

# กรณีศึกษา : การได้รับค่าแรงต่ำ

## Case Study: Mrs Malee Thamdee (anchovy gutting and cleaning)

Mrs Malee Thamdee (a fictitious name) was now 38 years old and uneducated. She had four children, three of whom were of school age while one of them was a construction worker. She lived with her four children at Ban Thon in Khok Khian subdistrict of Narathiwat province's Muang district. Her husband was hired as a fisher working in Malaysia and would return home once a month. Malee had no skills and funds to start any business. Also she had to look after her four children on her own, so she decided to become a homemaker, gutting and cleaning anchovy at home, which needed little production cost.

Malee has been doing this work for 15 years; a Thai trader based in Tak Bai collected the anchovy from Satun province then brought it to her house. It was agreed that the wage for gutting and cleaning a bag of big anchovy would be 30 baht and 40 baht for a bag of smaller anchovy, which was more difficult to gut. Each bag weighed 10 kilograms.

At the beginning, the anchovy brought from Satun was not boiled; Malee's employer paid her one baht per kilogram for boiling it. Later on, the fish had already been boiled before being delivered to her house. Malee started her job at 8:00 a.m. by pulling off the fish's heads and tearing up its body into two pieces. This manner of work would continue till 10:00 p.m., when a bag of (10-kilogram) anchovy would be gutted and cleaned. That day's work would earn her 30 or 40 baht, depending on the sizes of the fish. Once the employer came to collect the fish, the wage would be instantly paid. The fish would be sent on to traders in Malaysia to be sold there.

The need for Malee to finish gutting at least a bag of anchovy was to earn a daily income of 30 baht to cover a daily allowance for her four children to go to school. But the income was so small that one of the children decided to drop out and become a construction worker to help support the family.

The most serious and continuing problem Malee has faced as a homemaker is low wages: *"I've been working for 15 years now but the wages are the same. I tried to ask for a raise in both the boiling and gutting wages from the employer, but have not succeeded. Could he increase the boiling wage from 100 baht per 100 kilos to 120 baht? No, other workers*

*could accept it. Could he raise the gutting wage from 30 baht to 40 baht per 10 kilos? No, he said. He argued that he had to pay for a higher price of petrol to collect the fish and there was the boiling wage he had to pay too.”*

*Worse still: “During the season when the anchovy is in plentiful supply, the employer would ask to lower the wage from 40 baht to 35 baht. He cited that there was so many fish that the sales were not good. But when the sales were good, he did not increase my wage. All he did was give me the same old 40-baht wage.”*

*Malee described her life like this, pouring out her fears: “Don’t know what to do. It’s like I have no way out. I have no other jobs so I have to bear with the present one. Despite its very low wage, if I don’t do it how can I feed my children? If I don’t do it, others will. I’m afraid I’ll be unemployed.”*

What she wanted most was a wage increase. The cost of living has been rising, which resulted in increasing household expenses. But neither her demand nor even the voices of homeworkers demanding higher wages has been powerful enough to make the employers give in to their demands. She would like concerned state agencies to help protect homeworkers’ rights so that fair terms of employment could be provided.

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