

# Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

## Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

<b>Project Ref. No.</b>	<b>12-025</b>
<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Building constituencies for site-based conservation in Myanmar</b>
<b>Country</b>	<b>Union of Myanmar</b>
<b>UK Organisation</b>	<b>BirdLife International</b>
<b>Collaborator</b>	<b>Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (BANCA)</b>
<b>Report date</b>	<b>29 October 2004</b>
<b>Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)</b>	<b>HYR 1</b>
<b>Project website</b>	<b>WWW.BirdLifeindochina.org</b>

### **1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).**

1. A suitable site for the establishment of a second SSG in the Eastern Himalayas EBA identified.

Two sites have now been selected for the establishment of Site Support Groups(SSG) at Natmataung National Park, Chin State. The first site is Hilaung Village (Mindat Township) and the second site is at Okpo Village (Kanpetlet Township).

### **2. Series of workshops result in the establishment of 2 IBA SSGs in the Eastern Himalayas EBA and mobilized support for conservation.**

The Chairman and BANCA staff held an informal meeting at Mindat on 6 October with the Chairman of the Mindat District Authority, the Secretary of District Authority, the Warden of Natmataung National Park and township elders. On 7 October at Mindat Town Hall, the workshop was opened. The meeting was attended by the Chairman and members of district authority, district level officials representing various departments, township level officials from Mindat and Kanpetlet, town elders, two local NGOs from Mindat and Kanpetlet and villagers from Hilaung and Okpo Villages. The Chairman of BANCA introduced BANCA and BirdLife International to the audience and explained about the Darwin project and the SSG approach. The District Chairman urged the audience to cooperate with BirdLife and BANCA to conserve Natmataung National Park effectively. He also thanked BirdLife and BANCA for their help in promoting community development and conservation activities. The warden of Natmataung National Park explained at length about the park emphasizing issues, constraints and possible solutions to resource management issues which could form the basis of the collaboration with local villagers. The workshop continued throughout the following day. Site Support Group I (Hilaung Village) is composed of all the villagers and has 7 elected executive committee members. Site Support Group II (Okpo Village) is also composed of all the villagers with 5 elected executive committee members. According to the Chairman of the district authority, these two SSGs shall eventually become officially recognized local NGOs. Both SSGs include town elders, retired school teachers, retired agricultural officials, village authorities and villagers. During the workshop session, 12 members from Hilaung and 9 members from Okpo actively participated along with BANCA members and the warden of Natmataung National Park. At the workshop following lengthy debate about their livelihoods and local resource management, a joint programme of conservation and develop activities were agreed as follows. It was agreed that because of shortfalls in local rice production a monthly rice distribution

scheme would be initiated for three months initially; One water storage tank (capacity 1,500 gallons) would be built at Hilaung Village and two water storage tanks at Okpo Village; One perennial tree seedling nursery would be established at each of Hilaung and Okpo villages. This development assistance was provided on condition that villagers reciprocate by abstaining from hunting and extraction of forest products inside the national park and buffer zone. It was agreed that if monitoring showed this was not working the rice distribution programme would be suspended. This is the first time an international conservation NGO has initiated conservation and development initiatives of this kind. [Although outside the strict reporting period it is felt relevant to mention here given the emphasis in the last Annual Report Review on the perceived lack of progress with SSG activities].

### **3. Additional support to protected areas within the Eastern Himalayas EBA leveraged.**

During early July BirdLife conducted a meeting of government and non-government agencies in Yangon to discuss further, and reach consensus, on the draft conservation profile for Myanmar prepared on behalf of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, with stakeholder consultation having extended over the previous 12 months. This document sets-out a programme of priority conservation interventions and could be considered an unofficial biodiversity action plan. Numerous donors, including the British Ambassador were invited and attended the meeting. It is hoped that the interest generated will eventually lead to a greater commitment on the part of the international community to supporting conservation in Myanmar, including the Eastern Himalayas EBA.

### **4. Darwin Initiative and British Embassy featured in national and international press**

BirdLife International issued a global press release on 28 June reporting on the discovery and conservation value of the Ngawun Reserve Forest and our proposal to incorporate it within an expanded Lenya National Park. Please visit [www.birdlife.org/news/pr/index.html](http://www.birdlife.org/news/pr/index.html).

A front page article, with a colour photograph reporting on project work in the Sundaic Lowlands appeared in the Burmese language weekly, *7 Day News Journal*.

The July 19-25 English language weekly *The Myanmar Times* published a lengthy feature, with a colour photograph, reporting on project work in the Sundaic lowlands and the BirdLife/BANCA proposal to establish an expanded Lenya National Park.

### **5. Ornithological surveys of representative habitats in Sundaic Lowlands EBA conducted and IBAs identified.**

Throughout April and May a BirdLife/BANCA/Forestry Department team undertook surveys at a number of sites within the two largest remaining areas of level lowland forest in the Sundaic Lowlands. Most notable was the discovery of 50,000 ha of level lowland forest within the Ngawun Reserve Forest adjacent to the proposed Lenya National Park. As a result of the 2003 and 2004 fieldwork together with the GIS analysis undertaken in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution, a total of five IBAs have been identified within the Sundaic Lowlands EBA.

### **6. Conservation assessment of Sundaic Lowlands EBA published**

During the reporting period BirdLife completed work on the Directory of *Asian Important Bird Areas*. This document is a summary of the status of IBAs in Asia and is arranged country-by-country. The data for the chapter on Myanmar was completed using data collated during the Darwin-funded project. The document, to be published in cd-ROM format will be launched at the IUCN World Conference in Bangkok on November 18th by BirdLife President, HIH Princess Takamado of Japan.

## **7. Suitable sites for the establishment of SSGs at 2 IBAs in the Sundaic Lowlands EBA identified.**

Although we have identified a suite of IBAs in the Sundaic lowlands IBA we do not plan to pursue the establishment of *community based groups* to promote their conservation. This is for the following two reasons: The Ministry of Forestry, the Prime Minister and Cabinet have agreed, at BirdLife and BANCA's request, to incorporate the Ngawun Reserve Forest and the Ngawun Reserve Forest Extension within an expanded Lenya National Park, and they have also agreed to work with BirdLife to develop a project to deliver this conservation goal. Given these developments, plus the current prevailing management of these areas by the Ministry of Forestry as logging concessions, combined with little or no human settlement in and around these areas we believe a community based approach to secure their conservation is not appropriate. Rather, in relation to the Sundaic Lowlands EBA we prefer to interpret the wording of the project document, "empowering communities to manage natural resources," in its widest context to include all relevant stakeholders. The combination of Ministry of Forestry, Local government, BANCA and BirdLife, represents a group of stakeholders that falls within BirdLife's definition of a Site Support Group.

## **8. Conservation awareness materials modified and extended to villagers in Sundaic Lowlands EBA.**

During the reporting period BANCA and BirdLife produced a Burmese language report on fieldwork and advocating the establishment of an expanded protected area at Lenya National Park. This was circulated to key stakeholders in government and was important in securing government's commitment to expand Lenya National Park.

## **9. Series of workshops result in the establishment of two IBA SSGs in the Sundaic Lowlands EBA and mobilized stakeholder support for conservation.**

On 5 August Jonathan Eames (Project Manager) and U Uga (Chairman BANCA) met with the Minister of Forestry, and the Director Generals of the Forestry Department and Planning Department. At this meeting the Minister reported that the Prime Minister and cabinet had approved the incorporation of the Ngawun Reserve Forest and the Ngawun Reserve Forest Extension within an expanded Lenya National Park and that the Ministry of Forestry would cooperate with BirdLife to develop and implement a project to promote these goals.

## **10. Additional support to existing protected areas within the Sundaic Lowlands EBA leveraged.**

A proposal developed by BirdLife to address the conservation of key sites in the Sundaic lowlands and the development of BANCA, was submitted to the British Bird watching Fair for consideration as the fair theme for 2005. This was subsequently approved and a full project proposal developed and submitted during September. Thus the 2005 British Bird watching Fair will support the establishment of an expanded Lenya National Park.

On 24 September BirdLife submitted a project proposal entitled the *Establishment and expansion of Lenya National Park* to the Global Conservation Fund based at Conservation International. This project was designed using biodiversity data collated during 2003 and 2004 fieldwork and was designed in consultation with non-government and government stakeholders in Yangon on 6 and 7 September. The project for c. \$ 1,000,000 will be implemented over two years by BirdLife and the Ministry of Forestry.

## **2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the**

**project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

There have been no notable problems arising during the reporting period. However, for the reasons given above, it is now proposed to interpret the wording of the project document, “empowering communities to manage natural resources,” in its widest context to include all relevant stakeholders. The combination of Ministry of Forestry, Local government, BANCA and BirdLife, represents a group of stakeholders that falls within BirdLife’s definition of a Site Support Group. Project resources allocated to SSG establishment in the Sundaic lowlands could continue to be used there if the Darwin Secretariat accepts BirdLife’s definition of a SSG as a group of stakeholders or alternatively the resources for this activity can be used to establish two new SSGs in the Eastern Himalayas EBA.

**Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?**

No.

**Discussed with the DI Secretariat:**                    **no/yes, in..... (month/yr)**

**Changes to the project schedule/work plan:**    **no/yes, in.....(month/yr)**

**3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin’s management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

No.

**If you were asked to provide a response to this year’s annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.**

**Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/work plan or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with the Darwin Secretariat directly.**

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme, [stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk](mailto:stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk) . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**