



SHAPE-SEA COMMISSIONED THEMATIC RESEARCH 2026

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Theme: Peace and Conflict Transformation in Southeast Asia: Searching for Peace in an Era of (continued) Uncertainties

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

The Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research and Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia (SHAPE-SEA) programme is now accepting applications for its Commissioned Thematic Research 2026.

SHAPE-SEA, founded in 2015 by a group of human rights and peace scholar-practitioners in Southeast Asia, aims to establish ways to develop and strengthen the capacities and knowledge of fellow Southeast Asian scholars and academics in the region. SHAPE-SEA's vision is to strengthen the protection and promotion of human rights and peace in ASEAN/ Southeast Asia through research and education. It aims to support research efforts that contribute to cultivating a culture of human rights and peace in Southeast Asia. The programme is made possible with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation (SIDA) and the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University which is the host of the programme.

The Commissioned Thematic Research is tailored to serve a critical role contributing to the vision and aims of SHAPE-SEA through its component that is specifically targeted towards evidence-based knowledge production on critical human rights and peace issues. For each call for proposals, the programme provides research grants which cover research expenses including researcher writing fee to enable scholar-practitioners, researchers and academics in the region to conduct empirical research on specific human rights and peace themes.

For this round of the call for proposals under the theme **Peace and Conflict Transformation in Southeast Asia: Searching for Peace in an Era of (continued) Uncertainties**, we encourage specific case studies focusing at the local, national or regional levels.

CONCEPT NOTE: *Towards Conflict Transformation, Peacebuilding, and Transformative Peacebuilding*

We are facing a multitude of uncertainties in the world today, with ongoing armed confrontations and all types of conflicts in various parts of the world. We are also faced with the increasing threat of “democratic backsliding” and the rise of authoritarianism bringing even more challenges to the many problems that we already have. This present trend is disturbing and creates a unique challenge for us to overcome. However, it is hoped that this period of difficult history that we are



currently living in will eventually pass and that we are able to overcome the challenges, transform the situation, and build a stronger framework for peace in the future.

The search for sustainable positive peace needs imaginative and creative ways of looking at peacebuilding. Peacebuilding can be seen as “*a long-term transformation of a war system into a peace system, inspired by the quest for the values of peace and justice, truth, and mercy.*” (Askandar, 2021) It involves identifying, changing, and transforming certain key dimensions in a conflict situation - the personal, structural, relational and cultural aspects of conflict. Peacebuilding is usually brought about over different time-periods (short, mid, and long-term), and affects different system levels at different times.

Transformation is key to peacebuilding. Lederach (2003) says that conflict transformation is to “*envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures*”, and “*respond to real-life problems in human relationships*”. An important question to ask when faced with a conflict situation is how do we end something not desired and build something we do desire? Transformation then is a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses and if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict. It suggests a comprehensive approach, emphasizing support for *groups* within the society in conflict and transforming the conflict through a series of changes and specific steps.

“Conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect and promote the human and cultural resources from within a given setting. This involves a new set of lenses through which we do not primarily see the setting and the people in it as the problem and the outsider as the answer. Rather, we understand the long-term goal of transformation as validating and building on people and resources within the setting” (Lederach 1995)

From this perspective, we can suggest that the solution necessarily comes from the “*soil*” of conflict, those that are living in and most affected by the conflict situation. Their initial transformation and subsequent involvement in the peacebuilding process is crucial. This “actor” and “group” transformation into peace actors then is a necessary condition for peacebuilding, contributing to a comprehensive strategy that will involve these actors for peace at every level and acknowledging the “complementarity” of these actors. This actor and group transformation is part of a process of transformation that also includes the transformation of issues, context, and structure. (Askandar, 2021) Together these transformations present the core components involved in the process of transformative peacebuilding (TP). The search for sustainable peace in the region would need a comprehensive and innovative approach, one that can be achieved by applying the transformative peacebuilding or TP framework.

THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The Commissioned Thematic Research on “Peace and Conflict Transformation in Southeast Asia” specifically intends to focus on the search for peace in this era of continued uncertainties using the framework of Transformative Peacebuilding or TP. We encourage proposals that apply the TP framework in analysing case studies in the region, highlighting aspects of transformation



in the peacebuilding process. The intention is to celebrate milestones as well as critically reflect on conflict transformation processes carried out by various actors in the search for sustainable peace in the region. Lessons and good practices drawn from case studies can add on to existing knowledge and inform current and future peacebuilding and conflict transformation processes in Southeast Asia.

The guide questions presented below give an indication of what the research project(s) can cover and what is to be included, or can be included, in each case study.

- a) The context and issues of the chosen conflict situation.
- b) The peace actors involved.
- c) Transformative peacebuilding in action.
- d) Assessment of successes and challenges.

Research proposals may also address: Peace education; Conflict Transformation and Peace-building with a focus on Myanmar, Southern Thailand, Mindanao, Philippines; or inter-national/cross-border conflict.

ELIGIBILITY

1. Southeast Asian scholar-practitioner and academic working and based in Southeast Asia.
2. The proposed research project can be part of an ongoing research but must not have been published yet.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Accomplished Research Proposal [maximum 3000 words]

The proposal must include:

- Title of the Research Project;
- Name and Affiliation of the Researcher;
- Concept Note/brief description of the research;
- Objectives, Research Questions and Methodology;
- Literature Review;
- Risk Analysis and Ethical Concerns;
- Bibliography;
- Timeline; and
- Proposed Budget

■ *The project budget must be within a maximum of THB 80,000, inclusive of research and writing fee.*

2. Curriculum Vitae [maximum of 2 pages]
3. Proof of Employment or Affiliation [e.g. Institutional ID/ certification, etc]
4. Reference/Recommendation letter (1) [optional]

TIMELINE, EXPECTED RESULT AND OUTPUT



1. Completion of the research and submission of draft manuscript for a book chapter by 23 December 2026.
2. Presentation of research findings in a regional seminar organized by SHAPE-SEA. (Early 2027)
1. Contribute a book chapter based on the research findings of SHAPE-SEA supported Commissioned Thematic Research 2026.
2. Submit final manuscript for book chapter by March-April 2027.

APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

The selection committee will assess applications/proposals based on the alignment to the theme, quality of the research proposals, and feasibility of timely completion of the proposed research projects.

MORE INFORMATION

Submission Responsibility Disclaimer

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all submitted documents are complete and accurate. The committee will not be responsible for reviewing, correcting, or redistributing any files that contain errors or mistakes prior to the selection process or at any stage thereafter.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Submission Deadline: 25 June 2026 (11:59PM BKK Time)

Announcement of Result: By or before 15 July 2026

Documents to Prepare, Upload and Submit

1. Accomplished Research Proposal [*check the outline/ format above*]
2. Curriculum Vitae [maximum of 2 pages]
3. Proof of Employment or Affiliation [e.g. Institutional ID/ certification, etc]
4. Reference/Recommendation letter (1) [*optional*]

SUBMIT YOUR PROPOSAL