



Co-chairs lead a workshop for tour guides in Luang Prabang province on Thursday.

Tour guides get lessons on ways to prevent purchase of wildlife products

Keoviengkhone Bounviseth

Luang Prabang province: Local tour guides have learnt about ways to help Chinese tourists avoid the risk of buying illegal wildlife products while travelling, as well as promoting sustainable tourism in Laos.

A workshop titled 'Sustainable Tourism, Refuse Illegal Wildlife Products Specialised Training for Tour Guides' was held here on Thursday for 30 tour guides, as part of a collective effort to promote responsible tourism and reduce the illegal wildlife trade in Southeast Asia.

Wildlife Coordinator of WWF-Laos, Mr Khamkhoun Khounbolin, who co-chaired the workshop said "Given the influx of Chinese business and leisure travellers into Laos, we believe this is a critical moment to engage tour guides to help address the illegal wildlife trade."

"Our goal is to curb the poaching of endangered species. Reducing the demand for these products is key, and currently that demand is emanating from visitors from some East Asian countries."

Senior Programme Manager of WWF/TRAFFIC's China office, Ms Ling Xu, said collaboration with the tourism industry is key to helping combat wildlife trafficking.

She said that in some instances, tour guides, on behalf of tourists, help facilitate the smuggling of wildlife products across the border into China. The training aims to stop this, make tour guides more aware of the penalties involved, for them and the tourists, and to support the Lao government's efforts in this regard.

According to WWF-Laos, the aim of the responsible tourism initiative is to steer travellers in Laos away from opportunities to become

engaged in illegal wildlife trade. Over 30 tour guides who work primarily with Chinese tourists attended the training session, which included background information on the smuggling of illegal wildlife products across borders, and on what it means to participate in sustainable tourism.

Participants role-played potential scenarios, such as talking potential buyers out of buying illegal wildlife products, telling customers about the legal consequences of taking such products home, and identifying alternative products that could legally be purchased as souvenirs.

At the end of the day, participants took a pledge to promote sustainable tourism practices and to prevent their customers from buying illegal wildlife products.

The workshop was co-organised by World Wide Fund for Nature in Laos (WWF-Laos), WWF-China and TRAFFIC in collaboration with Trip.com (the largest online travel agency in Asia), Intrepid Group (the largest small group adventure travel company in the world), and the Luang Prabang provincial offices of Forest Inspection and Information, Culture and Tourism.

The event was co-funded by the UK Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the European Commission.

Representatives from WWF-Laos, WWF/TRAFFIC China, the provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office, Forest Inspection Department, and the EU Delegation to Laos attended the workshop.

Buddhist Fellowship reviews year's accomplishments, future plans

Sangkhomsay Bubphanouvong

Senior monks from temples around country and officials from related organisations are currently attending the annual Central Buddhist Fellowship of Laos meeting at That Luang Neua in Xaysettha district, Vientiane.

The two-day meeting, which ends today, arranged by the Central Buddhist Fellowship, is summarising the organisation's achievements throughout 2019 and discussing plans for next year.

President of the Buddhist Fellowship Organisation of Laos,

Phra Yotkeo Mahasangha Sudhammadhipati Ratana Mahasangha Pamokkha; President of the Lao Front for National Development, Dr Xaysomphone Phomvihane, senior monks from around the country and high-ranking officials from various organisations attended the meeting's opening ceremony on Thursday.

Over the past year, the Central Buddhist Fellowship has managed religious affairs in the country including the supervision of monks, expanded education programmes on Buddhism and prayer instruction, as well as the Metatham project to assist socio-economic development.

The Buddhist fellowship in each province has taken responsibility for local activities such as the managing of monks and their education, and development of religious teaching.

During the meeting, the Central Buddhist Fellowship and its provincial counterparts are discussing current religious issues along with plans to expand the spread of Buddhism in 2020.

Attendees heard that in 2019, there were 10,093 monks, 16,568 novices and 724 nuns around the country.

The nation has 4,765 temples with 3,401 having living quarters for monks.



Phra Yotkeo Mahasangha Sudhammadhipati Ratana Mahasangha Pamokkha (third right) and Dr Xaysomphone Phomvihane (second right) attend the opening ceremony of the meeting at That Luang Neua Temple Hall in Vientiane on Thursday.

Officials discuss mapping of climate risks for southern farmers

Phomphong Laoin

Champassak province: Government officials from the southern provinces came together in Pakxe this week to discuss the mapping of the risks and impacts related to climate change, aiming to give farmers more accurate information.

The two-day meeting on participatory mapping of agricultural livelihoods and the identification of climate

risks to establish priorities for climate service took place at the Rice Research and Seed Multiplication station in Phonngam village, Pakxe, from December 19-20.

The meeting was attended by the Director General of the Department of Agricultural Land Management, Dr Nivong Sipaseuth, Director of the Agriculture and Forestry Department of Champassak province, Mr Padith Vannalatsamy, and Project

Coordinator of the SAMIS Project, Dr Monica Petri.

The meeting was organised by the Department of Agricultural Land Management under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in collaboration with the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute and the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

The Department

of Agricultural Land Management and the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute are working to produce maps of the risks and impacts related to climate change in Laos.

This work is co-financed by two main climate change projects, one of which is called "Applying seasonal climate forecasting and innovative insurance solutions to climate risk management in the agriculture sector in SE Asia", otherwise known as De-RISK SE Asia.

This project, implemented by the World Meteorological Organisation and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture and the University of Southern Queensland, is financed by the International Climate Initiative of Germany's Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

The second project

partner is the FAO project Strengthening Agro-climatic Monitoring and Information Systems (SAMIS), which is financed by Global Environmental Financing and implemented by Laos' Department of Meteorology and Hydrology and Department of Agricultural Land Management.

This initiative, which links the activities of the two ministries involved, is targeting the production of important data that will be used for decision making at national and local level planning for the agriculture sector.

This week's meeting was the first in a series of three workshops and was attended by 45 officials from district and provincial offices of agriculture and forestry and natural resources and the environment from Champassak, Saravan, Xekong and Attapeu provinces.



District and provincial officials meet in Pakxe, Champassak province, to map the climate risks faced by farmers in the southern provinces.

Lao Press in Foreign Languages

Vientiane Times

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