



# ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking Program

Supporting ASEAN and ASEAN Member States to strengthen responses to **trafficking in persons**, while advancing the rights of trafficked victims.

ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking is a 10-year program (2018-2028) funded by the Australian Government, supporting ASEAN and ASEAN Member States to implement the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP).

The program continues over 20 years of Australia's support to ASEAN to prevent and respond to trafficking in persons. National-level programming is currently implemented in Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

## Trafficking in persons in Southeast Asia

Trafficking in persons in Southeast Asia is a significant and persistent issue driven by factors such as poverty, lack of education, inequality, and economic disparities.

ASEAN has adopted the internationally agreed definition of trafficking in persons as outlined in the ACTIP:

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<b>ACT</b>		<b>MEANS</b>		<b>PURPOSE</b>
Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbour or receipt of persons		Threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power		Sexual exploitation, other forms of exploitation, forced labour, practices similar to slavery, removal of organs

*\* all 3 elements must be present for a situation of trafficking in adults. In cases of child trafficking 'means' is not required.*

Southeast Asia is a source, transit and destination for trafficking, with victims exploited for forced labour, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, domestic servitude. The region is also impacted by new forms of trafficking into forced criminality, including into online scam centres, which are yet to be explicitly referenced in the ACTIP.

ASEAN and ASEAN Member States are working together to respond to this complex and evolving crime.

## Project areas

The ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking program has 4 key projects to respond to trafficking in persons:



ENHANCING **COLLABORATION** WITHIN AND ACROSS SECTORS



IMPROVING **TRANSPARENCY** AND ACCOUNTABILITY



INSTITUTIONALISING **KNOWLEDGE** AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



CULTIVATING **LEADERSHIP** AND COORDINATION

## Stakeholders



## Working with and through ASEAN

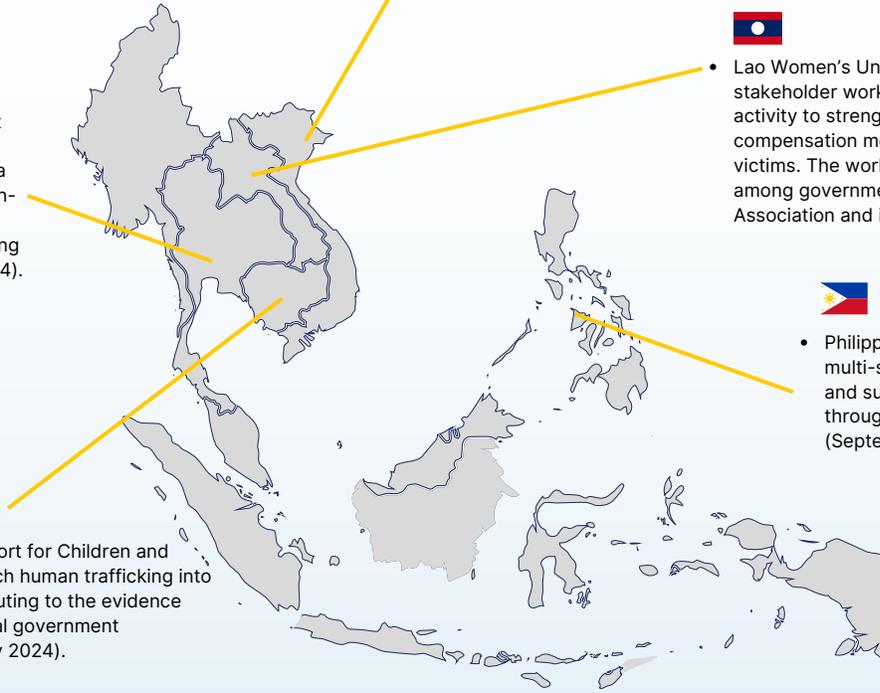
The program supports ASEAN to implement the ACTIP, working through the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) and relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies.

- Supported SOMTC with the development of the ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Work Plan Against Trafficking in Persons 2023 – 2028 (Bohol TIP Work Plan 2.0) and related monitoring and evaluation framework (September 2024).
- Supported Council of ASEAN Chief Justices with the development of a knowledge exchange framework, compendium of good practices in TIP adjudication, and revisions to the model professional development program for judges (2024).
- With the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the ASEAN International Legal Cooperation Compendium and Handbook developed and launched by SOMTC in Bangkok, Thailand (November 2025).
- Supported ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) to develop ASEAN Guidelines to prevent and respond to child and forced marriage, officially launched in Jakarta, Indonesia (November 2025).
- Facilitated the first joint SOMTC– ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) initiative to develop ASEAN Guidelines on implementation of the Non-Punishment Principle, officially launched in Jakarta, Indonesia (June 2025).
- Supported the development of an ASEAN guidebook on monitoring the implementation of victim-centred and gender-sensitive approaches in counter-trafficking in persons efforts, with ACWC, and piloted in Philippines and Thailand (2025).

## Support to strengthen law, policy and practice to counter trafficking in persons in the region

-  Thailand established the first Centre of Excellence with a dedicated focus on building a cadre of government and non-government professionals equipped to counter trafficking and related crimes (May 2024).

-  Cambodian NGO Legal Support for Children and Women supported to research human trafficking into online scam centres, contributing to the evidence base for regional and national government responding to the issue (May 2024).



-  Vietnam revised its trafficking in persons law to mandate stronger protection and enhanced support for victims, including provisions on the non-punishment principle (November 2024).

-  Lao Women's Union convened a multi-stakeholder workshop, as part of a regional activity to strengthen legal aid and compensation mechanisms for trafficking victims. The workshop fostered collaboration among government, civil society, the Lao Bar Association and international partners (2025).

-  Philippines Supreme Court launched a multi-sectoral guideline to better protect and support victims of serious crimes throughout the justice process (September 2024).

## Program journey

From 2003-2018 (prior to ASEAN-ACT, 2018-28), Australia supported ASEAN and ASEAN Member States to develop the legally binding ACTIP and to build capacities in investigation and prosecution of trafficking in persons.

### PHASE 1

2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023

Strengthened capacity of government in detecting, investigating and prosecuting trafficking in persons cases. This included enhancing protection and support to victims of trafficking.

Generated new research to inform ASEAN policies including on the implementation of the non-punishment principle in ASEAN, child rights in the ASEAN justice, shelter practices in ASEAN, vulnerability of migrant workers to labour trafficking in the region.

### PHASE 2

2024 2025 2026 2027 2028

Continuing partnerships with ASEAN and ASEAN Member States to strengthen institutional capacity, including to increase collaboration, improve transparency and accountability, and embed sustainable knowledge exchange and professional development.

Supporting policy reforms to advocate responsible business conduct and bring public and private stakeholders together to protect and promote human rights.

