

# Women, Peace and Security: Addressing Cross-border Challenges



## Trafficking in women for forced criminality along the Thailand-Myanmar border

The cross-border peace and security landscape in Asia and the Pacific has evolved dramatically in recent years. Trafficking in persons for forced criminality associated with online scam centres and other cyber-enabled threats are increasingly becoming critical security concerns for women in the region.

South-East Asia is witnessing a rapid transformation in human trafficking dynamics as criminal operations increasingly shift online. Along the Thailand-Myanmar border, trafficking syndicates exploit the lawlessness stemming from the Myanmar conflict to establish new destinations for trafficking in persons. As the conflict weakens state structures, removes protections, disrupts communities and displaces at-risk populations, women have been disproportionately impacted by heightened risks of trafficking and cyber-exploitation, often attracted by economic opportunities.

Although most trafficking victims for this purpose are young men, a recent United Nations report revealed that trafficked women who do not meet their sales quotas are threatened with being sold to brothels and other locations for sexual exploitation, with some cases involving girls under the age of 18 years.<sup>1</sup>



*UN Women's approach is to leverage the Women, Peace and Security agenda to tackle these emerging issues by identifying gaps, women's specific security and protection needs, and advocating for inclusion.*

## Leveraging the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda identifies trafficking in women for forced criminality as a critical security concern, particularly in conflict and crisis-affected settings.

Over the past 20 years, there has been notable progress on WPS in Asia and the Pacific region.<sup>2</sup> However, critical gaps remain between the ambitions expressed in international commitments and the actual political will and financial support given to WPS efforts.

The nature of conflict and its drivers has shifted. The gender dimensions of non-traditional security risks, including trafficking in persons and cyber security, pose new challenges that require innovative responses and solutions. These emerging security issues in South-East Asia have significant adverse impacts on women's rights, stability and security across the region.

1. *Casinos, cyber fraud, and trafficking in persons for forced criminality in Southeast Asia*, Policy Report. (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023).

2. *Women, Peace and Security in Asia Pacific, 20 Years On: Progress Achieved and Lessons Learned*. (UN Women, 2020).

## Japan-UN Women partnership

In response to an alarming rise in trafficking in women for forced criminality along the Thailand-Myanmar border, UN Women in partnership with the Government of Japan, is implementing a project to provide immediate support to survivors and mitigate and prevent the surge in trafficking in women and other cyber-enabled harms along this border area.

The project prioritizes immediate and gender-sensitive support, and leverages the WPS agenda to catalyze gender-inclusive responses with the aim of enhancing peace, stability and security along the Thailand-Myanmar border.

The project focuses on:

1. Providing survivor-centred support and reintegration services to women affected by trafficking and/or cyber-enabled harms.
2. Providing a package of support to build resilience and mitigate the surge in trafficking in women for forced criminality and cyber-enabled harms in the Thailand-Myanmar border area.
3. Leveraging existing anti-trafficking mechanisms to combat trafficking in women for forced criminality and cyber-enabled harms amid the evolving situation in Myanmar.

## More information

UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Government of Japan is a longstanding ally of UN Women since the entity was established to accelerate progress on meeting women's and girls' needs worldwide.

This project will contribute to efforts under the Regional Framework Towards Peaceful, Inclusive Societies in the Asia-Pacific Region (2023-2027), a UN Women regional initiative that is advancing the WPS agenda and inclusive governance in the region.

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