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ASIA



LMI: Asia's Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking (ARREST)

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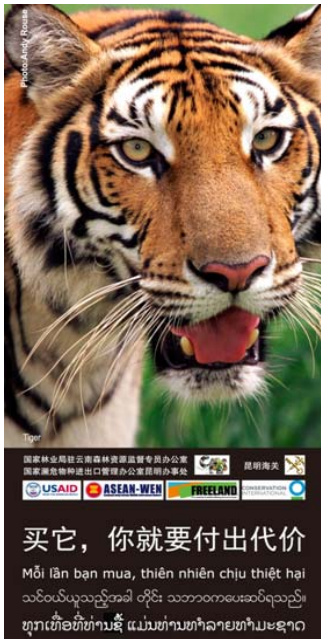


Photo: FREELAND Foundation

Public awareness banners placed at custom offices and ports in Lower Mekong countries help reduce demand for illegal wildlife products.

ARREST works in the LMI countries to reduce consumer demand, strengthen law enforcement, and improve regional cooperation.

U.S. Agency for International Development
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BACKGROUND

The illegal wildlife trade is a multi-billion dollar business, threatening the Lower Mekong region's unique ecosystems and robbing people of the benefits they provide. Wildlife trafficking undermines law enforcement, strengthens criminal syndicates, and raises the risk that diseases can be transmitted from animals to humans. The traffickers are well-organized; they prey on endangered species, move them across borders, and sell them around the world. Addressing these challenges means targeting each aspect of wildlife crime.

USAID's illegal wildlife trafficking programs began in 2005 with the establishment of the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN). Since then, the network has shown impressive results that include:

- More than 2,000 officials trained in anti-poaching operations and wildlife crime investigations;
- Arrests for and seizures of illegal wildlife increased ten-fold by 2009;
- A fully functioning secretariat established in Bangkok;
- National Task Forces created to combat wildlife crime in all LMI countries and nearly every ASEAN country (www.asean-wen.org).

ASEAN member governments have been doing their part, too, committing the necessary financial and human resources to enforce legislation governing the conservation, trade and sustainable use of wild fauna and flora. Likewise, they have also agreed to implement regional commitments to ASEAN-WEN, including cross-border collaboration on wildlife crime cases.

USAID is now building on ASEAN-WEN's successes by focusing on the Lower Mekong countries – Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam -- and sharing its lessons with China and South Asia through the new five-year **ARREST (Asia's Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking)** program. Implemented by the FREELAND Foundation, ARREST will fight trafficking in illegal wildlife in Asia in three ways:

- Reduce consumer demand;
- Strengthen law enforcement; and
- Strengthen regional cooperation and anti-trafficking networks.

ARREST unites the efforts of governments, NGOs and the private sector in the Lower Mekong nations together with China, ASEAN and South Asia countries. Together, these dedicated people and organizations are helping Asia respond to the challenge of protecting its unique wildlife.



Photo: FREELAND Foundation

A sun bear cub rests after being rescued by Thailand's Nature Crime Task Force at a raid at the Bangkok airport in May 2011. Since 2005, USAID support has helped train Asian task forces, increasing arrests for and seizures of illegally trafficked wildlife ten-fold.



U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Kristie Kenney (in blue, center), together with regional dignitaries and national representatives, expressed their support for stronger regional cooperation on fighting wildlife trafficking during the launch of the ARREST program in July 2011.

Contact: Winston Bowman

US Agency for International Development
 Regional Development Mission for Asia
 Athenee Tower, 63 Wireless Rd.
 Bangkok 10330 Thailand
 Office: +662-257-3000
 Fax: +662-257-3099
 E-mail: wbowman@usaid.gov

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES IN THE LOWER MEKONG BASIN

Target Countries: Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam

Demand Reduction Campaigns: ARREST will use its extensive media and advertising resources to support campaigns in Vietnam, Thailand and other countries that work to eliminate the consumption of protected wildlife. Where monitoring shows these efforts are succeeding, the program will expand upon them.

Mainstreaming Wildlife Crime in Law Enforcement: ASEAN-WEN's activities have already placed wildlife crime on the agenda of major national and regional law enforcement organizations, such as INTERPOL and ASEANAPOL—the ASEAN region's police organization. ARREST will help police chiefs across the Lower Mekong region include cross-border wildlife enforcement cooperation in their work plans.

Law Enforcement Capacity Building: ARREST will work with the region's law enforcement trainers and institutions to improve regional and national courses and materials on the following subjects:

- **Prevention:** Protected area enforcement and management;
- **Detection:** Nature crime investigation, forensics, and border inspection; and
- **Prosecution:** Judicial awareness.

Developing Law Enforcement Managers: ARREST will also strengthen law enforcement capacity by focusing on law enforcement leaders and training managers to lead front line staff in reducing wildlife crime. This should put large areas of biologically-significant habitat under improved management.

Sustaining the ASEAN-WEN Secretariat: ARREST will mentor ASEAN-WEN Program Coordination Unit staff and promote new technology that helps raise awareness and combat illegal trade in wildlife. This should help the Bangkok-based Secretariat become a stronger, more independent, and service-oriented institution that connects directly with enforcement agencies across the Lower Mekong region and other countries.

Promoting Regional Cooperation: Through regional program events - exchanges, regional investigation meetings, and training courses - officers from the new South Asian Wildlife Enforcement Network (SA-WEN), and China's Task Force will join ASEAN-WEN to learn from each other, and exchange information, intelligence, and best practices.

PARTNERS

ASEAN-WEN, FREELAND Foundation, ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, ACRES, AsiaWorks TV, Conservation International China Program, Education for Nature Vietnam (ENV), GreenEyes China, INTERPOL, JWT, National Geographic, MTV-Exit, Wildlife Alliance, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service.