

# SEAFORB NETWORK STRATEGIC PLAN 2024–26



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*SEAFORB Network Strategic Plan 2024–26* outlines the Network’s foundational vision, mission, goals and core values, along with key strategic opportunities which serve as the roadmap for the Network’s activities and decisions. It will guide the SEAFORB Network in its efforts to improve the state of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in Southeast Asia through a strong governance structure, regional- and national-level coordination, capacity-building and networking opportunities, and advocacy.

The Network is dedicated to promoting FoRB in Southeast Asia, promoting peaceful coexistence and ensuring individuals’ freedom to practise or not practise any religion, faith, or belief without interference and discrimination of any kind. Guided by a vision to inspire positive societal changes, the Network recognises FoRB as a fundamental human right that fosters social cohesion and sustainable development in the region. Upholding values of independence from political or religious affiliation, human rights and dignity, inclusivity, collaboration, local ownership, and accountability, the Network operates autonomously, bridges gaps among diverse stakeholders, and seeks to empower FoRB stakeholders in Southeast Asia.

This Strategic Plan also presents the SEAFORB Action Plan 2024–26. The Action Plan was developed through a collaborative process involving stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and expertise. It outlines specific and actionable activities through the Network’s four strategic objectives.

- First, establish a robust structure for the Network that would enhance decision-making, coordination, and accountability to strengthen internal governance and improve transparency.
- Second, facilitate national FoRB discussion platforms for country-level coordination of efforts and advocacy by leveraging collective resources.
- Third, implement capacity-building initiatives and conferences for regionwide networking and collaboration.
- Fourth, raise awareness and mobilize key stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels to support FoRB initiatives in Southeast Asia.

Within the Action Plan, a roadmap of activities for the initial implementation of fourteen months is presented. At its onset, the Network seeks to lay a foundation for the long-term implementation of the Network’s mission, vision and core values.

Advocating for religious freedom in Southeast Asia poses a remarkable challenge given the sensitivity of this topic. This Strategic Plan therefore also presents a risk mitigation strategy for key risks identified by FoRB actors in the region.

Altogether, the Strategic Plan helps ensure the Network continues making a significant and lasting impact in advancing the principles of FoRB in the region.

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# 1. Introduction

The Southeast Asia Freedom of Religion or Belief Network (SEAFORB Network) is a group of stakeholders who have participated in organising or attending SEAFORB Conferences. The reasoning behind the establishment of the SEAFORB Network was driven by the need to consolidate various actors to address FoRB-related issues in Southeast Asia. The Network has grown organically through professional relationships since the first Conference in 2015. From 2015 to 2022, the Conferences – organised by a group of organisations that came together as the SEAFORB Network Steering Committee (SC) – provided a venue for FoRB advocates in the region to build a network with like-minded actors across the globe and facilitated knowledge-sharing. However, at the current stage, the Network continues to be loosely constructed and lacks a clear aim and implementing mechanisms to drive that aim.

To pursue the aims of the SEAFORB Network and sustain the network beyond the annual conferences, this Strategic Plan outlines key strategic opportunities for the SEAFORB Network to realise its long-term goal of formalising a presence in Southeast Asia and advocating for FoRB in the region.

This Strategic Plan is organised as follows. First, it sets forth the Network’s mission, vision, goals and core values which form the basis for the Network. Second, the 2024–26 Action Plan; then an implementation roadmap for 2024 to early 2025. Third, the Network’s existing resources are clarified. Lastly, this Strategic Plan presents a set of risk mitigation measures.

This Strategic Plan was developed by Asia Centre under the “Strategy Development for the SEAFORB Network” project supported by Search for Common Ground through the USAID-funded Asia Religious and Ethnic Freedom Activity. The project design was developed by Search for Common Ground, Asia Centre and the SEAFORB SC. This research involved consultations with over 100 FoRB advocates across the region from November 2022 to March 2023 to identify their needs and expectations for a regional-level civil society-led FoRB collective such as the SEAFORB Network. The insights gathered from this process were documented in a separate Needs Assessment Report.

To ensure a broader range of stakeholders were consulted, during the 8th SEAFORB Conference from 7-9 November 2022 in Bali, country roundtables, and themed breakout group activities were facilitated by Asia Centre, for a total of over 100 participants. These discussions allowed conference attendees – FoRB advocates, representatives of faith-based organisations, academics, and media professionals – to provide input on four main themes of research: 1) FoRB concerns at the regional level, its effects and root causes; 2) key FoRB advocates working in and outside of the region that SEAFORB Network could connect with; 3) governance structure of the SEAFORB Network by the SC; and 4) possible risks in collaboration with the Network and mitigation measures. Following the conference, on 10 November 2022, Asia Centre convened a meeting with the SEAFORB Network SC members to discuss these comments and how they might affect the Network’s strategies moving forward.

The research found that FoRB actors in the region had the following expectations for the SEAFORB Network: it should be a FoRB-specific platform and therefore adopt the human rights approach; it should be civil society-led and Southeast Asia-based; and it should be multistakeholder. A point was also made for the Network to be supported by an organised administrative mechanism like a secretariat.

Analysis shows that the Network’s strengths lie in a strong SEAFORB SC that assumes directional steering for the Network. Its ability to gather funding for the Conferences, attract various stakeholders, and its unique position in the region are also some of the strengths of the Network. In terms of opportunities, the current loose connection can be built into a stronger regional multistakeholder Network. Such a Network sees support from both national-level FoRB actors and other international stakeholders.

The Strategic Plan also builds upon the previous efforts of the SEAFORB Steering Committee members from 2019-2021, which included the development of terms of reference for the Network and the SC, as well as a funding proposal. Key documents such as early drafts of the Network ToR, by-laws, organisational charts, and the SEAFORB SC terms of reference and Charter were additional documents that informed the development of this Plan.

The initial draft of the Plan was shared with the SC and colleagues from Search for Common Ground on 9 June 2023. A subsequent strategic development meeting was convened by Asia Centre in Bangkok, Thailand, from 15–16 June 2023. This meeting brought together SC members and key ForB actors who contributed to the data collection process for the Needs Assessment Report. During the meeting, Asia Centre presented the Strategic Plan and facilitated discussions to refine the programmatic priorities of the SEAFORB Network. After which, the second draft was sent for review to Search for Common Ground and the SEAFORB SC.

*This Strategic Plan is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the sole responsibility of Asia Centre and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.*

## 2. Vision, Mission, Goals, and Core Values

In the very first SEAFORB Conference in 2015, various stakeholders from across Southeast Asia representing religious groups, the civil society and human rights community, came together to confirm their commitment to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to defend and promote FoRB for all peoples of Southeast Asia and stand in solidarity with all who suffer FoRB violations. This commitment – enshrined in the 2015 Bangkok Declaration – is the building block upon which the SEAFORB Network has later been built. As the Vision, Mission, Goals, and Core Values of the SEAFORB Network are presented, this Strategic Plan builds upon these principles along with inputs provided through the strategic development process.

### 2a. Vision

"The SEAFORB Network envisions a society that fosters an environment where the Freedom of Religion or Belief is recognised as integral to human rights, social cohesion, and sustainable development in Southeast Asia."

### 2b. Mission

To defend and promote Freedom of Religion or Belief for all in Southeast Asia as a universal, inalienable, and non-derogable human right as set out in the UDHR to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to have, change or practise their religion or belief of their choice, without interference or discrimination regardless of one's religion, faith or belief, or the lack thereof, gender, ethnicity, legal status, or other identity markers.

### 2c. Goals

The SEAFORB Network aims to fulfil its Mission through the following goals:



**To promote and protect FoRB:** The SEAFORB Network seeks to promote FoRB for all peoples in Southeast Asia. It also seeks to protect FoRB by holding duty bearers to account across national, regional, and international levels.



**To empower FoRB actors in Southeast Asia:** The SEAFORB Network aims to equip civil society actors with knowledge, skills, connections, strategies and resources to better challenge FoRB violations across the region.



**To build alliances:** The SEAFORB Network encourages new partnerships and solidarity between a wide array of stakeholders across religious, ethnic and national divides. The SEAFORB Network strongly believes in national, regional and international alliances for increased impact.

## 2d. Core Values

**Independence:** The SEAFORB Network operates independently of any specific political ideology, religious or belief affiliation. The Network is guided by principles of human dignity, justice, and equality. The Network strives to cultivate an inclusive and tolerant society in Southeast Asia, where individuals can freely express their beliefs without coercion or discrimination.

**Respect for Human Rights and Dignity:** The SEAFORB Network is guided by core international human rights principles which recognise FoRB as an inalienable human right, encompassing the freedom to hold or change beliefs, practice religion and be free from coercion. The Network also strives to ensure respect for human dignity as one core value held among the people in the region.

**Inclusivity and Non-discrimination:** The SEAFORB Network values inclusivity, striving to establish meaningful connections and partnerships that go beyond the confines of religion, belief, and nationality, ultimately fostering a strong sense of solidarity among all involved. It seeks to expand ethnic, racial and gender diversity in its partnership and foster collaboration and bridge gaps among a wide range of stakeholders.

**Collaboration and Cooperation:** The SEAFORB Network fosters collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders to forge new connections, enhance existing partnerships, and drive the advancement of promoting FoRB in Southeast Asia. It acknowledges the value of collective efforts, leveraging the expertise and resources of diverse actors, in building a society that is inclusive and tolerant.

**Local Ownership:** The SEAFORB Network prioritises local ownership, emphasising the active engagement and leadership of local actors in Southeast Asia due to their expertise in addressing regional challenges. The Network aims to place local leadership at the forefront and align its priorities with the interests of FoRB advocates and stakeholders in the region. To achieve this, the Network follows a bottom-up approach, favouring the shaping of actions based on input and insights from local actors.

**Accountability and Responsibility:** Individuals, organisations and national-level networks constituting the SEAFORB Network remain accountable to the people in the region and assume responsibility for promoting and protecting FoRB, under the SEAFORB Network's mission, vision and objectives of each of the Network activities. It is important that the leadership of the SEAFORB Network facilitates the works of local advocates and other stakeholders in the region to engage in effective efforts to promote and protect FoRB. It seeks to provide the necessary support to enhance their capabilities and foster collaboration and coordination with regional and international partners as well as amplify their collective voices through various channels.

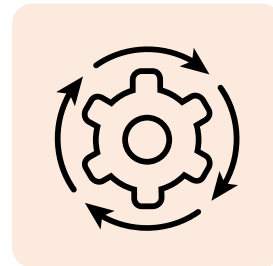
### 3. SEAFORB Network Action Plan 2024–26

The Action Plan outlines a set of objectives that are aligned with and intend to promote the vision, mission, goals, and core values of the SEAFORB Network. Such objectives guide the implementation of activities by the SEAFORB Network from the year 2024 to 2026. An initial action plan for the Network in the first 14 months of the operation of this Strategic Plan is also outlined. This will be used as a basis for resourcing necessary funds.

#### 3a. Objectives

##### Establish the SEAFORB Network Structure

As a foundational objective, a well-defined governance framework for the SEAFORB Network will be set out to ensure effective programming that speaks to the goals of the Network, transparency, accountability and participation of a multitude of actors. Included in this are considerations on the role of the current Steering Committee and plans to operationalise a Secretariat.



##### Facilitate National-level Platforms for Collaboration

The Network aims to facilitate national-level platforms for collaboration, knowledge-sharing and coordinating efforts. By setting up and strengthening such platforms, the SEAFORB Network can leverage collective resources and drive positive changes in promoting and protecting FoRB in Southeast Asia.

##### Capacity and Network-building

The SEAFORB Network aims to undertake training activities, seminars and conferences with an aim to enhance local stakeholders' understanding of the issues affecting the region as well as their operation and to facilitate dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and collaboration among different stakeholders. These activities will enable individuals and organisations to engage in meaningful dialogue and address FoRB-related challenges more effectively.



##### Advocacy

The SEAFORB Network will plan and implement effective advocacy and mobilise key stakeholders to support FoRB initiatives. Targets of advocacy include duty-bearers at national, regional and international levels. Activities will also be undertaken through opportunities with international human rights mechanisms and relevant FoRB networks outside the region.



## 3b. Activities

Activity		Details	Outcomes
<b>Objective 1: Establish the SEAFORB Network Structure</b>			
1.1	Formulating a Structure	Based on the findings from the Needs Assessment Report and in alignment with the vision and mission specified in this Strategic Plan, the members of the Steering Committee will be responsible for designing a governance structure of the SEAFORB Network, which includes membership, decision-making and day-to-day operation.	A consolidated governance structure for the SEAFORB Network.
1.2	Establishing a Secretariat	A Secretariat will be established or designated, staffed by full-time personnel, to effectively coordinate the diverse objectives and activities outlined in this Strategic Plan. The Secretariat will also be responsible for conducting monitoring and evaluation processes.	An established secretariat to manage the activities specified in this Strategic Plan.
1.3	Operationalising the Secretariat	The SEAFORB SC will be tasked to operationalise the SEAFORB Secretariat. This includes centralising and re-configuring cyber-secure online solutions like a website, email account, and social media accounts; maintaining a membership database; and managing newsletters, among others.	An operating procedure and infrastructure that allows for the Secretariat to serve its role.
1.4	Developing Communications Plans	Communications Plans will be developed by the Secretariat to promote the strategic plan, raise awareness about the Network's activities, enhance engagement with international mechanisms, and foster dialogue among diverse stakeholders who are part of the SEAFORB Network. The plan will also include a social media and public relations policy, taking into consideration the security concerns of ForB advocates.	Yearly communications plans developed to promote the SEAFORB Network, its goals and its activities.
1.5	Plans for Sustainability & Resourcing	To ensure the long-term viability of the SEAFORB Network, Sustainability & Resourcing Plans will be developed to shape the Network's resource identification, grant-making within the Network and national platforms, capacity-building and human resourcing, as well as monitoring and evaluation.	Plans developed to indicate how the Network would be sustained.

Activity		Details	Outcomes
1.6	Security Assessments	To ensure the safety of SEAFORB Network members as well as others connected to the Network and attendees of events hosted by SEAFORB Network, ongoing security assessments will be conducted. Risks identified will be discussed within SEAFORB SC to propose and implement mitigation measures.	Preparedness on the part of the Secretariat and SC to tackle risks arising from the works of SEAFORB Network and its partners.
<b>Objective 2: Facilitate National-level Platforms for Collaboration</b>			
2.1	Facilitating National FoRB Discussion Platforms	Facilitate national FoRB platforms in each Southeast Asian country. The aim is to facilitate connections and collaboration within the SEAFORB Network in a national context. Another key objective is for these platforms to develop country-level action plans in an effort to implement the Network's activities at the national level. Preferably, the SEAFORB Network should leverage the advantages offered by existing FoRB platforms in each country, rather than establishing new ones. To do so, the SC will first map existing platforms in each country through the participant network.	Platforms for stakeholder engagement to facilitate advocacy, joint grant-making and project implementation among FoRB actors under the SEAFORB Network banner.
<b>Objective 3: Capacity and Network-building</b>			
3.1	Implementing FoRB Trainings	The SEAFORB Network will offer country-specific training opportunities focusing on FoRB. Security training will also be conducted. This will include reporting of harassment against FoRB actors, online and offline threats as well as risk mitigation measures. The objective is to enable those connected with the SEAFORB Network to strengthen their current strategies and skills for promoting FoRB within their respective countries and throughout Southeast Asia.	Enhanced knowledge of FoRBs stakeholders in skills in FoRB promotion. Enhanced understanding of security issues affecting and risk management.

Activity		Details	Outcomes
3.2	Holding FoRB Seminars	<p>The SEAFORB Network will organise seminars or learning events at different levels to facilitate dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collaboration among stakeholders. National seminars will preferably be organised by national FoRB platforms for focused discussions and engagement on FoRB issues within the country. International online or offline events will highlight common FoRB issues in SEA, showcase the work of SEAFORB members, and foster cooperation among neighbouring countries.</p> <p>These seminars will contribute to strengthening the SEAFORB Network's objectives and promoting a deeper understanding of FoRB concerns at national, regional, and sub-regional levels and maintain engagement among the SEAFORB Network between the annual Conferences.</p>	Increased opportunity for dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and regional collaboration.
3.3	Convening Annual SEAFORB Conferences	<p>The SEAFORB Network will host annual Conferences, serving as a flagship event to bring together a wide range of stakeholders and experts in the field of FoRB. The Conferences will provide a platform for in-depth discussions, presentations, and interactive sessions, addressing key challenges, emerging trends, and best practices related to FoRB in Southeast Asia.</p> <p>The Conference will feature panel discussions, workshops, and networking opportunities among issue experts, FoRB advocates and victims of persecution, creating a conducive environment for knowledge exchange, collaboration, and forging partnerships. The annual Conference will play a pivotal role in fostering a vibrant and inclusive community within the SEAFORB Network, promoting dialogue, and advancing the cause of FoRB in the region.</p> <p>The Conferences would also host a strategic session to identify priorities for the upcoming year/s for the SEAFORB Network in terms of its programme and activities.</p>	<p>Conferences serve as knowledge exchange and learning opportunities and foster collaboration and partnerships among FoRB stakeholders in Southeast Asia and other regions.</p> <p>Conferences provide a venue for strategic discussion for the SEAFORB Network.</p>

Activity		Details	Outcomes
<b>Objective 4: Advocacy</b>			
4.1	Undertaking Advocacy with Duty-bearers	The SEAFORB Network will engage with duty-bearers at national (parliamentarians, ministry officials, national human rights institutions), regional (such as ASEAN) and international levels (foreign governments). It could include statements, letters, meetings with duty-bearers, and passing on concerns and reports.	Increased engagement in meaningful dialogue to tackle FoRB challenges with duty-bearers in the region.
4.2	Engaging International Mechanisms	<p>An important objective of the SEAFORB Network is to actively participate in existing international FoRB mechanisms and networks (e.g. relevant United Nations mandate holders, Universal Periodic Reviews, ministerial conferences, International Religious Freedom summits, etc.). The Network seeks to establish a presence within global platforms and engage in dialogues and initiatives that focus on FoRB at an international level. By collaborating with these mechanisms, the SEAFORB Network aims to contribute to global discussions, advocate for FoRB issues specific to Southeast Asia, and leverage international support and resources for its activities.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Network recognises the value of connecting with other regional FoRB networks, such as SAFFORB (South Asia) and NORFORB (Nordic countries), to foster collaboration, information sharing, and mutual learning. By building these connections, the SEAFORB Network can strengthen its regional presence, broaden its knowledge base, and collectively work towards promoting and protecting FoRB across various regions and contexts.</p>	<p>Raised awareness of the international community of the FoRB challenges faced in the region.</p> <p>SEAFORB Network's increased visibility and contribution to international discussions and initiatives related to FoRB.</p>

### 3c. 14-month Activity Roadmap

From the Action Plan above, the following activities (or sub-activities) will be implemented in 2024 and early 2025 (for a period of 14 months). This roadmap will be developed into a project proposal and applied for funding.

Activity 1.1	Members of the SEAFORB SC will develop a plan for establishing a framework for the SEAFORB Network.
Activity 1.2	An organisation will be selected as a Secretariat for the SEAFORB SC. The organisation appointed to serve the role will be selected by the SC depending on effectiveness and funding availability. Two staff (a programme coordinator and a communications personnel) will be positioned in the organisation and will coordinate work on behalf of the SEAFORB Network.
Activity 1.3	The Secretariat, with support from the SEAFORB SC, will develop administrative management plans for the Secretariat, and establish digital infrastructure.
Activity 1.4	A communications plan will be developed by the two secretariat personnel and approved by the SEAFORB SC. The communications plan will cover where and how advocacy should be conducted (see Activity 4.1 and 4.2), promotion of SEAFORB events and the Conferences, and informing participants of ongoing developments in the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The plan also includes managing the website and developing digital contents to be shared over social media.
Activity 1.5	Upon the completion of this initial plan, a resource & sustainability plan will be developed for the upcoming years. Of concern are issues related to programme objectives and sources of funding.
Activity 1.6	Throughout the period of 14 months, the Secretariat will assess ongoing risks from its observation as well as inputs from Network partners. When risks emerge, they will be discussed with the SEAFORB SC to identify possible solutions/mitigations. A detailed discussion regarding risk mitigation will be had prior to the annual Conference.
Activity 2.1	The Secretariat will take steps to coordinate with Indonesian and Myanmar FoRB stakeholders in order to facilitate two national FoRB platforms.
Activity 3.1	N/A
Activity 3.2	SEAFORB SC members will conduct visits to countries in the region (TBC) aimed at engaging with local stakeholders working on FoRB and conducting seminars to enhance capacity-building and foster connections.
Activity 3.3	A SEAFORB Conference will be convened towards the end of 2024. Location, number of participants and other matters will be confirmed according to the budget.
Activity 4.1	When applicable, the SEAFORB secretariat, national FoRB networks, and SC members will engage with duty-bearers at national, regional and international levels. This could be done as part of Activities 3.2.
Activity 4.2	Members of the SEAFORB SC will undertake two international missions to engage with international FoRB stakeholders at various opportunities. These missions serve not only to advocate for FoRB issues on the international stage, SC members will also promote the SEAFORB Network with other like-minded actors.



### 3d. Timeline

Activity	Timeline													
	01/24	02/24	03/24	04/24	05/24	06/24	07/24	08/24	09/24	10/24	11/24	12/24	01/25	02/25
<b>Objective 1: Establish the SEAFORB Network's Governing Structure</b>														
1.1 Operational Structure														
1.2 Secretariat														
1.3 Operationalising the Secretariat														
1.4 Communications Plan														
1.5 Sustainability & Resourcing Plan														
1.6 Security Assessments														
<b>Objective 2: Facilitate National-level Platforms for Collaboration (Indonesia, Myanmar)</b>														
2.1 National ForB Discussion Platforms														

Activity	Timeline													
	01/ 24	02/ 24	03/ 24	04/ 24	05/ 24	06/ 24	07/ 24	08/ 24	09/ 24	10/ 24	11/ 24	12/ 24	01/ 25	02/ 25
<b>Objective 3: Capacity and Network-building</b>														
3.1 ForB Trainings	N/A													
3.2 ForB Seminars														
3.3 SEAFORB Conference														
<b>Objective 4: Advocacy</b>														
4.1 Advocacy with Duty-bearers														
4.2 Engaging International Mechanisms														

## 4. Resources

### 4a. Existing Resources

#### *Human Resources*

Respondents perceive FoRB as encompassing the freedom to believe, practise, and promote one's faith of choice. They acknowledge the responsibility to respect other faiths and their practices and encourage religious actors to seek common ground, even if not on theological matters but at least on social aspects. As a fundamental human right, FoRB should harmonise with other freedoms and rights, and should not infringe upon them unjustifiably. Promoting FoRB should extend beyond fostering religious harmony and tolerance; it should also address legal and non-legal barriers that restrict religious expression and societal attitudes towards the inclusion of religious minorities. This perception shapes how actors engage with the issue and envision the approach that the Network should adopt.

#### *Financial Resources*

As it is now, the Network remains loose and without proper administrative mechanisms. The capacity of the SEAFORB SC members to provide funding for the purpose of driving activities under the SEAFORB banner, therefore, serves as a significant existing resource for the SEAFORB Network. By leveraging their funding capacity, the SEAFORB Network is able to increase its financial sustainability and implement projects and programs that contribute to the promotion and protection of FoRB in Southeast Asia.

### 4b. External Resources

The SEAFORB Network is currently a recipient of the USAID-funded consortium Asia Religious and Ethnic Freedom (Asia REF). The consortium, including the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI), Freedom House, Internews, Pact, and Search for Common Ground, aims to expand international religious freedom by working with local and locally established partners across Asia. For the year 2024, the Network will pursue additional follow-up funding under Asia REF.

There are also other resources that the Network could reach out to, particularly in the mid to long run. Government entities are one. In particular, the US continuously provides grants through its State Department (e.g. the Office of International Religious Freedom (OIRF) or the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL)) as well as other agencies working to promote international religious freedom (e.g. US Commission on International Religious Freedom). The US President's advocacy of democracy through the Summit for Democracy initiative also expanded funds at the embassy level for more democracy and human rights-related projects. There are also similar opportunities from the Australian and British governments and embassies as well as the European Council.

Other sources that announce grants and funding on an annual/periodic basis include: the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (launched by UNESCO), which includes an aim to strengthen capacities in public institutions and civil society organisations to support viable local and regional cultural industries and markets; National Democratic Institute (NDI) FoRB Action Fund; and grant opportunities from the Templeton Foundation, among many others.

## 5. Risk Mitigation Strategies

Risk	Description	Mitigation Strategy
<b>Security</b>	Threats posed by government and non-governmental actors against those engaging with the SEAFORB Network, including the participation in conferences, taking part in the national FoRB platforms, or attending other activities implemented under the SEAFORB Network banner.	Conducting regular security assessments will aid in identifying vulnerabilities and implementing necessary measures to address them. Furthermore, security training for individuals and organisations will help enhance their understanding and assessment of risks. This training should enable them to recognise potential threats and evaluate their severity.
<b>Potential lack of engagement by stakeholders in the region</b>	<p>There is a potential risk that certain actors, including religious groups, government actors, and others, may be reluctant to engage with the SEAFORB Network due to the prioritisation of religious freedom, which can be considered sensitive in the region.</p> <p>Concerns arise from the perception that a rights-based approach may be used as a guise for cultural and religious imposition or as a threat to the faiths and beliefs of individuals in the region. Consequently, this reluctance could restrict the Network's reach and limit opportunities for engagement.</p>	<p>Effective advocacy and targeted communication efforts will be undertaken to engage various stakeholders in the region, including religious groups, government actors, and others, as well as the wider public. The focus will be on highlighting the core values and benefits of a rights-based approach, emphasising the compatibility of religious freedom with the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and human rights and SDGs.</p> <p>Special attention will be given to addressing concerns and dispelling misconceptions that the rights-based approach is a disguise for cultural or religious imposition or a threat to faiths and beliefs.</p> <p>To foster inclusivity and overcome reluctance, efforts will be made to ensure the protection and respect for religions, faiths, and beliefs within the SEAFORB Network's activities.</p>
<b>Limited intersectionality with other rights</b>	Limited intersectionality poses a risk to the SEAFORB Network. Issues related to religious belief, such as forced subscription to a particular religion, laws enacted based on religious beliefs, or gender issues create a discriminatory impact on other groups of minorities such as ethno-religious groups and gender and sexual minorities.	<p>By adopting a human rights framework to the issue of religious expression, the SEAFORB Network can develop a holistic approach to rights-based advocacy. This will allow for the intersection of religious freedom and rights related to race and gender.</p> <p>It will also seek to maintain partnerships with other human rights organisations and networks and collaborate with these actors when appropriate.</p>

Risk	Description	Mitigation Strategy
<b>Lack of stakeholder inclusivity</b>	<p>The limited role of regional FoRB actors in steering the actions of the SEAFORB Network might be a threat should the SEAFORB SC not include regionally-based organisations and not be receptive to their concerns. Given the current informal nature of the SEAFORB SC, there are no mechanisms for transparency and accountability by the SC.</p>	<p>The SEAFORB SC will prioritise stakeholder inclusivity by adopting a transparent selection and decision-making process. To address concerns and enhance regional participation, the SC will actively involve regionally-based organisations in its decision-making body. This will ensure that the SC is receptive to their input and responsive to their concerns.</p> <p>Additionally, the national platforms will be empowered to play a central role in shaping SEAFORB Network programming at the national level, providing a platform for regional actors to actively steer the Network's actions.</p> <p>Furthermore, to ensure broad representation and guidance, input will be actively sought from the wider SEAFORB Network, enabling them to provide valuable feedback and insights to shape the Network's activities.</p>
<b>Hesitancy by regional actors to take part in SEAFORB Network</b>	<p>The perception of government actors, faith-based groups and other regional actors regarding the inclusion of foreign government officials and UN officials in SEAFORB Network, as well as the role of INGOs the Network's decision-making process, makes it appear non-local.</p>	<p>To mitigate hesitancy among regional actors, the SEAFORB Network will focus on stakeholder engagement, enhance local representation, promote transparency, highlight local impacts, foster capacity building and collaboration, and establish effective communication channels. These strategies include actively involving regional actors in decision-making, addressing their concerns, sharing information transparently, showcasing successful initiatives, providing training opportunities, and maintaining open lines of communication.</p> <p>Implementing these measures will help alleviate hesitancy and ensure active participation from regional actors in the SEAFORB Network.</p>
<b>Competition for funding opportunities</b>	<p>Among some actors in the region, there is a perception that a more formal SEAFORB Network with an established Secretariat will divert funding away from local organisations.</p>	<p>The SEAFORB SC will take the lead in fostering partnerships within the Network. It can explore joint grant opportunities (for example through the national FoRB discussion platforms). The Communications Plan will aim to showcase the Network's added value and its aims of complementing the efforts of FoRB stakeholders in the region. The Secretariat will be placed not as a separate organisation but as an entity under the SEAFORB SC.</p>





Asia Centre is a civil society research institute in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC) based in Bangkok, Thailand. The Centre serves as a knowledge partner, undertaking evidence-based research on issues related to human rights and religious freedoms. It publishes baseline studies and policy toolkits at the request of CSOs, development aid agencies, faith-based organizations, INGOs, and policy-makers. Additionally, it convenes events such as conferences, seminars, webinars and workshops and amplifies its advocacy for the rights of ethnic and religious minorities by producing digital content for media and social media to widen public engagement.

The SEAFORB Network is network of civil society organisations, faith-based organisations, and practioners working on Freedom of Religion or Belief in Southeast Asia. The Network, as well as partners to the Network, gather annually in SEAFORB Conferences. The SEAFORB Network Steering Committee, originally created to organise the Conference, leads the Network and contributes financially to its activities. In 2023, the Steering Committee is made up of representatives from Asia Centre, Boat People SOS, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, International Center for Law and Religion Studies (Brigham Young University), Religious Freedom Institute and Stefanus Alliance International.