Impact & Operational Progress Review (2021–2025)

2025

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INTRODUCTION

Since 2021, GASO's work has operated at the intersection of online fraud, scam-linked trafficking, and forced labour across Southeast Asia. Over this period, public attention on the issue has increased significantly, yet the underlying systems that sustain large-scale scam operations remain largely intact.

This publication brings together five years of work carried out by GASO since 2021. It documents impact achieved across direct assistance, operational analysis, and system-level intervention related to scam-linked trafficking and exploitation. It also outlines how the organisation's approach has evolved in response to direct field experience and practical operating constraints.

For much of this period, priority was given to action rather than documentation. Time-critical harm reduction and operational decision-making often left limited capacity for consolidated reporting. This publication marks the first occasion on which that work has been systematically brought together.

Written for collaborators and partners, the report reflects the realities of operating in complex, high-risk environments. It focuses on outcomes and challenges, and acknowledges the limits of what can be publicly documented in sensitive contexts.

The publication also describes recent operational adjustments and explains why certain approaches have been prioritised to ensure work can continue safely, responsibly, and over time. Its purpose is clarity: to show where the work stands, what has changed, and what is required for it to continue.

MESSAGE FROM
OUR LEADERS

"Real impact comes from reducing risk
and harm where systems quietly fail,
not from visibility.

———————

Since 2021, GASO's work has been shaped primarily by what we encountered directly on the ground rather than by predefined plans or external frameworks. Early efforts focused on immediate harm reduction—supporting victims of fraud and survivors of exploitation where urgent action was required. Over time, consistent patterns emerged: the persistence of harm is less a function of awareness gaps than of systems that remain structurally difficult to reach.

Operating under sustained resource constraints over this period has required disciplined prioritisation, careful risk assessment, and continuous evaluation of what can be undertaken responsibly. These conditions have shaped an approach grounded in feasibility, judgment, and impact rather than scale or visibility. Decisions about where and how to engage have been guided as much by risk and sustainability as by need.

In response, our work has evolved. We have made deliberate choices to focus on approaches that can be sustained responsibly and that address underlying structures rather than only their consequences. This has required changes in how resources are allocated, clearer boundaries around collaboration, and a focus on work that produces practical impact even when it is less visible or slower to register.

Field engagement in high-risk environments demands discretion. Local contributors operate in contexts where overt activity can carry personal and legal risk, requiring approaches grounded in trust, sensitivity, and low-profile coordination. These realities place practical limits on how work can be conducted or documented, reinforcing the need for calibrated, risk-aware decision-making.

This publication brings together five years of work for the first time. It reflects what has been done, what has changed, and what is required for this work to continue. Support enables GASO to remain focused, independent, and grounded in operational reality—so work can continue where accountability most often ends.

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

Since 2022, GASO has operated in environments where online scams, forced labour, and transnational criminal activity intersect. Much of this work has been carried out with limited resources and without the insulation of distance or abstraction, requiring direct engagement in high-risk contexts across multiple jurisdictions. Over this period, GASO's work has contributed to the following outcomes.

Support for forced labour and trafficking survivors

Assistance provided to 700+ individuals subjected to forced labour or human trafficking within scam operations, through coordination with local partners, civil society actors, and relevant authorities.

In 2022, GASO collaborated with a Taiwanese influencer, BUMP on an investigative video exposing forced labour at Kok Rong, which went viral with 4M+ views and contributed to the rescue of a Taiwanese victim.

Subsequent coordinated efforts supported the rescue of a Taiwanese woman trafficked and sexually assaulted in Sihanoukville, who was safely returned home. Following heightened public and media attention, Cambodian authorities launched a hotline and enforcement actions in September 2022, leading to the release of large numbers of individuals from scam centres. Later that year, collaboration with Taiwanese and Hong Kong media on KK Park, Myawaddy coincided with operations that resulted in the release of approximately 3,000 individuals.

From 2022 to November 2025, GASO provided rapid, volunteer-coordinated temporary relocation, medical support, food, and short-term accommodation for forced-labour survivors escaping scam centres in Cambodia; this capacity ceased due to funding constraints.

Support for scam victims

Assistance provided to 1,000+ individuals who suffered financial losses due to scam activity, through documentation, guidance, and case handling within realistic operational limits.

In 2022, a case referral by GASO was acknowledged by the Criminal Investigation Bureau, contributing to a raid on a scam centre operating from a building in Taiwan and the arrest of a fraud syndicate.

Asset disruption

A minimum of USD 21.9 million in assets linked to scam operations and associated bad actors—including digital wallets—were frozen, disrupted, or rendered inaccessible through coordinated reporting and follow-up action.

Transnational money - laundering accountability

GASO supported action against a transnational money-laundering syndicate linked to scam operations, resulting in multiple legal outcomes across jurisdictions:

- In 2023, several key individuals connected to the syndicate were arrested in China and returned to serve custodial sentences.
- In 2024, a Thai national associated with the same network was convicted and sentenced.
- In June 2024, Cambodian authorities arrested two additional individuals—one Cambodian national and one Chinese national—in connection with the syndicate.
- Legal proceedings resulted in a successful judgment on behalf of eight victims globally, with victim recovery processes ongoing as of December 2025.

see how victims are
living their life,

Salam, a survivor of trafficking for forced cyber exploitation in scam compounds speak at the General Assembly of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons on 24 November 2025 at United Nations Headquarters, New York.

Salam was rescued in 2022 from a scam compound in Cambodia through the assistance of Global Anti-Scam Organisation (GASO) and was subsequently repatriated. Since his return home, he has remained actively engaged in supporting other victims of trafficking, contributing to the safe return of more than 50 survivors through peer assistance, referrals, and survivor-led coordination.

He is a member of the Global Survivor Network, where he works alongside other survivors to amplify lived experience, strengthen survivor-informed responses, and advocate for accountability within anti-trafficking systems.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Despite growing public and institutional attention, scam-linked trafficking and exploitation have not diminished. Instead, the systems sustaining these harms have adapted in ways that reduce visibility while preserving operational reliability. Activity has become more geographically dispersed, less predictable, and increasingly embedded within legitimate-looking environments, limiting the effectiveness of responses built around concentration, exposure, or episodic enforcement.

At the same time, the operating conditions for direct intervention have tightened. Cross-border fragmentation, uneven accountability, and elevated risk have narrowed the range of situations in which time-critical engagement can be undertaken safely and responsibly. These dynamics have exposed the limits of response models that prioritise speed, scale, or headline outcomes over feasibility, safety, and durability.

A core constraint underlying these challenges is fragmented accountability across platforms, jurisdictions, and institutional mandates. While individual actors may respond within scope, no single system is positioned to act across the full harm chain—from recruitment and coercion to financial extraction and monetisation. These gaps are consistently exploited, reducing the impact of isolated or sector-specific interventions.

Compounding this is a persistent mismatch between the speed at which harm occurs and the speed at which formal responses are able to operate. Scam-linked exploitation often unfolds over hours or days, while policy, regulatory, and procedural mechanisms typically move on significantly longer timelines. Where response speed does not align with operational reality, risk escalates before corrective action becomes feasible.

Although large volumes of data related to scams, trafficking, and financial abuse already exist, this information is rarely decision-ready. Data remains siloed, delayed, or structured for reporting rather than intervention, limiting its usefulness for timely disruption. As a result, intelligence is often descriptive rather than operational, reinforcing reactive rather than preventive approaches.

The challenge is therefore no longer one of awareness or isolated enforcement, but of system resilience. Scam-linked operations persist because they function as adaptive systems capable of absorbing pressure without losing core capacity. Addressing this environment requires sustained analytical capability, field-informed risk assessment, and interventions that reduce repeat harm by targeting structural dependencies rather than responding to individual incidents in isolation.

These assessments are informed by direct operational exposure and day-to-day decision-making in high-risk environments, rather than desk-based analysis or episodic consultation alone.
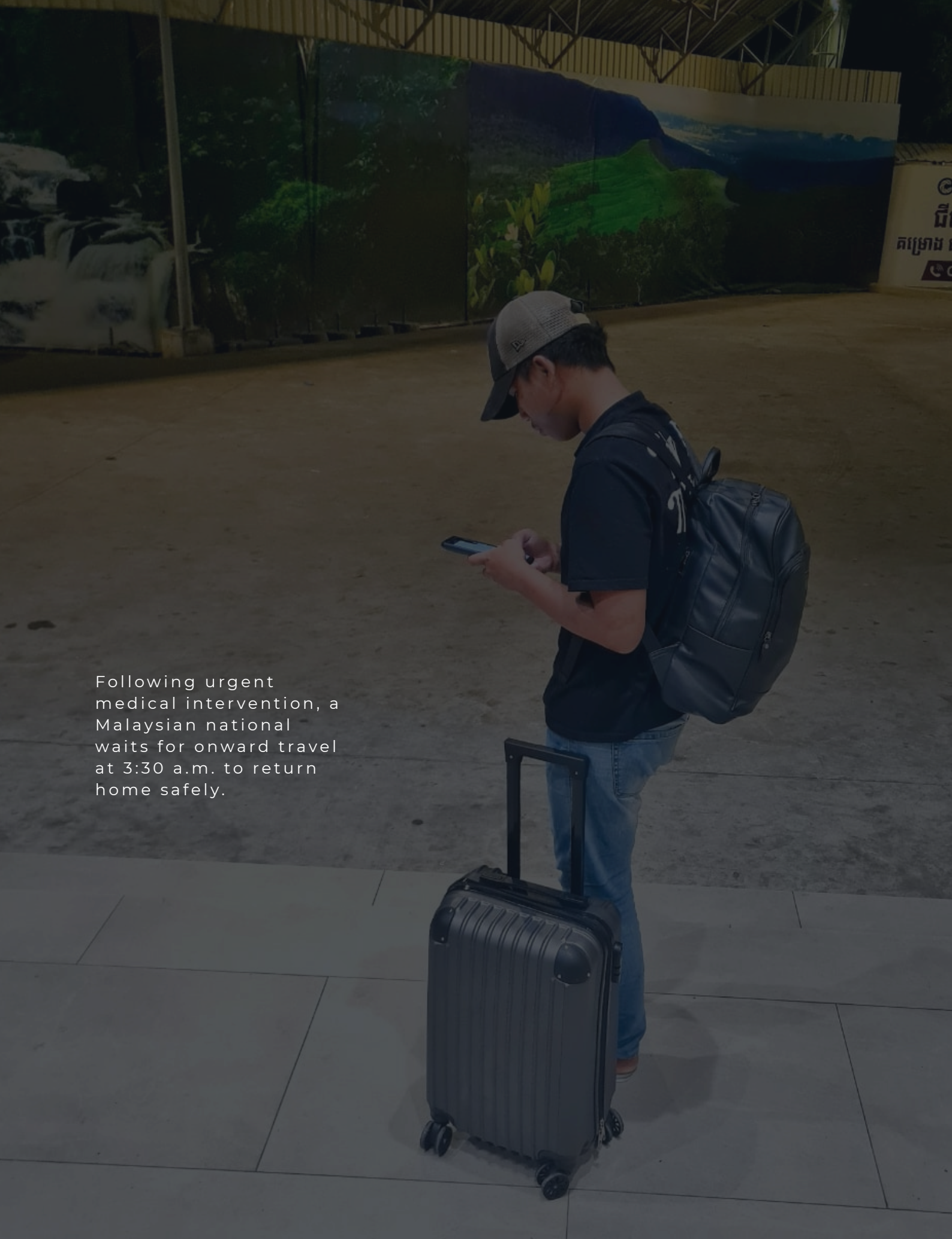
Following urgent
medical intervention, a
Malaysian national
waits for onward travel
at 3:30 a.m. to return
home safely.

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2026

In 2026, GASO will focus on four core operational modules. These priorities reflect lessons from five years of field engagement and are designed to strengthen upstream intervention, evidence generation, and accountability while remaining sustainable under real-world constraints.

| Activity / Project	Description	Data / Outcome
Mapping & Satellite-Based Monitoring	Systematic mapping and monitoring of scam-linked trafficking infrastructure across ASEAN using satellite imagery, survivor-verified locations, and open-source intelligence.	Evidence-grade geospatial intelligence documenting scam compound locations, physical controls, and expansion patterns to support accountability and targeted intervention.
Financial Pool Monitoring & Analysis	Analysis of scam-linked financial aggregation and monetisation structures using consent-based victim data, public blockchain records, and open-source intelligence.	Identification of recurring capital pooling and cash-out dependencies that enable scam operations to scale, supporting disruption and regulatory action.
AI-Assisted Analysis of Scam & Trafficking Ecosystems	AI-assisted analysis of open-source and survivor-derived data to identify recurring links between online scams, trafficking, and forced labour across ASEAN.	Early-warning indicators and evidence-based insights to anticipate recruitment waves, emerging scam typologies, and operational escalation before harm occurs.
Independent Publications & Briefings	Independent Publications & Briefings	Production of independent analysis grounded in direct engagement with scam victims and forced-labour survivors, free from programmatic or funding incentives.

STRATEGIC INTEGRATION WITH SCAMCENTER.ORG

As part of this update, GASO is integrating its work with ScamCenter.org to strengthen the mapping and analysis of scam operations in high-risk regions. This integration combines complementary capabilities to improve accuracy, coverage, and operational usefulness.

The collaboration brings together:

- GASO's operational exposure and victim-informed intelligence
- ScamCenter.org's work in documenting and mapping scam centres and risk zones

Through this integration, GASO is developing a scam map feature, currently in progress and scheduled for release in a forthcoming phase. The aim is to provide clearer visibility into scam concentration areas, operational patterns, and regional risk dynamics.

The objective of this work is practical utility rather than public sensationalism. Consolidated mapping and intelligence are intended to support law enforcement, regulators, and policymakers in understanding scam ecosystems and identifying points of intervention more effectively.
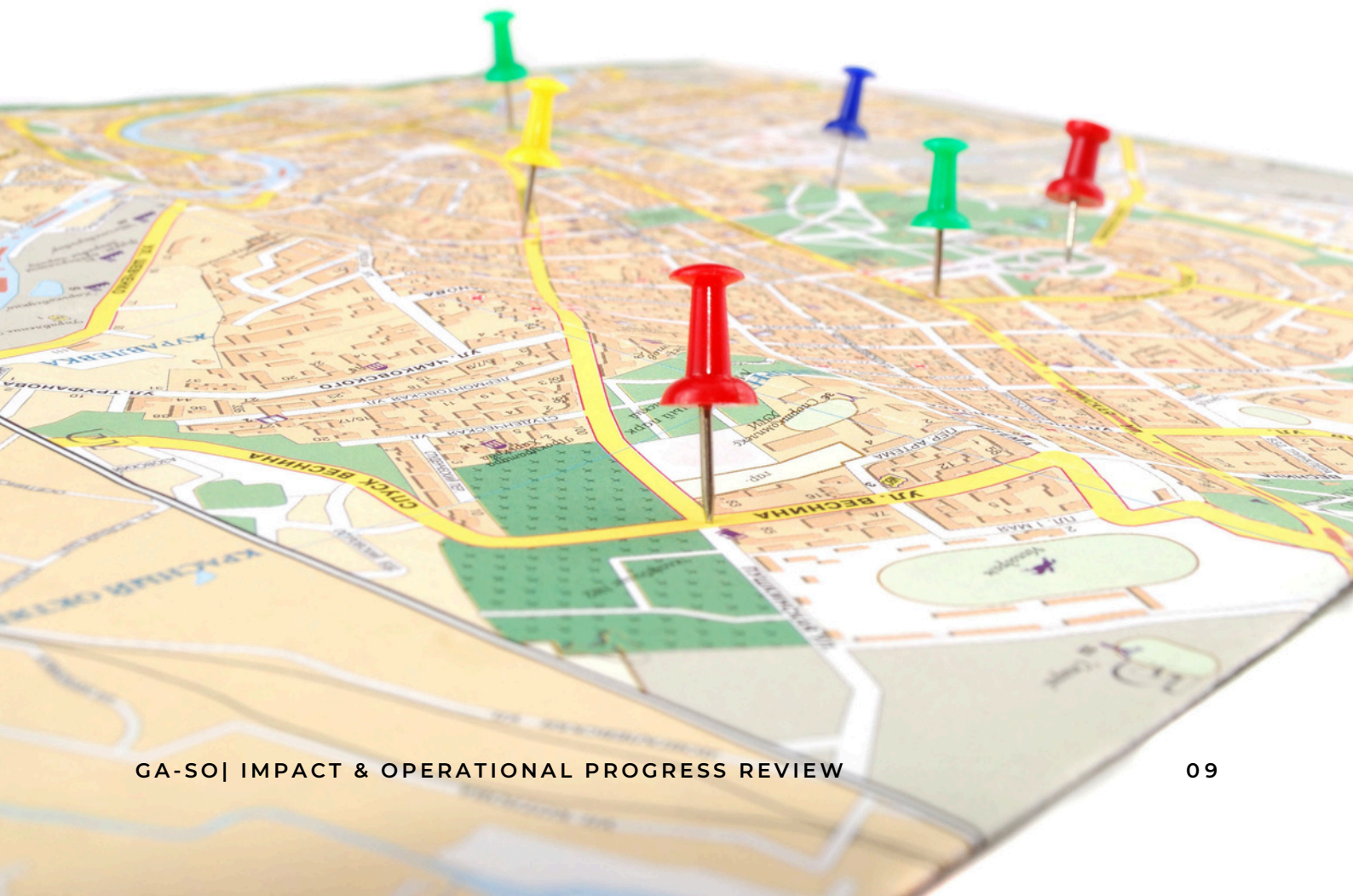
WHY SUPPORT MATTERS

The work documented in this publication reflects conditions that are persistent, cross-border, and operationally complex. These conditions are not sustained by a lack of awareness, but by systems that continue to function reliably despite attention, enforcement, and periodic intervention. Addressing them requires sustained engagement grounded in operational reality, rather than episodic response or desk-based analysis.

Support enables GASO to operate across time, cases, and jurisdictions in ways that existing institutional models often cannot. It allows resources to be directed toward interventions that reduce risk and harm where delays, procedural constraints, or fragmented accountability would otherwise render response ineffective. This includes both time-critical engagement and longer-term work to identify and weaken structural dependencies that drive repeat harm.

Sustained support also enables disciplined operation. It provides the capacity to set and maintain clear boundaries, to decline work that cannot be undertaken responsibly, and to prioritise interventions based on impact rather than visibility, scale, or narrative appeal. In environments where accountability is diffuse and risk is unevenly distributed, this stability is not ancillary—it is essential.

Support enables:
- Continuity of analytical capacity informed by direct operational exposure
- Time-critical response when risk escalates faster than formal systems can act
- Independent assessment free from programmatic, visibility, or reporting incentives
- Responsible scaling of system-level disruption through risk reduction

GASO's mission is to reduce risk and harm arising from transnational scam operations by improving system responsiveness and targeting structural bottlenecks that enable repeat exploitation.

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Media & Partners

Contributors of GASO

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