



PRESS RELEASE
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GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY FOR THE FIRST EVER WILDLIFE RESCUE AND EDUCATION CENTRE IN LAO PDR

VIENTIANE, LAO PDR, 1 OCTOBER 2012 – ACRES and Lao Zoo are delighted to announce the start of the construction of the **Lao Wildlife Sanctuary, the first Wildlife Rescue and Education Centre in Lao PDR**. Located at the Lao Zoo in Ban Keun and managed by ACRES, the Lao Wildlife Sanctuary will provide refuge to animals rescued from the illegal wildlife trade.

The first phase of construction will involve the creation of an Education Center and Auditorium, made possible by a \$50,000 grant from the U.S. Embassy in Lao PDR. A groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the new center took place on Oct. 1, attended by U.S. Ambassador to Lao PDR Ms. Karen Stewart; Mr. Phoxay Khaykhamphithoune, Deputy Director General of International Organizations, Lao PDR Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mdm. Somvang Kiasrithanakorn, Managing Director of Lao Zoo; and Mr. Louis Ng, Chief Executive of ACRES.

Once completed, the Lao Wildlife Sanctuary will serve as a landmark educational facility in Lao PDR, to create much-needed awareness on the wildlife trade, environmental protection and a host of animal protection issues. This onsite Education Centre will feature exhibits on a variety of animal protection issues, whilst educational talks, skits and performances will be held at the Auditorium.

The Sanctuary's mission will be to reach out to the hearts and minds of people of all ages through education programmes, creating awareness and also inspiring people to make a difference for animals and for the community at large.

"The U.S is proud to play a role in educating the future generations in Laos about the protection of wildlife and the preservation of habitat." said Ambassador Stewart, during her remarks at the groundbreaking ceremony.

"I am grateful for the grant from the US Embassy which has enabled us to empower Laotians with knowledge about animal protection issues and inspire them to make a difference. I am confident that our strong partnerships with the Lao PDR government, the Lao Zoo and the U.S. Embassy, will strengthen animal protection in Lao PDR and contribute to social progress of the country" said Mr. Louis Ng, Chief Executive of ACRES.

"There is no better way to protect the wildlife than to change the way humans think of and treat animals in the wild. We are deeply thankful to the US Embassy for sharing this vision and look forward to our continued collaboration to make this Education Centre a success" said Mdm. Somvang Kiasrithanakorn, Managing Director of Lao Zoo.

In addition to the Education Centre and Auditorium, the Lao Wildlife Sanctuary will also include a Wildlife Hospital, a Quarantine Centre, an Animal Kitchen, a Volunteer House and Animal Enclosures.

The Lao Wildlife Sanctuary is expected to be operational by the end of this year.

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