



REGIONAL SUPPORT OFFICE  
THE BALI PROCESS

# 20 IMPACT REPORT









The Regional Support Office of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (RSO) extends its gratitude to the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, which has provided primary funding for the RSO since its establishment in 2012. The RSO acknowledges additional funding support from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment of the Government of New Zealand, towards RSO programmes and activities.

The RSO acknowledges the support provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which hosts the RSO in Bangkok, Thailand and supports its administration. The RSO further extends its gratitude to the Royal Thai Government for its ongoing support for RSO operations in Thailand.

The work of the RSO would not be possible without the support and commitment of all Bali Process Members, each of whom contribute time, resources, and personnel to work with the RSO across its lines of effort.

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The migration and movement of people in search of opportunity, freedom, to escape persecution, or the impact of conflict or natural disasters is an enduring human story.

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The Regional Support Office of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (RSO) acknowledges the ever-increasingly complex and unpredictable environment Member State governments are navigating in considering international migration challenges.

Through the publication of the RSO's 2024-2026 Strategic Plan and Work Plan—developed in consultation with Bali Process Members—the RSO has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Member States in their efforts to counter irregular migration, people smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crime, in line with the 2023 Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation.

Over 2024, some 1,188 participants from 49 Bali Process Member States and Organisations took part in 56 RSO-led events and activities. In this report, we reflect on the support provided to Member States to enhance policy, programming and decision making through RSO research and knowledge products, support for frontline capability development, and opportunities and platforms for dialogue.

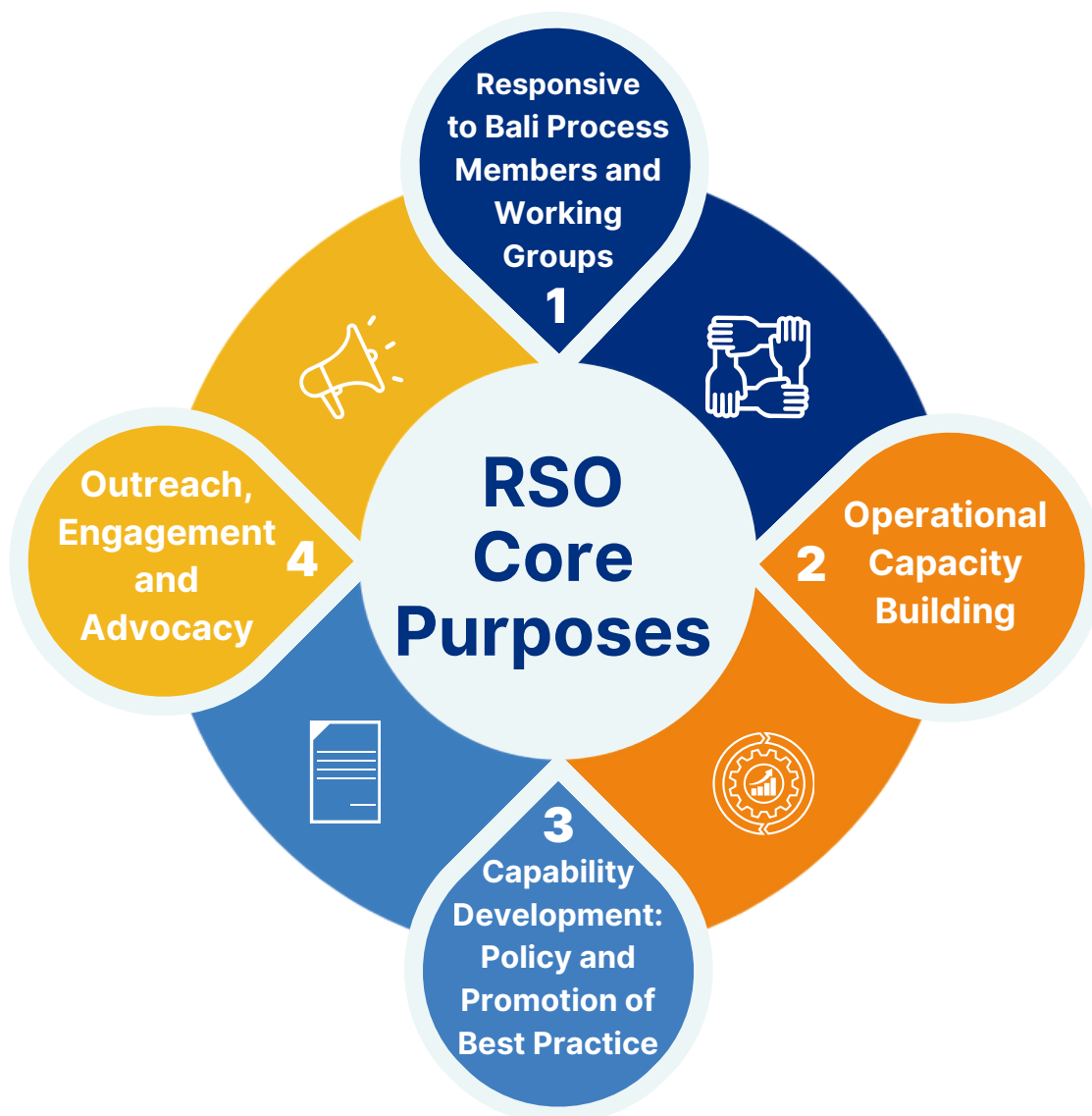
# CONNECTING ACROSS BORDERS

The RSO Core Purposes set out the RSO's commitment to be responsive to Bali Process Members and Working Groups, to support operational capacity and capability development in the region, to promote policy and best practice, and to engage in outreach and advocacy on Bali Process priorities.

Support to Member States in enhancing operational capacity remains a cornerstone of RSO efforts, and in 2024 the RSO led 12 training and capacity-building activities, training 461 law enforcement and border and immigration officers. The RSO Alumni Network and Secondment Programme have been integral in capacity-building and information-sharing efforts.

Now with some 223 members, RSO Alumni support continued peer-to-peer engagement and sharing of best practices—facilitating cooperation and real-time information sharing across frontline operations.

Over 2024, the RSO hosted five secondees, who joined the RSO from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Sri Lankan Department for Immigration and Emigration. These placements have provided mutual benefit to the RSO and sponsoring governments, strengthening connections, and providing opportunities to enhance forward working.



## PARTNERSHIPS AND STAKEHOLDERS

RSO efforts would not be possible without the partnership, insights and expertise input by colleagues across government, academia, civil society, international organisations and the private sector.

On behalf of the RSO, we express our gratitude to the Department of Home Affairs, Government of Australia, for its longstanding core and project funding support; and to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment of the Government of New Zealand for additional programmatic funding support provided over 2024.

The RSO recognises the invaluable collaboration and active participation shown across Bali Process Member and Observer States and Organisations, and broader regional partners and actors who have provided input into RSO activities.

We thank the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for their partnership in co-funding the delivery of projects and activities over 2024, and the governments of Sri Lanka and the Republic of Indonesia for in-kind support for RSO activities, and for the seconding of officers to the RSO.

As set out as a priority through the Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation, the RSO has strengthened collaboration with regional dialogues and platforms including The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration, the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) and through ongoing engagement with the Budapest Process—to identify opportunities for synergy and cooperation.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to strengthening these partnerships, building on the achievements of the past year, and working collaboratively to advance shared objectives in line with the Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation.



A blue ink signature of Fuad Adriansyah.

Fuad Adriansyah  
RSO Co Manager (Indonesia)



A black ink signature of David Scott.

David Scott  
RSO Co Manager (Australia)



# RSO 2024-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN AND WORK PLAN

The RSO 2024-2026 Strategic Plan provides a roadmap for the RSO for the delivery of RSO Projects and Activities designed to support Members to counter people smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crime. The 2024-2026 Work Plan outlines the relevant, complementary and evidence-based actions that will be undertaken, in line with the RSO's Core Purposes and priority areas for Bali Process Members, as set out in the 2023 Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation.

To deliver upon the RSO Strategic Plan, the RSO's work has been grouped according to seven initiatives and associated projects. RSO Initiatives provide the framing through which the RSO has identified its priorities in the 2024-2026 Work Plan—following engagement with Bali Process Member States.



# RSO INITIATIVES: IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

## INITIATIVE 1: Drivers and consequences of irregular migration

**Enhancing understanding of drivers and consequences of irregular migration, through an expansion of the RSO's research portfolio—aiming to support informed decision making and allocation of resources.**

*Primary research was conducted over 2024 with some 600 migrants and key informants from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, to understand attitudes, perceptions and information needs regarding irregular migration.*

## INITIATIVE 2: Regional cooperation to counter people smuggling

**Supporting regional cooperation to counter people smuggling and to enhance collective efforts in addressing an enduring and dangerous regional trend—the year-on-year rise in migrant fatalities relating to irregular migration journeys.**

*A 2024 Regional Dialogue on **Combating Maritime People Smuggling in the Andaman Sea region** paved the way for closer collaboration and shared commitments to address this issue.*

## INITIATIVE 3: Transnational crime and technology

**Enhancing Member States' preparedness and ability to respond to emerging and future challenges driven by technology.**

*The RSO has supported Members to provide proactive and agile responses to the **use of technology by transnational organised crime groups**—through policy guidance on artificial intelligence-enabled trafficking and illicit financial flows, capacity building that supports online investigations into cyber-scam centres, and support to enhance cross-border and inter-agency responses.*

## INITIATIVE 4: Smuggling and trafficking at the border

**Borders are points of vulnerability in migration management—regional and national training for frontline officers remains at the heart of the RSO's approach.**

*In 2024 the RSO reached more than **1,200 participants through 56 technical dialogues and training workshops**. Trainings were held at both regional and national levels, supporting cross-border and inter-agency connections and cooperation.*

## INITIATIVE 5: Identification and support of migrants who may be in a vulnerable situation

**Providing support to Members to enhance and strengthen protection-based approaches across national and institutional frameworks.**

*A Policy Roundtable to discuss strategies to improve the response to people going missing along dangerous routes in Asia gathered experts, policymakers, and frontline responders across the region. In addition, the Bali Process Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration programme assisted 126 stranded and vulnerable migrants and refugees.*

## INITIATIVE 6: Enhancing capability development and implementation

**Enhancing the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of RSO activities through a new RSO Capability Development Approach, providing a framework through which the RSO will seek to capture and sustain long-term impact and positive change.**

*The **RSO Alumni Network** provides one example of how the RSO aims to sustain change through RSO activities. The RSO Alumni Network, now at some 223 members, provides a platform supporting ongoing access for peer-to-peer connections, information sharing, and opportunities for personal development.*

## INITIATIVE 7: Support for the Bali Process ecosystem

**Strengthening connections across the Bali Process ecosystem and enhancing the reputation and awareness of the Bali Process and the RSO.**

*In 2024, the RSO launched a standalone website supporting Members' access to and engagement with RSO activities and resources. The RSO held a week of activities in Jakarta for the RSO's **Member State Spotlight: Indonesia**, in recognition of Indonesia's leadership and strategic importance for the Bali Process.*



# THE RSO IN 2024

## CORE PURPOSE 1

### RESPONSIVE TO BALI PROCESS MEMBERS AND WORKING GROUPS

**49** Some 49 Bali Process Member and Observer States and Organisations participated in RSO activities.

**1** The RSO secured funding from one new donor—the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Government of New Zealand.

**13** The RSO provided inputs and shared technical expertise to 13 Bali Process and Bali Process Working Group Meetings.

## CORE PURPOSE 2

### OPERATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

**1,188** Some 1,188 participants took part in RSO activities, across 56 RSO-led events and activities.

**461** The RSO led 12 training and capacity-building activities, training 461 law enforcement and border and immigration officers.

**223** The RSO grew the RSO Alumni Network to 223 members, supporting cross-border connections and information sharing.

# THE RSO IN 2024

## CORE PURPOSE 3

### CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT: POLICY AND PROMOTION OF BEST PRACTICE

- 29** The RSO held 29 multi-stakeholder dialogues, thematic expert meetings and trainings.
- 5** The RSO hosted five secondees from across the Sri Lankan and Indonesian governments.
- 4** The RSO published four new publications and reports.
- 5** The RSO hosted five interns from universities in Thailand and Australia.

## CORE PURPOSE 4

### OUTREACH, ENGAGEMENT, AND ADVOCACY

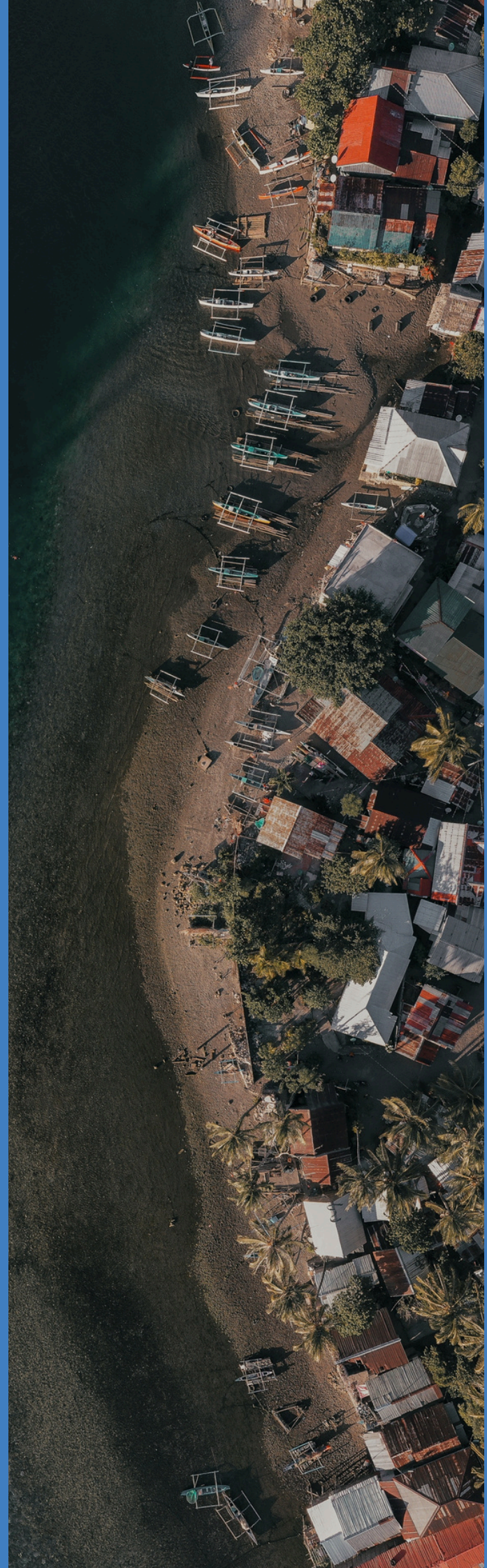
- 67** RSO staff contributed expertise, and provided advocacy on Bali Process priority issues, across 67 external events.
- 12K** The RSO launched a new standalone website, which attracted 12,000 new users and 71,000 views.
- 1,222** The RSO gained 1,222 new followers across RSO social media accounts on LinkedIn, X and Facebook.

# INITIATIVE 1: DRIVERS AND CONSEQUENCES OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION

*According to the latest data from the International Organization for Migration, at least 2,514 people died in 2024 across Asia's migration routes, making it the deadliest year on record<sup>1</sup>.*

In the face of known dangers and great personal risk, large-scale irregular movements of people continues to be seen across the Bali Process region, as vulnerable cohorts choose to risk irregular migration journeys in search of safety, protection, and livelihood opportunities.

Such journeys create opportunities for exploitation by traffickers and smugglers. Over 2024, the RSO has undertaken research to enhance understanding of drivers and consequences of irregular migration that aim to strengthen policy responses and improve protection.







# COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Governments and development partners across the region invest heavily in information campaigns as a preventative approach to irregular migration—however, evaluation of campaigns is understandably difficult.

The RSO and the Mixed Migration Centre conducted an assessment based on 612 interviews with migrants and key informants in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand to help better understand and capture information needs across groups most at risk of embarking on irregular migration journeys.

One striking insight was that 85 per cent of surveyed migrants did not consider regular migration options at all.

This points to critical gaps—not only in access to information, but also in the awareness and accessibility of regular pathways.

Insights from the study, along with actionable recommendations, aim to support Bali Process Members in designing effective and context-specific public information campaigns that adopt tailored messaging to target those most at risk of irregular migration, and resonate across different cultural backgrounds.

A series of briefings are underway to support awareness and discussion of key findings and recommendations as they pertain to Member States.

**Figure 1. Migration routes to Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand**



**85%**  
of surveyed migrants did not consider regular migration options at all.

**4%**

Only 4% of migrants reported having benefited from information related to migration from official sources.



Women were three times more likely than men to say they did not know where to find migration-related information



## INITIATIVE 2: REGIONAL COOPERATION TO COUNTER PEOPLE SMUGGLING

*In 2024, 647 people were recorded to have died at sea across migration routes in Asia—a sixfold increase in just one year.<sup>1</sup>*

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Migrant fatalities in the region have risen year-on-year for the past seven years. Yet even as the dangers grow, people are still taking to the sea, often turning to smugglers to facilitate their journeys.

A collective, coordinated, and proactive response is critical—one that can bridge the gap between policy, operations, and public communication.





The increasing scale and sophistication of maritime smuggling networks across the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal calls for a collective, coordinated, and adaptive response that can bridge the gap between policy, operations, and public communication.

Over 19–20 February 2024, the RSO convened a Roundtable on Combatting Maritime People Smuggling in the Andaman Sea Region in Bangkok, following the Third Activation of the Bali Process Consultation Mechanism.

The high-level meeting aimed to drive progress on a strengthened shared regional approach, ahead of the 2024/25 ‘Sailing Season’, when attempted maritime crossings reach their peak with calmer seas.

Recommendations captured and discussion points from the meeting included strengthening information sharing, establishment of a cross-border coordination group or joint operations taskforce, and the utilisation of the RSO Secondment Programme as a potential means to achieve these objectives.

The RSO is taking forward recommendations through its 2024-2026 Work Plan—in particular through the revitalisation of the Regional Information, Liaison and Outreach Network (RILON) Initiative.



37%

*of respondents to an RSO survey for frontline officers indicated that they believed information sharing with international counterparts was not permitted in their institutions*

52%

*respondents stated that legislative and regulatory barriers prevented them from sharing information with their international counterparts*



Capacity building is a vital part of the response to support frontline responders to build knowledge and confidence in identification, disruption and investigations into people smuggling operations, and to support strengthening of cross-border networks and information sharing.

The International People Smuggling Investigations Program (IPSIP) aims to enhance investigative skills and knowledge of key frontline responders to counter people smuggling and transnational crime. The course is delivered by the Australian Federal Police, New Zealand Police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police each year at the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) headquarters in Semarang, Indonesia.



Through funding provided by the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, the RSO has worked with JCLEC and partners to further regionalise the delivery of IPSIP—to enhance responses to people smuggling operations and strengthen awareness of on-the-ground realities and challenges faced by cross-border counterparts.

In 2024, IPSIP was hosted in Penang, Malaysia, recognising Malaysia's important leadership role for the region as the ASEAN Voluntary Lead Shepherd for People Smuggling. Participants highlighted benefits realised from access to international experts—including industry representatives from social media, technology and financial platforms—and the opportunity to engage with domestic and cross-border counterparts in operational settings and through the simulation of real-world scenarios.

The RSO expresses its gratitude to the Government of Malaysia for continued joint working to progress regional discussions relating to countering maritime people smuggling. IPSIP will be delivered in September 2025 in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh—a critical maritime departure point for the region.





## INITIATIVE 3: TRANSNATIONAL CRIME AND TECHNOLOGY

*Emerging technologies are reshaping how transnational organised crime groups operate, enabling complex, cross-border activities such as trafficking in persons and people smuggling to scale more efficiently and evade traditional enforcement efforts.*

Driven by billions of dollars in illicit capital inflows, cyber-scam centres have taken on industrial proportions across Southeast Asia.

Cyber-scam centres are increasingly appearing in new regions, reflecting the global nature of this evolving challenge and the growing reach of the transnational organised crime groups operating them. With trafficking for forced criminality and fraud at their core, these operations cause serious harm—exploiting victims of trafficking and defrauding individuals around the world.

To prevent such abuses, it is important that law enforcement officers and policy-makers are supported by evidence-based recommendations and capacity building efforts, that can support governments to proactively prepare and strengthen their responses to the changing environment they are operating in.



# ENHANCING REGIONAL RESPONSES TO CYBER-SCAM CENTRE OPERATIONS

Partnership with Member State governments and regional actors has supported a more coordinated, comprehensive regional response to this still-evolving challenge. RSO workshops and dialogues have strengthened relations with and between Member States, and facilitated access to private sector and finance expertise, and civil society voices.

Priority needs articulated by Member State governments steer the thematic focus for RSO workshops and training activities. The RSO and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia jointly held a regional workshop to support consular responses, recognising the rapid uptick in consular assistance being requested by nationals trafficked into cyber-scam centres.<sup>2</sup>

Perspectives from cyber-crime experts and private sector partners underpinned a technical workshop on investigating and prosecuting syndicates involved in cyber-scam centre operations, also jointly coordinated with the Government of the Republic of Indonesia. Participants representing private sector, social media companies and law enforcement outlined actions needed to enhance content moderation, evidence-sharing, and proactive monitoring.

A Technical Experts Meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia, co-hosted with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) and ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking program brought together regional law enforcement, financial intelligence officials, civil society and private sector representatives to share knowledge and best practices on identifying, tracking and disrupting illicit money flows fuelling trafficking in persons in the region.

A joint workshop coordinated with Thailand's Office of the Attorney General, the International Justice Mission (IJM), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking program brought together prosecutors from across the region to identify gaps and good practices when prosecuting cases of trafficking for forced criminality tied to cyber-scam centres.

The RSO also worked with Member States to strengthen their national response. A National Dialogue held in partnership with the Philippine Government Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) brought together relevant Government agencies representing law enforcement, consular officials, judicial officers, social workers and migrant worker departments to support a 'whole-of-government' approach in responding to trafficking into scam centres. The RSO is also adopting this model with other Member States.





## STRENGTHENING REGIONAL CAPABILITY IN ONLINE INVESTIGATIONS

Social media and online job portals have become primary recruitment tools for trafficking into forced criminality.<sup>3</sup> With the increased focus on online recruitment by traffickers, law enforcement must in parallel build capacity to investigate trafficking recruitment networks, to keep pace with new recruitment tactics.

To support this need, the RSO developed a new curriculum on open-source intelligence (OSINT) to strengthen capacity of law enforcement officers to obtain evidence through online investigations. The curriculum supports officers to develop practical skills, including advanced techniques for using search engines, digital footprint analysis, social media monitoring, disinformation detection, and use of geolocation to support investigations. The curriculum was piloted through a three-part national workshop series, jointly held with IOM Mongolia.



Content from the curriculum was used to train officers at the RSO 2025 Alumni Day, and in RSO capacity building support for INTERPOL's Liberterra II Operation (see page 19).



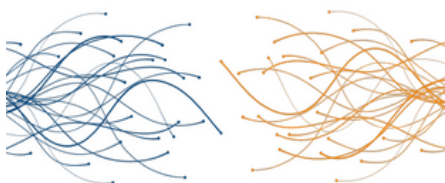


# PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE OF AI: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

OSCE Organization for Security and  
Co-operation in Europe



## NEW FRONTIERS: THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO FACILITATE TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS



POLICY BRIEF  
NOVEMBER 2024

Artificial intelligence (AI) is an emerging challenge, with AI increasingly adopted by transnational criminal groups to scale up operations—from utilising AI to perform tasks such as the translation of fraudulent job adverts into multiple languages, to the creation of highly-realistic fraudulent online identities.

A policy brief, *New Frontiers*, developed in partnership with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, provides timely insights into AI-enabled trafficking.

It provides frontline officers, investigators, and policymakers with recommendations, from documenting suspected AI use in trafficking cases, to prevention, detection, and enforcement approaches.

The RSO presented on findings from the report and the intersection of AI and trafficking in persons at the 12th INTERPOL Global Conference on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, which took place in Belgrade, Republic of Serbia, over 28-30 October 2024.



*countries have reported cases to the RSO of their citizens being trafficked to Southeast Asia's scam compounds<sup>3</sup>*



*New Frontiers has been cited and referenced in UK and European Union policy documents, academic literature and news and trade media.*



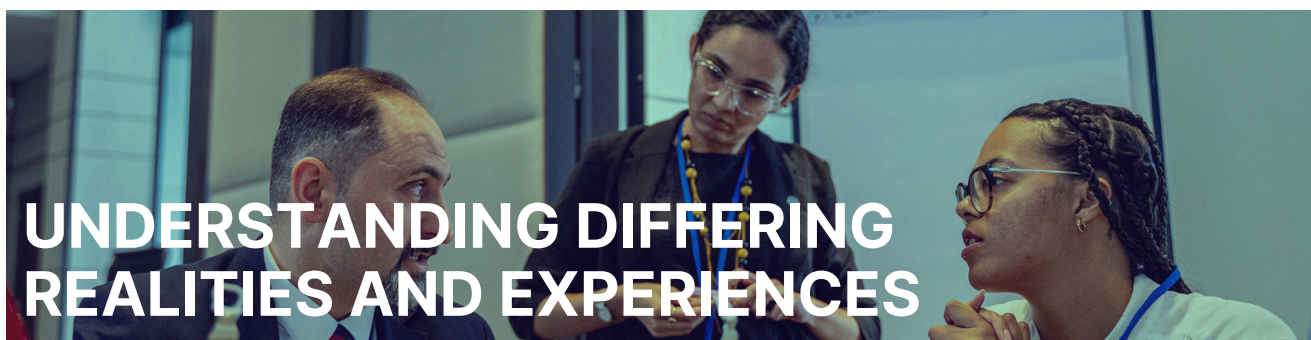
## LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION

The RSO provided technical expertise, training and support to the Asia-Pacific Operational Coordination Unit of Liberterra II, INTERPOL's largest ever counter-trafficking and migrant smuggling operation, involving 116 countries. Prior to the operation, participants strengthened skills in online evidence collection, benefitting from content in the RSO's newly developed OSINT curriculum. The Operation's Asia-Pacific component took place in Manila, the Philippines, bringing together 16 countries and resulting in the closure of a cyber-scam centre compound. RSO support also facilitated the in-person participation of Bali Process Member State law enforcement agencies, enhancing opportunities for cross-border connections and information sharing.



## PROMOTING THE VOICES OF CIVIL SOCIETY

In May 2024, the RSO and Freedom Collaborative, a network connecting civil society organisations worldwide, convened civil society actors to share recommendations based on observations in the field and from direct experience providing support to victims, as to which policy interventions could make the greatest impact in disrupting trafficking into cyber-scam centres. Participants emphasised the need to enhance cross-border coordination and to strengthen documentation of cases involving trafficking into forced criminality. A joint report, led by the RSO and Freedom Collaborative, will distill recommendations from frontline partners with the aim to further strengthen the collective response to trafficking into cyber-scam centres.



## UNDERSTANDING DIFFERING REALITIES AND EXPERIENCES

Every victim and individual will have their own, unique story to tell. Understanding the different dynamics and experiences individuals encounter, based on identifying factors such as nationality and gender is critical, and can strengthen policy and programme development by making sure responses introduced are grounded in reality and actual need. The RSO established a new partnership with the Australian Institute of Criminology and the UN Women Asia and the Pacific Office to support research into women's experiences in cyber-scam centres, capturing gender-specific insights to inform future policy and training.



## INITIATIVE 4: SMUGGLING AND TRAFFICKING AT THE BORDER

*Border vulnerabilities present a key point of exploitation in migration management. Enhancing the skills and knowledge of frontline officers is critical to building resilient and responsive systems that can improve protection for vulnerable individuals and support the integrity of borders.*

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In 2024 the RSO reached some 1,188 participants through 56 technical dialogues and training workshops, with protection for individuals who may be in a vulnerable situation a common thread across all training activities.







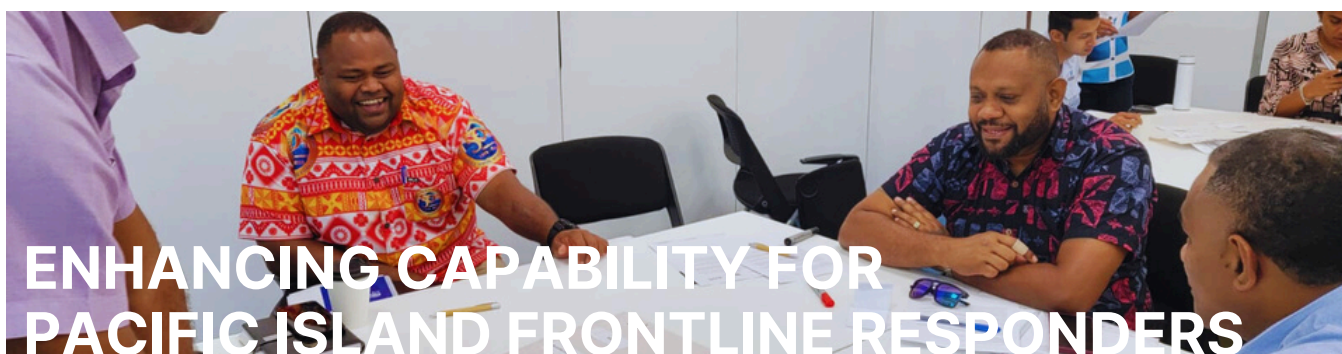
A complex challenge in the response to the growth of cyber scam centres lies in victim identification and support—as trafficking victims are coerced into forced criminality and made to carry out cyber-enabled scams.

This can cause stumbling blocks in cross-border cooperation and efforts to return and provide support to potential victims—particularly where understanding of victims and perpetrators may differ from one country to another.

The RSO provided support to the Indonesia-Cambodia Forum on Human Trafficking, convened by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, and facilitating collaboration between Cambodian and Indonesian authorities. The workshop focused on victim identification, inter-agency coordination, and shared challenges in countering cross-border trafficking, particularly into cyber-scam centres.

The RSO led a session on Inter-agency Cooperation and Coordination, and the importance of both formal and informal routes for bilateral cooperation. The workshop initiated discussions towards the development of a bilateral Standard Operating Procedure to support agreed standards for victim identification between Indonesia and Cambodia.





In recent years, Pacific Island nations have increasingly reported issues related to trafficking in persons and related transnational crime reaching their shores,<sup>4</sup> creating new and urgent challenges—and putting existing resources under additional pressure.

In response to a call from Pacific Island Members for the Bali Process to deepen engagement and support, the RSO, in partnership with the Australian Government's Attorney-General's Department and Fiji's Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration, delivered a capacity-building workshop supporting awareness and understanding of trafficking trends, challenges and opportunities for coordinated action.

Building on this workshop, the RSO, IOM Fiji, and the Government of Fiji co-hosted a training workshop bringing together practitioners from across immigration, customs, labour, aviation and fisheries sectors, to build understanding of legal frameworks, enhance victim identification and inter-agency cooperation.

Participants reflected on essential knowledge and learning gained that will support Fiji in its ongoing work to strengthen the implementation of its 2021-2026 Anti-Trafficking National Action Plan, which seeks to bolster investigative and prosecution efforts, to strengthen collaborative partnerships, and enhance awareness-raising activities.







# EMBEDDING LEARNING INTO WAYS OF WORKING

The RSO Regional Workshop on Border Management by Air, held in Jakarta, Indonesia provided training to frontline officers from five regional travel hubs—India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Participants honed their skills in traveler assessment and document examination. The training was supported by the Australian Border Force and JCLEC.

Each participant developed a Return-to-Work Action Plan, identifying opportunities and committing to efforts to share learning onwards and put learning into practice at their respective duty stations.

A virtual follow-up session captured how Alumni had worked to sustain and implement learning to provide long-term impact and positive change.



- Alumni from **India** reported that they had scaled-up the reach of the training by providing onwards briefings to over 400 personnel, updating national training modules to reflect best practices provided through the training.



- **Malaysian** officials highlighted efforts to broaden reach of knowledge, through a presentation given at a national Anti Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Conference.



- Alumni from **Thailand** reported an increase in successful interdictions, and infrastructure upgrades at border checkpoints and enhancements to Standard Operating Procedures at Suvarnabhumi Airport, in line with recommendations made at the training.



- The **Philippines** has incorporated workshop recommendations into its Bureau of Immigration work plan.



Thailand's Counter Trafficking in Persons Centre of Excellence (CTIP-COE), established by the Royal Thai Government with support from the Australian Government through the ASEAN–Australia Counter Trafficking program establishes a regional hub for training and knowledge sharing to counter trafficking in persons for Southeast Asia.

The RSO provided strategic input to the centre's opening through its role as an Observer on the Centre's Joint Steering Committee, and will continue to share technical expertise to shape course content, and support reach, input and participation across Bali Process Member States.







## INITIATIVE 5: IDENTIFICATION AND SUPPORT OF MIGRANTS WHO MAY BE IN A VULNERABLE SITUATION

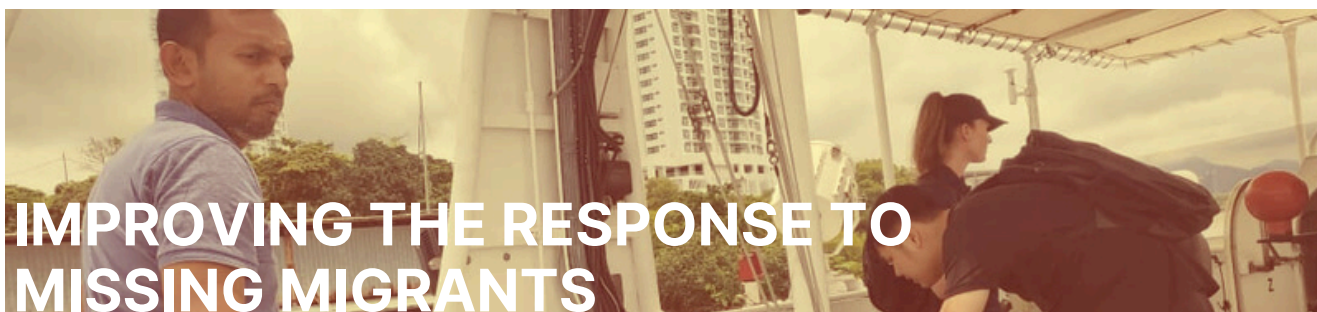
*Recognising and conveying  
the human impact for  
migrants undertaking  
dangerous journeys is  
central to the RSO's  
approach to its work*

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The RSO provides support to Members to enhance and strengthen protection-based approaches across national and institutional frameworks and operating procedures, including through the provision of necessary legal identity documents for all.

Positive institutional changes to policies and practices are important to strengthen refugee protection and to enhance management of movements and arrivals—as well as to support safe and dignified returns and sustainable reintegration.





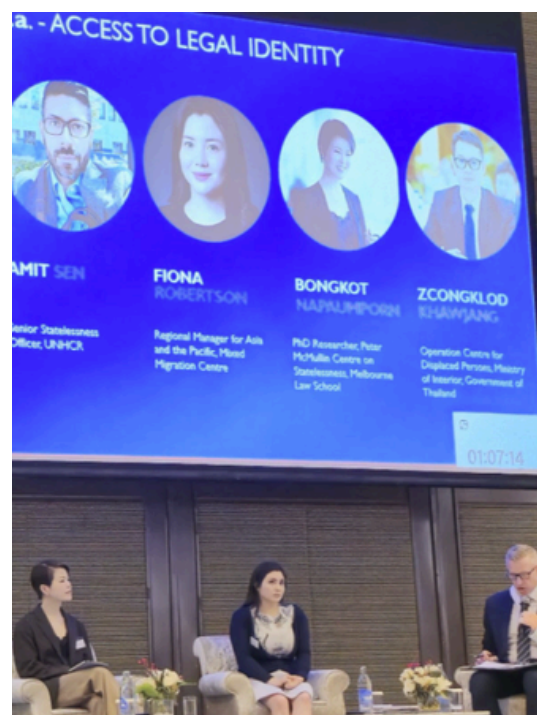
# IMPROVING THE RESPONSE TO MISSING MIGRANTS

Data from IOM shows that the use of maritime routes continues to present one of the gravest risks taken in irregular migration journeys. In Asia, IOM data further shows the heightened risk for Rohingya populations to encounter violence whilst on the move.

A policy roundtable, funded by the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, UNHCR and the ICRC and co-organised with the RSO and IOM, gathered experts, policymakers, and frontline responders from across the region to discuss strategies to improve the response to people going missing along dangerous routes in Asia.

The roundtable highlighted the urgent need for enhanced data-sharing mechanisms between origin, transit, and destination countries, the importance of robust civil registration systems, and the need for coordinated protocols to identify missing persons, provide appropriate support and communications to families, and allow dignified treatment of deceased migrants.

Delegates acknowledged a currently unmet need to bring together implementing partners and donors, that can support sustainability and impact in programming and resource allocation.



**483%**

*increase in irregular maritime movements in Asia between 2021 and 2023<sup>5</sup>*



*Nearly 1 in 5 people attempting irregular journeys by sea in this region have been reported as dead or missing<sup>6</sup>*





## ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURNS AND REINTEGRATION

The Bali Process Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration (AVRR) programme is designed to assist persons in need of protection through safe and dignified returns and sustainable reintegration. The Bali Process AVRR programme is implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), where it has been active from 2012 until 2024. Over the 12 years the programme has run, it has supported victims of trafficking, stranded migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers and irregular migrants across the Indo-Pacific region.

The Bali Process AVRR programme provided pre-departure assistance including medical screening, psychosocial counselling, and the provision of non-food items; voluntary return services; and, sustainable reintegration assistance. Over the years, the Bali Process AVRR programme has responded to the evolving nature of irregular migration and trafficking in persons. Since 2022, the programme has held a strong focus on supporting victims of trafficking for forced criminality, trapped in cyber-scam centres in Southeast Asia.

Reintegration assistance provided under the Bali Process AVRR programme has supported individuals to access income-generating and livelihood activities. Those who have received support through the programme include victims of trafficking, victims of abuse, migrants with medical needs, single women with children, and migrants with limited support networks in their home countries.



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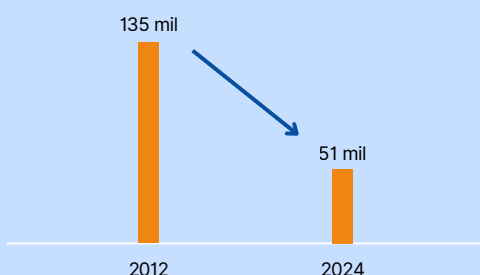
*The Bali Process AVRR programme assisted 126 stranded and vulnerable migrants in 2024*

1,819

*Since its inception in 2012, the Bali Process AVRR programme has supported a total of 1,819 stranded and vulnerable migrants*



### Number of unregistered children under five in Asia and the Pacific decreased between 2012-2024<sup>9</sup>



**One in six children is still unregistered in 2024**



**The majority of unregistered children under five live in South and Southwest Asia**



Undocumented and unseen, people without legal identity face layered risks from being denied basic services and livelihood opportunities—which in turn results in higher vulnerability to exploitation and statelessness.

This can lead to individuals selecting to undertake irregular journeys as their only perceived option to a better life.

The link between legal identity and migration—whilst perhaps not immediately obvious—is an important topic for this region to understand and address. Inclusive civil registration and vital statistics systems play an important role in reducing vulnerability to trafficking in persons, addressing the risks of statelessness and enabling safe, regular and orderly migration.

The updated Bali Process [Toolkit for Inclusive Civil Registration](#) and [Guidance on Birth Registration for Civil Registrars](#) provides Member States with enhanced practical guidance to support inclusive civil registration. The RSO presented the updated Toolkit at the [2024 World Conference on Statelessness](#), and highlighted policy recommendations that can support governments in reviewing civil registration systems with migration governance in mind.



*of the global total of people living in modern slavery are in Asia and the Pacific<sup>7</sup>*



*Nearly 1 out of every 4 detected victims of trafficking for forced labour are women<sup>8</sup>*



## INITIATIVE 6: ENHANCING CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

*Embedding learning into ways of working—to influence internal processes and procedures at the institutional level, and to uplift knowledge, technical skills and ways of working at an operational level—underpin the RSO’s approach towards capability development.*

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The design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of RSO activities through a new RSO Capability Development Approach will provide a framework through which the RSO will seek to capture and sustain long-term impact and positive change.

The RSO Alumni Network and Secondment Programme provide examples of where learning is being sustained, through strengthened and enduring connections and access to opportunities and networks. These serve to build informed, connected, responsive communities of practice across the Bali Process membership.





The RSO Secondment Programme brings mutual benefit to both the RSO and Member State governments, strengthening connections and supporting a two-way exchange of information and good practices. Secondees from Member States are hosted by the RSO for a three-to-six month period to work on a discrete project. Secondees act as important links for the RSO to their home governments—and through the exposure they gain at the RSO, are also able to bring new approaches, and widened regional contacts and networks back to their workplaces.

In 2024, secondees from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia focused efforts to lead the delivery of capability development workshops and regional dialogues relating to trafficking into forced criminality in cyber-scam centres.

A series of secondments from Sri Lanka's Department of Immigration and Emigration—funded by the Government of New Zealand—has fostered information sharing between Sri Lankan officials, Thai Immigration and Airline Liaison Officers based in the region around aviation people smuggling and trafficking in persons.

The RSO welcomes interest from Bali Process Members in the Secondment Programme.





The RSO Alumni Network, launched in November 2023, now connects some 223 alumni across the region. This network serves as a platform for peer-to-peer information sharing, professional development, and real-world collaboration.

Alumni have reported tangible outcomes, including, for example, cross-border coordination during live investigations that have led to arrests, made possible through connections established within the network.

The RSO's Return-to-Work Action Plan framework provides those who participate in RSO trainings with a structure to identify opportunities to share learning onwards in the workplace. Development of Return-to-Work Action Plans establishes a shared understanding and expectation for training participants on their return to their duty stations, to implement knowledge and skills gained to benefit ways of working.

Follow-up sessions provide peer-to-peer opportunities to share success and positive outcomes that may benefit others and allows the RSO to continue to provide support and to measure success.



My goal is to elevate the skill level in my office to meet international standards. Given the limited education and resources available here, I am committed to sharing knowledge and best practices whenever possible. I take pride in having enhanced my team's skills and expertise on border security and management.

**Police Captain Patcharapon Phomphan**  
Deputy Inspector of Mukdahan Immigration, Thailand






The RSO's Internship Programme provides students with hands-on experience in the field of international development assistance, capability, programme and policy development, fostering skilled professionals and investing in and supporting aspirations of graduates from the region and across the Bali Process membership.

The RSO has established a formal partnership with Mahidol University International College, Thailand, and hosted five interns to date from its International Relations programme. In addition, the RSO has hosted two interns from Thammasat University, Thailand and two interns from Australian universities under the New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program.



I feel truly grateful and privileged to have joined the RSO as the first intern from Mahidol University International College. Over my time in the RSO, I have been entrusted with a range of tasks that have supported me to develop my skills for the workplace, alongside professional colleagues who have been guiding and inspiring me for my future career path.

**Sarawut Pongsuwan (Tor)**  
Intern—Communications & Engagement





# INITIATIVE 7: SUPPORT FOR THE BALI PROCESS ECOSYSTEM

*The geographic reach of the Bali Process stretches across Asia and the Pacific, and to Europe, Africa and North America.*

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The Bali Process facilitates dialogue and information sharing across its 45 Member States, four Member Organisations, and 27 Observer States and Organisations on trends, challenges and priorities relating to international migration, people smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crime.

The RSO 2024-2026 Work Plan provides practical and technical support through research, access to trends and insights, capacity development and training activities, and opportunities for dialogue and to strengthen connections across cross-border counterparts, at both senior policy maker and frontline official levels across the broad Bali Process region.





Acknowledging Indonesia's pivotal role as Bali Process Co-Chair, the RSO has established an annual week of activities to take place in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The *RSO Member State Spotlight: Indonesia* was held over 3-7 June 2024, bringing together counterparts from across the Bali Process membership. A series of technical activities took place over the course of the week, including workshops on border management and financial crime, and discussions on national legal frameworks.

The RSO Members' Engagement Function evening reception brought together members of the diplomatic corps from across the Bali Process membership, colleagues from international organisations, and regional partners and actors. Ambassador Tri Tharyat, Director General for Multilateral Cooperation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and Senior Official Co-Chair of the Bali Process (Indonesia), and Gita Kamath, Australian Deputy Ambassador to Indonesia, formally opened the evening.







## SUPPORT FOR BALI PROCESS WORKING GROUPS

Bali Process Working Groups convened annual meetings over 2024. The RSO provided technical input and support towards these meetings.

- **The Bali Process Working Group on Disruption of Criminal Networks Involved in People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons** concluded its Joint 2023-2024 Period of Action. At its Annual Meeting, Co-Chair New Zealand committed to fund a series of secondments from the Sri Lankan Government to the RSO office, to build on information-sharing and cooperation between Sri Lankan and Thailand immigration officials initiated through the Joint Period of Action.
- **The Bali Process Technical Experts Group on Returns and Reintegration** held its Sixth and Seventh Meetings in Bangkok, Thailand and Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to progress development of its Forward Work Plan. Participants identified key priorities, including economic reintegration, inter-agency coordination, and reducing stigma for returnees. The RSO will support the refresh of the Bali Process Policy Guide on Returns and Reintegration.
- **The Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons** marked its 10th anniversary with a Commemorative Dialogue, where the RSO moderated a panel discussion on emerging trends and global challenges intensifying the risks and harms of trafficking in persons. The RSO also supported a regional event held jointly by the Working Group and the Bali Process Taskforce on Planning and Preparedness through technical presentations and contributions in line with the theme 'Trafficking into online scam centres: enhancing community awareness through partnership'.
- **The Bali Process Government and Business Forum** held its Sri Lanka Summit in June, resulting in the Colombo Commitment, which calls for strengthened public-private sector partnerships, upholding of migrant workers' rights and stronger legal protections and business practices. Planning is underway to support the hosting of Bali Process Government and Business Forum funded staff into the RSO.





## SYNERGY AND COOPERATION ACROSS REGIONAL DIALOGUES

The 2023 Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation calls for strengthened collaboration with regional organisations, including The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN is a vital platform in southeast Asia due to its capacity to promote regional stability, and to provide a collective voice on global issues including trafficking in persons and people smuggling.

Over the past year, the RSO has sought to deepen engagement with ASEAN bodies and mechanisms, including the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC), the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) and through engagement with ASEAN Voluntary Lead Shepherd Member States for People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons.

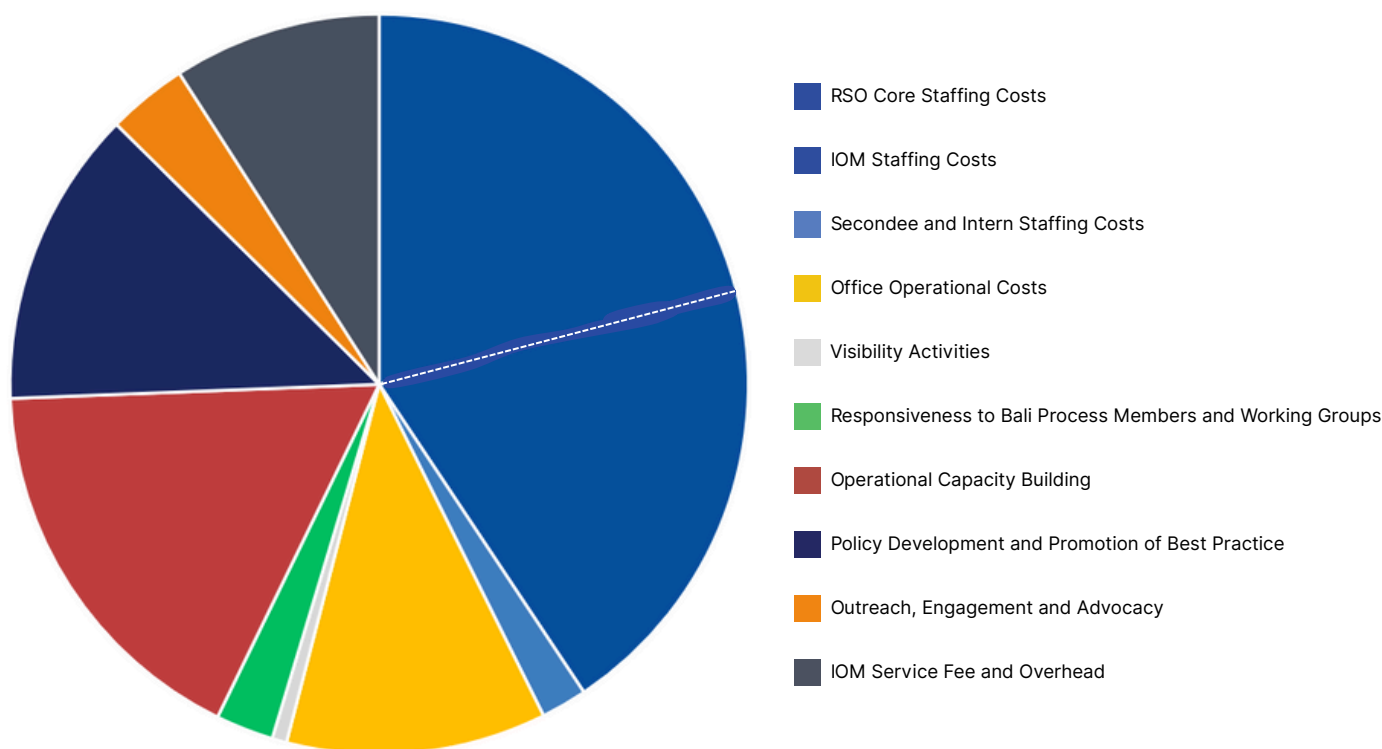
The RSO has also engaged with regional dialogues including the Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration, the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT Process) and through ongoing engagement with the Budapest Process—to identify opportunities for synergy and cooperation.





# RSO FUNDING AND 2024 EXPENDITURE

## RSO EXPENDITURE 2024



A breakdown of RSO expenditure over 2024 is represented in this pie chart. Programme costs are reported against each of the RSO Core Purposes: Responsiveness to Bali Process Members and Working Groups, Operational Capacity Building, Policy Development and Promotion of Best Practice, and Outreach, Engagement and Advocacy. Development of RSO materials are represented under visibility activities.

Staffing and operational costs are broken down by RSO staffing costs, staffing costs for IOM colleagues who provide administrative and operational support, supporting costs to host secondees at the RSO, general office operational costs and the service fee and overhead costs to the IOM for its hosting of the RSO in Bangkok, Thailand.

Primary funding for the RSO is provided by the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment of the Government of New Zealand provided additional programmatic funding support.

In 2024, RSO activities were also supported through in-kind funding of venues and logistics by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and the Philippine Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking. The Governments of the Republic of Indonesia and Sri Lanka supported the secondment of their officers to the RSO.

The RSO further recognises the invaluable collaboration of broader regional partners and actors who have input into RSO activities.



## LOOKING AHEAD

The RSO acknowledges the increasingly complex and unpredictable environment Member States must navigate in considering international migration challenges.

Technology advances have changed the way and rules by which we all work. Political uncertainty and pressures from natural and humanitarian disasters will continue to place pressure on individuals and communities, and provide opportunities for transnational criminal actors to seek to exploit and profit from those in vulnerable situations.

The challenges of today require governments to be agile and responsive, to embrace cross-border cooperation and coordination across efforts and resourcing.

The RSO 2024-2026 Work Plan provides a roadmap to advance shared objectives in line with the Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation. As new priorities and emerging issues redirect needs, the RSO will review and update this Work Plan to reflect and respond to Bali Process Members.

Looking ahead, the RSO remains committed to strengthening partnerships to build on achievements of the past year, and stands ready to support and add value across Member State efforts.



# GLOSSARY

<b>AICHR</b>	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
<b>AVRR</b>	Bali Process Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration (AVRR) programme
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>COMMIT</b>	Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking
<b>CTIP-COE</b>	Thailand Counter Trafficking in Persons Centre of Excellence
<b>IACAT</b>	Philippine Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>INTERPOL</b>	International Criminal Police Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IPSIP</b>	International People Smuggling Investigations Program
<b>JCLEC</b>	Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation
<b>RSO</b>	Regional Support Office of the Bali Process
<b>SOMTC</b>	Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations Refugee Agency
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

# ENDNOTES

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**REGIONAL SUPPORT OFFICE**  
THE BALI PROCESS

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