



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Supporting Regional Integration with Effective Border Management: Border Liaison Offices



UNODC Regional Programme for Southeast Asia

The Need for Border Liaison Offices in Southeast Asia

Transnational organised crime crosses national borders, and slowing or stopping illicit movements of people and goods remains a top priority for law enforcement agencies. Increased cross-border cooperation through the UNODC Border Liaison Office (BLO) network is a key element in tackling transnational threats in Southeast Asia.



Regional Integration and Border Management

The region is undergoing a process of integration that includes far-reaching change in the management of its borders. The regional roadmap for connectivity, such as the ASEAN Community 2015 and Greater Mekong Sub-Region Transport Master Plan, includes major upgrades in infrastructure and initiatives to promote a freer movement of people and goods. Entry and exit points at border crossings will be increasingly pressed by the need to ensure timely and efficient movements while guaranteeing the legality of these movements and the respect of trade regulations.

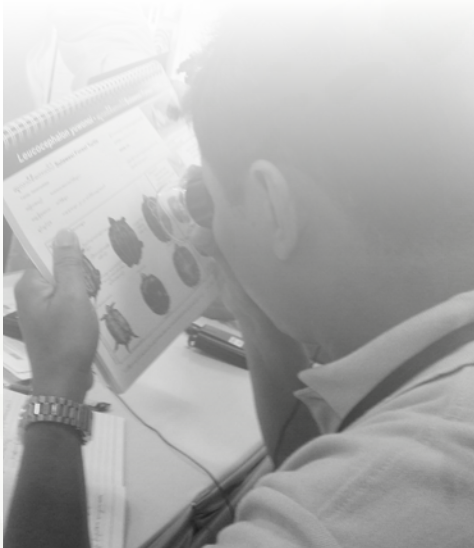


Pan-regional infrastructure programmes seek to cross-reference one another and form an interlocking plan for a highly connected region. This includes large scale projects such as the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway Network, as well as sub-regional initiatives in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region to upgrade roads, rail and ports while re-organizing border management processes to facilitate increasing flows of goods and people.



Although these trends will generally have a positive effect in terms of lowering overall trade costs while boosting growth, they will likely create opportunities for organised criminal groups to traffic illicit goods and smuggle people across borders. According to conservative estimates, the transnational organised crime economy in Southeast Asia and the Pacific already

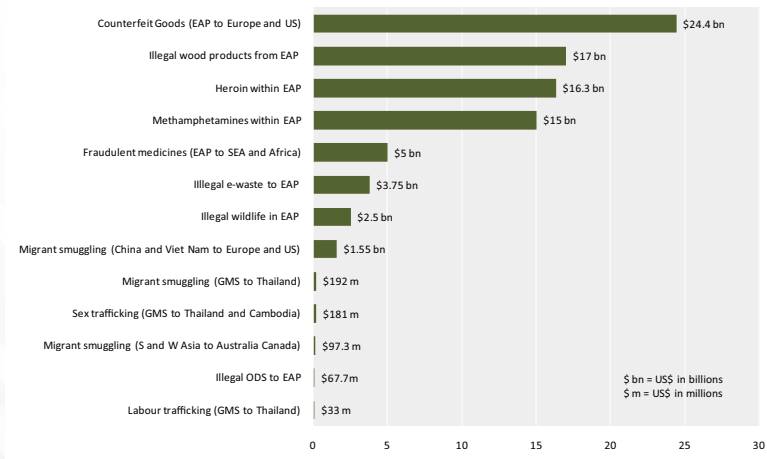
exceeds a staggering value of US \$100 billion per year, surpassing the GDP of several countries in the region. These illegal money flows have a detrimental impact on human security, economic development and the environment.



The ASEAN Single Window (ASW) initiative establishes a single submission point for harmonized data and information processing, together with a single decision-making point for customs clearance. The objective is to accelerate clearance procedures for goods and achieve greater economic efficiency. When fully operational, the ASW envisages, for example, that an importer bringing a container into ASEAN, destined for Vietnam via Singapore, would need to submit data once to a single, centralized data hub, for automated sharing with all relevant agencies.

Often, border control officers remain ill-equipped to identify and interdict the illegal movements and trafficking of people, narcotic drugs and precursor chemicals, wildlife, timber and counterfeit goods in a comprehensive manner, even at international checkpoints. At the same time, the flows of people and cargo are growing bigger and moving faster, illustrating the need for increasing the fundamental knowledge, information and operational capacity among frontline officers.

This requires strengthening domestic and cross-border cooperation and information sharing. Illegal cross-border flows have already taken on a well-integrated regional character. As transnational crime groups are increasingly outpacing national criminal justice responses, border law enforcement agencies need to improve cooperation and communication across borders to share real-time information and intelligence on criminal activities and trafficking routes.



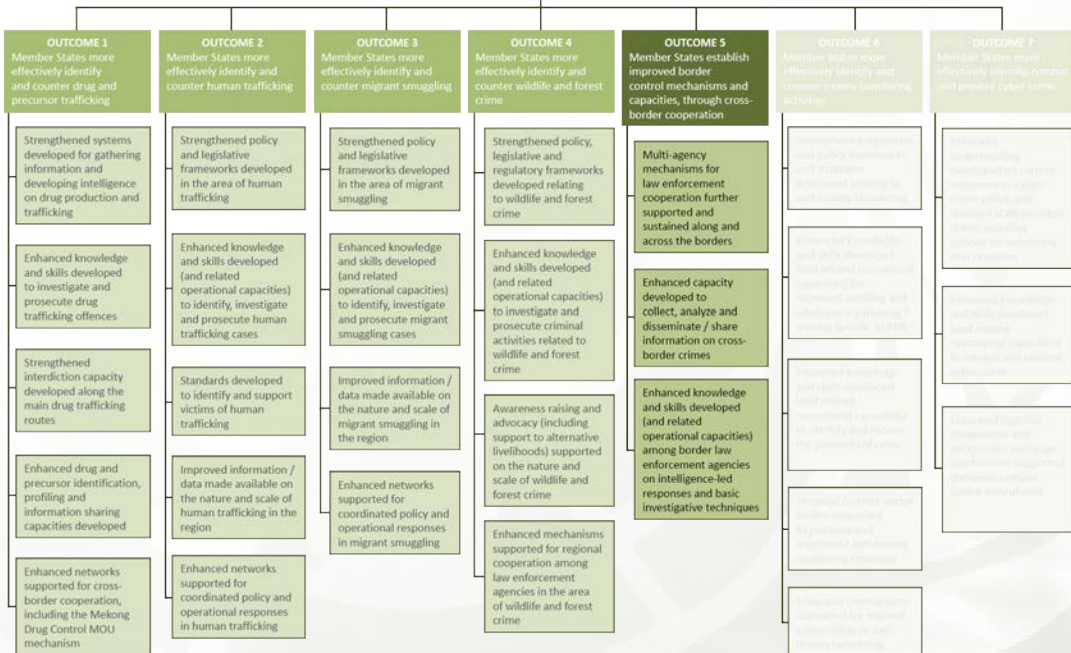
Transnational crime in Southeast Asia is conservatively valued at \$100 billion/year

UNODC Support for Effective Border Management


UNODC assistance to the region is guided by the Regional Programme for Southeast Asia 2014-2017 (RP). A central component of the RP is Sub-Programme 1: Transnational Organised Crime and Illicit Trafficking, which includes Outcome 5: Member States establish improved border control mechanisms and capacities, through cross-border cooperation. Importantly, strengthening border management also benefits other outcome areas covering transnational crimes.



SUB-PROGRAMME 1
Transnational organised
crime and illicit trafficking



Effective border management supports efforts to counter a number of transnational crimes



Following research and consultations with national counterparts, regional partners and stakeholders, the RP is implemented to ensure alignment with national strategies and regional frameworks such as, inter alia, the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC), the ASEAN Senior Officials meeting on Drugs matters (ASOD), the Greater Mekong Sub-Region MoU on Drug Control and the Bali Process.



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Within the GMS, six countries share approximately 12,000 kilometers of land borders which are highly porous and infrequently patrolled

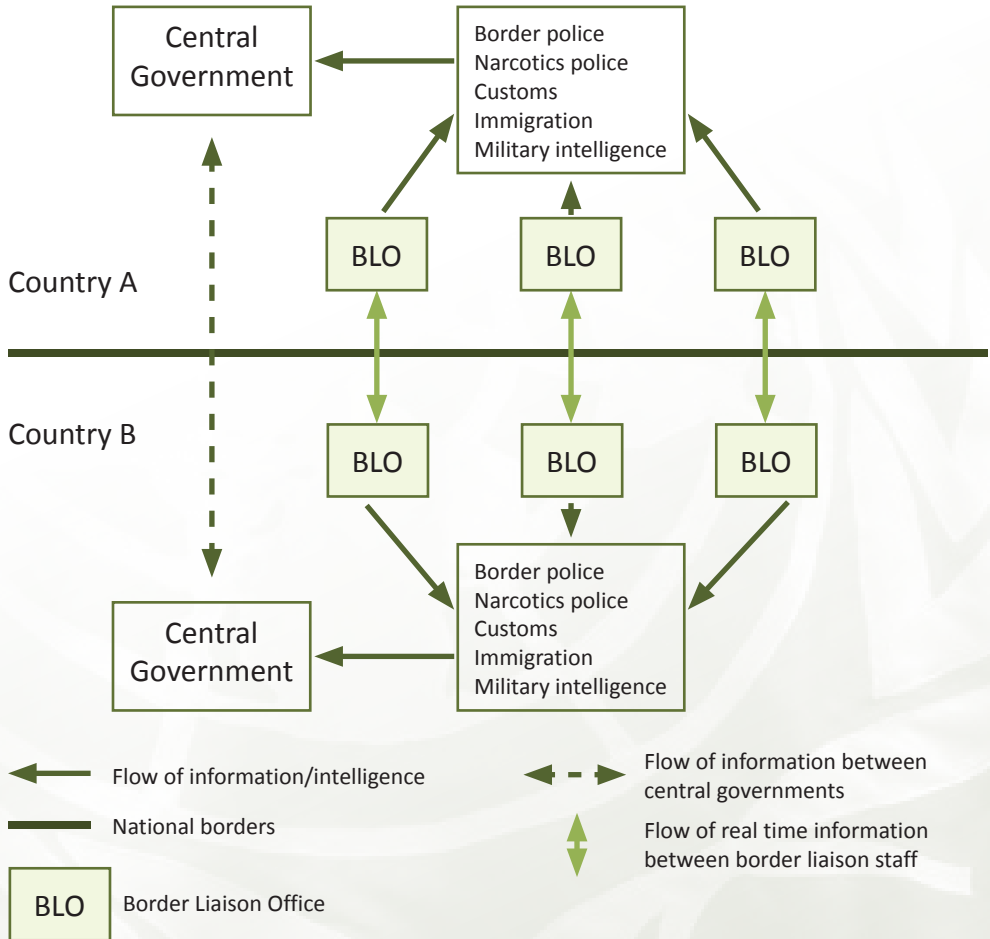
A BLO is a coordinating office for national law enforcement agencies which facilitates and promotes greater cross-border cooperation. Located near recognized border crossings, BLOs act as a centralized clearing house for information received from the vicinity of border areas and a point where joint actions can be taken and coordinated.

BLOs are typically staffed by five to ten officers from frontline law enforcement agencies including narcotics, border, local and immigration police as well as customs officers. They receive common training, tools, systems and equipment, facilitating a shared approach, understanding and lexicon for addressing transnational crime challenges.

BLO officers patrol neighboring border areas and serve as focal points for relaying important information and intelligence to counterparts. This leads to better communication and cooperation between different national agencies, as well as fast and effective intervention by law enforcement officers on opposite sides of a border.

BLO counterparts meet on a regular basis to exchange intelligence both formally and informally. Periodically, regional BLO workshops are held to disseminate the latest *modus operandi* of traffickers, as well as information on the newest trafficking routes.

The BLO Mechanism



The Impact of Border Liaison Offices

UNODC supports over 70 BLOs throughout Southeast Asia. The combination of common training, tools, systems and equipment provided to BLOs helps countries in the region accomplish the following goals:

- Sustain and expand national coordination and policy committees
- Strengthen cooperation between front-line border agencies
- Strengthen cooperation between border agencies across national borders
- Enable the rapid sharing of intelligence leading to seizures and arrests
- Enable the sharing of information on modus operandi, trends and trafficking routes, and
- Facilitate the execution of joint operations against transnational crime networks.

As regional integration will lead to rapid increases in the movements of people and goods across borders, the UNODC BLO network will play an increasingly crucial role to ensure that border law enforcement agencies have the knowledge, capacity and communication mechanisms to share real-time intelligence and information, and to respond to the growing threat transnational organised crime poses to the region.



Border Liaison Offices in Southeast Asia





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