

# Education centre opens in Petén to prevent animal trafficking and protect biodiversity

The Centre is a project of the Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Association (ARCAS) based in Aldea el Arrozal, Municipality of Flores, Department of El Petén. ARCAS has extensive experience in Guatemala working to tackle the causes of illegal wildlife trade and other environmental problems, by promoting education and sustainable community development.

The Construction of this Biodiversity Education Centre has been part-funded with US\$125,000 by the United Kingdom Space Agency through its space for sustainable development initiative, the International Partnership Programme. It also received the support from other donors -such as Harvest Key of Belize, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), Oakland Zoo, USAID / CNCG / Rainforest Alliance, and the Municipality of Flores- making an approximate investment of US\$202,000 plus a match from ARCAS of US\$30,000. Construction began at the end of 2018.

The main objective of CE BIO is to offer an unforgettable educational experience, with the help of technology and digital media that will allow visitors to know the biodiversity and natural wealth of the country with a "360o vision" programme. It also seeks to make the population aware of the problem of illegal wildlife trade, one of the greatest scourges suffered by the department of El Petén, and to conclude that, if we work together - government and civil society- we can have a positive impact on AVOID KEEPING WILD ANIMALS AS PETS.

Visitors will start the tour in an interactive "Temple" where they will have the opportunity to experience different ways of how illegal wildlife trafficking occurs, and then continue with their visit, verifying the sad reality of seeing how animals are affected by poaching.

Miriam Monterroso, Executive Director of ARCAS, said:

We thank our donors and, especially, the British government for having made possible the construction of this Biodiversity Education Centre that will help save one of the last natural frontiers of this century: The Mayan Biosphere Reserve.

Nick Whittingham, UK Ambassador to Guatemala, said:

I am very happy to be here today at the inauguration of the Centre. The UK is globally committed to protecting biodiversity and the environment. I congratulate ARCAS for such a brilliant initiative.