



## US Support Program for the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN)

JULY 2009



Photo: Thai Nature Crime Police

Cross-border cooperation between Laos and Thailand led to the confiscation of tiger, leopard and clouded leopard parts near the Mekong River border that separates the countries.

### BACKGROUND

The illegal wildlife trade supplies the world's third-largest black market, surpassed only by illicit commerce in arms and drugs. Southeast Asia's rich biodiversity is particularly vulnerable due to the region's well-developed road and transport system and weak wildlife law enforcement.

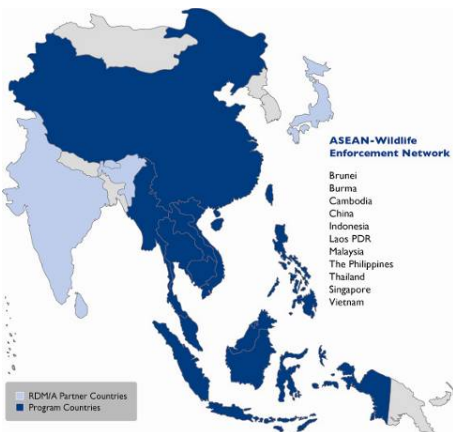
The multi-billion-dollar illegal wildlife trade threatens to unravel entire ecosystems and the benefits they provide, undermining law enforcement and threatening public health via exposure to diseases transmitted from animals to humans. Illegal wildlife traffickers are efficient and organized, operating within and across international borders. Authorities need a similar coordinated enforcement response if traffickers are to be curbed. In response, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) created the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) in December 2005. It has become the world's largest nature crime enforcement network and fosters vital regional cooperative links between police, customs, judicial and environment agencies.

USAID supports the initiative by helping strengthen ASEAN-WEN into a sustainable regional network to fight wildlife crime. The ASEAN-WEN Support Program is designed to:

- Improve government capacity to enforce wildlife laws through training and investigation assistance
- Strengthen ASEAN-WEN through regional cooperation
- Develop community and civic support for the network through media outreach and collaboration with partner organizations
- Ensure ASEAN-WEN's sustainability

This focused and comprehensive approach has paid off. ASEAN-WEN's accomplishments include:

- Completed 67 new enforcement actions
- Trained over 1,000 personnel from 154 agencies
- Established a secretariat in Bangkok
- Created five national-level, environment crime task forces
- Agreed on a strategic action plan for coordinated action against nature crime
- Forged a partnership with INTERPOL, the International Criminal Police Organization





Training of national park rangers is the front-line defense against illegal wildlife trafficking.

Photo: Freeland Foundation

## APPROACH

Engaging all 10 ASEAN countries (Brunei Darussalem, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) along with China and the United States, ASEAN-WEN works on two levels. At the national level, participant governments create interagency environment crime task forces that coordinate enforcement actions with police, customs and environment officers. At the regional level, task forces serve as focal points in the battle against transnational wildlife crime, sharing experiences among countries and exchanging vital intelligence about cross-border criminal organizations.

**Agency surveys.** Compilation of wildlife law enforcement data in participating countries provides baseline data for measuring ASEAN-WEN's impact and successes. Surveys allow identification of potential task force participants and help set priorities for training activities.

**Training and skill building.** Specific courses and workshops provide the means to sustain effective wildlife law enforcement. Training management packages developed in concert with government agencies and in local languages are designed to address gaps in wildlife law enforcement capacity.

**Public awareness.** Increased public understanding about the illegal wildlife trade and civic and community support are essential for addressing wildlife crime. Nongovernmental, media and corporate organizations play a helpful role by providing additional support and publicity for ASEAN-WEN.

**Regional meetings and cooperative events.** Gatherings between policy stakeholders and national task forces enable the network's development. During these events, ASEAN-WEN participants share information, plan cross-border operations and discuss mutual challenges. All 10 ASEAN member countries participate in ASEAN-WEN. The network plans to engage other countries linked to Southeast Asia's wildlife trade, including Japan, South Korea, Australia, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the African states and the European Union.

## PARTNERS

Government of Thailand, FREELAND Foundation, TRAFFIC, Wildlife Alliance, ASEAN, US Department of State, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Department of Justice, US Forest Service, and the Secretariat for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

For more information, see <http://www.asean-wen.org/>.

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