



mahouts

ELEPHANT FOUNDATION

COMMUNITY POLICY

We are Founded on Partnerships with Local Communities.

Mahouts Elephant Foundation is a UK registered charity founded by the Blaine family from England - Sarah, Felix, Joe and Natasha - As a family they are impassioned by the natural world and all animals. In 2008 they travelled to Thailand, part of this trip was spent volunteering - an experience that would change their lives forever.

They learnt first-hand about Elephants working in the tourism industry in Thailand. The industry often unknowingly forces mahouts and their families into a desperate poverty trap that few can escape, meaning the families are impoverished and the welfare of the elephant is compromised.

MEF was created to address these problems - the growing needs of elephants and their mahouts in the tourism industry.

After a decade of experiencing all sides to this complex story and learning everything they could about the elephant tourism industry, Sarah and Felix Blaine teamed up with the people who know these issues intimately but are often left out of conversations, Karen indigenous mahouts. Together, they came up with community driven solutions that allow mahouts and elephants to thrive together.

Equal Partners: Under the direction of our local partners, we have created a model that restructures the industry - putting indigenous mahouts in control and giving them a platform and a voice, to share their knowledge and love for elephants.

The Key themes to our partnerships are:

Inclusivity: Everyone in the community has a voice in the direction of the tourism programs we create. Decisions are made holistically incorporating the concerns of elders, women, and young people. Leadership roles are dispersed among a diverse group of people to ensure everyone has a role in the long term vision of the project.

Prosperity: As a nonprofit, we are able to ensure that all of the financial benefits of from the tourism programs, directly benefit the community.

Patience: Working in remote communities means progress is not always rapid. We do not push through changes, instead we work gently to ensure long term sustainability of any new aspects to the projects.

Trust: Trust is the glue that holds our partnerships together. The communities we work with have a long history of disappointment and broken promises by outsiders. We understand the sensitivity of this, and when we commit to something we follow through with it, every time.