



ANNOUNCEMENT
March 31, 2025

Project WILDMED Launches to Boost Wildlife Conservation in Laos



Project WILDMED was officially launched in Laos in early 2025 to address the urgent need for both routine and emergency veterinary care in the nation’s rich but vulnerable wildlife populations. This ground-breaking initiative is a collaboration of the Lao Wildlife Conservation Trust (LCTW), the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC), and the French NGO Des Elephants & Des Hommes (DEDH).

Addressing an Urgent Need at a Critical Time

Laos is recognized as a biodiversity hotspot. Yet the country’s wildlife species face increasing existential threats from human-wildlife conflicts, illegal trafficking, and zoonotic diseases. The near-total lack of veterinary capacity in wildlife conservation medicine has been a major challenge in addressing this ongoing crisis. *Project WILDMED* is filling this gap in expertise, skill, and knowledge by establishing a Wildlife Mobile Emergency and Diagnostic Unit designed, staffed, and equipped to both respond swiftly and effectively to wildlife emergencies across the country and to deliver effective preventive care.

Innovative Solutions for Conservation

At the core of *Project WILDMED* is the creation of a professional Wildlife Emergency Response Team capable of deploying to any location within 24 hours. This team is equipped with two mobile veterinary units—essentially wildlife ambulances¹. WILDMED’s veterinarians, vet techs, and biologists are capable of delivering immediate medical care in the field. This rapid response capability is crucial to ensuring that sick and injured wildlife receive timely and appropriate treatment.

In addition to emergency response, the WILDMED unit engages in disease surveillance, sample collection, and ongoing health assessments, contributing to a broader understanding of wildlife health in the region. This data is invaluable to shaping future wildlife conservation strategies and policies.



Building Local Capacity and Community Engagement

Project WILDMED is also focused on building local capacity by employing and training Lao veterinarians and offering internships to veterinary students from the National University of Laos. This approach not only addresses immediate conservation needs but also invests in the future by empowering local professionals to lead wildlife conservation efforts.



Special Focus on Elephant Conservation

While serving a wide array of wildlife species, elephants are at the heart of *Project WILDMED*. This initiative integrates a One Health approach, which recognizes the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health. This is particularly important in the context of semi-wild elephant populations where close contact with humans poses both conservation and public health challenges.

The project will conduct preventive health checks for elephants living under human care and will organize tuberculosis screening for community members who frequently interact with them. This dual focus on animal and human health exemplifies the holistic approach that WILDMED is pioneering in Laos.



In its first three months of operation, WILDMED has assessed over 50 individual animals from different wildlife species, collected more than 100 biological samples for disease surveillance, wildlife health and conservation research, and identified 3 disease outbreaks at the human-domestic-wildlife interface. The unit has been deployed to provide emergency support to cases such as a wild elephant in critical condition in Phongsaly province, an orphaned baby golden jackal in Xayaboury province, and multiple critically endangered pangolins confiscated from the illegal wildlife trade.



¹ The Elephant Conservation Center and the Laos Conservation Trust for Wildlife each own one emergency vehicle.

A Collaborative Effort Supported by Many International Organizations

Project WILDMED is one of 11 initiatives selected for funding under the ProBioDev programme, managed by the IUCN French Committee and funded by the French Development Agency, Fondation de France, Fondation Manthano, Audemars Piguet Foundation for Trees, Egis Foundation and Maisons du Monde Foundation. This underscores the international community's commitment to enhancing biodiversity conservation in Laos. Other partners supporting the WILDMED initiative include the Wyss Academy for Nature, the UK Embassy in Laos, via the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office and other partners such as France-based UNIVET Nature and Des Elephants & Des Hommes NGO.

Looking Forward

The launch of *Project WILDMED* represents a significant step forward in wildlife conservation in Laos. By combining emergency veterinary care with community involvement and capacity-building, the project is setting a new standard for conservation efforts in the region. As WILDMED units begin their work, they not only provide immediate benefits to wildlife but also lay the foundation for a sustainable, long-term approach to conservation in Laos.

For more information on the WILDMED Project and its impact on conservation efforts in Laos, please visit <https://uicn.fr/eleven-new-projects-supported-by-probiodev/>



Additional WILDMED Photos - From the Field

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