA), which is gaining some popularity among the producers and buyers. The FTUSA program aims to empower fishers by restructuring their activities, leading to economies of scale and improved bargaining power.

FTUSA involves the formation of producer associations to provide training and capacity building, with fishers receiving a fair-trade price for their catch. By increasing information, market access and economic benefits, FTUSA strives to enhance the conditions of local producers. The Capture Fisheries Standard (CFS) within FTUSA focuses on the social dimension of work and environmental impacts, while the Trade Standard ensures transactional safeguards and reporting requirements (Borland and Bailey 2019; Bailey et al. 2016).

While market-based approaches have helped to bring attention to labour abuse in the commercial fishing sector, overall they are much more focused on product quality and environmental sustainability than on worker rights. There is room to advocate for more of a focus on worker rights within certification systems, and international and local NGOs have an important role to play in this regard. However, worker-driven initiatives are necessary if long-term change is to be achieved.

From other sectors

Examples of influencing in other sectors include the National Advocacy Network for Domestic Workers (Jaringan Nasional Advokasi Pekerja Rumah Tangga, Jala PRT), which has engaged in a sustained campaign to convince government to pass legislation regarding the employment of domestic workers. Jala PRT is an advocacy network that brings together domestic worker groups in eight regions of the country. As a result of this advocacy, the Domestic Worker Protection Bill was listed as priority 15 out of 41 on the National Legislative Agenda for 2023. The national legislature regularly fails to pass all prioritised bills, but the fact that it is relatively high on the list of priorities increases the chances that it will be passed ahead of 26 legislative amendments and other bills slated for consideration in the 2023 calendar year. This follows several years in which the bill was slated for consideration but ultimately rolled over to another year.

A second example is the union campaign for universal social security, driven by the Federation of Indonesian Metalworkers Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Metal, FSPMI). Law No. 40/2004 concerning the National Social Security System extended the system's coverage to all Indonesians, to be financed by employers, employees and the government, which would subsidise coverage for the poor. To bring it into full force, it required implementing legislation that would specify how the principles of the social security system would be achieved. In March 2010, a coalition of unions and NGOs led by FSPMI established the Action Committee for Social Security Reform (Komite Aksi Jaminan Sosial, KAJS), which played a central role in securing this implementing law through the deployment of a sophisticated array of tactics, combining mobilisation in the streets with lobbying, lawsuits and stronger alliances with individual politicians and civil society organisations (see Cole and Ford 2014; Caraway and Ford 2020).

It is also worth reflecting on how, in some industries – most notably garment manufacturing – pressure from consumers and labour movement actors has not only forced lead firms to introduce internal checks and balances within their supply chains but also has influenced the operation of Indonesia's national industrial relations system (Amengual and Chirot 2016, Ford and Gillan 2017, Locke et al 2013).



Image: Fishermen on a vessel.
Photo credit: Armin Hari/The Freedom Fund

8. DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

A **key point of difference** between the Freedom Fund hotspot initiative and the many other international initiatives that engage with Indonesia's seafood sector is its focus on organising as a long-term strategy to promote labour rights. This point of difference is warmly welcomed in a field dominated by market-based approaches. However, it does require a long-term commitment, since organising is much slower and harder work than either advocacy or servicing. This fundamental difference should also be recognised when assessing the relative contributions of the hotspot partners that employ different strategies and allocating support to them.

The seafood sector is a challenging one for labour organising because of the structure of the industry and the nature of work within it. However, seafood sector workers have succeeded in organising in other countries. The experience of Thailand in particular demonstrates that **even the most precarious of seafood workers can organise** and that local NGOs and local unions, as well as international NGOs and unions, have an important role to play in supporting that organising work. Moreover, while seafood workers face some specific challenges, the barriers to organising are not necessarily any greater than those experienced by many other groups of factory-based workers in Indonesia.

Supporting workers to organise is ultimately the most successful way to achieve long-term, grassroots-driven change in the seafood sector. Through worker-driven unions or associations, workers can themselves advocate for better wages, improved working conditions and other labour rights. Having a recognised union – even in cases where unions are quite conservative and service-oriented – gives workers additional leverage because it allows them to engage in structured collective bargaining and access formal industrial relations mechanisms.

This does not mean that NGOs have no place in organising work. While unions and worker associations are best equipped to organise workers, **collaboration between workers' organisations and NGOs** has proven successful in Indonesia in other industries (for example, garment manufacturing in the 1990s) and in neighbouring countries such as in Thailand. NGOs can provide resources, support and networks to enhance the capabilities of worker organisations in the seafood sector, as we can see in the case of DFW's work with SAKTI Sulut and ISBS's work with the Kedungrejo Workers Association. It is important, however, that NGOs create space for workers not only as implementers but as leaders and strategists, and to support workers to succeed in these tasks.

Within the sector, opportunities for **organising** are potentially greatest in seafood processing because of the concentrated and grounded nature of seafood processing work. In Banyuwangi and Bitung, hotspot partners are encouraging seafood processing workers to form unions outside of their respective companies as a first step towards establishing unions inside them.

Enterprise-level organising is more challenging among **fishers**, but the geographical concentration of the local industry around a series of major ports offers potential for regionally based organising as a step towards enterprise engagement with large employers. SAKTI Sulut has already begun experimenting with this two-pronged approach. Even more limited are opportunities to form effective worker organisations for migrant fishers because they are deployed to companies scattered around the globe. This necessarily limits the capacity of Indonesian regulators and unions to influence their practice. However, SPPI's strategy of establishing representative posts in key port countries is currently focused on servicing but could be leveraged for organising.

In terms of **servicing**, the hotspot partners engage in a range of activities for workers, their families and their communities. Servicing for local fishers and seafood workers includes case handling and education and training, as well securing access to affordable healthcare and other public services. It also includes efforts to negotiate CBAs on behalf of migrant fishers. There is room for a concerted push to ensure that migrant fisher CBAs represent migrant fishers' interests and do not just replicate legal minimums. Stronger mechanisms are also required to ensure effective implementation.



Image: Muara Baru, Penjaringan.
Photo credit: Unsplash/Refhad

Hotspot partners representing **local fishers** on medium and larger vessels should be strongly encouraged to negotiate CBAs on behalf of their members to complement and strengthen the individual contracts required by government. While this constitutes a more difficult challenge in the first place because they are not specifically required by government, monitoring and enforcement of them is potentially more effective because of the geographical concentration of the local industry. Other forms of servicing, such as providing support for fishers' families, may be socially useful but – in contrast to organisationally focused forms of education and effective case management – are unlikely to contribute to organising.

Unions, NGOs and advocacy networks are already playing an important role in **advocating** for better policies and practices. Nevertheless, the hotspot partners have collective opportunities for strengthening joint evidence-building and influencing activities that are currently underutilised. A potential hurdle in this respect is the level of trust among organisations in the sector, including the hotspot partners, driven by differing perspectives, the structural differences between land-based and sea-based organisational structures, and the different imperatives associated with organising workers employed in Indonesia and abroad.

International pressure and support can also play a significant role in improving labour conditions in the seafood industry. However, it is important for international players to consider the implications of pursuing their agendas in any given country. While international pressure can be a catalyst for improvements in labour conditions, it also has the potential to create unintended negative consequences, particularly for employers who are the primary targets of such advocacy.

There may be instances where companies respond to international pressure by seeking ways to silence workers rather than engage with them. It is therefore vital that international advocacy aimed at improving labour conditions is coupled with a constructive dialogue focused on developing sustainable strategies that benefit workers without negatively affecting employers in the longer term.

8.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE HOTSPOT PARTNERS

To strengthen their collective impact and drive positive change in the seafood industry, SBMI, AP2I, DFW, ISBS, SAKTI Sulut, Srikandi and SPPI should consider the following recommendations:

1. FOCUS ON PLAYING TO THEIR OWN STRENGTHS.


While not intending to do so, the Freedom Fund hotspot program has worked thus far to encourage partners to attempt to engage with at least two, if not all three, target groups. Based on our fieldwork and best practice in other sectors, we recommend that this strategy be revisited so that hotspot partners can play to their own strengths both in terms of target sub-sectors but also activity domains. NGOs are best suited to research, advocacy and servicing. While unions can also engage successfully in advocacy and servicing, their potential strength lies in their capacity to move beyond these activities and into organising.

Experience in other sectors suggests that collaboration between unions and NGOs, and between unions, can produce better outcomes than working alone. Deeper collaboration could benefit individual partners as well as the program as a whole. An obvious starting point for such collaboration is between Srikandi, a new grassroots organisation targeting seafood processing workers, and ISBS, the only other hotspot partner with a substantive interest in this sub-sector. Collaboration may be more difficult to achieve between the migrant fisher-focused organisations, which have quite different perspectives on strategy.

2. CONSIDER DEVELOPING A HYBRID WORKPLACE/REGIONAL UNIONISATION STRATEGY FOR GRASSROOTS ORGANISING.

Regional unions can be a game-changer for local fishers and seafood processing workers. The formation of these bodies can provide an authoritative voice for the workers, allowing them to negotiate from a position of strength. Lessons from the garment industry and the gig economy can be leveraged, where geographically based unionisation strategies (which are different from the village-based strategies adopted by some hotspot partners) have resulted in significant progress with regard to labour rights.

At the same time, it is important to develop a stronger focus on workplace organising. There is a risk with regional unions that membership is spread thinly over a range of workplaces and thus fails to be strong in any. Ideally, grassroots organisations for local fishers and seafood processing workers would develop a strategy that includes both. As a longer-term strategy, we recommend that port-level organising is prioritised for local fishers and workplace-level organising for seafood processing workers.



*Image: Women working in a processing unit.
Photo credit: Armin Hari/The Freedom Fund*

3. INCORPORATE AN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS APPROACH IN SERVICING STRATEGIES FOR LOCAL WORKERS.

CBA's can be a strong instrument in safeguarding workers' rights and ensuring fair negotiations. In established industrial democracies, this approach keeps the dialogue open between workers and employers, reducing the risk of labour abuses and unrest. Currently AP2I and SPPI are the only hotspot partners that negotiate CBA's. There is an opportunity to leverage government requirements for the negotiation of CBA's to develop agreements that better serve workers' interests and to develop more robust, worker-centred approaches to enforcement.

There is little evidence, meanwhile, that any of the grassroots organisations working with local fishers or seafood workers are prioritising any kind of collective bargaining (with the partial exception of SAKTI Sulut). There are significant barriers to workplace-level organising for local fishers, who frequently change employers and who work in relatively small groups even on large vessels. These barriers do not exist for seafood processing workers who, while often on rolling contracts, are generally employed at the same factory for years if not decades.

Adoption of this strategy would require a significant change in the nature of the workers targeted. Most of the organisations that are engaging with local fishers are focused exclusively on fishers who work on small vessels and who are likely to remain firmly in the informal economy. Our recommendation is that they begin to do the (more difficult) work of organising fishers on larger vessels. Similarly, we recommend that ISBS and Srikandi focus more strongly on seafood processing workers who are employed on fixed-term or permanent contracts rather than focusing on workers employed on a daily basis. Workers in more secure employment are an important target for any attempt to build collective power in the workplace and should be targeted even before factory-based organising begins.

4. GROW STRATEGIC ALLIANCES WITH MAINSTREAM UNIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATIONS.

Strategic alliances with the mainstream labour movement are vital if the hotspot partners wish to achieve traction on labour relations nationally through the Ministry of Manpower. Educating mainstream unions about the importance of organising in the seafood sector should be an important aspect of this work. In addition, unions and NGOs could encourage certification bodies to develop comprehensive social and labour standards and monitor their implementation as well as strengthening their alliances with environmental organisations.

5. STRENGTHEN JOINT EVIDENCE-BUILDING AND CAMPAIGNING.

National and international campaigns increase public awareness of the difficulties that workers in the seafood sector confront. Collective opportunities for strengthening joint evidence-building and influencing activities across the six organisations are as follows:

- a) **Identify potential areas for joint evidence-building and campaigning:** While each of the hotspot partners has their own priorities and ways of working, there are many potential points of common interest.

One option would be to advocate for greater space for collective bargaining for local fishers. Partners could advocate for extension of the CBA model to local fishers employed on vessels of 30 GT or more. In this case a port-based model would create opportunities for organizing among local fishers.

Alternatively, they could advocate for a seafood workers' protocol that would serve as a benchmark for employers and a tool for advocacy groups pushing for improved conditions. Experience from the garment industry suggests that such industry-specific protocols can provide a framework for workers' rights. A task force consisting of representatives from unions, NGOs and potentially government bodies and employers' associations could be set up to draft and refine a protocol. Once established, awareness campaigns could be run to ensure that all stakeholders understand and adhere to it.

- b) **Joint policy advocacy:** Hotspot partners can collaborate to develop joint policy advocacy campaigns and initiatives and build relationships with policymakers, both at the national and local levels. By engaging in constructive dialogue and providing evidence-based recommendations, they can enhance their credibility and influence their policy decisions.

An important potential focus for joint advocacy efforts is for better enforcement of established mechanisms (e.g., workplace and port inspections) as well as disputes resolution procedures. By leveraging their collective voices and resources, they can have a stronger impact on policymaking processes and influence the development and implementation of approaches that benefit seafood workers.

- c) **Sharing and pooling resources:** By combining their expertise and conducting joint research, hotspot partners can generate robust evidence with greater weight and credibility. Hotspot partners can collaborate to share data, research findings and best practices. By pooling their resources, they can collectively build a stronger evidence base to support advocacy efforts.

Hotspot partners should also consider working with academic organisations and research institutes to strengthen their evidence-building activities. Collaborating with experts in relevant fields can enhance the quality and credibility of their research output and provide access to additional resources and networks.

- d) **Leveraging international networks:** Organisations like SPPI, AP2I and DFW can tap into their international networks and collaborations to amplify their advocacy efforts. By working with international organisations and platforms, they can raise awareness about the challenges faced by workers in the seafood industry on a global scale and advocate for international standards and regulations that protect workers' rights. Leveraging these networks will broaden hotspot partners' reach and strengthen their position in influencing global seafood supply chains.

- e) **Generating further resources for evidence-building and influencing:** Collectively, they can engage with funding agencies and philanthropic organisations support initiatives related to labour rights, fisheries and social justice. Their financial support and networks provide additional resources for evidence-based policy advocacy.

By embracing these collaborative approaches to joint action and influencing, the hotspot partners can maximise their impact, create synergy among their efforts and drive positive change in the seafood industry. The sharing of resources, expertise and best practices will enable them to address common challenges more effectively and achieve their shared goals of promoting workers' rights, improving working conditions and advocating for a sustainable and just seafood sector.



Image: Fixing the nets.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FREEDOM FUND AND HUMANITY UNITED

The Freedom Fund and Humanity United have a crucial role to play in supporting the hotspot partners to maximise their impact. Efforts to encourage streamlining and collaboration, but also strategic deployment of resources and regular reviews, can contribute to a dynamic and impactful network that effectively advances the rights of workers in the seafood sector.

Based on our findings, our recommendations for the Freedom Fund and Humanity United are as follows:

1. ESTABLISH A MODEL THAT BETTER DIFFERENTIATES BETWEEN ADVOCACY, SERVICING AND ORGANISING, AND THAT BETTER SUPPORTS ORGANISING WORK.

It was clear during our fieldwork that there is significant confusion among hotspot partners, but also among Freedom Fund staff, about the differences between advocacy, servicing and organising. Most hotspot partners identified servicing activities (even advocacy) as organising. While servicing activities can potentially encourage organising, they should not be used as proxies for organising. For example, training may encourage workers to think about their rights and how to act collectively, but such training in and of itself does not guarantee that those workers will come together and develop the institutional mechanisms and strategies required to actually achieve them. The same can be said for efforts to secure individual and collective justice for workers who have experienced forced labour or milder forms of labour exploitation. Such efforts may demonstrate the benefits of unionisation but do not in and of themselves constitute unionisation.

2. SUPPORT SPECIALISATION.

While some forms of advocacy make sense at a sector-wide level, more specialised approaches by sub-sector (migrant fishers, local fishers, seafood processing workers) are more likely to promote real and lasting change.

A separate but related consideration is that not all organisations are equally well placed to undertake advocacy, servicing and organising work. While some NGOs have an established history of labour organising and strong links to unions in other sectors, most NGOs in the seafood sector have no background in labour issues. Not surprisingly, the latter group have little understanding of the nuts and bolts of organising work. Similarly, while organisations that have a long history of engagement with migrant fishers may not be able to develop the skills and expertise to engage effectively with local fishers, the shift required to work effectively with seafood processing workers would be enormous. In a third example, organisations that have adopted a village-based servicing approach may struggle to come to terms with the far greater challenges of workplace organising.

Rather than adopting a “let one thousand flowers bloom” approach, it would be more beneficial for the Freedom Fund to develop a clearer set of indicators against which to assess different organisations’ aspirations, plans and actions, and to inform decisions about where to best direct resources in order to maximise the hotspot program’s impact. While NGO and migrant unions have an important role to play in advocacy and servicing, a more useful long-term approach to servicing and organising local fishers and seafood workers would be to change the strategy from retrofitting those organisations to supporting others that are purpose-designed to engage with local fishers and seafood processing workers.

3. HELP PARTNER UNIONS AND WORKER ASSOCIATIONS HONE OR ACQUIRE ORGANISING SKILLS.

Organising involves galvanising a typically disparate group of individuals to act together in their common interests and providing them with the skills – an understanding of labour law, strong communication and negotiation skills, and, often, the courage to stand up to powerful interests – required to effect change in the workplace. Some partner unions and worker associations have demonstrated some or all of these skills. However, most, if not all, could benefit from opportunities to engage with mainstream unions (large and small) that have expertise in this area. A potential area for development is to design a



structured program in which partners that are involved in organising are provided with opportunities to engage with experienced organisers from other sectors. Exposure to experienced organisers may also be useful for partners that are engaged in advocacy and servicing work.

4. SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEANINGFUL LINKS WITH MAINSTREAM UNIONS AND LABOUR NGOS.

The proposed skills development program should be part of a broader strategy of promoting engagement with mainstream unions and labour NGOs. Although networks among organisations with a focus on the sector are growing in strength, it is important to move beyond these and engage more broadly, as there is much work to be done to raise the profile of the sector even within the mainstream unions that currently serve it. An expanded network would create pathways to more meaningful engagement with the Ministry of Manpower and lay the foundation for joint campaigns on CBAs and other mechanisms for protecting workers' rights.

5. PROMOTE STRATEGIC COLLABORATION AMONG PARTNERS.

Fostering strategic collaboration among partner organisations is key to achieving a coordinated and cohesive approach. Clear communication channels, regular meetings and joint planning sessions should be established to align objectives, strategies and activities. It is important that these sessions are truly participatory and not simply forums for reporting.

Collaboration should extend beyond individual projects to encompass long-term partnerships built on trust, shared values and common goals. By fostering strategic collaborations, the network can leverage the collective strengths of partner organisations and maximise their impact. The most developed example of this kind is the collaboration between DFW, SAKTI Sulut and Srikandi in North Sulawesi. ISBS is a potentially useful addition to this cluster because of its links to factory-based unions through SBK and its evident commitment to organising workers. As noted above, other opportunities for strategic collaboration include joint advocacy campaigns.

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ANNEX A. DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

Data used in the report were collected by the investigators. In the first phase, we conducted a desk review of materials from Indonesia and other relevant countries, as well as 30 key informant interviews with government officials, employers and employer associations, and unions and labour activists from NGOs in Indonesia and internationally. These interviews were conducted in English either in Jakarta or using an online meeting platform. We also conducted initial consultations with the hotspot partners for the purpose of mapping their organisational histories, skills and expertise, current activities and operational capacity, as well as opportunities to test out more innovative approaches to their work.

In the second phase, members of the team visited key sites of engagement for a selection of hotspot partners, namely Banyuwangi, Bitung, Jakarta, Pemalang and Tegal. There, we observed the activities of the hotspot partners and engaged in intensive discussions with them about their hopes for the future and the challenges they faced. While in the field, we conducted semi-structured group interviews with 72 fishers and 60 seafood processing workers in order to document their experiences working in the industry and their interactions with the hotspot partners. We also spoke to local industry representatives and government officials. All second-phase interviews were conducted in Indonesian, a language in which all three team members have native or near-native fluency. All members of the team are experienced qualitative researchers and, in most cases, did not have difficulty securing interviews or engaging informants in candid conversations.

Ethics clearances were secured for this study and data were collected in an ethical manner. Interviewees were informed about the nature and purpose of the study, that they were free to accept or decline an invitation to participate in the study and that they could withdraw at any time. A summary of indicative interview questions for each group of informants is included in Annex B. Key informants from unions, NGOs, companies and international organisations were asked, where relevant, whether they are willing to be quoted directly or with reference to their organisational position. Care has been taken to present 1) an informed view of the issues covered and 2) a respectful view of the organisations' roles and activities. All data collected from seafood sector workers are reported anonymously. Workers interviewed were given a small honorarium for their time and provided a travel allowance to attend group interviews.

Once the documentary and interview data were collected, they were analysed using thematic coding methods. In order to resolve conflicting information, we referred back to key informants for clarification and elaboration and engaged at different points in the data analysis process with the hotspot partners to sense-check our findings. The report's findings were shared and validated at a workshop involving all the hotspot partners that had participated in the study in August 2023. This opportunity was also used to support strategic planning activities, including the identification of opportunities for joint evidence-building and influencing, and to facilitate purposeful networking between the hotspot partners.

ANNEX B. INDICATIVE INTERVIEW TOPICS

Indicative topics for each of our interview cohorts were as follows:

1. SEAFOOD WORKERS

Personal history of work in the sector

- Reasons for seeking employment in the sector (life narrative)
- General conditions at work and perception of those conditions
- Main problems at work and why those problems happen
- Specific issues that affect seafood sector workers
- Do workers ever make formal complaints/reports to the employer? What does the employer do?
- Do they use informal mechanisms, for example confronting their supervisor or acting collectively?
- Current or previous forms of support or intervention provided by other organisations before or during employment (e.g., unions, CSOs, ethnic or religious associations, government services, recruitment/manning agencies)
- Desirable forms of support or intervention by other organisations before or during employment
- Assessment of the effectiveness of that support including long-term impacts
- Ideas for improving recruitment practices and industrial relations practices in the commercial seafood sector

2. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND TRADE UNIONS

- Understanding of labour rights abuse in the commercial seafood sector (scope, causes etc)
- Current strategies by the Indonesian government to address violation of labour rights of commercial seafood workers in Indonesia and changes in approach/focus in the past five years
- Current strategies by international organisations, INGOs and global unions to improve working conditions and changes in approach/focus in the past five years, including strategies that seek to provide support as a collective - i.e., collective bargaining; workers coming together to collectively demand better conditions
- Employer and recruitment/manning agents' responses to labour rights violations in the commercial seafood sector
- Current strategies within the organisation/union and any changes in approach in the past five years
- Details of direct support from international organisations on labour rights in Indonesia's commercial seafood sector
- Assessment of internal/external strategies and efforts to date including successes, barriers and opportunities
- How much emphasis has been put on labour organising strategies vs other kinds of strategies, like policy advocacy or legal case work?
- What do your organising strategies look like and how do they work?

- What strategies have been successful and why? What challenges or barriers must be overcome to put these strategies into practice?
- What impact have international programs that focus on improving workers' collective rights in the sector had on the issue? How could these programs be improved?
- Top strategies to improve industrial relations practices in the commercial seafood sector in the next five years

3. INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS / INGOS / GLOBAL UNIONS

- Understanding of labour rights issues in Indonesia's commercial seafood sector (scope, causes etc)
- Current strategies at the international level and changes in approach/focus in the past five years
- Current strategies within the organisation and any changes in approach in the past five years, including strategies that seek to provide support as a collective - i.e., collective bargaining; workers coming together to collectively demand better conditions
- Assessment of internal/external strategies and efforts to date including successes, barriers and opportunities
- How much emphasis has been put on labour organising strategies vs other kinds of strategies, like policy advocacy or legal case work?
- What do your organising strategies look like and how do they work?
- What strategies have been successful and why? What challenges or barriers must be overcome to put these strategies into practice?
- What impact have international programs that focus on improving workers' collective rights in the sector had on the issue? How could these programs be improved?
- Relationship between their organisation and Indonesia-based actors (unions, employers) in addressing the issue
- Barriers to working with local organisations on the issue
- Indonesian government's position and influence in the issue
- Top strategies to reduce labour rights violations in the fishing industry at work in the next five years

4. INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT

- General trends on the fishing sector and relative importance to the Indonesian economy
- Perspectives on employment relations in the commercial seafood sector, including measures to improve them
- Policies on labour rights protection for commercial seafood workers at the national, provincial and local level
- Assessment of the effectiveness of those policies
- Awareness of and perspectives on international norms around working conditions for commercial seafood workers
- Extent to which trade unions and NGOs have shaped responses internationally and within Indonesia
- Perspectives on the different roles of government, employers, NGOs and unions in responding to any difficulties faced by seafood workers

5. EMPLOYERS/RECRUITMENT/MANNING AGENCIES

- Information on the company, position in Indonesian/global seafood supply chains, general issues for seafood workers
- Awareness of government policies and labour regulation on labour rights in the commercial seafood sector
- Perspectives on current employment relations practices within the sector
- How poor practices are identified, reported and dealt with
- Assessment of unions' and NGOs' involvement in this process
- How do they work with unions/NGOs (including challenges, successes) and are they willing to consider working in new/improved ways?
- What steps do they take to understand the key needs of workers?
- Suggestions for improving employer responses to poor practices in the fishing industry.



Image: Fishing vessel workers fixing the nets at a port in North Sulawesi. Photo credit: Armin Hari/ The Freedom Fund

VISION

Our vision is a world
free of slavery.

MISSION

Our mission is to mobilise the
knowledge, capital and will
needed to end slavery.

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