



The Elephant Conservation Network

Kanchanaburi, Thailand



The ECN Newsletter

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ECN Mission

To understand the causes and effects of human-elephant conflict and establish an inclusive and collaborative approach to seeking solutions and planning interventions



ECN is a small non-profit organisation which relies on grants and private donations to do its work. Any financial support you give will be gratefully received

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

We are often asked whether women play an equal part in our project planning process. Well, as it happens, we do rather well in the gender equality stakes. Until two years ago, ECN was an all-female team, by accident rather than design. Even now, our team of 12 full-time staff is 75% women, and the admirably hard-working and efficient FORRU team is an all-female quintet! So far the SEECA network is more balanced but, even so, 60% of the alternative livelihood projects now in the pipeline are managed by women. However, all but one of our 14 village monitors are men, perhaps because their work often means visiting crop-raiding sites alone, and going out at night to help deter elephants from fields.



The management team of ECN's FORRU project: Ning, Gip, Joy, Warinda & Pannor

ECN's local profile is a lot higher than it was, thanks to Jittin's Whitley Award and the publicity it attracted here. But that was only made possible by the support of our loyal partners and donors, in particular ZSL, USFWS, Keidanren and the Cecil King Memorial Foundation. Our heartfelt thanks to them and to you all for your support.

Belinda Stewart-Cox
ECN Director

1. Reviving community forests

On 6 June, local volunteers were out in force to replant two acres (0.8 ha) of community forest in Ban Kaeng Plakod, which co-manages our forest restoration research nursery with help from [FORRU Chiang Mai](#). In spite of grey skies and wet grass, over 300 rangers, soldiers, fire fighters, health workers, teachers, children and other villagers, signed on to

transplant 2,500 indigenous saplings. Organised by our capable FORRU team, the event was opened by a line-up of local officials who joined the training, and the planting teams. The exercise was so well planned it was all over in two hours, leaving volunteers time to chat, snack and get on with the day.



2. Plastic blocks termites

When the rains began in April, our forest tree nursery in Kaeng Plakod village was assailed by termites. The sapling roots were favoured first, but the nursery structure would also have been a target. The usual treatment is salty water or a liberal dose of pesticide. A knight in shiny white armour came to our rescue. Mr. Roengchard Mahavinichai-montri, CEO of a shipping company and brother of Kanchanaburi's governor, is kindly donating surplus polyethylene for us to line our nursery roofs, walls and ground to keep the termites out. Local temples and SEECA community projects are also benefitting from this windfall gift.



3. Rotary Award for Jittin

On the back of her success in winning a Whitley Award for conservation, ECN projects manager Jittin Ritthirat won an award from Rotary Kanchanaburi for her contribution to conservation in ECN's home province. Mindful of the credit crunch, the awards ceremony involved many Rotary Clubs from Thailand and other Asian countries. Held in the provincial hall, the dinner entailed speeches, videos and much applause as each award was given. As Jittin herself noted, this award recognises the work of the whole ECN team and is especially pleasing because it is the local honour of a global club.



4. Salakpra forest planting

On 18 June, we held another planting day, this time with Salakpra, to fill-in empty areas of the sanctuary where a mass die-back of bamboo has left several plots bare. The Salakpra and ECN teams, this time aided by [Bring The Elephants Home](#), again mobilised scores of volunteers, including a unit of immaculate soldiers who dug holes for the 10,000 saplings in four acres (1.6ha), making planting them much easier for the rest of us. Even so, it took a long half-day in oppressive heat to finish the task. The survival rates of these plantings, along with those in Kaeng Plakod's forest, will be monitored as part of our forest research restoration project, funded by [Keidanren's Nature Fund](#).



5. SEECA self-help groups

These 3-months saw a tremendous burst of activity guided by project manager Saravane (Nok) Namsupak. Full-time & part-time forest users from 5 communities formed working groups to plan non-forest livelihood projects in mushroom farming, sewing, recycling, and herb production. One group of women from Thung Na village have pooled their equipment to form a sewing circle. They hope to improve their capability and develop their product range by getting more equipment and some training. ECN is helping these groups develop business plans so that we and they can seek funds to establish a community revolving loan fund.



6. Elephant Education Award

For some months, we have mulled the idea of establishing an education award for SEECA network villagers who demonstrate notable changes in their attitude towards, and treatment of, the forest and its resources. Thanks to generous donations from Mr Roengchard Mahavinichaimontri and Mr & Mrs Uthorn Kusitkanchana, we have been able to make our first award to

Mrs Pannor Kamnerdphet who runs the Kaeng Plakod tree nursery with exceptional diligence and dedication. More than that, she has vowed to help improve and protect the forest rather than exploit it. She will use the award to help her daughter in school.



7. Whitley Award publicity

Jittin's photo graced several newspapers in Thailand following the announcement that she had won a prestigious Whitley Award. The Bangkok Post published an illustrated feature about her work, while two of the highest circulation Thai language papers printed large photo-captions of her with Princess Anne, adding considerably to her local celebrity status! A few weeks later, she was the star of a 40-minute documentary film on Thai cable TV which aired several times. As a result, she has enjoyed the curious experience of being greeted by strangers in the street and, once, almost caused an accident when a shop-keeper rushed across the road to tell her she was on TV! This publicity has done wonders for the local profile of ECN.



8. Running for Salakpra

On 23 April, when the dry season was at its hottest and most humid, two members of ECN's FORRU team, Gip and Joy, donned tracksuit and trainers to join the Salakpra rangers in their annual 5km mini-marathon. The purpose of this event is not to raise funds but to celebrate the start of the Thai new year in an energetic group activity. But in future, ECN will join forces with Salakpra to arrange a 10km mini-marathon to raise funds and mark the birthday of Salakpra's founding father Dr Boonsong Lekagul (born 15 Dec), and the 31 Dec birthdays of the sanctuary and Seub Nakhasathien, another of Thailand's most admired conservationists. Funds raised will be used to benefit of the sanctuary



elephants.

9. New chief for Salakpra

On his first day as the chief of Salakpra, Mr Tassanet Petkong found himself surrounded by the hoardes of strangers who came to plant saplings in Salakpra. Poor man! But he rose to the occasion superbly, welcoming everyone, joining in and demonstrating the commitment and energy we now know to be characteristic. For the last ten years, he has worked in southern Thailand, but before that he was at the world heritage site of Huai Kha Khaeng, so he and Belinda (ECN's director) are old allies. Mr Tassanet's aim now is to raise the profile and protection of Salakpra so that it becomes a safer sanctuary for wild elephants.



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