

A PROJECT FROM:



COHORT 2 REPORT 2025

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LAO YOUTH ON A *Mission!* FOR *Nature* CONSERVATION

MAKE EVERYTHING POSSIBLE



Lao Youth on a Mission for Nature Conservation (LYoM) 2025 cohort 2 report.

Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR | 28 July – 2 August 2025



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lao Youth on a Mission for Nature Conservation (LYoM 2025) was a six-day intensive youth capacity-building programme organized by Association Anoulak and Econox Laos, two organizations dedicated to advancing conservation efforts in Lao PDR.

Held from 28 July to 2 August 2025 in Vientiane Capital, the programme brought together 26 young professionals and students from universities, NGOs, government institutions, and the private sector. The cohort had an average age of 24 years, with a strong female representation of 57.7%.

Programme Objectives & Curriculum.

LYoM 2025 was designed to bridge the gap between academic theory and real-world conservation practice. The curriculum is integrated:

- **Wildlife Research & Technology:** Hands-on techniques and modern conservation tools.
- **Species & Habitat Management:** Focus on endangered species and protected area management.
- **Wildlife Protection:** Wildlife rescue operations and anti-trafficking initiatives.
- **Methodology & Outreach:** Research methodologies and public engagement strategies.
- **Professional Growth:** Leadership development and project planning.

Participants engaged directly with experts from leading organizations, including the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), IUCN, WWF, Free the Bears, the Elephant Conservation Center, the Saola Foundation, the Lao Conservation Trust for Wildlife (LCTW), the Faculty of Environmental Sciences (NUoL), and Kxatalyst Partners.

Key Outcomes

The programme achieved significant results in empowering the next generation of environmental stewards:

- **Enhanced Knowledge:** Deeper understanding of conservation science and field practices.
- **Practical Skills:** Improved proficiency in research technology, communication, and leadership.
- **Innovation:** Development of youth-led mini-conservation project concepts.
- **Networking:** Expanded professional links between youth and established conservation organizations.
- **Career Clarity:** Strengthened confidence and defined pathways for conservation careers.

Evaluation findings indicate high participant satisfaction and a strong motivation to pursue volunteer or internship opportunities within the sector. Many participants described the experience as transformative and career-shaping. Through LYoM 2025, Econox reaffirms its commitment to nurturing the next generation of conservation leaders in Lao PDR.



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LAO YOUTH ON A *Mission!* FOR *Nature* CONSERVATION



INTRODUCTION

Lao PDR is one of Southeast Asia's most biodiverse nations, home to globally significant species such as the Saola, Asian elephant, and Siamese crocodile. However, these species—and the ecosystems they depend upon—face escalating pressures from habitat degradation, illegal wildlife trade, unsustainable development, and climate change. Addressing these challenges requires more than just robust policies; it demands a generation of empowered young leaders dedicated to conservation.

At Anoulak Association and Econox Laos, we believe that youth are the primary drivers of long-term environmental sustainability. Investing in young people today ensures a more innovative, resilient, and effective conservation movement tomorrow.

Driven by this vision, we organized the Lao Youth on a Mission for Nature Conservation (LYoM 2025 - Season 2) from 28 July to 2 August 2025 in Vientiane Capital. The programme was designed to equip Lao youth with the practical skills, technical knowledge, and professional networks necessary to contribute meaningfully to biodiversity conservation. Through strategic collaboration with national and international partners, LYoM 2025 provided an integrated learning experience—combining technical training, career development, and peer exchange.

The following report outlines the programme's objectives, implementation, and transformative impact.

ORGANIZER TEAM



PARTICIPANTS 2025



FACILITATORS & SPEAKERS



FACILITATORS & SPEAKERS



PANEL DISCUSSION



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LAO YOUTH ON A Mission! FOR Nature CONSERVATION



Daovanh Senghalath
 Program coordinator IUCN



Souksamlan Laladeth
 Consultant Nature Photographer
 Saola Foundation



Pavina Chalernsouk
 Veterinarian
 Elephant Conservation Center

Panel 1 (Lao, 17:00-18:00)

ຈາກພາກສະໜາມ: ຄວາມເປັນຈິງ ແລະ ນະວັດຕະກຳໃນການອະນຸລັກສັດປ່າ

ເວທີເສວະນາ ງານພົບປະ ໄອ້ລົມຂອງນັກອະນຸລັກ Panel Discussion on Building a Conservation Movement



Loris Palentini
 Country Director of WWF



Santi Saypanya
 Country Director of WCS



Tyler Franklin
 Technical Advisor at Free the Bears

Panel 2 (English, 18:00-19:00)

Leadership, Vision and Systemic Change in Conservation

A Project from:  econox
 Your partner in environmental collaboration and sustainability

Sponsored by:  Wilhelma
 Zoologisch-Botanischer Garten
 Stuttgart 

Partnership with:  GIZ  WWF  WCS  IUCN  LCTW  SAOLA  FREE THE BEARS  Elephant Conservation Center  ECO NEWS  90.0 MHz  katalyst

LEARNING JOURNEY



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

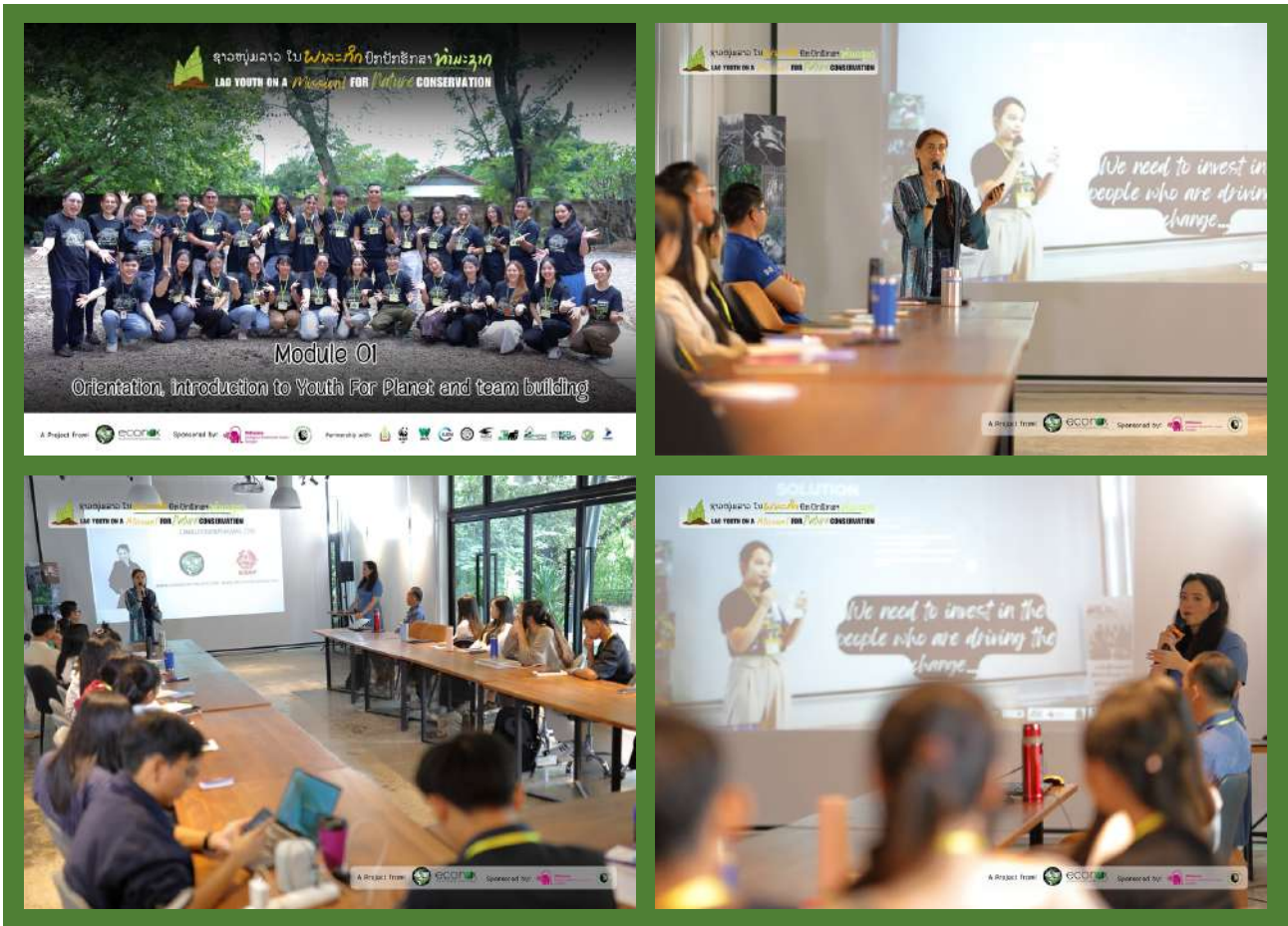
Module 1

Orientation, Youth for Planet & Team Building

LYoM 2025 officially opened with an inspiring ceremony led by Econox Laos and Association Anoulak. The day began with warm welcomes and participant introductions, marking the first connection for our future conservation leaders.

Participants explored the programme's core goals and reflected on a fundamental question: "Why do youth matter in conservation?" A major highlight of the day was the LYoM Season 1 Sharing session, where alumni returned to share their personal conservation journeys, offering firsthand inspiration to the new cohort.

It was a powerful start to an exciting week of learning, collaboration, and collective action for the planet.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Module 2

Career Planning & Skill Mapping for Lao Conservationists; Job Application & Team Building

Following the opening ceremony, the day transitioned into an interactive workshop on Career Planning and Skill Mapping for Conservationists. Participants explored their personal strengths and interests, learning how to align their unique profiles with diverse roles in the sector—whether in research, policy, fieldwork, or communications. The session also provided practical guidance on CV building and setting strategic career goals.

This momentum carried into the afternoon with team-building activities and a dedicated Youth Dialogue session. Through ice-breakers and a “values-sharing circle,” participants connected on a deeper level, reflecting on two foundational questions: “Why am I here?” and “Where do I want to go?” The day concluded with the formation of Career Ally Groups—peer support teams designed to foster mutual growth and collaborative learning throughout the week. It was a powerful first day that successfully blended professional development, self-discovery, and community building.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Module 3

Wildlife research techniques and protected area management.

The second day of LYoM 2025 began with a comprehensive session led by WCS Lao PDR on wildlife research techniques and protected area management. Participants were introduced to cutting-edge biodiversity monitoring tools that are transforming modern conservation efforts.

The curriculum covered a sophisticated suite of technologies, including:

- SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool): Used for tracking wildlife data and patrol efforts.
- ArcGIS Pro: For advanced mapping and spatial analysis.
- Camera Trapping: Providing crucial insights into animal behavior and population density.
- Field Essentials: Hands-on navigation with Garmin GPS devices and aerial surveys using drones.
- Data Science: An introduction to using R programming for robust data analysis.

To ground these technical skills in reality, the session featured a case study on the Siamese crocodile project in Savannakhet. This allowed participants to see how these tools are applied in the field, highlighting both the practical challenges and the rewarding opportunities within conservation science today.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Module 4

Conservation Affords in Lao PDR.

The afternoon session shifted toward a global perspective as the IUCN Country Office in Lao PDR shared its expertise on conservation strategies and international frameworks. Participants explored the IUCN Programme Overview, gaining insights into the Species and Protected Areas and Water & Wetlands programmes.

The discussion also covered innovative global standards currently shaping conservation efforts worldwide, including:

- The IUCN Green List: For effectively managed protected areas.
- Nature-based Solutions (NbS): Strategies that protect, sustainably manage, and restore ecosystems.
- Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs): Recognizing conservation efforts outside of formal protected areas.

A particularly practical component of the session was the introduction of the Grant Programme, which provided participants with actionable advice on how to secure funding for impactful, community-level conservation projects.

To conclude the day, participants took part in an interactive conservation quiz, which served as both a fun engagement tool and a way to reinforce key lessons on biodiversity protection. It was an inspiring session that successfully bridged the gap between local field efforts and global conservation strategies, reminding everyone that conservation is a collective, shared responsibility.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Module 5

Endangered Species Conservation: The Saola Story

Led by the Saola Foundation for Annamite Mountains Conservation, this session took participants deep into the world of endemic species conservation, focusing on one of the rarest animals on Earth: the Saola, often referred to as the “Asian Unicorn.”

Participants explored the unique threats facing endemic species within the Annamite Mountains and discussed why the Saola has become a global symbol of hope for biodiversity. A central theme of the discussion was the critical importance of community-based conservation, highlighting how local communities serve as the frontline guardians in protecting this elusive species.

The session also analyzed key lessons learned from Saola conservation efforts, including:

- Policy Advocacy: Influencing governance to strengthen species protection.
- Environmental Education: Building local awareness and pride in endemic wildlife.
- Long-term Strategic Planning: Ensuring sustainable interventions for species survival.

Youth voices drove the dialogue, generating creative ideas on how local actions can bridge the gap to global conservation efforts. It served as a powerful reminder that protecting a single flagship species is a gateway to protecting entire, complex ecosystems.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Module 6

Research Methodologies & Academic Pathways

In this session, participants joined an interactive workshop with the Faculty of Environmental Sciences (NUoL), led by Lecturer Phokham Latthachack, to dive into research design and academic career pathways in conservation.

The workshop provided a comprehensive overview of the scientific process, covering:

- Research Design: Developing robust frameworks for environmental studies.
- Field Techniques: Practical methods for high-quality data collection.
- Data Analysis: Transforming raw observations into meaningful scientific insights.

Beyond the technical skills, Lecturer Phokham offered valuable mentorship on navigating an academic career. Participants received practical tips on pursuing advanced degrees, securing research grants, and the process of publishing in peer-reviewed journals. This session not only strengthened the participants' technical foundations but also inspired them to see themselves as future leaders in science and conservation.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Module 7

Conservation Ethics, Rescue & Veterinary Support

This session, participants explored the science and ethics of elephant conservation with the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC) in Laos. The session focused on the current situation of elephants in the country, the scientific approach to reproduction, and the key challenges faced by both wild and captive elephants.

Key takeaways from the session:

- Distribution and population trends of elephants across Laos.
- Age distribution of elephants in Sayaboury Province, home to the country's largest population.
- The importance of establishing breeding programs to sustain healthy and genetically diverse populations.
- The challenges of breeding elephants and the role of hormone monitoring in improving success rates.
- Practical solutions through veterinary care, community involvement, and ethical practices.
- Insights from the Wildlife Mobile Emergency & Diagnostic Unit, which plays a vital role in elephant health and rescue operations.

This session gave youth a holistic understanding of elephant conservation, combining science, field practice, and ethics—reminding us of the delicate balance between animal welfare and long-term population sustainability.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Be the Change

“Want to see the change? Be the change.”

Presented and moderated by Econox Laos, this session inspired participants to reflect on the most pressing environmental challenges facing the region and the pivotal role youth play in driving solutions.

Through open dialogue and interactive sharing, the group explored how individual actions can catalyze a larger movement for conservation, sustainability, and positive change in Lao PDR. The session emphasized that the future of nature depends on collective responsibility and that meaningful change begins with local leadership.

It was a defining moment of the programme, shifting the focus from learning about problems to empowering the architects of the solutions.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Module 8

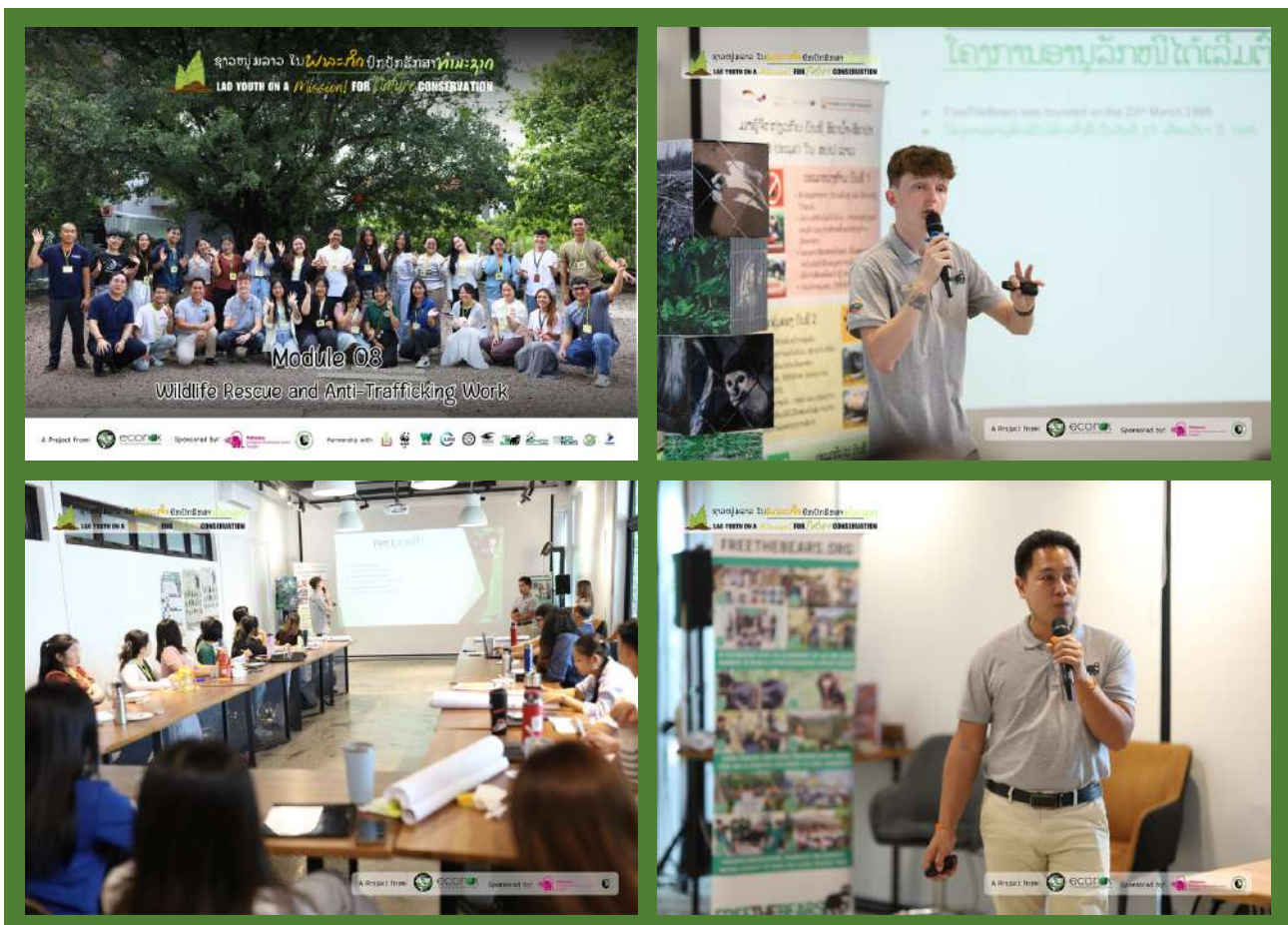
Wildlife Rescue & Anti-Trafficking Work

In this impactful session, Free the Bears introduced participants to the frontlines of wildlife rescue and anti-trafficking efforts. The discussion focused on the urgent mission to protect Sun bears and Moon bears in Lao PDR and across Southeast Asia, highlighting the unique challenges faced by these vulnerable species.

The workshop went beyond theory, as participants analyzed real-world scenarios of the illegal wildlife trade. This case-study approach allowed the group to:

- Identify Threats: Understand the drivers behind the illegal trade and its impact on bear populations.
- Rescue & Rehabilitation: Learn about the specialized care required for rescued bears and the process of returning them to sanctuary environments.
- Youth Advocacy: Discuss concrete actions young leaders can take to raise awareness and support anti-trafficking initiatives.

It was a sobering yet empowering session that challenged participants to think critically about their role in protecting the region's most exploited biodiversity.

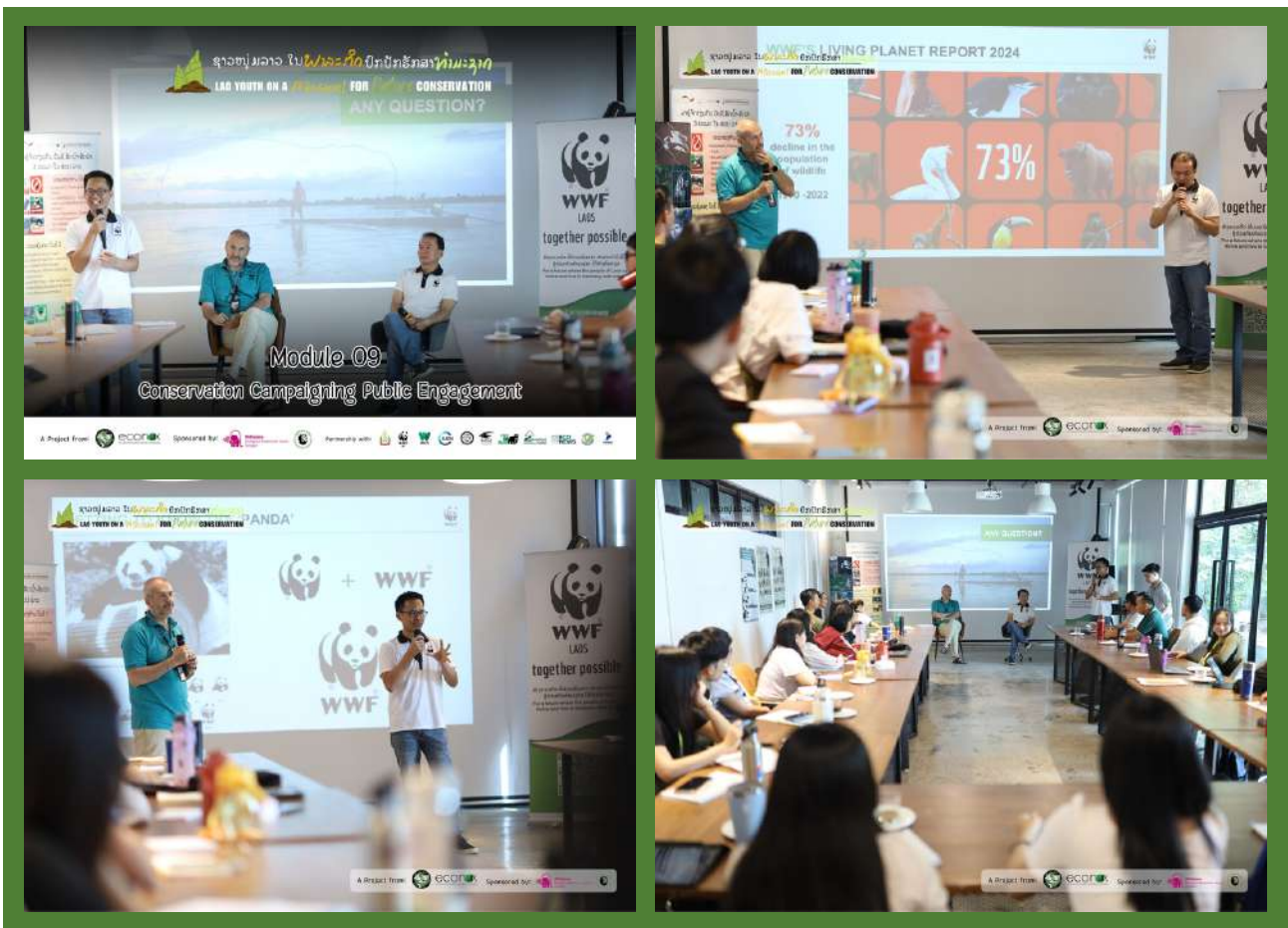


SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Module 9

Conservation Campaigning & Public Engagement

This morning, participants joined WWF-Laos for a storytelling workshop on conservation campaigning. They discovered how powerful stories can raise awareness, inspire communities, and drive real change. By exploring WWF's current projects, youth also practiced how to communicate their own conservation messages in a way that connects with people's hearts.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Module 10

Leadership & Project Planning for Change

In this session, participants engaged with Katalyst Partners for an intensive workshop on Leadership, Innovation, and Project Management.

The session challenged traditional views of authority, emphasizing that leadership is defined by purpose and human contribution rather than formal titles. Through reflective exercises, participants identified their unique leadership styles and practiced integrating these individual strengths into high-performing teams.

The workshop then moved into a practical application phase, where participants:

- Explored Strategic Frameworks: Using a project canvas to structure complex environmental ideas.
- Initiated Project Design: Collaborating in groups to develop their own mini-conservation projects.
- Mapped Operations: Defining clear goals, realistic timelines, resource requirements, and specific team roles.

The day served as a powerful reminder that true leadership is the art of turning vision into action to create measurable impact within the community.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Module 11

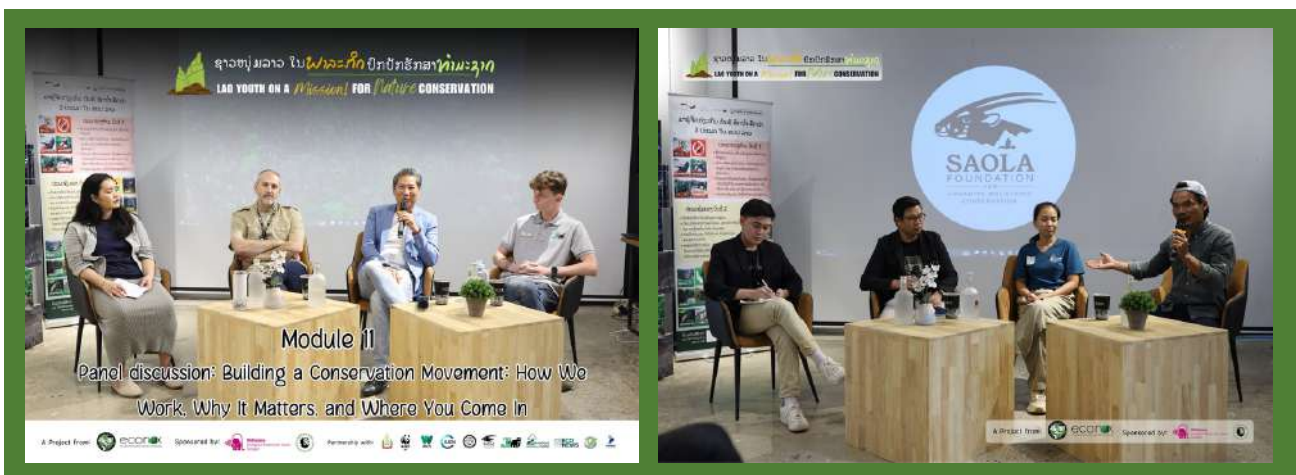
Public Session: Panel discussion on Building a Conservation Movement

Panel 1 | Field Realism and Innovation in Wildlife Conservation

Expert Panelists: Representatives from WWF-Laos, WCS Lao PDR, and Free the Bears.

This discussion bridged the gap between theoretical conservation and the operational realities of protecting biodiversity in Lao PDR's most challenging landscapes.

- **Law Enforcement & Monitoring:** Experts from WCS and WWF detailed the integration of SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) and camera-trap technology to optimize ranger patrols and track population trends of elusive species across Protected Areas.
- **Wildlife Rescue & Crisis Management:** Free the Bears provided a direct look at the logistical and ethical complexities of responding to the illegal wildlife trade, emphasizing the specialized care and long-term sanctuary requirements for rescued Sun and Moon bears.
- **Applied Innovation:** The panel moved beyond “tech for tech’s sake,” discussing how innovation must be paired with community-led monitoring and local ecological knowledge to ensure that conservation interventions are both culturally relevant and scientifically sound.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Module 11

Public Session: Panel discussion on Building a Conservation Movement

Panel 2 | Leadership, Vision, and Systemic Change in Conservation

Expert Panelists: Representatives from IUCN, the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC), and the Saola Foundation.

This session shifted the focus from tactical field operations to the macro-level strategies required to drive institutional and systemic change in the region.

- **Global Frameworks in a Local Context:** IUCN representatives explained how international standards—such as the Green List for protected areas and Nature-based Solutions (NbS)—provide a roadmap for aligning Lao PDR’s development goals with global biodiversity targets.
- **Flagship Species as Strategic Anchors:** The Elephant Conservation Center and Saola Foundation discussed how focusing on “umbrella species” (like the Asian elephant and Saola) acts as a catalyst for landscape-level protection, influencing national policy and securing international funding for entire ecosystems.
- **Visionary Leadership:** The dialogue emphasized that “systemic change” requires moving beyond short-term project cycles. Panelists challenged youth to develop a multi-decadal vision, fostering the cross-sectoral alliances between government, NGOs, and the private sector necessary to embed conservation into the national identity.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Module 12

Field Experience & Closing Ceremony at LCTW

An unforgettable full-day field trip hosted by LCTW, where wildlife rescue truly came to life. From touring veterinary stations and rehabilitation zones to observing animal care and feeding routines, today was all about learning by doing.

We also had the chance to meet inspiring conservation professionals and hear their real career journeys—proof that passion can turn into purpose. The day ended with a meaningful Closing Ceremony, where participants shared reflections, personal commitments, and their youth-created “My Conservation Career Toolkit” (CV, career plan, and project ideas). Certificates were awarded, memories captured, and gratitude shared with all our amazing trainers and partners.

To make it even more special, we wrapped up the journey with a camping night and an after-party, before heading back to the center the next morning—ending this experience with laughter, bonding, and lifelong memories

Thank you, LCTW, trainers, and all participants for making this journey truly impactful. This is not the end, but the beginning



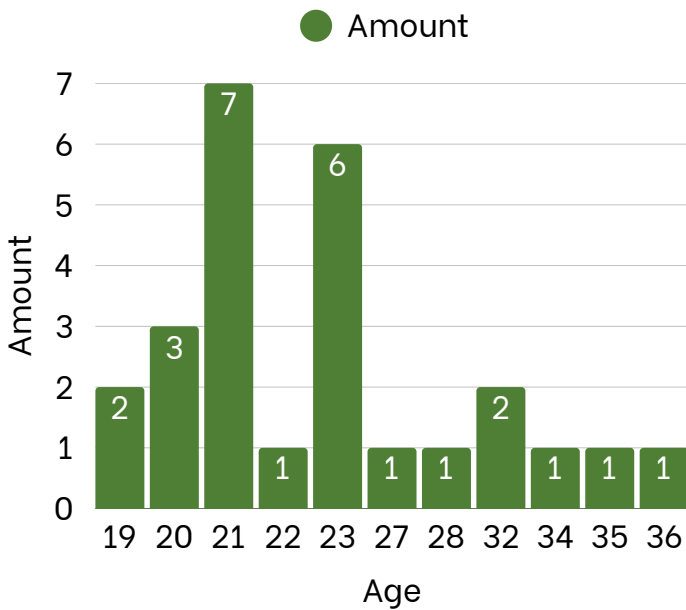
EVALUATION



PARTICIPANT PROFILE

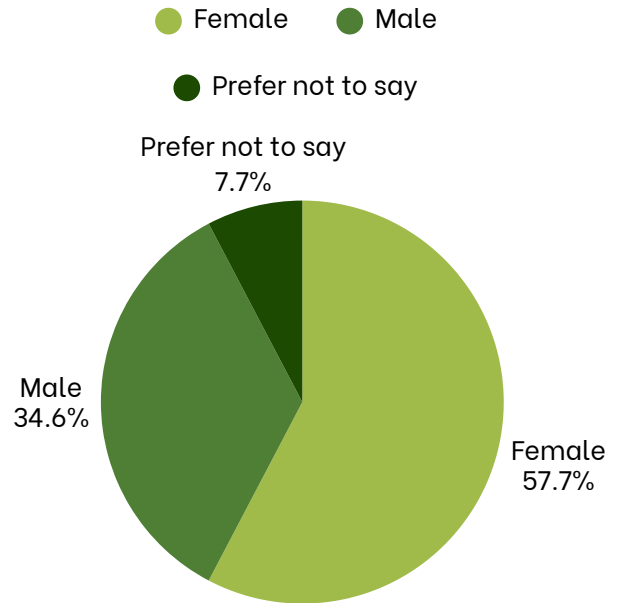
Age:

26 people.
Average: 24 years old.



Gender:

26 people.

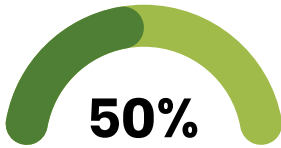


Oganization:

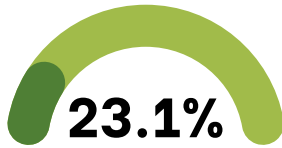
Insitution	Count	% of Total
National University of Laos (all faculties)	14	51.9%
Wildlife Conservation Society – Savannakhet Landscape	4	14.8%
Souphanouvong University	2	7.4%
Savannakhet University	1	3.7%
Hugarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences	1	3.7%
Ministry of Education and Sports	1	3.7%
Nam Ngieb 1 Hydropower Project	1	3.7%
TAFE NSW	1	3.7%
Econox Laos	1	3.7%
Namjai Community Association	1	3.7%

KNOWLEDGE

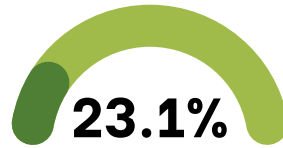
Did you learn new things during this program?



All of the content were new to me



Most of the content were new



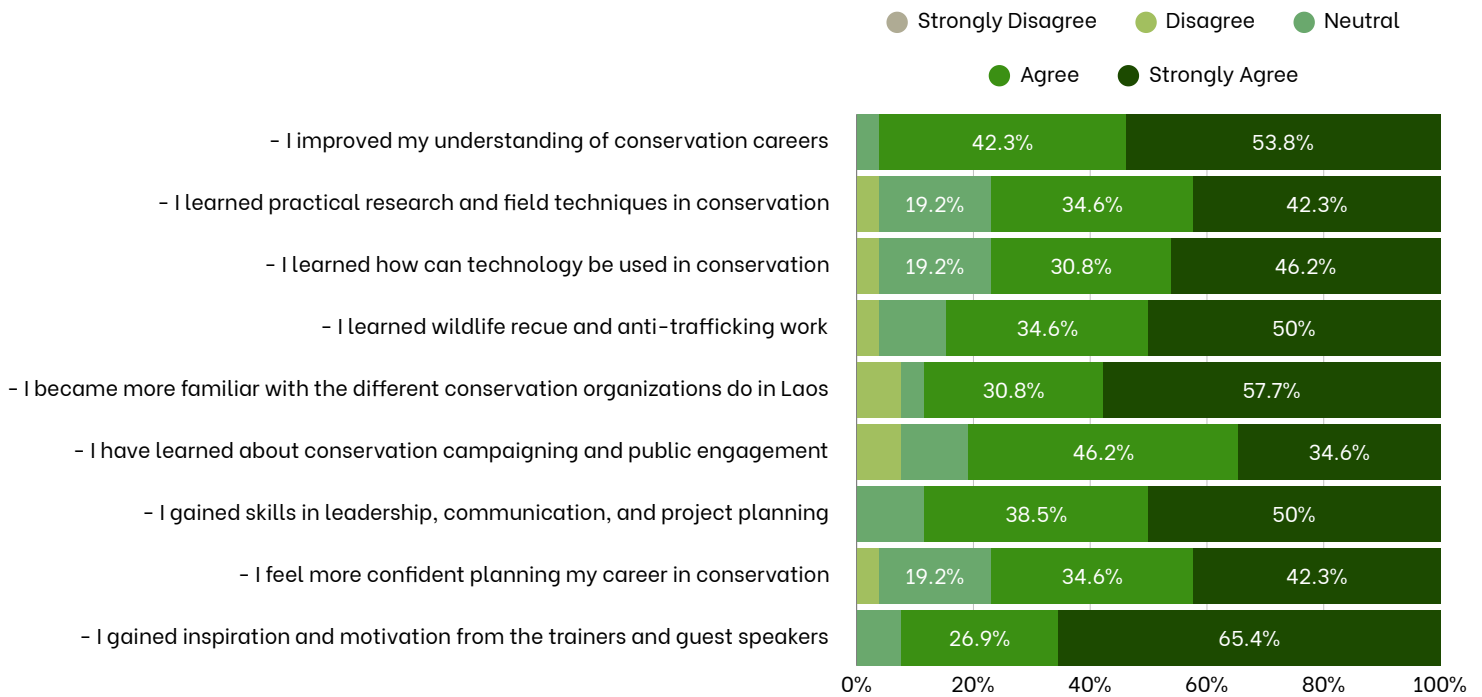
Half of the content were new to me



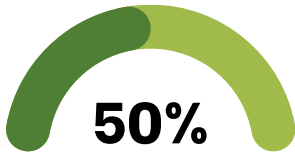
I was already familiar with most/all of the content

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements:

Responded



SASTISFACTION



50% Never Participated in such a training course before.



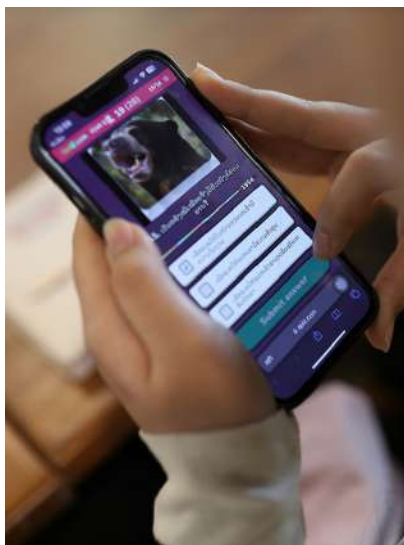
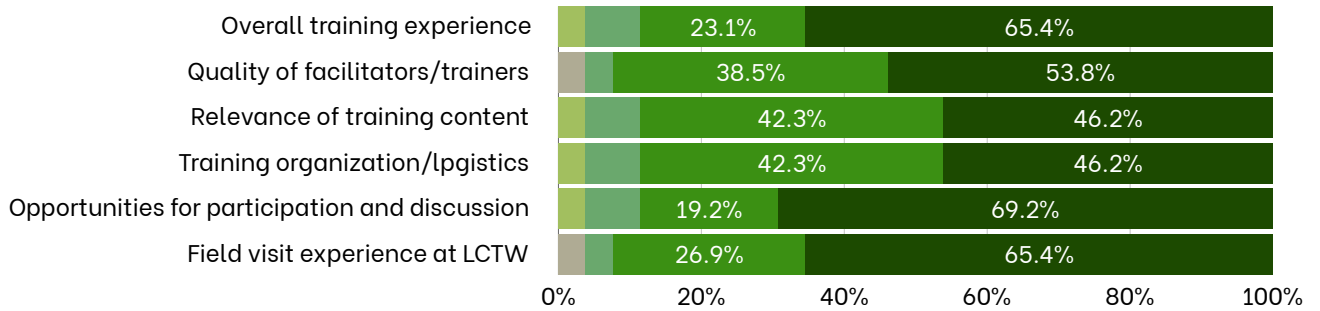
The programme met theri expectations



Recommend this program to their friends if it is run again next year

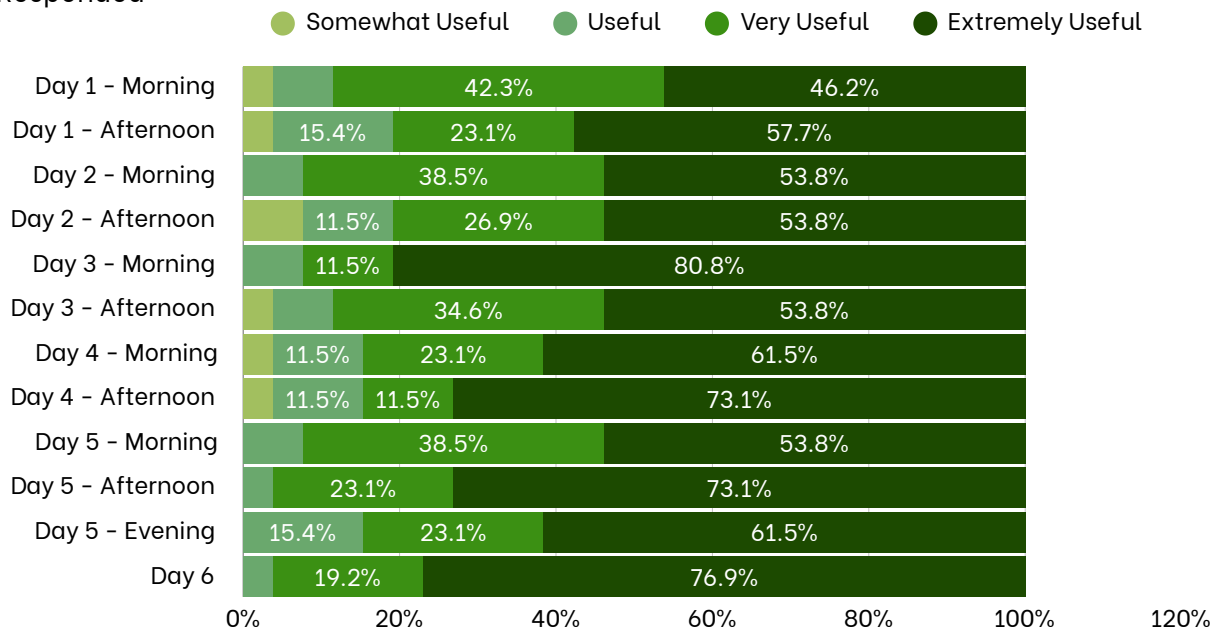
Please rate your level of satisfaction with the following aspects of the training:

Responded



Please rate your level of satisfaction with each session/topic:

Responded



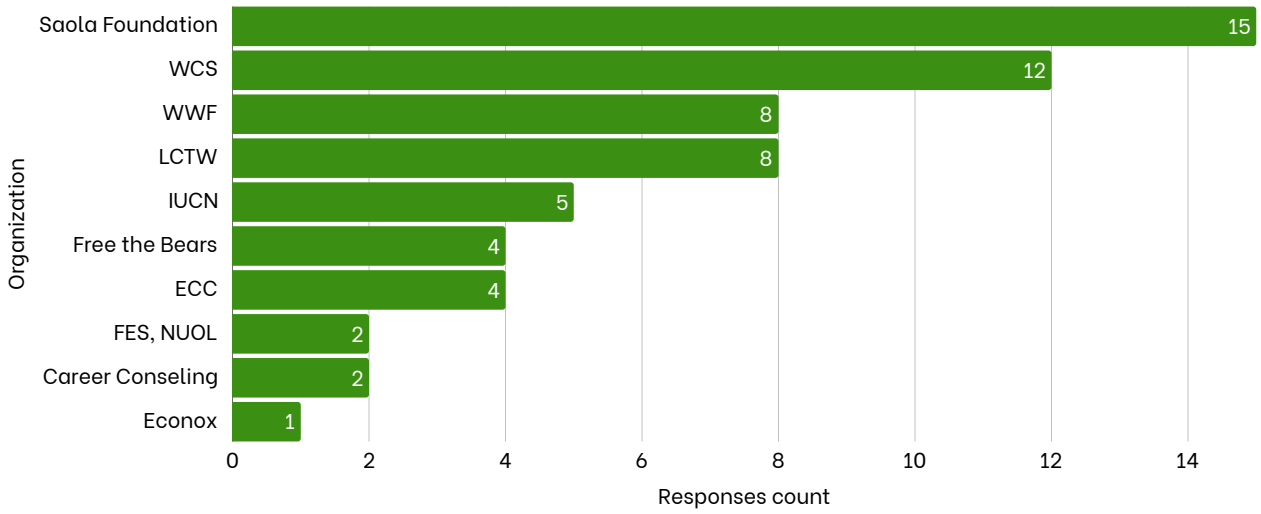
- Day 1 Morning - Career Planning and Skill Mapping for Conservationists (led by Silisack Sithiphone)
- Day 1 Afternoon - Team Building & Youth Dialogue (led by Silisack Sithiphone)
- Day 2 Morning - Use of Technology in Conservation & Case Study on Conservation of Siamese Crocodile (led by WCS)
- Day 2 Afternoon - ICUN in Laos (led by ICUN)
- Day 3 Morning - Endangered Species Conservation: The Case of the Saola (led by the Saola Foundation)
- Day 3 Afternoon - Research Methodologies and Academic Pathways (led by Phokham Latthachack from Faculty of Environmental Sciences, NOUL)

- Day 4 Morning - Elephant Conservation in Laos (led by The Elephant Conservation Centre)
- Day 4 Afternoon - Wildlife Recue and Anti-trafficking Work (led by Free the Bear)
- Day 5 Morning - Conservation Campaigning and Public Engagement (led by WWF)
- Day 5 Afternoon - Leadership and Project Planning for Change (led by Katalyst Partners)
- Day 5 Evening Panel Discussion "Building a Conservation Movement: How we work, why it matters and where do you come in?"
- Day 6 - Field Visit at LCTW: overnight camping & session and your.

IMPACT

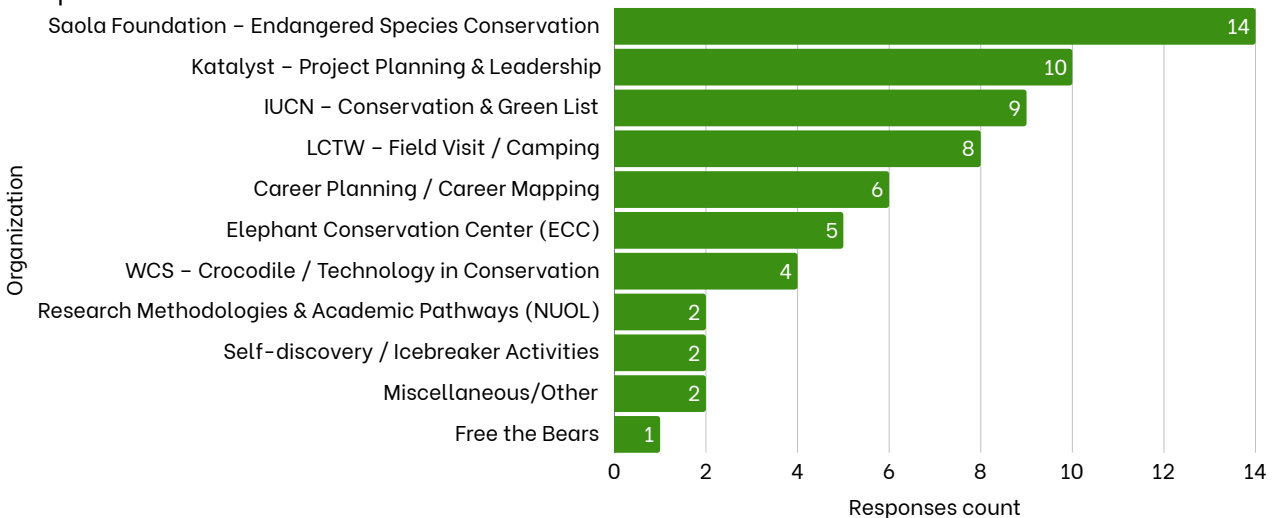
Which organizations inspired you the most? List the top 3

Responded



Which modules/workshops/events inspired you enjoyed the most? List the top 3

Responded



LESSON LEARNED

Key lessons from the programme include:

- Interactive and practical learning approaches greatly increased participant engagement and knowledge retention.
- Collaboration with conservation organizations and experts enriched the learning experience and exposed participants to diverse perspectives.
- Youth participants showed strong motivation to pursue careers and volunteer opportunities in conservation.
- Networking opportunities between youth and conservation professionals helped strengthen future collaboration.
- Field-based learning activities were particularly effective in connecting theory with real-world conservation practice.



SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Key recommendations include:

- Allocate more time for the question and answer sessions and interactive discussions with experts.
- Expand programme topics to include forest conservation, ecosystem restoration, and environmental policy.
- Invite more speakers from government institutions and policy making agencies.
- Improve session time management to ensure balanced learning schedules.
- Provide clearer logistical information before the programme begins.
- Share training materials and presentations with participants after the program to support continued learning.



APPENDIX



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of **Association Anoulak** and **Econox Laos**, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to all partners, sponsors, facilitators, and participants who contributed to the successful implementation of the **Lao Youth on a Mission for Nature Conservation (LYoM 2025)**.

This initiative would not have been possible without the generous financial support and trust of our valued sponsors, **Wilhelma Zoologisch-Botanischer Garten Stuttgart** and **Denver Zoo Conservation Alliance**. Their dedication to global conservation and capacity building has played a critical role in enabling Lao youth to access knowledge, mentorship, and practical experience in the field of wildlife conservation.

We also extend our heartfelt thanks to our technical partners and guest facilitators, including **Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)**, **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**, **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)**, **Free the Bears**, **Elephant Conservation Center**, **Saola Foundation**, and **Lao Conservation Trust for Wildlife**, as well as the **Faculty of Environmental Sciences at the National University of Laos** and **Katalyst Partners**. Their expertise, practical insights, and willingness to invest time in mentoring young conservationists greatly enriched the programme.

We are especially thankful to the **26 youth participants** whose passion, curiosity, and commitment brought energy and meaning to every session. Their engagement demonstrates that the future of conservation in Lao PDR is in capable and motivated hands.

Finally, we recognize the dedication of the **organizing team and volunteers** who worked diligently behind the scenes to ensure smooth coordination, effective facilitation, and a positive learning environment throughout the six-day programme.

LYoM 2025 represents not the conclusion of a project, but the strengthening of a growing youth-led conservation movement in Lao PDR. At Association Anoulak and **Econox Laos**, we remain committed to continuing this mission and expanding opportunities for young leaders to protect and sustain our country's biodiversity.

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Partnership with





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