

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

Note: If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2023

Project reference	30-002
Project title	Sustainable Wetland Management in the Central Ayeyarwady River Basin
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Myanmar
Lead partner	Fauna & Flora International (Fauna & Flora)
Partner(s)	Marine Science Association Myanmar (MSAM) Friends of Wildlife (FoW) Indawgyi Natural Farming Association (INFA) Inn Chit Thu (ICT) Shanni Literature and Cultural Association (SLCA)
Project leader	Zau Lunn
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31/10/2023, HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	Save Freshwater Together (https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550043969685&mibextid=LQQJ4d)

Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

In the HYR1 duration, the following activities were done for each output. Because of the current political context, some of the project sites could not be visited because of the security concerns. Therefore, the project activity implementations focussed on Indawgyi and downstream of the Ayeyarwady and Chindwin River confluence situated in the central Ayeyarwady Basin (Figure 1).

Output1: Increased knowledge, attitude and behaviour of local stakeholders in support of a free-flowing Ayeyarwady River and the wise use of its associated wetlands

1.1 Conduct Knowledge, Attitude and Behaviour (KAB) survey at project start and end

Fauna & Flora team and project partners, MSAM and FoW conducted KAB surveys of local stakeholders (fishers and farmers) regarding the aquatic biodiversity conservation and the crucial role of the free-flowing Ayeyarwady River system to the dependent communities as follows. A total of 292 participants, including 192 males and 100 females, participated in the surveys (Table 1 & Annex 1).

Table 1. KAB surveys in the HYR1

No.	Village	Participants	
		Male	Female
1	Tagaung	62	43
2	Tha Phan Kone	22	8
3	Myo Hla	20	18
4	Kya O Kyun	30	16
5	Sint Ku	38	8
6	Let Pan Kyun	20	7
	<i>Total</i>	<i>192</i>	<i>100</i>

1.2 Establish Ayeyarwady river CSO network; facilitate regular meetings, agree on vision and TOR for the group, develop a social media network platform (e.g., Facebook, Signal)

The Facebook page “Save Freshwater Together” (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550043969685&mibextid=LQQJ4d>) was developed and shared among the project communities. The project activities were uploaded regularly on the page.

1.3 Upgrade the Indawgyi Wetland Education Centre (IWEC) facilities to include improved water and sanitation facilities

Indawgyi Wetland Education Centre (IWEC) facilities were upgraded by SLCA (Annex 1).

1.4 Conduct organisational resilience check at project start and end for local IWEC partners (Inn Chit Thu and Shanni Literature and Culture Association)

1.5 Provide organisational and technical training (incl. finance management, business planning, hospitality, visitor interpretation and education) for local IWECC partners

1.6 Support IWECC to deliver training/visitor programmes for wetland management, including training modules/ materials

1.7 Research, develop and implement a 'Living Ayeyarwady Campaign' including village conservation awareness programmes and social media campaigns for the wise use of wetlands

The community response communication system was developed and recorded the information informed by the stakeholders (Table 2).

Table 2. Information informed by the community through the communication system

No.	Date	Source	Villages	Location	Species Name	Condition		Released	Consumed	Size
						Live	Dead			
1	22/11/21	Fisher	Tet Thit Kyun, Padaung District	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Burmese Narrow-headed Softshell turtle	1		*		
2	22/7/22	Fisher-women	Hepu	Indawgyi Lake	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	1		*		
3	11/9/22	U Baran Mai, Rice farmer	Lone Ton	Indawgyi Lake	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle		1		*	
4	13/9/22	Fisher	Tagaung	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Burmese Narrow-headed Softshell turtle		1		*	
5	19/10/22	Fisher	Shwe Latt Pan	Indawgyi Lake	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	1		*		
6	24/10/22	U Baran Mai, Rice farmer	Lone Ton	Indawgyi Lake	Asiatic Softshell Turtle	1		*		
7	14/11/22	Fisher	Tar Law Gyi	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	1		*		
8	4/5/23	Fisher	Tagaung	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Burmese Narrow-headed Softshell turtle		1		*	
9	2/5/23	Fisher	Lone Kauk	Indawgyi Lake	Asiatic Softshell Turtle	1		*		
10	21/5/23	Fisher	Lone Kauk	Indawgyi Lake	Asiatic Softshell Turtle	1		*		
11	29/5/23	Fisher	Lone Kauk	Indawgyi Lake	Asiatic Softshell Turtle	1		*		

12	14/6/23	Conser vation group	Ma Na Khaw	Nant Pa Lum Chaung, Indawgyi Lake	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	15		*		
13	12/3/23	Fisher	I Gyi village, Pakkoku District	I gyi yay lal kone kyun, Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Asiatic Softshell Turtle	1		*		
14	1/8/23	U Win Naing	Myo Hla village	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	1		*		
15	12/8/23	U Shein Thin- Fish conserv ation committ ee member	Myo Hla village	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	1		*		
16	27/8/23	Fisher	Nyaung Bin	Indawgyi Lake	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	1		*		
17	29/8/23	Fisher	Koe Lone	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	2		*		Juvenile
18	23/8/23	Fisher	Sint Ku	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	1		*		
	26/8/23	Fishers	Myo Hla	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Ayeyarwady Dolphin		1		-	About 2 meters
19	18/9/23	U Maung Lay- Turtle species guardia n	Ma Na Khaw	Indawgyi Lake	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	1		*		Adult
20	20/9/23	Fisher	Myo Hla village	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	1		*		Juvenile
21	26/9/23	Fisher	Sint Ku	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	1		*		
22	27/9/23	Fisher	Kya O Kyun	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	3		*		0.5 Kg
23	29/9/23	Fisher	Sint Ku	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	2				
24	13/10/23	Fisher	Kya O Kyun	Central Ayeyarwady River basin	Burmese Peacock Softshell turtle	1		*		
						39	4			

Output 2: Fisheries co-management areas (including fish conservation zones/ FCZs) are established and managed sustainably in KBAs throughout the upper Ayeyarwady basin

2.1 Conduct training/ capacity building of local partners/ fisheries association (organisational development, small grant management, empowerment of women/ vulnerable people, sustainable fisheries)

Fish for livelihood development capacity-building training were done in the reporting duration as follows. Fauna & Flora-Myanmar Programme organized five-days in-person training on Freshwater fish and turtle conservation training in Indawgyi from 2 to 6 May 2023, and two-day in-person training on basic fish farming and eel farming for FCA committees and softshell turtle species gradian group in Indawgyi from 11 to 12 August 2023. The training aims to understand the crucial role of freshwater fish and turtles for the dependent communities along the river systems and to enhance the livelihood sectors for improving incomes of the project-targeted villages (Table 3 and Annex 1).

Table 3. Capacity building training for fisheries sector development in HYR1

No.	Date	Village	Training topic	Participants	
				Male	Female
1	2~6/5/2023	Loneton, Indawgyi	Fish and turtle resource conservation and management training	16	4
2	12~13/8/20 23	Ma Na Khaw, Indawgyi	Basic training on the swamp eel artisanal farming	29	11
	<i>Total</i>			45	15

2.2 Conduct organisational resilience check at project start and end for the local fisheries associations

2.3 Facilitate development of fisheries co-management agreements between fisheries' leasehold owners and village fisheries associations

Conducted awareness talks among the fisheries leasehold owners and village fishers for the establishment of co-management agreements to mitigate illegal fishing activities, especially in the fish spawning season in the crucial habitats (Annex 1).

2.4 Establish Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) for fish spawning, fish/ dolphin aggregation areas, threatened freshwater turtle/ waterbird nesting sites, based on local knowledge, scientific evidence, and participatory consultation process

Draft FCZs for fish spawning and aggregation areas, freshwater turtles and waterbird nesting sites were identified by the local knowledge based on the participatory consultation process in the project villages (Annex 1).

2.5 Establish, train, and operate community-based patrols to monitor/ protect FCZs and waterbird/ turtle nesting sites

Communities were trained and piloted community-based patrolling in the identified FCZs of the project villages in June 2023. Partner organizations, FoW also conducted patrolling in Indawgyi to strengthen the community-led patrolling to mitigate illegal fishing activities (Annex 1).

2.6 Establish small innovation grant facility for fisheries associations with an emphasis on benefitting vulnerable groups such as landless fishers, contributing to off-set any short-term negative impact of sustainable fisheries interventions

2.7 Provide gender training for fisheries associations

2.8 Support quarterly fish catch/ fish landing site monitoring of fisheries leasehold and ‘open’ community-fisheries

Partner organizations were undertaking quarterly fish catch/ fish landing site monitoring started from August (Annex 1). MSAM recorded 35 fish species from the fishers along the central Ayeyarwady River basin. The majority of fish species recorded along the central Ayeyarwady River basin in August were small-size fish species because of the spawning season. The economically important fish species recorded were Wallago and Ayer species. FoW recorded 50 fish species from Indawgyi. Main landing fish species recorded from the fishers in Indawgyi were Ayer, Bronze featherback and Osteobrama.

2.9 Undertake annual mid-winter waterbirds census, annual dolphin census, breeding season monitoring of waterbird/turtle nesting sites

Output 3: Organic agriculture developed and upscaled throughout seasonally flooded wetlands associated with fisheries co-management areas, contributing to biodiversity conservation and community well-being

3.1 Facilitate establishment of 5 local organic farmers associations

Awareness raising meeting with project village communities for the establishment of local organic farmers association in June 2023 (Table 4 and Annex 1).

Table 4. Capacity building training for organic farming sector development in HYR1

No.	Date	Village	Training topic	Participants
-----	------	---------	----------------	--------------

				<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
1	19~21/9/20 23	<i>Let Pan Kyun</i>	<i>Organic farming training</i>	37	27
2	22~24/9/20 23	<i>Kya O Kyun</i>	<i>Organic farming training</i>	37	14
	<i>Total</i>			74	41

3.2 Conduct organisational resilience check at project start and end for the local farmers associations

3.3 Provide organisational development/ small grants management training for fisher/ farmer associations

3.4 Establish farmer field schools for organic farming techniques based on FAO standards [Ref.5]

3.5 Develop on-farm pilots to introduce bio-fertilisers, bio-pesticides, rice-fish farming and other innovative organic farming practices

3.6 Facilitate farmers' association's internal control systems, based on IFOAM participatory group certification standards

3.7 Facilitate PGS organic certification [Ref.6] by Myanmar's organic growers' association

3.8 Support logo design/ marketing campaign to develop product brand for biodiversity-friendly products; facilitate trademark registration

Output 4: Biodiversity-friendly market system of at least one fisheries product strengthened by promoting participation and collaboration of private sector in co-management, and improved social equity and gender participation in market system operations.

4.1 Conduct training for local NGO partners (MSAM/ FoW) and local fisheries association in the target villages on PMSD approach

4.2 Facilitate fisheries product selection through local focus group discussion and stakeholder meetings

Project partner, MSAM has assessed the selection of fish species and potential villages to produce fish paste and fish sauce products as potential fisheries products from some project

villages, such as Tagaung and Let Pan Kyun for the external market. The other villages are interested in producing fish value-added products for home consumption and village markets.

4.3 Conduct market research for and supply chain mapping for the selected products

Project partner, FoW has piloted the fish paste production in Indawgyi and looking for the market (Annex 1).

Project partner, MSAM has done market surveys from 21st to 30th September at Myo Hla, Kya O Kyun, Sint Ku and Let Pan Kyun villages. The main products have been selling from the villages to the markets are agricultural products, such as seedless plum, lemon, star fruit, several kinds of beans, sesame, peanuts, onion, potato, corn, and fisheries products, such as Hilsa shad, Catla, Wallago, Ayer, Pangas catfish, and small size fish species. Those products were sold in the village market and nearby towns in raw condition. The majority of the fishers sold fish in raw condition to the fish collectors who are based in the village. A small number of fishers sold their fish to the nearby towns. There are no value-added products are producing from the village resources along the central Ayeyarwady River basin.

4.4 Develop a strategic plan for market system development to integrate conservation and sustainable livelihoods

4.5 Arrange a multi-stakeholder workshop to bring fisheries associations, traders, and companies together to share knowledge across supply chain actors

4.6 Formulate and implement a participatory action plan for value chain improvements

4.7 Train fisheries association/ small-scale enterprises in bookkeeping/ enterprise management

4.8 Facilitate meetings with potential buyers to establish market linkage for selected products

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt 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.

Current political context: Because of the current political turmoil, some project sites could not be visited regularly (Figure 1).

3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with NIRAS: No (But we will inform them in HYR2 duration depending on the political situation.)

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

Change request reference if known:

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)

Actual spend: ██████████

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2024)?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

4c. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

No issues in the HYR1 duration except the current political turmoil impacting to visit some villages to implement the project activities.

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but should also be raised with NIRAS through a Change Request. Please DO NOT send these in the same email.