

International
Labour
Organization

Working with  **outh**

**TIPS FOR FISHING ENTERPRISES WITH
YOUNG WORKERS IN MYANMAR**

**Myanmar Programme On the Elimination of Child Labour
(MY-PEC)**

KEEP THEM SAFE

Working with Youth

TIPS FOR FISHING ENTERPRISES WITH YOUNG WORKERS IN MYANMAR

This booklet is for boat owners and managers of fishing operations which employ young workers, especially those between 14 and 18 years old. It describes what you need to know when hiring and managing younger workers and how to ensure that your operation is safe for all workers and profitable for you.

Myanmar Programme On the Elimination of Child Labour (My-PEC)
Fundamental Principles and Right at Work (Fundamentals)
International Labour Organization (ILO)

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**GENERAL
GUIDELINES**

KEEP THEM SAFE

TO THE OWNER OR MANAGER OF A FISHING OPERATION . . .

This manual is for you.

Myanmar's fisheries are an important source of food and income for rural families. While people appreciate having fish on the table, not all realize the major challenges you have to contend with to put it there: declining fish stocks due to overfishing by outsiders, pollution, the rising cost of fuel and other inputs, long distances and poor roads which make it difficult to transport fresh fish as well as to get access to health care, and the constant challenge of bad weather, hot sun, and rough seas.

To help meet these challenges, small fishing enterprises draw on family members or young workers to help in all stages of the operation -- from preparing the boats and fishing gear to preserving the catch. It is true, because of their strength and energy, young workers have a key role in Myanmar's fishing industry. Young workers are a great asset because they:

- learn fast
- have quick reflexes and are energetic
- have good eyesight and hearing
- appreciate the chance to learn skills and are anxious to do well
- are enthusiastic with a great work ethic
- are adaptable and flexible, often able to work part-time or on weekends or outside school hours when you do not require a full time worker
- most likely have gone to school and are literate and numerate, which often produces new ideas for making a business more efficient and productive.

WHO ARE YOUNG WORKERS?

According to Myanmar law, which is in accordance with international labour standards, young workers are young people who are over age 14. The upper age limit is not defined in law but generally considered to be age 24. Therefore, it is legal for you to employ young people full-time who are in the age range 14-24.

However, there are restrictions on the type of work that young workers can do. An international law called the "Work in Fishing Convention", 2007 (No. 188) sets the minimum age for work on fishing vessels at 16, or age 15 if the young person is in training.

3 TIPS FOR WORKING WITH YOUNG WORKERS

1. **Training is crucial.** Youth make good workers if they are
 - Given clear instructions, observed doing the task, have their mistakes corrected if any, and then checked again periodically.
 - Shown, not just told what to do (they learn best by observing).
 - Surrounded by good role models. Make sure that adult workers are setting a good example.
 - Treated kindly.
-

2. **They deserve care.** Young workers need special consideration because they are:
 - still growing and their organs, muscles, and bones are still developing
 - more sensitive to certain chemicals, toxic fumes, or noise than adults
 - quick to move — sometimes without thinking — and more likely to take risks
 - less experienced and may not yet have the judgement for tasks that require careful critical thinking.
 - bored more easily and may let their attention wander

Young workers may look like adults on the outside but on the inside, both physically and emotionally, they are not fully mature. They want to please and do not want to appear stupid. As a result they may take on tasks they do not really know how to do, or let other workers talk them into doing things they have not yet been trained for. Although generally strong, smart and eager, young workers must be kept away from jobs or places or situations where they will be put at risk.

3. **They are not machines!** Look at the young worker as a whole person. Pay attention to
 - whether the young worker has completed compulsory schooling, has a school certificate and has learned to read, write, and do arithmetic well.
 - how the young worker behaves and seems to feel: anxious? sad? shy?
 - signs that the young worker does not have enough food, sleep, clothing or housing
 - what the young worker wants to learn and her/his hopes for the future.

If something is lacking in one of these areas, the employer or supervisor can often provide or direct the young person to the kind of help that will set him or her on the right track for the future.

WHO ARE CHILD LABOURERS?

A lot of people are confused about what is and what is not child labour.

First, a child is anyone under the age of 18 according to international law.¹ This age is set because their bodies and minds are still maturing up until about that age and so they merit special protection.

Second, what is child labour? It is not all work done by children, but rather the kind of work that interferes with a child's education, development or well-being, or which might damage them in some way (physically, socially, mentally, psychologically or morally). Myanmar has set the age for entry into regular work at 14 because this is when most children would be finishing school.

Work in the form of chores and helping the family is encouraged as long as it is age-appropriate and does not endanger children in any of the above ways. For example, we would not call it 'child labour' if a child works less than an hour or two a day as this amount of work is unlikely to interfere with her education. If s/he worked longer than that, s/he might not have enough time or energy to do homework and would not be able to do well in school.

What if the work does pose a danger to a child's health and well-being? In this case, only persons over age 18 should be allowed to do it. This is "off limits" to children in the age group, 14-17, and we call it "hazardous" work. Myanmar law states that children under 18 years of age must not do hazardous work.

KEY FACTS ABOUT HAZARDOUS WORK

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182, adopted by most countries including Myanmar, hazardous work is: "...work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children". Young workers should therefore not be allowed to do these tasks if they below 18 years of age. Hazardous work includes:

- work in or under water (diving, standing in water or on damp ground for more than a few minutes)
- lifting heavy items or carrying loads for long distances
- operating or working close to heavy or dangerous machinery
 - equipment that cuts or crushes
 - equipment that is motorized or powered by an engine (e.g. a winch)
 - machines that can trap the foot or clothing

¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 32

- work for long hours or at night
- work with toxic chemicals or close to where they are being used, as well as in heavy dust or smoke
- work in places where there is risk of attack going to and from work
- work demanding heavy responsibility for others' safety or goods
- work in small spaces (e.g. boxes, refrigerators)
- work alone away from others, or isolated from other young people

Many of these are found in fishing operations, and this is why fishing is regarded as one of the most dangerous types of work in the world. However, there are many tasks in the fishing industry that can be done by young workers. The challenge is to know where to safely draw the line. On board a fishing vessel this can vary by the number of hours on the water, the weather conditions, the type of gear used, the processes used to capture fish, the need for diving and, overall, the general working (and living) conditions on board the vessel.

This booklet will help you identify recognize hazardous work and deal with it in ways that make good business sense.

KEY FACTS ABOUT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY OF YOUTH

Workplace accidents and illnesses can have tragic consequences for workers and their families. They can also have a very bad impact on your operation, due to a tarnished reputation, workers absent because they have become hurt or sick, skilled workers leaving to go to another outfit, and medical costs.

In contrast, if the work is done safely, it is more efficient and more productive. As an employer, it is worth your while to make sure that your fishing operation is safe for all your workers. A place made safe for young workers is safe for all!

Because there are many advantages to hiring young workers, you want to use them in the best way. You will want to assign them tasks which draw on their strengths. But youth need to be protected from work situations that they are not ready for yet. Whether you have youth serving an apprenticeship or those over the legal working age doing regular work or a family member just helping out, this booklet will tell you some of the things you need to know about how to protect your younger workers.²

2 The content of the *Safe Work for Youth* materials was prepared by international health and safety professionals but as no document can cover all circumstances, the user must take responsibility for applying this information.

FOUR GOLDEN RULES

1

Know the legal age for regular work. In Myanmar, it is 14 years. Do not let anyone below that age work or even be present on the boats!

2

Give every young worker a work contract. A written and signed contract – even for part-time or single day workers -- protects you, as well as your young employees and helps avoid misunderstandings by making clear the rights and obligations of both.

3

Train and supervise. It is your obligation to teach young workers what they need to know to do the job well, and how to stay safe while doing it. Supervise all young workers, apprentices and trainees closely.

4

Do not let anyone under 18 do hazardous work. If the working conditions or the work itself is dangerous, let adults do it.

Remember, the tips in this booklet are not just good for young workers; they are good for your own pocketbook. It has been proven time and time again, that simple improvements can actually make your business more profitable. Equipping a young worker with skills and experience for the future will also yield rewards many times over. A worker you train yourself knows the fishing business. There is no better way to build loyalty and trust. Invest in the future. Invest in a young worker!

Read through this booklet, and see what makes sense to you. Then set up a plan to make changes step by step. The checklist at the end may be a big help.



Put a circle around all the hazards you can find in this drawing. Put a double circle around those which are especially dangerous and which you would take action on immediately.

WORKING WITH YOUNG WORKERS: THE BASICS

If you have read this far, it shows you are a concerned person who wants to have a safe operation. You will become known as a good owner of a fishing operation and be more competitive through efficiency, good quality work, and reduced accidents. The ideas and solutions provided in this booklet do not come out of thin air. They have been developed and tested time and time again with thousands of enterprises like yours.

The following section outlines some general rules to keep in mind when you have young people working for you.

Here are some of the basic principles to keep in mind if you have young workers in your operation.

1: MAKE IT “OK” TO ASK QUESTIONS

Young workers need guidance, especially at the beginning, but are often too shy to ask questions. Respectful of authority, they may be reluctant to speak directly to you. Above all, they don't want to lose their job by saying something that might displease you. However, most injuries and mistakes of young people occur simply because they are not sure of how to do the job right and try to figure it out on their own. The best way to prevent this from happening is to create an atmosphere in which it is “OK” to ask questions and to provide constant supervision. Tell the young worker that it is OK to speak frankly and to raise any concerns he might have.

2: ENGAGE THE PARENTS

Many fishing operations are family-owned, or are otherwise linked with the family of the young worker. For this reason, training the parent may be the best way to train the child. It is the family which may feel such great economic distress that s/he is forced to remove a young person from school in order to work in the fishing industry. Or, it might be strong cultural tradition that dictates children should learn fishing skills at an early age in order to take over the family business later on. In any case, the decision of whether or not to go fishing is not likely to be made by the young person but by his or her elders. And so it is they who need to understand the changing dangers and the implications that these hold for the future of their child.

3: MAKE IT SAFE FOR YOUTH

Make sure you know the risks in all the tasks in your fishing operation – looking at it from the standpoint of the younger workers. If young workers are safe, all workers will be safer. A good way to do this is to let both the young and older ones help you in identifying hazards and suggesting solutions; they are an ideal source of information because they experience the haz-

ards directly. See that the first aid box, fire extinguishers, communications equipment, signal flares and other emergency devices are ready to use and that young workers know where they are and what to do. Prepare them for all kinds of emergency: accidents, fires, violent situations, etc. Show them how to escape a sinking boat or a fire and explain where to go if they need medical treatment. Demonstrate the safety precautions to take for each task. While physical safety is important, consider psychological well-being as well because all situations that can lead to fatigue, stress, or harassment can have a direct effect on the attitudes of workers and their productivity.

SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

The following section looks at a few of the ways (it cannot cover them all) you can protect your younger workers and those which will most likely have the added benefit of improving productivity and efficiency. Some of the most important areas of action for fishing are presented first.

KEEP THEM SAFE

TIME & HOURS

- ✓ **Do not allow young workers to work more than 8 hours at a stretch**
- ✓ **Do make sure young workers have at least 9.5 hours of sleep between shifts**

When the weather is good, you have to take advantage of the opportunity. However, when you have young workers on board, keep in mind that they need rest – more than adults, and even more than a little child. Long hours is probably the #1 problem facing workers in the fishing industry and it leads to many other problems....

NO LONG HOURS; NO OVERTIME

TIP

The usual recommendation is that young people should not work more than 8 hours at any one time. If the work is hard or the weather is harsh, however, the time has to be adjusted. Although many young workers are more than willing to do extra work in the hope of getting overtime pay or to please you, do not be tempted to keep going. Long hours can make even the simplest work hazardous. Experience shows that letting youth work more than 8 hours, or making them come back to work without at least 8 hours of sleep will reduce quality and increase the number of mistakes and injuries. Mistakes and injuries cost you money!

Working at night poses additional safety risks, particularly out on the water. As an employer, you have a moral responsibility for your workers to see that they get home safely after work.

TOTAL HOURS = WORK+CHORES+SCHOOL

TIP

Many young workers often have a second “job” at home in the form of domestic tasks. They may also be going to school. Fishing plus home-based chores plus school work adds up to a long day. When all these additional hours are combined, young workers become chronically fatigued, which places them at increased risk for mistakes, injuries and illnesses. Worker fatigue harms the productivity of your operation.

During the workday, rest breaks and a good lunch break can go a long ways toward reducing fatigue. Be sure young workers fill in a time log each day.

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

- ✓ **Do find out about the health effects of chemicals used in and around fishing**
- ✓ **Don't allow young workers to mix, handle, use or dispose of hazardous chemicals**

It is easy to say that young workers should not work with toxic chemicals, but we are not always aware of what is toxic or that commonly used products, such as petrol, can have noxious and long-standing effects.

TIP DON'T ALLOW EXPLOSIVES

In a boat, it is almost impossible to separate young workers sufficiently from all the processes that might be damaging to them. As sustainable modern fishing techniques begin to take hold, it becomes clear that there is no place for chemicals, poisons, or particularly explosives. So, for the sake of your young workers, now is the time to get your fellow fishermen to stop using such methods that are dangerous not only to humans but also to the environment.

TIP LABEL ALL CHEMICAL CONTAINERS AND STORE THEM IN ONE PLACE

Be sure that containers for gas and oil are properly labelled. Do not allow young workers to dispose of empty containers because there is often a chance that people will re-use them for drinking water or food products and be poisoned.

Train young workers on what to do if they ingest petrol (e.g. siphoning from one container to another) or get it on their skin. Do they know how to avoid fire or explosion? Or what to do if it spills? Remember, never re-use chemical containers for something else!

TIP DON'T FORGET CLEANING MATERIALS CAN BE HAZARDOUS

Where young people are concerned, it is so easy to think only about the main job they do or what they were hired for. But a lot of the time young people are given extra jobs, 'one-time' jobs, or temporary tasks that everyone (including the young workers) forgets about. These tasks are usually simple and it is assumed that little or no training is needed and so usually no training is given. Examples of this kind of work are: sweeping up, cleaning the boats or fishing equipment, cleaning the sanitary facilities, running errands, bringing someone a piece of equipment, tool or product that they need. Cleaning equipment may mean working with solvents, the vapours of which may be harmful to the skin or lungs.

- Cleaning toilets and other facilities may expose a young person to germs, and require contact with harsh cleaning agents, some of which may have been mixed in unmarked containers or in bottles with incomprehensible labels. No one thinks to give them rubber gloves, or gloves in a size that fits their smaller hands ...

WHY ARE YOUNG PEOPLE MORE VULNERABLE TO TOXIC CHEMICALS?

- In a young person, the elimination of hazardous agents is less efficient because the gastro-intestinal and endocrine systems and renal (kidney) function are still maturing. Exposure to toxic substances in the workplace can hinder the process of maturation.

- Detoxification of hazardous substances is less effective because the enzyme system is less mature.

- Absorption of toxic chemicals through the skin is higher among youth than in adults because most of the cells in their organs and tissues are smaller, their skin area is as much as 2.5 times greater than that of an adult (per unit of body weight) and their skin is thinner. Skin structure is only fully developed after puberty.

- Absorption of toxic chemicals through respiration (breathing) is higher among youth than in adults because they have a higher metabolic rate and oxygen consumption and therefore greater intake of air per unit of body weight. They also breathe faster and more deeply.

- Young people consume more energy than adults as they are still growing and often more active. With increased energy requirements come an increased susceptibility to toxic chemicals.

- Metals are retained in the brain more readily in childhood than in adulthood and absorption is greater (lead and methyl mercury). These metals have an effect on the nerves and brain.

PROTECT AGAINST THE WORST

Fires are deadly offshore. Do you have fire extinguishers? Have they been checked recently? Do your young workers know where they are and how to use them? Do they know how to extinguish an engine fire?

A fire on a ship may release highly toxic chemicals used in refrigerants, insulation, or fish preservation. Young workers can also be exposed to a variety of toxic gases in an unventilated hold due to the decay of organic material or the storage of products which produce these gases. Young workers need to be trained how to act in the case of a worst case scenario occurring.

And what about flotation equipment? Are there enough life vests for all the workers? Are they carefully stowed so that they do not get damaged? And most important, of course, is to make sure that young workers wear them whenever seas are rough or if they go into the water for some reason. Communication devices are also necessary on board.

Finally, it needs to be said that having young people dive underwater for any reason – to pick shells, to untangle a net, to set a net, or to scare fish – is hazardous labour and off-limits to anyone under 18 years of age. The dangers are many: perforated ear drums, hypothermia, stings and bites from snakes and dangerous fish and animals, drowning from getting caught in the net or fishing lines. The loss of life has been exceptionally high in this industry mainly because simple common sense safety rules were not followed. Don't let this happen to you.

TRUE STORY

Two employees were asphyxiated inside a compartment on a barge used for fish farming while attempting to rescue a colleague. Two workers had entered a compartment below deck to inspect the hydraulics on a faulty crane. One worker felt dizzy and left the compartment. He raised the alarm when he saw his colleague unconscious. The manager then entered the compartment (wearing a respirator) to attempt a rescue. He managed to get the worker in a sitting position but then himself lost consciousness. On seeing the manager collapsed on the floor, another employee fetched a length of rope and descended into the compartment, but he too collapsed as soon as he reached the bottom. The worker was resuscitated by the emergency services but the two rescuers died due to the lack of oxygen.

CRIMINALITY ON THE SEAS

It pays to be aware that sometimes fishing boats and their crews are subject to being drafted into criminal activities, or are the target of criminal activities.

Piracy is increasing in certain areas, and young people are not immune because they can be exploited in the same way on the sea as armed groups exploit child soldiers on land.

Similarly, criminal gangs engaged in smuggling operations, can take on children and youth because they see them as more easily brain washed or manipulated than adults. Faced with a financial crisis or simply years and years of being ground down by poverty, even fishing communities may 'turn a blind eye' if a fishing operation takes on some extra-legal work. Young people may even be seen as an asset because they are not of "responsible age" and presumably would not suffer prosecution if caught.

However, make no mistake, both of these forms of criminality constitute a "Worst Form of Child Labour" as specified in ILO Convention No. 182. Besides risking psychological trauma and violence, they set a young person off on the wrong life road. The fishing community and its leaders must do everything possible to protect their youth from this fate. (reference: Whitman 2012; FAO 2015)

WORK CONTRACTS

- ✓ **Do sign a written contract with young workers – even if they are family members, short-term or just filling in -- and make sure they clearly understand its terms**
- ✓ **Do give them the same pay and benefits as adult workers (e.g. rest breaks, leave)**

A contract helps to avoid misunderstandings. Never rely on a verbal agreement. It is easy to forget what you have said and agreed to. A written contract reduces chances for conflict in the future by clarifying the rights and obligations of both you and your young workers. Without it, you may end up spending a lot of time and money if a dispute arises.

TIP

INFORM YOUNG WORKERS OF THEIR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Young workers have rights under Myanmar law. They are eligible for benefits that other workers get, such as breaks and medical care. Make sure that all young workers know this.

You are also the one responsible for buying food, water, supplies, protective clothing or equipment for the trip, not the young worker or their families.

TIP

PAY YOUNG WORKERS PROMPTLY

When young workers are paid on time, it contributes to a positive relationship between employer and employee and an overall positive atmosphere in the community. Young workers may be especially dependent on their pay check because of school expenses and providing support for other family members. It will enhance production as no time will be wasted in following up the salary and other allowances.

1. Information about the worker:

- Name
- Age
- Parent/Guardian contact information
- Home address

2. Information about the company:

- Name of the company or factory
- Contact information for the company

3. Information about the work:

- Tasks to be done
- Name of supervisor

4. Information about the contract

- Start date and duration (or end date, if time-limited)
- Days per week and hours of work per day
- Amount of pay and when it will be paid
- Holidays, leave and other benefits

TRIPPING AND FALLING

- ✓ **Do keep the decks and floors clear**
- ✓ **Store things sensibly**

One of the most common injuries in fisheries is falling or stepping on, striking against or being struck by falling objects. The main causes of these accidents, as reported in a 1999 ILO survey, are rough weather, fatigue, poor condition of the vessel, inadequate or inappropriate tools, equipment, or personal protective equipment, and inattention (ILO, 2000, box 2.1). While wet and slippery floors and decks contribute to this, there is a lot you can do to avoid the broken bones, concussions, and back injuries which can result from a fall and which take a long time to heal.

TIP IF IN DOUBT, TAKE IT OUT

Fishermen must do their work in a tight space on a boat. Organization and housekeeping become more essential than in almost any other occupation. One way to increase efficiency is to not let waste or unused materials accumulate. Put it away! Otherwise, it creates safety hazards and reduces the space available to move around. The more cluttered your working area is, the more likely it is that the catch can be damaged, or that small tools will be lost, or accidents will occur. Workers will waste valuable time looking for things. It sounds simple, but many owners like you have found that just improving housekeeping dramatically improves productivity.

Young workers need to be trained on good housekeeping procedures as soon as they are hired so that it becomes a habit. Tell them to look at each item, and ask themselves: Is it still needed? If the answer is “no”, then stow it or throw it!

TIP AVOID SCATTER

But where do you put materials that are not being used? The first rule is NOT to put them on the floor. They take up space. And they also create an obstacle course, as workers try to walk around and over them, reducing efficiency. Or worse, things on the ground lead to injuries when workers trip over them. The nets and equipment take up a lot of the room that exists, so there is even less room for the workers to move around. Anything laid on the floor becomes a tripping hazard, which is accentuated as the boat pitches and rolls. Everything should be stowed in an organized way so that your workers can work efficiently. Scatter is a hazard to all workers, not just the younger ones. If there is space below decks for storage, you can be innovative and “go up.” Build simple shelves or multi-level racks. A face-board in front will help to keep things from falling off and causing injuries.

LIFTING AND LUGGING

- ✓ Do teach the right way to lift (SLIM)
- ✓ Do invest in simple trolleys to carry heavy loads

Fishing almost always involves some sort of heavy lifting. Whether it is bringing gear down to the boats and lifting it in, carrying bait buckets, throwing out and hauling in the nets, raising sails and spreading tarps, playing heavy fish on a rod, lugging crates of fish onto shore or into processing areas – all these demand muscular effort. Remember that young peoples' muscles and bones are still growing, and although they may not feel the strain or overexertion at the time, they can do permanent damage to their backs if they are not careful. Keep an eye on them and the weights they are trying to carry, push, pull or lift.

MAKE LIFTING MORE EFFICIENT AND SAFER

TIP

Young workers can injure themselves through repeated lifting or by trying to lift heavy items all by themselves. Although it depends somewhat on the size and strength of the worker, some commonly-used rules are:

- divide heavy items into smaller loads, as it is generally more efficient to lift more objects weighing less than 20 kg, than fewer objects weighing more
- have 2 or 3 young people lift a heavy item together
- the load a young person lifts should be no more than 15-20% of body weight; in most cases this means less than 10 kilos

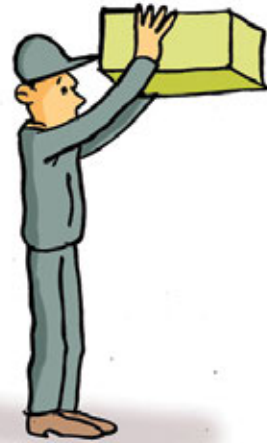
To avoid low back pain, provide step-stools and design racks and cupboards so that young workers can reach them with ease. Here are the guidelines:

- The lowest level rack for heavy material should not be lower than the workers' knees.
- Heavy materials should not be placed higher than the workers' shoulders.

MAKE TRANSPORT EASY

TIP

It is not just lifting that can hurt the back, it is also transporting loads such as wet nets or boxes of fish in the wrong way or for long distances, whether holding a load in the arms, on the head or on the back, or pulling and pushing it. The solution is to use simple trolleys or platforms with wheels. Make sure that there are enough so that young people do not waste time waiting for their turn, or worse, take risks by trying to carry something that is too heavy for them because the transport equipment is not available.



POWERED EQUIPMENT

- ✓ Do mark which equipment is hazardous and ‘off limits’ for young workers
- ✓ Do maintain electrical equipment in good repair; check it frequently

As more traditional methods give way to motorized equipment, whether powered by electrical or gasoline engines, the risks to untrained workers increase. Equipment can cause severe injuries when misused or not maintained properly and these may force you to lose good days of work. There are several simple measures that you can take to avoid having work interrupted due to an accident.

ASSESS WHICH EQUIPMENT IS A RISK TO YOUNG WORKERS

TIP

Managers of fishing vessels need to assess which equipment young workers will be using after they have been trained. The general rule is that high powered equipment with fast-moving parts is ‘off limits’ which means it is not to be used by young people under 18. The risk is too great. While all equipment poses some degree of risk, there are those, such as the net winch, which can be especially dangerous when powered by an engine because they can easily catch clothing and pull a person into the wheel. Young workers are likely to be other unfamiliar with the equipment so the decision is yours as to what is safe for them to do! Here are some rules to keep in mind:

- Machines that a young worker needs to be wary of are those with a back and forth movement or equipment such as the boom on a sail that may catch a worker unaware
- For the machinery which young workers are allowed to use, ensure that all the safety guards are in place and none have been altered, removed, or broken. When you buy equipment, check that it has all of the safety guards in place. Used machinery sometimes has the guards dismantled.
- Is the engine or other machines frequently breaking down? Keep young workers away from it until you have figured out the cause of the problem because it could be something quite dangerous such as an electrical short or a fault in the fuel line. Buying a more expensive but safer and better built engine or other machine will often save you money in the long-term.
- Workers using powered fishing equipment should tie up loose clothes or hair so it won’t get caught.

BE ESPECIALLY CAREFUL WITH WIRES

TIP

Almost everything on a boat will be wet so if there is a generator producing power, it is essential to keep a sharp eye on the electrical cords to make sure they are not damaged. Train young workers never to touch a “hot” wire.

PROTECTING AGAINST SKIN INJURIES AND DISEASES

- ✓ Do train young workers to respect cutting tools and use them safely
- ✓ Do have a first aid kit with tools to remove hooks, antiseptics, bandages

TIP TRAIN FOR SAFETY

When it comes to knives, gaff hooks, fishhooks, and other sharp tools, the most important thing you can do for young workers is to train them how to use them properly; give clear, precise instructions. Observe their technique in gutting fish, setting hooks, etc. Tell them what they are doing right and what needs improvement. Be positive and constructive in this critique. From then on, check periodically to see that they have gotten the idea and are doing things correctly. Any worker injury can lead to wasted time and money both for the worker and for you. Rules to avoid cuts:

- Keep cutting tools sharp. Dull tools lead to more cuts and more serious cuts because workers have to use extra force to cut with them.
- Keep knives sheathed except when using them.
- Stow sharp hooks and knives in a container so that they don't fly around when the boat pitches and rolls.

TIP WATER HARBORS RISKS

Fishers face some unique health threats as a result of being in frequent contact with salt water or contaminated lake or river water or exposed to water-borne biological threats. These include infections from cuts and puncture wounds, allergic reactions from being stung by poisonous fish or molluscs, boils and blisters, water snake or shark attacks, and serious illnesses such as schistosomiasis. These threats are not just temporarily painful or inconvenient but many of these can be life-threatening. Statistics from the European Union and United States' fisheries have shown that disregard of or inattention to these risks is often a factor in such illnesses and injuries. Therefore, when training young workers, one cannot emphasize too much the need to remain vigilant.

TRUE STORY

An employee drowned while harvesting fish. He was crewing a local fishing boat, but was missing when the boat returned to harbour. The weather was wet and windy and the handrail was missing. The boat was cluttered with equipment hampering access around the deck. There were no witnesses as to what happened or how he fell overboard. When his body was recovered it was found that he had not been wearing a lifejacket.

LIGHT, NOISE, TEMPERATURE

- ✓ **Do not let youth work for long periods in places where noise levels are high**
- ✓ **Do take extra caution when young workers are exposed to extreme temperatures**

Fishermen are exposed to hot, cold, wet conditions and if they are working from a powered boat, noise as well. There is not a lot one can do about the conditions, but what you can do is to provide as much protection as possible. Especially protection for the eyes and ears, because although one of the advantages of hiring young workers is that their hearing and eyesight are keen, they are also fragile.

PROTECTING YOUNG WORKERS' EYES

TIP

A common problem among fishermen are eye diseases, such as conjunctivitis, which are extremely contagious and if left untreated not only spread to others but can damage eyesight. Don't wait; it is worth going for medical care as soon as you notice it. Eye injuries are also common in the fishing industry from all sorts of flying objects or exposure to polluted water. One way to reduce the chance of eye injuries is by providing goggles and then insisting that the young workers wear them whenever they go underwater or when they are exposed to flying sand or other objects.

Exposure to intense light in another source of danger to the eyes which bears mentioning. For example, bright lamps may be used at night to attract fish. The glare of the direct sun on the water is a constant strain. Welding might be required to repair something on the boat. It is easy to suggest protective glasses, but unfortunately, experience shows that these tend to get broken or lost, and won't be used regularly in any case. Therefore, the recommendation is simply to be mindful of the danger and keep younger workers away or shielded from harsh glare as much as you can. In any case, they should never do welding, even with a mask, if they are under 18.

PROTECTING YOUNG WORKERS FROM THE ELEMENTS

TIP

A common way to cope with both cold and heat is to cover up. Do you have enough insulated garments to protect young workers if the weather turns cold? Do you have slickers and boots if weather is wet? Are there long sleeved shirts or hats against a brutal sun? (Skin and lip cancer are all too common among fishers.) Young people are prone to forgetting to bring such items to work even if they have them or they just don't think ahead. It is the manager's responsibility to make sure there are garments on board to protect young workers against the elements should they be needed.

A key reason (if any are needed) to not allow young workers to dive is the risk of rupturing the ear drum. Not only painful in the short term it can lead to infection that damages hearing in the long term.

Noise from an unmuffled boat engine or other equipment can also cause damage. The rule of thumb for knowing whether noise is too loud is if you cannot hear someone speaking in a normal voice two meters away. Remember that young workers' hearing can be permanently damaged if they are exposed to noise for too long, or if the level of noise is too loud because they are more vulnerable to hearing damage than adults. So what is the solution?

- While ear plugs might seem like an obvious answer, they also pose a risk because the wearer cannot hear instructions or a warning and because they are uncomfortable to wear for long periods workers tend to take them off. The best solution, again, is to keep young workers as far as possible from the source of noise.
- You can also reduce the noise. One way is to buy quieter equipment. Although it may initially cost more, it is often of higher quality and lasts longer because it is built to tighter tolerances (e.g., gears fit together better). Shut down noisy equipment when not needed.
- It may be possible to isolate the noise to some degree. Do you use a generator? Enclose the machine or create a sound barrier between it and the workers, or see if it can be moved away from where workers routinely work. The level of noise drops quickly with distance from the source.
- Maintenance can help. Lubricate machines to prevent unnecessary wear and grinding noises. Replace chipped gear teeth, adjust vibrating or imbalanced parts, and inspect noise control attachments to ensure that they are functioning properly.

WORKERS' COMFORT

- ✓ **Do ensure clean drinking water is available**
- ✓ **Do insist that young workers take rest breaks**

Throughout the day, young workers need to drink clean water (more than adults), eat meals and snacks, wash their hands, use a clean toilet, and rest and recover from fatigue. This can be difficult or easy, unpleasant or comfortable, a health risk or an aid to hygiene and nutrition. A small investment in such facilities usually pays for itself in many ways. On the other hand, worker dissatisfaction can be costly. Why is this so important with young people?

- Their sweat glands and the body's temperature control system in general are not yet fully developed making them more sensitive to heat and cold;
- Young persons require more fluid per unit of body weight than adults because they expel more fluid through the lungs by breathing faster, through the skin due to its larger surface, and through the kidneys as they are less able to concentrate urine.

PROVIDE CLEAN DRINKING WATER

TIP

Clean drinking water is essential for all types of work. Especially in a hot environment, each worker can easily lose several litres of water per work shift. If not provided with or having access to water, workers become thirsty and gradually dehydrated. This greatly increases fatigue and lowers productivity.

The availability of water is particularly important for young workers because they need to drink more fluid than adults. Avoid placing drinking water near the engine, the toilet or hazardous equipment or where it can be contaminated by dust, chemicals, or other substances.

Young workers usually start the day alert and productive, but their energy level decreases as the day goes on. Fatigue grows gradually and may not be apparent until the person is really tired. Especially younger workers, because they lack seniority and self-confidence (and think they are invincible!), have a tendency to keep pushing themselves to the limit. It is important for you to insist on them taking breaks. If the worker rests before showing signs of fatigue, recovery is much faster. Short breaks taken frequently are much better than infrequent but long breaks. For most types of work, workers will produce much more with breaks than they can by working continuously. The minimum is one good break in the morning and another in the afternoon, in addition to a longer break for lunch. Consider making it routine: young workers take a five-minute break every hour.

Having a place to rest also helps to reduce fatigue. Getting away from the noisy, polluted or wet areas of the boat helps young workers relax and recover from fatigue. A simple canopy may provide the necessary shade. Try to cut down on bright sunlight: the eyes need to rest as well as the body. If there is a table or flat surface there, it can also double as a place to eat.

HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE

- ✓ **Do model good behaviours yourself**
- ✓ **Do address harassment or violence immediately if it occurs**

Young workers work better when they enjoy their work and have good relations with their co-workers and the owner. They want to please and so will try their best when they are treated well. This means no harassment or violence. Harassment is an act or comment made to someone who is not in a position to complain.

In the past, some managers thought it was normal to slap or shout at young workers to “keep them in line” or “show them their place.” Now we know that this is not an effective way to discipline workers. For the individual concerned, harassment can result in extreme suffering — both physical and psychological. The physical problems can take many forms including headaches, sleep problems, and stomach disorders. On the psychological side, it can make a young person depressed, lose motivation, and in extreme cases, take his own life.

DO NOT IGNORE ANY SIGN OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

TIP

Sexual harassment includes:

- unwelcome touching or patting
- staring or leering
- suggestive remarks, lewd comments, or telling “dirty” stories and jokes
- sexually suggestive wall posters or calendars
- hints, requests or demands for sexual favours
- rape

Myanmar culture does not condone sexual harassment, but it is still far too common and the effects are serious. A young person can bear the scars of sexual abuse for a lifetime. Even when there has been no physical contact, there can be psychological damage in the form of shame or guilt although the young person was not the one at fault. Religious sensitivities can be particularly strong on this matter. It can have a devastating effect on a young person’s whole life when an unwanted pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease such as an HIV infection results.

Your reputation also suffers. Co-workers may act as if they ‘don’t see’ but they do and may well be afraid, less productive or treat you with less respect as a result.

Most of the time the harasser is in a more powerful position than the one being harassed. Supervisors or others in authority think they can get sexual favours from young workers by using threats and intimidation. Both boys and girls are at special risk of sexual harassment and abuse.

TIP **WARN WORKERS THAT VIOLENCE IS UNACCEPTABLE**

When we think of violence we think of blows, cuffs, and slaps. But there is also verbal violence and more subtle kinds of attack. For example:

- humiliation, insults, name-calling and ridicule – in front of them or behind their backs
- shouting, swearing, making threats
- isolating the young person or ignoring them

You may not think harassment like this is serious but it is. It can end up in physical violence. It can – and almost always does – seriously damage the morale of the workforce.

TIP **IDENTIFY WHO MIGHT BE VULNERABLE TO HARASSMENT OR VIOLENCE**

Whatever the type of harassment or violence, the situation or the cause, it is up to you to stop it, or better yet, prevent it from happening in the first place. Here are steps that will help prevent harassment:

- 1** Identify any young workers whose skin colour, sex, race, ethnic background, immigrant status, age, or religion makes them appear different from the others and who may be at extra risk.
- 2** Talk to young workers periodically to make sure that they are not facing problems. Keep an eye on them to detect changes in their behaviour, mood and motivation.
- 3** If you detect a problem, stand up for your young worker. Protect him/her. Make sure others know that you will not let incidents like this occur.

Harassment is usually not a one-time occurrence. It is usually repeated and it gets worse and more entrenched each time it is repeated. A manager or supervisor who fails to take action at the first sign of harassment sends a message that the behaviour is acceptable. If an incident of harassment or violence does occur at the site, respond immediately and decisively.

STRESS

- ✓ **Do keep watch for signs of stress**
- ✓ **Do take steps to reduce the causes of stress**

Young workers are often under greater stress at work than people realize. Fishing conditions are stressful in themselves. But at the same time, young workers are trying to learn new skills, to get the work done on time, and struggling to meet the employer's expectations in terms of quality. In short, they are trying to prove themselves.

If you add to that other types of stress, such as working in a small confined space, long working hours with few rest breaks plus pressures from family, co-workers, or domestic chores, the young person can become rapidly overwhelmed. There is something you can do.

GIVE YOUNG WORKERS SOME MEASURE OF CONTROL

TIP

Because they are young and inexperienced, young workers usually have little say or control over their work. They may have no choice about whether or not they work or what type of work to do, and even no access to their earnings. Knowing this, a wise manager will do simple things to give the young worker some sense of control over her/his work and life, for example, choices over which task to do, which adult worker to work with, or what time to take a rest break.

TREAT STRESS AS A SERIOUS ISSUE

TIP

High levels of work-related stress are not just unpleasant, they can cause illness, accidents, and violence. Fish industry statistics from developed countries show a high rate of suicide and unexplained deaths that appear to be stress-related. Because stress interferes with sleep, it compounds the effect of other factors such as inadequate food, fast-paced work, exposure to germs, and many others. Remember, even when the work itself is not too dangerous, the weather and other conditions may make it terrifying.

One factor that is frequently forgotten is that, all too often, young people are carrying a heavy burden of family responsibilities. They may already be supporting a spouse and children. In a household where the father is ill or incapacitated, they may be the sole support for an unknown number of relatives. It is not uncommon for a young worker – even a child worker -- to be providing money for school fees for the child's younger siblings. As a result, they may feel desperate to keep the job and will agree to almost any terms or conditions, often at great risk to their own health and future.

A PARTNER CAN EASE ENTRY AND TRAINING

One technique that has been used by others to reduce stress in the workplace is to assign each new young worker a "buddy" or mentor. Sometimes this is a more experienced young worker. This mentor answers questions – particularly the simple ones that a young worker may be too embarrassed to ask of the boss, helps with the hands-on training and especially the practice of new skills, and offers safety tips.

The atmosphere or mood on the boat or other fishing work site profoundly influences the productivity of young workers. Creating a positive climate by making small improvements in many areas can help to create a better, more efficient and competitive business.

**HELPFUL
RESOURCES**

KEEP THEM SAFE

WHO CAN HELP

HAZARD CONTROL INFORMATION

This booklet covers some potential problem areas involved in the fishing industry, but not all. It does not go into detail on hazardous chemicals, particularly the very toxic ones, nor can it cover all the laws and regulations which govern exposure to hazardous agents. These more technical areas require the assistance of specialized professionals such as occupational hygienists to identify, evaluate, and devise control measures. If you have Internet access, go to www.ilo.org/safework for help. Otherwise, the ministry of labour, ministry of health, medical school, or hospitals may be able to help.

Name of the Employers' Organisation in Myanmar,
Its general phone number
Contact person's name

Department of labour contact information
Its general phone number
Contact person's name

Labour Inspectorate contact information
Its general phone number
Contact person's name

Trade union contacts
Its general phone number
Contact person's name

Medical care contact information
Its general phone number
Contact person's name

**ACTION
CHECKLIST**

KEEP THEM SAFE

Fishing Action Checklist

This checklist is a quick way to review the key actions needed to protect younger workers. It can be used in two ways: a) as a tool to train young workers when you first hire them, b) as a periodic reminder of items that need attention.



Here is how to use it:



1. Walk through the area where your fishing operation is located. This might include an office or processing area on land as well as boats or fixed fishing sites if you use them. It is good to do this 'walk through' with young workers as they might see something that needs attention which you do not.

2. Put a checkmark in the appropriate column – yes or no – as to whether each item has already been addressed, is not needed, or needs attention.

3. After you have finished, look again at the items in the column which need attention. It is hard to do everything at once, therefore choose a few that you are able to address right away. Usually these are the ones that are most urgent to do because they pose an immediate danger, but it can also be those which you can do. Mark these items as a priority by putting a checkmark in the “!” column.

4. Add notes in the “comments” column because it is hard to remember details from one time to another. Note in this column anything that should be followed up on in the next inspection.

5. Decide on a date to repeat this 'walk through'. It may be at a fixed interval, such as three months from now, at the end of the season, at the end of the next fishing trip, or the next time a new worker is hired.

Question	Notes for action			
General rules for protection of young workers	yes	no	!	
There are no children under age 14 working on the boats, not even helping out				
You have made a list of "OK" and "Not OK" tasks for young workers under age 18.				
Each new young worker has been told which tasks are "Not OK" and which areas and tools are off-limits				
Rights and working conditions for young workers				
All young workers, including temporary ones, have a simple written work agreement				
All young workers receive a medical check-up and medical fitness certificate before being hired				
All young workers have completed compulsory or basic schooling or are now in school				
Young workers are trained for each new task they are assigned; they are re-checked periodically				
Young workers are trained on what to do if there is an emergency, such as a fire or accident				
If an accident occurs on the job, you have agreed to provide transport and pay for medical services				
Young workers receive at least minimum wage				
Young workers receive their wages on time				
Young workers have the same rights as other workers including time off and other benefits				
Young workers who do not have enough food, clothing or a place to stay are referred to a service agency				
Young workers are not allowed to work at night or go home in the dark				
Young workers are not allowed to work overtime or more than 40 hours per week				
A daily log of work hours and medical fitness record are kept for each young worker				
Young workers are free to look for other employment if they so desire				
Young workers have a five minute rest break every hour				
(additional)				

Question	Notes for action			
Specific rules for protection of young workers	yes	no	!	
Young workers are trained on the correct way to lift heavy things so they don't hurt their backs				
Training is provided on biological risks and how to avoid them				
There are fire extinguishers in place, which are easily accessible				
Young workers do not operate heavy powered equipment				
All motors, winches, and powered equipment have safety guards				
Young workers do not work alone				
All chemical and fuel containers have labels written in the local language(s), including warning symbols				
Young workers do not use, transport or handle toxic chemicals or products				
No explosives or fish poisons are used or kept				
To reduce tripping hazards, clutter is minimized, and the floor and decks are kept clear				
Measures are taken to reduce engine noise levels				
Young workers wear clothing and gear that will not get caught in machinery				
Workers' comfort				
There is enough cool, safe drinking water for young workers to drink				
Toilets are regularly cleaned and have soap and water for washing				
There is a shaded place for workers to rest and eat				
(additional)				

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