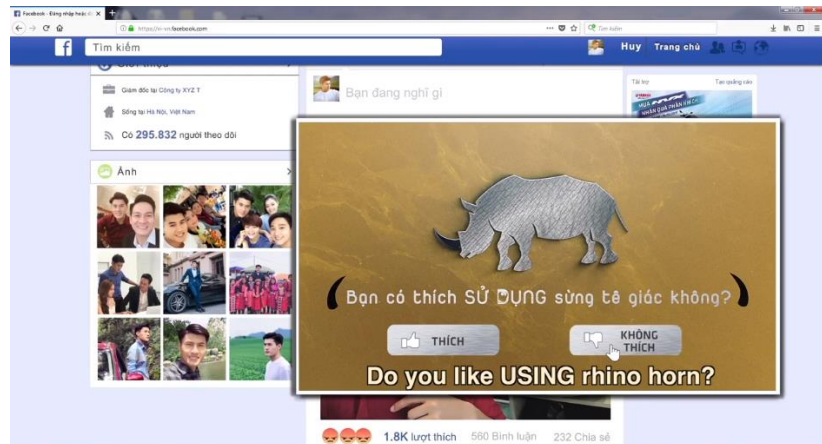


Public urged to debunk rhino horn myths and save rhinos from extinction

Ha Noi (August 22, 2018) - Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV) has released its [latest Public Service Announcement \(PSA\)](#) urging the public to help bring an end to the slaughter of rhinos in Africa.

The PSA features a successful and very popular businessman who takes pride in his huge social media following and constant affection from his friends, family and colleagues. When an advertisement pops up on his social media page about whether he likes using rhino horn, he confirms that he does, thinking it is a symbol of wealth and popularity. His social media fan base, immediately reacts, unfollowing and un-friending him rapidly until he is reduced to zero followers; a

clear sign of public disapproval and shifting perceptions on rhino horn use. Without his popularity, he is a broken, lonely man and realizes that society does not condone the use of rhino horn.



Vietnam is a major transit and consumer country of rhino horn. For many years a small minority of people believed that rhino horn held medicinal properties. As Vietnam's middle class continues to grow, enriched by the country's rapid economic growth, rhino horn unfortunately came to be perceived as a status symbol sometimes used as a luxury gift to foster business relationships. This has stimulated greater demand for rhino horn in Vietnam.



Although the last wild Javan rhinoceros in Vietnam was killed for its horn in 2010, the rising consumer demand in Vietnam has driven the killing of rhinos across Africa. Consumer demand has also fueled the trafficking and trade of rhino horn, and paved the way for an increasing number of criminal networks to freely operate, such as that of [Nguyen Mau Chien](#), a known leader of a major criminal network, smuggling rhino horn and ivory from Africa to Vietnam.

In 2017, 1,028 rhinos were illegally killed in South Africa to meet consumer demand, 26 fewer than in 2016, but far above the 13 killed in 2007. This represents nearly three

rhinos killed every day and highlights the stark reality that rhino populations are still in critical danger. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), if poaching continues to increase at current rates, rhinos could be extinct by 2026.

“Should we feel ‘special’ consuming rhino horns when our obsession is driving a magnificent animal to the brink of extinction and enriching criminals who make money at the expense of our planet’s biodiversity?” asks Nguyen Phuong Dung, ENV’s Vice Director.

Dung called on the public to lend a hand in bringing an end to this senseless killing. “Protecting the world’s rhino populations is a responsibility shared by all of us as Vietnamese citizens,” says Dung. “It is high time for us to dispel myths and rumors about the supposed magical properties of rhino horn and mobilize efforts to save rhinos and let wild populations recover.”

Dung went on to urge the public to “stand up and get involved” by committing to neither buy nor consume rhino horn, encouraging others to protect rhinos, debunking falsified myths of being a magic medicine or wealthy gift, and reporting crimes involving the selling or trade of rhino horns to local authorities or ENV’s 1800-1522 Wildlife Crime Hotline.

The PSA will be broadcast on both national and provincial TV channels throughout Vietnam in the coming months and can be watched online at [ENV’s YouTube channel](#).

ENV wishes to thank Save the Rhino International, International Rhino Foundation, Oak Foundation and U.S Fish & Wildlife Service for supporting ENV’s efforts to produce this PSA.

ENV would also like to thank national and provincial TV channels, MobiTV, VTC Digital, and Sen Communications for airing the PSA, and enabling this important message to reach millions of people across Vietnam.

More details about ENV’s campaign to end illegal rhino horn trading can be found at: <http://envvietnam.org/index.php/what-we-do/env-species-focused-campaigns/bring-an-end-to-the-killing-of-rhinos>

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About ENV

Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam’s first non-governmental organization focused on the conservation of nature and the protection of the environment. ENV combats the illegal wildlife trade and aims to foster greater understanding amongst the Vietnamese public about the need to protect nature and wildlife.

ENV employs creative and innovative strategies to influence public attitudes and reduce demand for wildlife trade products. ENV works closely with government partners to strengthen policy and legislation, and directly supports enforcement efforts in the protection of endangered species of regional, national, and global significance.

Since 2007, ENV has focused its activities on three major program areas that comprise ENV’s integrated strategic approach for addressing illegal wildlife trade in Vietnam. These include:

- Reducing consumer demand for wildlife products through investment in a long-term and sustained effort to influence public attitudes and behavior.
- Strengthening enforcement through direct support and assistance to law enforcement agencies, and mobilizing active public participation in helping combat wildlife crime.
- Working with policy-makers to strengthen legislation, close loopholes in the law, and promote sound policy and decision-making relevant to wildlife protection.