



Environmental Cooperation – Asia (ECO-Asia)

ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN)



A Customs officer displays confiscated crocodile skin (Photo: FREELAND)

BACKGROUND The illegal wildlife trade supplies the world's third most profitable black market, surpassed only by illicit commerce in arms and drugs. Southeast Asia's rich biodiversity is particularly vulnerable because the region's well-developed infrastructure and weak wildlife law enforcement compound the problem.

The multi-billion dollar illegal wildlife trade threatens to unravel entire ecosystems and the services they provide. The loss of important watersheds or carbon sinks means communities who once depended on the forest for food or clean water now need to spend what little income they have on basic necessities, exacerbating their economic hardship. The trade undermines rule of law and increases public health threats via exposure to zoonotic diseases like SARS and avian influenza.

Illegal wildlife traffickers are highly organized, operating within and across international borders. A coordinated international law enforcement response is needed to curb this crime. In response, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) created the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) in December 2005. It is the world's largest nature crime enforcement network and fosters vital regional cooperative links between police, customs, judiciary, and environment agencies.

USAID supports the initiative by helping to strengthen ASEAN-WEN into a sustainable and effective transnational network against wildlife crime. The ECO-Asia-funded ASEAN-WEN Support Program is designed to:

- Improve government capacities to enforce wildlife laws through training and investigation assistance
- Strengthen ASEAN-WEN through regional cooperation and interaction
- Develop civil society support for the network through media outreach and collaboration with aligned organizations
- Ensure sustainability of the ASEAN-WEN beyond the Support Program

This focused and comprehensive approach has paid off. The ASEAN-WEN has achieved the following milestones:

- Carried out more than 70 new enforcement actions
- Trained over 1,800 personnel from 154 agencies



- Established a secretariat called the Program Coordination Unit in Bangkok, Thailand
- Created six active national-level, environment crime Task Forces
- Agreed on a Strategic Action Plan for coordinated action against nature crime
- Forged partnerships with INTERPOL, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, World Bank and ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity

APPROACH Engaging all ten ASEAN countries, China, and the United States, ASEAN-WEN works on two levels. At the national level, participant governments create interagency environment crime task forces that involve police, customs, and environment officers. At the regional level, task forces also serve as focal points in the battle against transnational wildlife crime, exchanging intelligence between countries about cross-border syndicates. Project activities are described below.

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

Capacity Building Specific courses and workshops provide the means to build and sustain effective wildlife law enforcement. Training Management Packages developed in concert with government agencies and in local languages, help address gaps in wildlife law enforcement skills development.

Public Awareness Increased public understanding about the illegal wildlife trade and civil society 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, various ASEAN-WEN participants share information, plan

cross-border operations, and discuss mutual challenges.

All ten ASEAN member countries—Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam—are participants in ASEAN-WEN. The Network is also fostering engagement with other countries linked to Southeast Asia's wildlife trade, including the United States, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), African states, and the European Union.

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS Government of Thailand, FREELAND Foundation, TRAFFIC, ASEAN, U.S. State Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Justice Department, U.S. Forest Service, and CITES Secretariat

For more information, please visit: usaid.eco-asia.org and www.asean-wen.org



Cross-border cooperation between Laos and Thailand led to the confiscation of tiger, leopard and clouded leopard parts on the Mekong River border area between the two countries. (Photo: Royal Thai Police)

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