



**ASEAN
and
ASEAN-AUSTRALIA COUNTER TRAFFICKING (ASEAN-ACT)**

**PROGRESS REPORT 2019 – 2020
and
WORK PLAN 2020 – 2023**

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A draft of this document was circulated to all ASEAN Member States soon after the 20th Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime and its Related Meetings, via teleconference, dated 24 September 2020 by the SOMTC Voluntary Lead Shepherd on trafficking in persons. The SOMTC Voluntary Lead Shepherd on trafficking in persons received no further inputs and has therefore considered the draft to be final. This ASEAN-ACT Progress Report 2019 – 2020 and Work Plan 2020 – 2023 is considered a living document that will be subject to continuing discussions and coordination with partners, such as the SOMTC.

1 Introduction

This Progress Report and Work Plan 2020–2023 for ASEAN and ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking (ASEAN-ACT) program build on the ongoing progress of ASEAN and its Member States in improving the region’s justice responses to trafficking in persons - an important area of cooperation under the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-Australia Strategic Partnership (2020-2024).

ASEAN-ACT is a ten-year, A\$80 million initiative, first announced at the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit on 18 March 2018 and launched before ASEAN foreign ministers in Bangkok on 1 August 2019, during Thailand’s ASEAN Chairmanship. ASEAN-ACT’s overarching goal is that ASEAN Member States will have effective justice systems that provide just punishment of traffickers and protect the human rights of trafficking victims.

In March 2017, the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children (ACTIP) entered into force among signatory States Parties. ASEAN-ACT is the next phase of Australia’s commitment to supporting ASEAN in achieving the goals set out in ACTIP and the associated ASEAN Plan of Action.

The Progress Report 2019 – 2020 (Section 2 of this document) outlines ASEAN and ASEAN-ACT’s progress highlights from July 2019 to June 2020.

The ASEAN and ASEAN-ACT Work Plan 2020-2023 (Section 3 of this document) presents a multi-year outline of proposed projects with ASEAN. The work plan will contribute to further implementation of the ACTIP, including through the ASEAN Bohol TIP Workplan 2017-2020 and subsequent plan, thereby improving the regional response to trafficking in persons.

The work plan sets out how the program will achieve the objectives of:

- supporting ACTIP implementation by maintaining momentum for positive change based on shared goals and mutually beneficial relationships; and
- enhancing regional-level ASEAN capability to oversee ACTIP implementation and reporting.

Each project proposed in the work plan will assist ASEAN Member States to implement the obligations outlined in the ACTIP. The projects reflect ASEAN-ACT’s consultations with relevant ASEAN bodies, including work with the Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC). ASEAN-ACT will report annually to the SOMTC on progress against the multi-year work plan and seek endorsement for any changes.

The work plan will be supported by other projects under ASEAN-ACT’s direct national-level programs in seven ASEAN Member States and its cooperation with all 10 Member States. Together, the national and regional programs seek to partner with national agencies and regional institutions to implement the ACTIP and improve the justice sector’s response to trafficking in persons.

Sections 4 and 5 of this document provide summaries of the progress report and work plan.

2 Progress Report 2019 – 2020

Following approval of ASEAN-ACT’s Progress Report and Work Plan 2019 – 2020 at the 19th SOMTC and Related Meetings in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, in July 2010, several key developments have occurred. This section outlines progress highlights from July 2019 to June 2020.

2.1 Progress highlights

The year 2019 is a foundational period for ASEAN-ACT. During its inception year, the program focused on the following areas:

- maintaining engagement with key stakeholders and partners;

- scoping and implementing foundational activities;
- establishing the ASEAN-ACT capacity assessment and annual planning process; and
- implementing strategic activities.

By the end of 2019, the program completed its foundational work for multi-year project implementation commencing in 2020. At the national-level, ASEAN-ACT worked with counterparts to mobilise multi-year projects, starting with foundational activities such as research, consultation, recruitment. The momentum during the first quarter of 2020 was disrupted by the spread of COVID-19 throughout the region. Despite the pandemic, ASEAN-ACT and its counterparts achieved the following:

- Mobilised multi-year projects with national counterparts in Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam.
- Provided ongoing support to the development of Vietnam's National Plan of Action 2021-2025.
- Commenced research and studies in various areas, for example stakeholder mapping, research and curriculum development in the Philippines National Bureau of Investigation, and Vietnam's TIP Journal.
- Trained 367 officials (161 women and 206 men) from January to June 2020.
- Translated and/or printed copies of 16 reports, handbooks or manuals in response to partners' requests.
- Conducted situational analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on trafficking in persons, used this in determining possible response and review the 2020 work plan.
- Advocated for TIP awareness and impact of the pandemic on trafficking in persons.
- Provided emergency support in response to COVID-19 – in the form of personal protective equipment to key partner agencies in seven ASEAN Member States.
- Commenced planning for capacity assessment workshops in Cambodia and Lao PDR.
- Commenced planning for 2021 calendar year with national counterparts.

2.2 Status of activities with ASEAN

The pandemic has severely affected the implementation of activities with ASEAN. Planned activities were postponed. However, coordination and foundational activities have continued.

- Provided technical support to Philippines, as host of the 20th SOMTC, for the review of the Bohol Work Plan.
- Commenced development of a resource portal for partners and stakeholders.
- Published a policy paper on 'Vulnerability, human trafficking and COVID-19'.
- Funded translation of three publications for the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC).
- Continued coordination and consultation with other ASEAN sectoral bodies for possible activities.

See Section 4 for summary of progress status against approved work plan 2019 – 2020.

3 Work Plan 2020 – 2023

The ASEAN and ASEAN-ACT Work Plan 2020-2023 builds on developments over the past five years to continue improving justice responses to trafficking in persons in priority areas. The year 2020 marks the start of project implementation, and the work plan has been developed in the context of COVID-19's impact on counter-trafficking efforts. The work areas in the plan – identified in consultation with Member States and ASEAN – will concentrate on:

1. support to ongoing ACTIP implementation and reporting;
2. continued support to strengthen transnational investigative cooperation and international legal cooperation; and
3. other activities as agreed by the SOMTC Working Group on Trafficking in Persons and the Australian Government.

A report on progress in these work areas will be presented to the 21st SOMTC in 2021.

See section 5 for a summary of proposed projects under this work plan.

3.1 Regional coordination

Continuing engagement and support for ACTIP implementation is a priority for ASEAN-ACT in this multi-year work plan.

Support for ACTIP implementation will include:

1. **Assisting SOMTC, ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat**

Assistance will include, but not limited to, support for Bohol TIP Work Plan activities, such as:

- cooperation with Vietnam to support their priorities as ASEAN Chair.
- cooperation between SOMTC Working Group on TIP and the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.
- technical and other support for implementation activities and reporting.

2. **Enabling SOMTC Working Group on TIP**

ASEAN-ACT will provide technical and financial resources, as appropriate and based on its investment criteria, to provide flexible, timely and responsive assistance to the SOMTC Working Group on TIP through the Office of the Voluntary Lead Shepherd, as and when it is required.

3. **Cooperation with ASEAN sectoral bodies**

ASEAN-ACT will continue consultation and coordination with ASEAN sectoral bodies in implementing their ACTIP obligations and/or activities. ASEAN-ACT will engage with the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices (CACJ) through the Chief Justice of the Philippines. A meeting was held with the Chief Justice of the Philippines for possible collaboration from 2021 onward. Possible areas of support will be identified with ASEAN sectoral bodies during consultations in 2020 – 2021.

4. **Enabling professional development for ASEAN adjudicating judges and knowledge sharing among justice officials and partners**

ASEAN-ACT will promote the use of the Model Professional Development Program for ASEAN Judges in Trafficking in Persons – Outline of Curriculum (2018). In cooperation with the SOMTC Voluntary Lead Shepherd on TIP, ASEAN-ACT may partner with ASEAN Member States to develop judicial TIP programs, learning resources and guides tailored to the pilot countries' laws and legal systems. To enable knowledge sharing, ASEAN-ACT is developing a resource portal to provide resources to ASEAN governments, policy makers and private sector. The portal will include policy papers on counter trafficking in persons in the context of COVID-19, toolkits, research, events, news and contacts for advice and assistance.

3.2 Transnational Cooperation

Support for Transnational Cooperation will be continued, including for:

1. **transnational investigative cooperation**, by providing financial support and technical advice to active bilateral investigations of transnational human trafficking offences.
2. **international legal cooperation**, by providing technical advice and support through program resources for mutual legal assistance and the dissemination and implementation of ASEAN guidelines on international legal cooperation.

In the medium term, this work will focus on building sustainable cooperation systems and supporting those bilateral relationships that demonstrate genuine progress in conducting parallel or joint cross-border investigations and active international legal cooperation.

3.3 Other activities

Working in cooperation with the SOMTC Voluntary Lead Shepherd on TIP, ASEAN-ACT will provide input to activities being undertaken by the Australian funded ACTIP Implementation Project, delivered by The Asia Foundation. The activities will seek to facilitate the development of a monitoring and reporting approach and facilitate ASEAN decision-making on an appropriate focal point system of national ACTIP representatives.

4 Summary of Progress: ASEAN and ASEAN-ACT 2019 – 2020

Activity	Scheduled for completion	Status
Support to ACTIP Implementation (Bohol TIP Work Plan support)	Ongoing	Ongoing technical and financial support for review of Bohol TIP Work Plan, planning and coordination
Support to transnational investigative cooperation	Ongoing	Country-level activities in progress on active bilateral ASEAN Member States relationships
Responsive support to SOMTC Lead Shepherd on TIP	Ongoing	Ongoing support to Philippines, as host of 20 th SOMTC, including planning for SOMTC Working Group on TIP meeting
ASEAN sectoral bodies cooperation	Ongoing	Ongoing translation of three publications for ACWC Collaboration and consultation with ASEAN Secretariat and other ASEAN sectoral bodies Exploring collaboration and activities with Council of ASEAN Chief Justices in 2021
Support to knowledge exchange	Ongoing	Mobilised development of a resource portal for knowledge exchange Judicial exchange and roundtable workshop postponed to 2021
<i>Other activities</i>		
ACTIP Implementation Project technical support and input	Ongoing	Coordination with ACTIP Implementation Project in progress

5 Summary of ASEAN and ASEAN-ACT Work Plan 2020 – 2023

Project	Status as at time of 20 th SOMTC	Actions taken ad referendum after the 20th SOMTC & Related Meetings
Support for ACTIP implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bohol TIP Work Plan ○ SOMTC support 	Ongoing – planning for Bohol TIP Work Plan review, support to SOMTC meeting and development of subsequent work plan	Endorsed the project as part of the Work Plan 2020-2023
Responsive support to SOMTC Lead Shepherd on TIP	Ongoing – support the conduct of 17 th SOMTC Working Group on TIP, support to other requests	Endorsed the project as part of the Work Plan 2020-2023
ASEAN sectoral bodies cooperation	Commenced consultations and will explore options for support; engagement with the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices	Endorsed the project as part of the Work Plan 2020-2023
Support for transnational investigative cooperation	Ongoing – active bilateral ASEAN Member States relationships	Endorsed the project as part of the Work Plan 2020-2023
Support to knowledge exchange	Ongoing – judicial exchange; roundtable workshop of judges; build a resource portal for partners and stakeholders	Endorsed the project as part of the Work Plan 2020-2023
<i>Other activities</i>		
ACTIP Implementation Project technical support and input	Ongoing partnership with the ACTIP Implementation Project (delivered by The Asia Foundation)	Endorsed the project as part of the Work Plan 2020-2023