



ASEAN-ACT is a  
10-year program (2018-2028)  
\$A80 million



32 events in Lao PDR,  
with 665 participants  
(45% female, 54% male,  
0.75% other)



16 capacity development events  
conducted in Lao PDR  
312 people trained  
(37% female, 62% male, 0.32% other)

ASEAN-ACT's focal point in Lao PDR  
is the Ministry of Public Security.

**Other key partners:**

- Anti-Human Trafficking Department, Ministry of Public Security
- Lao Women's Union
- Judicial Research and Training Institute
- National Committee on Anti-Trafficking in Persons
- People's Supreme Court
- Office of the Supreme People's Procuracy (OSPP)
- Public Prosecutor Training Institute
- Village Focus International

 [aseanact.org](http://aseanact.org)

 [@AusAmbASEAN](https://twitter.com/AusAmbASEAN)

THROUGH THE **ASEAN-AUSTRALIA COUNTER TRAFFICKING PROGRAM (ASEAN-ACT)**, AUSTRALIA CONTINUES 19+ YEARS SUPPORTING COUNTER TRAFFICKING IN THE REGION.

**WE SUPPORT ASEAN MEMBER STATES TO STRENGTHEN JUSTICE RESPONSES TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING, WHILE ADVANCING THE RIGHTS AND PROTECTION OF VICTIMS.**

**Trafficking in persons has no borders and occurs in many different sectors - its negative impacts are spread across Southeast Asia.**

Economic downturn across the region as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with an increase in online activity, has placed more people at risk of being recruited into false or misleading employment opportunities.

Citizens of ASEAN Member States are finding themselves in exploitative conditions that they cannot escape from and the dynamics between countries of origin and countries of destination are changing.

In response to these emerging trends and ongoing vulnerabilities to trafficking in persons, ASEAN-ACT works with government and non-government organisations across ASEAN Member States to increase cooperation, strengthen capacity, facilitate dialogue between policymakers and practitioners, and identify innovative ways to prevent and address trafficking in persons.

The partnership supports ASEAN Member States to implement and report on their obligations under the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP).

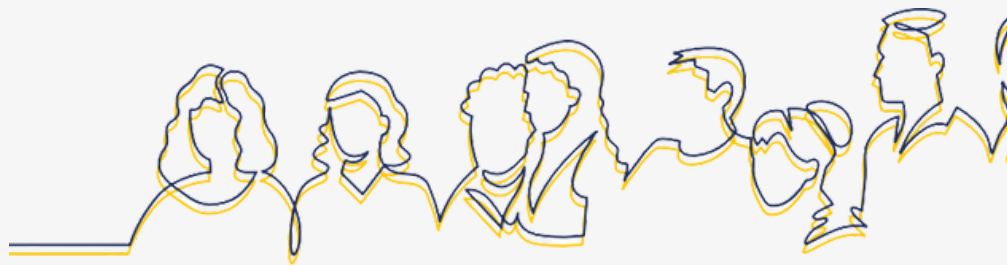
ASEAN-ACT has national-level programming in Cambodia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. We are establishing programming in Indonesia, and our projects are currently on hold in Myanmar.

ASEAN-ACT's Regional Program Steering Committee (RPSC) is the regional governance mechanism of the program, with members drawn from all 10 ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat.

The RPSC is co-chaired by the Lead Shepherd on Trafficking in Persons from the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) and a senior Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) representative.



ASEAN-ACT works through three interrelated pathways:



## Enhancing regional-level capacity

We support and partner with the Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) and other ASEAN bodies to strengthen victim-sensitive planning, monitoring and reporting processes.

## Enhancing national-level capacity

We work with national partners to strengthen their capacity to implement the ACTIP, in particular those that uphold victim rights and advance gender equality, disability and social inclusion.

## Developing inclusive public policy and dialogue

We facilitate dialogue and cooperation between government, civil society and the private sector to support improvements in counter-trafficking policies and practices.

## JUSTICE OUTCOMES

ASEAN-ACT facilitates justice sector cooperation and provides technical support to strengthen justice responses to trafficking in persons in Lao PDR. Recent achievements with our partners include:

- Strengthened the capacity of 68 police officers to investigate trafficking in persons through two training events conducted by the Anti-Human Trafficking Department of the Ministry of Public Security. These officers have been trained to conduct training of other Laos police officers.
- Supported a workshop on digital evidence in trafficking in persons cases for 29 participants (6 female and 23 male) from the Ministry of Public Security, the Office of the Supreme People's Prosecutor, the People's Supreme Court and Ministry of Justice. Regional good practice examples and experiences were shared by a Philippines prosecutor.
- The development of a counter-trafficking in persons training program for prosecutors was finalised through a workshop with the Department of Criminal Inspection and Prosecutorial Research and Training Institution of OSPP.

- Lessons learned workshops on supporting trafficked victims with the Center for Counselling and Protection of Women and Children, Central Lao Women's Union
- Through our partnership with Village Focus International, workshops and training on victim identification, protection and support for non-government organisations and lawyers were held in Lao PDR.

## VICTIM RIGHTS, AND GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION OUTCOMES

ASEAN-ACT is working with partners to support groups most vulnerable to trafficking and reduce barriers to accessing protection and support. Recent achievements include:

- Conducted a four-day workshop on victim rights, gender equality, disability and social inclusion, and monitoring and reporting in May 2022. Gender-sensitive and victim-sensitive approaches, including basic concepts of monitoring were presented to justice counterparts. The workshop has initiated discussion on how to incorporate gender-sensitive and victim-sensitive approaches, and monitoring and reporting into the implementation of the national plan of action against human trafficking.
- Presented key findings of a capacity needs assessment of the protection of child rights in the justice system response to trafficking in persons for Lao PDR.

## PARTNERSHIPS

ASEAN-ACT has established partnerships with regional and national actors, as effective counter trafficking responses require multi-sectoral approaches. Highlights with our partners include:

## Guidelines for victim-sensitive courts

Through a series of consultation workshops supported by ASEAN-ACT, judges in Lao PDR are developing guidelines to ensure trafficked victims are treated with fairness and sensitivity as they move through the criminal justice process.

As a result of the workshop, judges learned from good practices in Australia and the ASEAN region and established a technical working group of Lao judges to adopt victim-sensitive court indicators.

In February 2022, the final draft of the victim-sensitive court guidelines was submitted to the Council of Judges.

To finalise the guidelines, the President of the People's Supreme Court suggested a further engagement with four agencies (foreign affairs, justice, prosecutor and police) to ensure that the victim-sensitive court principles are also applied across the criminal justice system.

**This is a significant milestone for Lao PDR as the first ASEAN member state to develop victim-sensitive court guidelines.**