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UK Government and Luang Prabang Film Festival Launch Illegal Wildlife Trade Campaign

#IWTMekong Short Film Competition will challenge regional filmmakers to take a stand

Luang Prabang, 7 June 2018 -- The UK Government and Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF) have launched a new short film competition to increase awareness about the Mekong Region's need for intervention regarding illegal wildlife trade (IWT).

Illegal wildlife trafficking represents the third-largest illicit trade in the world, with an estimated value of up to \$19 billion USD per year, and Southeast Asia remains among the most critical in terms of severity and volume of wildlife trade.

"The Mekong region is a perfect storm - a source, transit route and final destination for many of the world's most valuable and threatened wildlife species. The #IWTMekong Short Film Competition aims to tackle these challenges through engaging filmmakers, and by providing them a platform to address aspects of illegal wildlife trade and creatively explore and showcase ways to protect endangered species," explained Ambassador Hugh Evans of the British Embassy in Vientiane.

In collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the UK government and LPFF are calling on filmmakers throughout the Mekong region to generate global attention for protecting endangered wildlife, reinforcing wildlife conservation practices, and encouraging long-term solutions within short films submitted to the competition.

With a submission deadline of 15 August 2018, filmmakers in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam stand to win \$5,000, \$4,000 and \$3,000 USD for first, second, and third prizes, respectively. The top three winners, plus the student prize winner (see below), chosen by a jury of representatives from WCS, WWF, and British Embassies in the Mekong region, will be invited to present their films in the UK during the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade on 10-11 October 2018. Screening these films for an international community of politicians and leading IWT experts will provide critical exposure to this issue facing the Mekong region.

Students currently enrolled in undergraduate college and below are encouraged to submit films within their own category, competing against their peers for a \$1,000 USD prize, as they bring a unique perspective to the issue but also will be key in implementing change throughout the region.

To generate additional buzz around IWT, up to fifteen films from the competition will be posted on LPFF's Facebook page. The video that receives the most shares will win a Viral Prize of \$2,000 USD. The British Embassies of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam will also award a \$2,000 Special Prize for a film from each of their mission's countries.

All prizewinners (except for the Special Prize) will be provided roundtrip flight and accommodation to attend and participate in the 9th Luang Prabang Film Festival, which will take place 7-12 December 2018. There, the filmmakers will present their films and engage in a public discussion on the topic.

"We're thrilled to have this opportunity to partner with the British Government on such an important cause," said Luang Prabang Film Festival Director Gabriel Kuperman. "Using film as the medium to get

this message out to young people in the Mekong region makes the content so much more accessible. It is our hope that these short films will contribute to effecting the change that is so desperately needed.”

To read more about the #IWTMekong Short Film Competition, please see the activity’s Call for Submissions, or visit www.lpfilmfest.org/iwtmekong.

All Luang Prabang Film Festival press enquiries:
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LPFF Background:

Founded in 2009, the Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF) is an annual celebration of Southeast Asian cinema held every December in the UNESCO World Heritage town of Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. LPFF is a not-for-profit project that fosters cross-cultural dialogue within the region and supports the burgeoning film industry in Laos. Throughout the year, LPFF organizes a range of cultural events and educational activities, from film screenings to workshops for amateur Lao filmmakers. LPFF also manages the Lao Filmmakers Fund, a publicly-generated granting system that helps local artists realize their film projects.