Journal of Social Political Sciences
JSPS
Vol. 7, No. 1, February 2026

INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THE REPATRIATION OF INDONESIAN CITIZENS (WNI) WHO ARE VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CAMBODIA FOR THE PERIOD 2023-2024

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Abstract: This study examines the Indonesian Government's policy on the repatriation of Indonesian citizens (WNI) who are victims of human trafficking in Cambodia for the period 2023-2024. It uses Phil Williams' Transnational Organized Crime theory as a grand theory, supported by the concepts of human rights, international cooperation, and non-traditional security. The method is descriptive qualitative library research, drawing on books, journals, official reports, and national and international media. The findings show that the sharp rise in cases was driven by three interlocking factors: post-pandemic economic vulnerability, weak regulation and enforcement in destination zones, and corruption that eases movement through departure controls. On the policy side, the study describes bilateral and regional cooperation instruments, a multi-agency domestic task force, and a consular exit procedure built around substitute travel documents and negotiated exit permission. It concludes that the administrative machinery of repatriation was fairly effective at bringing victims home, but weak at prevention, at dismantling scam compounds, at prosecuting domestic recruiters, and at funding long-term reintegration, so that rescued people remained at risk of being trafficked again. The novelty of the study lies in its multidimensional approach, which integrates the analysis of the asymmetrical structure of digital syndicates with rescue strategies based on restoring human dignity and with a security framing for the Southeast Asian region.

Keywords: Human Trafficking, Cambodia, Repatriation Policy, Exit Strategy, Indonesian Citizens.

Submission	:	December 13th 2025
Revision	:	January 24th 2026
Publication	:	March 29th 2026

INTRODUCTION

The escalation of human trafficking cases in Cambodia is no longer just a matter of ordinary crime, but has transformed into a serious non-traditional security threat to the sovereignty of protecting citizens. According to the 2024 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (GLOTIP), there was a 25% increase in the number of trafficking victims in 2022 compared to 2019. In Southeast Asia, this dynamic is exacerbated by the emergence of a highly structured modus operandi of exploitation in the form of online scamming. Cambodia is now a crucial epicentre for this transnational crime, with a crime score of 7.02 out of 10 and a critical human trafficking index of 8.50. The main issue in this study is the radical shift in threats to Indonesian citizens (WNI) from traditional physical exploitation to modern digital slavery involving high technology, while state instruments face challenges in detecting aggressive

recruitment methods on social media that trigger a crisis of public trust. As a solution, the Indonesian government is expected to be able to orchestrate integrated cross-institutional policies to formulate a comprehensive exit strategy, ranging from administrative protection through Travel Documents in Lieu of Passports (SPLP) to reintegration programmes to ensure human security and prevent the phenomenon of repeat victims (re-trafficking).

Previous studies have explored the issue of migrant worker protection, but there is a gap in research related to specific handling of online scamming clusters involving thousands of Indonesian citizens in areas with high structural vulnerability such as Sihanoukville and Phnom Penh. Research by Permana et al. (2025), for example, began to map patterns of human trafficking in the digital era, but did not thoroughly examine the effectiveness of exit strategies during the crucial period of 2023-2024. The statement of gap or originality of this article arises because previous studies tend to focus on reactive-curative approaches, while this study offers novelty through a multidimensional approach that integrates the analysis of the asymmetrical structure of digital syndicates with rescue strategies based on restoring human dignity and securitising issues in the Southeast Asian region. The use of references from journals and authority reports in the last ten years, such as the Global Organized Crime Index 2025 and the UNODC 2024 report, reinforces the justification that Indonesia's repatriation policy faces unique challenges in the form of state weakness in foreign jurisdictions that hinder the synchronisation of law enforcement.

The theoretical lenses used in this study are applied as follows. Transnational Organized Crime theory (Williams, 2001) explains how syndicates exploit regulatory differences between countries. Non-traditional security thinking (Buzan, 2008) frames trafficking as a threat to human security rather than only to state borders. Human rights theory (Donnelly, 2013) supplies the standard against which victim protection is judged, namely the restoration of dignity, privacy, and recovery. Cooperation theory (Keohane, 2005) explains why repatriation depends on sustained institutional cooperation rather than on one-off diplomatic gestures. These lenses are used together in the analysis: the crime lens explains the syndicate, the security lens explains the threat, the rights lens explains the standard of protection, and the cooperation lens explains the condition for exit to succeed.

Furthermore, the urgency of this research is based on data showing that throughout the period from 2023 to 2024, online scamming cases dominated the workload of citizen protection, with the government successfully repatriating 1,138 Indonesian citizens who were trapped in these syndicates. This figure is reported here with the scope given in this passage, namely the full 2023-2024 period. This phenomenon created massive sociopolitical pressure because the public saw the state's instruments as unprepared to detect recruitment methods in the digital realm. This is in line with the application of the Transnational Organized Crime Theory, in which syndicates exploit regulatory disparities between countries to build cyber exploitation infrastructure that is isolated from the reach of conventional law. The unique difference between this study and previous studies lies in the analysis of the asymmetric interdependence between Indonesia and Cambodia, where the success of repatriation policies is largely determined by the level of cooperation from local governments amid complex sovereignty challenges.

Recent research on scam compounds in Southeast Asia supports this reading of the recruitment pattern. Luong (2025) shows how offers framed as simple jobs with high salaries

draw jobseekers into forced criminality, while the Cyber Scam Monitor (2025) maps the bases and networks through which such operations are organised across the region. Fernando et al. (2025) identify the legal gaps that leave victims of cyber exploitation without clear protection, a gap that matters directly for citizens held in guarded compounds abroad. These studies do not replace the documentary evidence analysed in this article, but they confirm that the recruitment lure, the compound structure, and the protection gap described here are regional patterns rather than isolated incidents.

The Indonesian government has optimised cross-sectoral synergies involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Police, and BP2MI as a manifestation of strengthening the long-term human security system. However, in practice, the Task Force for the Prevention and Handling of Human Trafficking (GT PP TPPO) still faces obstacles in terms of budget allocation and technology to detect adaptive syndicates. Therefore, this research is important to evaluate whether the repatriation policy has met human rights standards and is able to restore the basic rights of victims in a sustainable manner. By combining Phil Williams' Transnational Crime Theory with International Cooperation and Non-Traditional Security Theory, this study aims to fill the academic gap regarding how humanitarian values are operationalised as concrete foreign policy instruments in the face of asymmetric threats.

The purpose of this study is to describe the factors behind the sharp increase in cases of Indonesian human trafficking in Cambodia in the period 2023-2024 and to analyse the effectiveness of the exit strategy repatriation and reintegration policies implemented by the government as a manifestation of the concepts of protection and humanity. Through this analysis, it is hoped that applicable policy recommendations will be created for stakeholders in formulating protection strategies that are not only administrative but also address the root causes of the economic and digital vulnerability of victims. Two research questions guide the study. Research Question 1: What factors drove the sharp increase in cases of Indonesian citizens trafficked in Cambodia in 2023-2024? Research Question 2: How effective was the government's exit strategy, covering repatriation and reintegration, in protecting victims and preventing re-trafficking?

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analytical type to examine the Indonesian government's policy on the repatriation of Indonesian citizens (WNI) who are victims of human trafficking in Cambodia for the period 2023-2024. The choice of qualitative method is based on the need to understand the complexity of non-traditional security phenomena through in-depth analysis of policy documents and the dynamics of transnational crime recorded in various official records. Referring to Creswell's framework, this study aims to interpret the phenomenon of repatriation policy based on the facts and meanings contained in secondary data and official records published by policy actors. The research stages were carried out systematically, beginning with the identification of issues related to the escalation of online scamming cases, data collection through document searches, data reduction to sharpen the focus of the analysis, and finally drawing conclusions.

The data collection technique applied in this study was entirely library research, relying on credible secondary sources. The researcher collected data from official government agency reports, scientific publications, international relations journals, and mass media reports on

the phenomenon of human trafficking. The main secondary data sources were obtained from the Global Organized Crime Index (GOCI), the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Annual Report on the Protection of Indonesian Citizens, Statistics from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), official reports from the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), and data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In addition, scientific journal references from the last ten years and reports from trusted media outlets such as Antara News, Kompas, and BBC News Indonesia were used to strengthen the argument regarding the effectiveness of repatriation strategies and diplomatic obstacles that occur.

The results of document observation were processed using interactive data analysis techniques according to the Miles and Huberman model. This procedure involved data reduction to simplify the transformation of raw data from documents, data display in the form of descriptive narratives and systematic tables, and data verification to draw valid conclusions. The performance benchmarks of the policy were measured qualitatively by analysing the parameters of the success of the exit strategy, the effectiveness of cross-sectoral coordination in the TPPO Task Force scheme, and compliance with human rights standards in the repatriation process. All collected data is then verified using source triangulation techniques to ensure that the research results reflect an objective picture of the state's efforts to protect its citizens amid the threat of international criminal syndicates.

This method has stated limits that are carried through the analysis. No document list, document count, search terms, or inclusion and exclusion criteria are supplied in the source material, and no coding scheme or worked example is presented. The study therefore cannot claim a reproducible corpus: its claims rest on the named institutional sources and media reports discussed in the analysis, triangulated against each other, rather than on a counted and coded set of documents. The reading of those sources is also guided by survivor-centred scholarship: Qiao-Franco (2021) argues that trafficking research in Southeast Asia should better reflect survivors' agency, a caution that matters when secondary reports describe victims mainly as numbers to be repatriated. Effectiveness is judged qualitatively in this study against three benchmarks named in the method, namely exit-strategy success, cross-sectoral coordination, and human rights compliance, but no measurable indicators or thresholds for those benchmarks are defined, and that absence is acknowledged as a limitation of the verdicts that follow.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Dynamics Of Transnational Crime Threats

The dynamics of human trafficking threats in Cambodia during the 2023-2024 period have shown a very worrying transformation towards digital-based transnational crime, often referred to as the online scamming industry. This phenomenon is no longer just sporadic ordinary crime, but rather a highly structured operation that uses sophisticated technology and crosses national borders asymmetrically. This paradigm shift requires a deep understanding of how syndicates exploit the loopholes of globalisation to create models of modern slavery.

Based on the processing of secondary data from national reports and security authorities, a significant spike in cases was found after the pandemic. The data is presented in Figure 1, which shows the annual values as printed.

Figure 1. Number Of TPPO Cases In Indonesia From 2020 To 2024 (National Data)

Year	Cases
2020	261
2021	383
2022	752
2023	1,061
2024	843

Note: Source as printed, unverifiable: United States Embassy and Consulate in Indonesia (2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024). The article does not state whether these national counts are Cambodia-related cases. The plotted series rises in every year from 2020 to 2023, reaching 1,061 cases in 2023, and falls to 843 cases in 2024.

The data presented in Figure 1 shows a very significant spike in cases, especially entering 2022, reaching a peak of 1,061 cases in 2023. The sharp increase after 2021 confirms a shift in the recruitment patterns of syndicates, which are now targeting tech-savvy people of productive age. These findings prove that economic vulnerability not only affects the lower classes, but also university graduates who are struggling to find job opportunities amid limited formal employment opportunities in the country.

Technically, the recruitment process is carried out through digital platforms such as Facebook, Telegram, and Instagram with offers of high salaries in US dollars. Victims who are trapped are then held captive in large complexes isolated from the outside world. The spatial conditions of the victims' workplace in Cambodia were documented through observation, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Working Conditions, Buildings, And Sleeping Quarters In The Scam Building In Chrey Thum

Source: BBC News Indonesia (2025). The photograph shows rooms and buildings, not a map of victim locations.

The photograph in Figure 2 shows that the concentration of Indonesian citizens being held captive is in economic zones that are difficult for the central authorities to control strictly. The governance conditions in these areas provide a safe haven for criminal organisations to hold victims captive in large complexes that are heavily guarded by armed guards. This makes it difficult for Indonesian diplomatic assistance to coordinate independent rescue efforts without the full involvement of local Cambodian authorities, who sometimes have overlapping regulations.

An analysis using Phil Williams' Transnational Organized Crime Theory shows that this phenomenon is driven by three main interlocking factors. The first factor is post-pandemic economic vulnerability. Why are educated groups the main targets? This is linked to the concept of regulatory arbitrage, where syndicates exploit the economic needs of digitally literate graduates who have lost their bargaining power in the domestic job market. Asymmetric digital infrastructure gives syndicates the advantage of recruiting victims across borders with an instant departure process.

The second factor is weak regulation in the destination country, or state weakness. The emergence of the concept of state weakness is evident in autonomous regions such as Sihanoukville and Chrey Thum. These areas have become legal grey zones with a TPPO index score reaching a critical level of 8.50. The link between the photograph in Figure 2 and Williams' theory explains that syndicates deliberately choose locations with minimal central legal supervision to ensure the sustainability of online fraud operations without meaningful intervention from law enforcement.

The third factor that is a major catalyst is the practice of corruption. Corruption functions as oil that lubricates the wheels of transnational crime from upstream to downstream. This is evidenced by the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) data presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Corruption Perception Index In Indonesia 2020-2024

Year	Score	Global Rank
2020	37	102
2021	38	96
2022	34	110
2023	34	115
2024	37	99

Source: Transparency International (2025).

The comparison of figures in Table 1 clarifies the correlation between low bureaucratic integrity and the ease of syndicate operations. With Indonesia's CPI score at 34 in 2023, syndicates are able to exploit gaps in supervision at international airports. Why does this happen? Discussion of the facts shows that corrupt practices allow victims to fly using visitor visas even though their original purpose is to be employed forcibly. Transnational crime requires systemic failure to continue the flow of human trafficking that threatens human security.

Comparative research places these three factors in a wider regional pattern. Buckley et al. (2022) review how the pandemic period increased migrant workers' vulnerability to trafficking for forced labour in Southeast Asia, while Dinh et al. (2019) show, from a household survey in Viet Nam, that trafficking risk is measurable at household level rather than visible only in case counts. Phon and Price (2024) add that forced migration pressures raise trafficking risk for young women in rural Cambodia itself, and Yea (2024) documents forced labour and trafficking among migrant fishers from Southeast Asia. On the crime side, Prasetya (2020) treats human trafficking as a transnational organised crime threatening state security, and Setiyono (2020) examines integrated policy management of trafficking as transnational organised crime in Indonesia. Schidlow (2025) describes forced fraud as financial exploitation of trafficking victims, which fits the scam-compound pattern analysed here, and Nataraj-Hansen and Richards (2022) warn that fraud victims are often blamed, a stigma that can deter reporting and help compounds keep victims silent.

Indonesian Government Policy Response

In response to the escalation of human trafficking cases, particularly involving Indonesian citizens in Cambodia during the 2023-2024 period, the Indonesian government has initiated various legal instruments through bilateral and regional cooperation as a form of citizen protection. Data shows that in August 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Indonesian National Police and the Cambodian Ministry of Interior, focusing on the prevention and eradication of transnational crimes, including human trafficking and cybercrime. This step was reinforced by the signing of a Letter of Intent (LoI) between the immigration authorities of both countries in 2025, after the study period, which covers information exchange and human resource capacity building to curb illegal migration. The findings from the implementation of this policy can be seen in preventive measures at departure points, where from January to April 2025, after the study period, immigration authorities successfully detained 5,000 prospective non-procedural migrant workers and delayed the issuance of 303 passports suspected of being linked to online scamming syndicates. At the regional level, Indonesia has also optimised the instruments of the 2015 ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP) to strengthen cross-border coordination in prosecuting perpetrators and protecting victims.

This policy still faces major challenges closely related to the legal nature of the instruments used. Theoretically, the 2023 Memorandum of Understanding and the 2025 LoI have fundamental weaknesses because they are temporary and non-binding (not legally binding), whereby one party can terminate the agreement at short notice without clear sanctions. This explains why the effectiveness of the policy in the field is highly dependent on situational political will rather than an established legal system. The link between the results obtained and the facts on the ground shows that this cooperation has not yet addressed structural problems in Cambodia, such as the dismantling of scam compounds, the impunity of perpetrators who have close ties to local authorities, and corrupt practices that facilitate transnational crime. As a result, the handling of cases during the 2023-2024 period has been more of a quick response through rescue and direct pick-up mechanisms after the cases went viral on social media or through independent complaints that received a quick assessment from the Indonesian Embassy in Phnom Penh.

Without strong law enforcement against domestic recruiters, repatriation efforts will continue to be a recurring burden for the country. There is also a contradiction with the government's claims of success, which often consider passport delays as the final solution. Human trafficking figures continue to rise because these policies have not been able to curb the human rights crisis and the ever-evolving asymmetric threats. Current diplomatic efforts are still at the level of treating the symptoms, so there is a need for more legally binding international agreements and transparent evaluation mechanisms to protect Indonesian citizens from the increasingly massive threat of digital slavery.

Scholarship on Indonesia-Cambodia and ASEAN cooperation clarifies why non-binding instruments produce this pattern. Valerisella et al. (2025) examine the cooperation framework of Indonesia and Cambodia against transnational organised crime in online gambling human trafficking, while Priyono and Sudiro (2020) analyse intergovernmental cooperation mechanisms against transnational human trafficking within ASEAN. McAdam (2025) shows how the Trafficking in Persons Protocol has drifted from its parent treaty against transnational organised crime, which helps explain why treaty language does not automatically produce enforcement on the ground. At the prevention end, Saraswati (2024) studies prevention through the passport issuance process for prospective Indonesian migrant workers, Darnela and Kharlie (2023) examine village-based movements of migrant workers against trafficking in Indonesia, and Mahardika and Wicaksono (2020) analyse the protection of Indonesian migrant workers overseas. Together, these studies support the argument that departure-point prevention and bilateral cooperation must be paired with binding enforcement if repatriation is not to remain a repeated rescue operation.

Policy Implications For Human Security And Human Rights

The handling of human trafficking cases in Cambodia in the 2023-2024 period places victim protection as a top priority that directly intersects with international human rights norms. Universally, this policy refers to the Anti-Human Trafficking Protocol (Articles 2 and 6) and the regional ACTIP instrument, which requires states to guarantee the privacy, identity, and physical and psychological recovery of victims. Data shows that the implementation of protection policies in Indonesia has been comprehensively regulated through Law No. 21 of 2007, which covers the rights to rehabilitation, restitution, and identity confidentiality in Articles 44 and 47. The government has sought to operationalise this mandate through the establishment of a multi-level Task Force for the Prevention and Handling of TPPO (GT PP TPPO). However, processed data shows operational gaps; although GT PP TPPO has been established in 283 districts and cities, reports on the frequency of meetings, budget allocation, and updating of Integrated Service Centre (PPT) data are still very minimal after 2019.

Figure 3. Overview Of The Protection Framework For Victims Of Human Trafficking

Source: Johnson et al. (2020), NEXUS Institute.

Figure 3 shows an overview of the framework for protecting victims of human trafficking, referring to the Anti-Human Trafficking Protocol and ACTIP, which consists of three stages, namely identification, referral, and assistance to victims of human trafficking.

The implications of this policy have not yet reached maximum effectiveness, which is closely related to the link between results in the field and the basic concept of Human Security. Theoretically, victim protection is not merely an administrative procedure, but an effort to restore human dignity that has been taken away by syndicates. The main reason for obstacles at the regional level is the lack of budgetary support and technological mastery to detect increasingly sophisticated online recruitment scamming methods. The reality is that even though Indonesia has issued Presidential Regulation No. 19 of 2023 (RAN PP TPPO 2020-2024), its implementation in the field is still reactive. This connection is clearly seen in the findings of the National Human Rights Commission, which places TPPO as a priority issue due to the serious threat to the safety of Indonesian citizens, but on the other hand, regional task forces are often paralysed due to limited resources. This explains why the referral and assistance process (Article 14 ACTIP) is often delayed, putting repatriated victims at risk of not receiving adequate long-term reintegration services. This is in line with the view of the Southeast Asian National Human Rights Institutions Forum (SEANF), which states that combating TPPO requires cross-border commitments that go beyond normative documents. There is a contradiction between the availability of comprehensive regulations on paper (Law No. 21 of 2007 and Presidential Regulation No. 19 of 2023) and the reality on the ground regarding the number of PPTs and UPPA whose information has not been updated since 2020. The government's current repatriation policy has been successful in terms of physical safety, but still has major weaknesses in terms of human security. If the budget crisis and technological backwardness at the regional level are not immediately addressed, the guarantee of restitution and rehabilitation for victims will only become an administrative right that is difficult for Indonesian victims of human trafficking to access in reality.

Comparative work on victim protection supports this diagnosis of a gap between law on paper and services in practice. Naibaho (2023) examines victim protection in Indonesia against the changing situation of human trafficking, Rafferty (2019) maps knowledge gaps in the identification, recovery, and reintegration of child trafficking victims within ASEAN, and Dolhan et al. (2021) link trafficking to human security through a Southeast Asian case study. Tomita et al. (2020) show that involving specialists in victim support and protection improves outcomes, which underlines the cost of under-resourced regional task forces. Clancey and Mahon (2020) add a caution from outside the anti-trafficking framework itself: where labour abuses are addressed only through trafficking law, some victims fall outside protection, a risk that applies equally when repatriated scam-compound workers are treated only as rescued migrants rather than as victims entitled to restitution and rehabilitation.

Implementation Of Exit Strategy In Prevention And Reintegration

The implementation of an exit strategy in the policy of repatriating Indonesian citizens from Cambodia for the 2023-2024 period is a crucial technical-administrative instrument for breaking the chain of victims' dependence on syndicates. Data shows that one of the main obstacles to rescue is the confiscation or destruction of travel documents (passports) by

syndicates, which aims to create fear of illegal immigrant status and arrest by local authorities. The Indonesian government has operationalised the Travel Document in Lieu of Passport (SPLP) as an official replacement document to facilitate repatriation. This process involves stages ranging from victims' self-reporting to the Indonesian Embassy, identification and administrative assessment, to the processing of exit permits through coordination with Cambodian authorities. The technical procedures for rescue are systematically described in Figure 4, which serves as an operational guide for protection abroad.

Figure 4. Stages Of The SPLP Procedure For Victims Of Human Trafficking

Source: procedure as described in this article.

This strategy is the backbone of repatriation, closely related to the role of the state as protector of its citizens outside its jurisdiction. Theoretically, the active involvement of the Indonesian Embassy in issuing SPLPs and conducting diplomatic negotiations with Cambodian immigration authorities indicates a shift from merely providing consular services to aggressive legal intervention against transnational crime. The main reason for the effectiveness of this strategy can be seen in the successful repatriation of 1,138 Indonesian citizens in 2023 and the resolution of 1,841 online scamming cases between 2020 and 2023. The facts on the ground show that this success includes mass repatriations, such as the case of 28 Indonesian citizens in Poipet in June 2023, as well as the handling of victims' remains, such as the case of Rizal Sampurna, who died of a heart attack at a scam company. A strong exit strategy provides victims with the security to escape from syndicates without fear of their legal status in the destination country.

The effectiveness of the exit strategy implemented by the Indonesian immigration authorities is reflected in the administrative achievements in early 2025, after the study period, namely the postponement of the departure of 5,000 non-procedural migrant workers and the suspension of the issuance of 303 passports. However, this data shows a significant discrepancy when compared to reports from the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (SBMI). SBMI findings reveal that of the 1,343 cases reported as of August 2023, including 279 cases of online scamming, 609 cases (nearly 50%) have not yet reached a legal resolution. This anomaly indicates that the success of downstream protection (repatriation from Cambodia) has not been followed by a strong commitment to law enforcement upstream (domestic Indonesia). The lack of legal proceedings against the intellectual actors in the country ultimately perpetuates human security vulnerabilities and increases the risk of re-trafficking.

Reintegration research explains why the exit procedure alone cannot close the case. Ramaj (2021) traces the return, rehabilitation, and reintegration challenges of trafficking victims, Rai (2023) compares approaches and practices of reintegration, and Cholidah et al. (2024) study the social reintegration of trafficking victims in Indonesia specifically. Armeanu (2020) links legal protection to social reintegration, and Islam (2023) examines trafficking law enforcement from the perspective of anti-trafficking stakeholders, including the balance between action against victims and action against offenders. Read together, these studies

support the article's central distinction: a repatriation that ends at the airport is not a completed exit, because without funded rehabilitation, restitution, and follow-up, the same economic vulnerability and the same recruiters remain in place.

LIMITATIONS

This study is based entirely on secondary sources, and that basis limits what its verdicts can claim. No document list, document count, search terms, or inclusion and exclusion criteria are supplied, and no coding scheme or worked example is presented, so the analysis cannot be reproduced from a stated corpus. The method names three benchmarks for policy performance, namely exit-strategy success, cross-sectoral coordination, and human rights compliance, but defines no measurable indicators or thresholds for any of them, so the judgement that administrative repatriation was fairly effective while prevention and reintegration were weak is qualitative and comparative rather than measured.

Several figures in this article must be read with their stated limits. The total of 1,138 repatriated citizens is reported with two scopes in this article: the full 2023-2024 period in the introduction and 2023 alone in the exit-strategy discussion, and the two statements should not be treated as two separate totals. Figure 1 rests on a source as printed that cannot be verified, and the article does not state whether its national counts are Cambodia-related cases, so the chart supports a description of the plotted national series only, not a Cambodia-specific case count. The trafficking index score of 8.50 is reported first as a country-level figure for Cambodia and later as a figure for specific zones, and the score of 7.02 out of 10 is given without a citation at the sentence, so neither score should be quoted without its scope label. Materials dated 2025, namely the immigration Letter of Intent and the January to April 2025 detention and passport figures, are labelled in this article as post-period context and are not findings for 2023-2024.

Some specific claims in this article are reported without a citation at the sentence and cannot be independently checked from the article itself: the resolution of 1,841 online scamming cases between 2020 and 2023, the establishment of the task force in 283 districts and cities together with minimal meeting, budget, and service-centre reporting after 2019, the claim that service-centre information has not been updated since 2020, and the individual death case used as evidence. Two institutional sources named in the body have no corresponding entry in the reference list, namely the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children and the Southeast Asian National Human Rights Institutions Forum, because no specific document from either body is identified in the article. These limits do not cancel the article's documented findings on recruitment, compound structure, and the SPLP procedure, but they mark the boundary between what the article documents and what it reports without a traceable source.

CONCLUSION

Research Question 1 asked what factors drove the sharp increase in cases of Indonesian citizens trafficked in Cambodia in 2023-2024. The answer, in order, is as follows. First, post-pandemic economic vulnerability pushed digitally literate jobseekers, including university graduates facing limited formal employment, towards high-salary offers that proved to be recruitment traps. Second, weak regulation and enforcement in destination zones, above all in

semi-autonomous economic areas where central supervision is minimal, gave syndicates guarded compounds in which victims could be held and put to work on online fraud. Third, corruption eased movement through departure controls, allowing victims to travel on visitor visas for forced employment and allowing compounds to operate with limited interference. These three factors interlock: vulnerability supplies the recruits, weak destination regulation supplies the workplace, and corruption supplies the passage between them.

Research Question 2 asked how effective the government's exit strategy, covering repatriation and reintegration, was in protecting victims and preventing re-trafficking. The answer is two-sided. On repatriation, the strategy was fairly effective in administrative terms: the embassy-led procedure of self-reporting, identification, substitute travel documents, and negotiated exit permission physically brought large numbers of victims home, including through mass repatriations. On prevention and reintegration, it was weak: bilateral and regional instruments remained non-binding, scam compounds were not dismantled, domestic recruiters were largely not prosecuted, and long-term rehabilitation and restitution services were underfunded and uneven at regional level. The result is that physical rescue succeeded more often than lasting exit, and rescued people remained exposed to the same recruiters and the same economic pressures that had trapped them in the first place.

Three recommendations follow directly from those findings. First, departure-point prevention should be made a permanent screening and enforcement function, not a periodic campaign, with passport and visa checks linked to verified employment and with corrupt facilitation treated as part of the trafficking chain. Second, bilateral and regional cooperation should move from non-binding instruments towards binding agreements with transparent evaluation, so that compound dismantling and perpetrator prosecution become measurable commitments rather than matters of situational political will. Third, reintegration should be funded as the second half of every repatriation, with rehabilitation, restitution, and follow-up tracked for each returned citizen, so that success is counted not by arrivals at the airport but by sustained freedom from re-trafficking. A policy transformation is therefore needed from administrative crisis management towards strengthening the rule of law and eradicating systemic corruption, because only that combination addresses the drivers identified in the first research question while completing the exit promised in the second.

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