



## **SEAZA POSITION STATEMENT ON ELEPHANT RIDES**

Approved by the SEAZA Executive Board on 30 July 2024

SEAZA strongly believes that all elephants under human care should be treated with respect and dignity. Any animal-visitor interactions that are detrimental to the physical or psychological wellbeing of the animals are unacceptable. These include circus-like shows, demonstrations, animal photography or interactions that are not respectful, and demonstrate unnatural behaviours.

Elephants are culturally important to Asia with historical records of elephants and human interactions spanning centuries. Elephants are integrated into the daily lives of many Asians including featuring in religious festivals and used as transportation.

There is some evidence that elephants which are used for riding have better health indicators like body condition, compared to other elephants that are not used for riding. This may be attributed to them walking for long distances which is similar to their behaviour in the wild. However, many elephants used for rides are often subjected to cruel training methods including food deprivation and physical punishment to force them to be submissive. Furthermore, tools to inflict pain and fear are used to control the elephants. Training should be done only using positive reinforcement methods as stated in the SEAZA Standard on Animal Welfare.

We understand there may be an initial loss of income from elephant rides if members phase elephant rides out. We strongly suggest for members to pivot to other elephant-related interactions that would still draw income without compromising the welfare of the elephants.

Many SEAZA members have elephants in their institutions, and some offer elephant rides as part of the experiences offered to visitors. However, there are mounting concerns regarding elephant rides and the commitment to positive animal welfare is paramount to SEAZA. With all these considerations in mind, SEAZA has committed to phase out elephant rides at all our member institutions by **30 October 2024**.

Thus, SEAZA aligns with the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) which issued a position statement in May 2021, urging the cessation of elephant rides among WAZA members, in accordance with their Code of Ethics, Animal-Visitor Interactions Guidelines, and Animal Welfare Strategy.