

PEOPLE POWER:

Transforming Mekong Security Through Local Engagement



In recent years, non-traditional security (NTS) challenges, specifically human trafficking, drug trafficking, and illegal immigration, have escalated in the Mekong region, particularly in 44 districts spanning 17 provinces along the Thailand-Laos and Thailand-Cambodia borders.

To respond to this highly alarming situation, the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA), a government agency under the Ministry of Interior in Thailand, launched the "People-to-People Connectivity" Project (P2P) in 2014. Aligned with Mekong- Republic of Korea Cooperation Fund's priority sector on Non-traditional Security Challenges, it aims to fortify regional cooperation among Thailand, Lao PDR, and Cambodia in the fight against human trafficking and other security threats.

In 2021,
127.6 tons
of methamphetamine
confiscated in the lower
Mekong subregion alone

Success of the "Non-Traditional approach"

Existing regional efforts are insufficient to effectively address these cross-border crimes. Instead of focusing on military and police involvement, the project's unique strategy actively involves local communities, enabling them to contribute to collective efforts against NTS threats to the fullest extent possible.

Implemented annually in 128 border districts, the project has resulted in more informal communication, trust and cooperation between Thailand and neighboring countries, facilitating quicker resolution of various issues and fostering unity and peace in the region.

Increased awareness programs such as the launch of www.NTS-Mekong.com, providing significant online reporting channels for citizens, coupled with the training of local officers in non-traditional security literacy, have significantly improved the ability of communities to identify and understand the mechanisms of various NTS threats, turning them into active participants in surveillance and prevention, rather than passive observers. Local populations and authorities now engage more proactively and with greater agility to address arising challenges, which is a critical factor in their decline.



THE WAY FORWARD

In areas with demarcated border, the situation is particularly challenging. **Extending efforts to the village level** would be highly beneficial, fostering a sense of familiarity among residents and mitigating the perceived distance between them.

www.NTS-Mekong.com