

Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31st October 2017)

Project reference	23-024
Project title	Securing marine fisheries, livelihoods and biodiversity in Myanmar through co-management
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Myanmar (Burma)
Lead organisation	Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) – Myanmar Program
Partner(s)	Ministry of Agriculture Livestock and Irrigation (Department of Fisheries/DoF), Pyoe Pin, Rakhine Coastal Region Conservation Association (RCA), Rakhine Fisheries Partnership (RFP).
Project leader	Barry Flaming
Report date and number	31 October 2017 - HYR2
Project website/blog/social media etc.	https://programs.wcs.org/myanmar/Wild-Places/Marine-Ecosystems.aspx https://www.facebook.com/WCSMyanmar/ https://twitter.com/WCSMyanmar https://myanmarbiodiversity.org

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project.

During April to September 2017, significant progress has been made towards the project's overall outcome and specific outputs. In summary, a co-management committee has been formed by representatives of the 10 participating communities, the inshore fisheries area has been defined, and a co-management plan has been drafted. Extensive data collection efforts continue and will inform fisheries management efforts as well as baseline monitoring. Barry Flaming joined WCS in June as marine conservation technical advisor and was approved by Darwin as the new Project Leader in July.

Progress towards Output 1: A gender-sensitive participatory planning process has led to the development and adoption of a co-management plan for coastal fisheries in Thandwe District in Rakhine State. During April and May, fisheries co-management orientation sessions were held in each of the 10 participating coastal villages. This helped familiarize fishers with co-management principles and processes, which are very new in the Myanmar context, while setting a foundation for the subsequent formation of the Kyeintali inshore fisheries co-management committee. In June, a workshop was held in Kyeintali with representatives of the 10 participating communities, along with representatives from the Department of Fisheries (DoF), Rakhine Coastal Resource Conservation Association (RCA), Pyoe Pin (PP), Rakhine Thahaya Association (RTA), Rakhine Fisheries Partnership (RFP), University of Exeter, General Administration Department (GAD), and local Police. A total of 54 persons (13 women) attended including from: Government = 9, DoF = 6, Fishers = 22, RCA = 7, WCS = 6, and one each from RFP, RTA, PP, and Exeter.

Information from participatory mapping exercises illustrating where different gear types are being used, conflict areas, and habitat maps were presented and discussed. Based on the areas of concentrated fishing activity, community representatives identified and agreed upon the proposed co-management area (ranging from Naung Pin Thar village in the north to Kywe Gyaing village in the south, out to 10 nautical miles from shore). This includes the area of predominant fishing types including purse seine, drift gill net, and long line fishery. Additional

discussions on by-catch, conflicts with offshore fishing vessels, illegal fishing activities, and options for no take zones and seasonal closure areas were also held to inform provisions in the co-management plan. A co-management committee was established, with two representatives (one female and one male) from each of the 10 participating communities (20 total). An Executive Committee of four representatives (chairperson, vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer) was created, roles and responsibilities defined, and committee members selected from out of the 20 co-management committee members. At the end of the meeting, a letter recognizing the co-management area was signed by township representatives from DoF, GAD, the Police, and representatives of the co-management committee. After the meeting, WCS presented the proposed co-management area to DoF officials in Nay Pyi Taw for consideration of higher-level formal recognition. This process is ongoing, with DoF requesting presentation directly from the co-management committee.

Discussions and outputs from the workshop informed the development of a co-management plan, which has been drafted and signed by the co-management committee members. In addition to identification of the co-management area, the plan also addresses important fish habitats, control of trawls and illegal activities, steps to reduce conflicts and by-catch, and capacity building. One of the immediate next steps is for the co-management committee members to socialize the co-management plan within their communities to foster greater buy-in and uptake. WCS and RCA continue to provide mentoring and capacity building support to strengthen the co-management committee and build the confidence of its members. This will include efforts to begin addressing some of the more straightforward issues, such as reducing conflicts between inshore and offshore vessels and reducing illegal activities such as poison fishing. Over the coming months, WCS will continue to work with committee members and fishing communities, and other relevant stakeholders, to further develop the co-management plan and improve capacities for effective implementation. This will be an ongoing process.

Progress towards Output 2: Baseline data is available and routine participatory collection of additional data is integrated into the governance mechanisms for co-management. Data collected during year one has resulted in extensive information related to fishers, licenses, gear types, target and non-target species catch, and socioeconomic status in the ten target communities in Thandwe district. This has included household interviews with nearly 390 fishers (from a total of 1,387) from 10 landing sites in Kyeintali, as well as regular interviews with five traders and 25 collectors / processors operating in the area. Data is currently being analysed and will be completed soon to establish the baseline values for two key indicators - Catch Per Unit Effort/CPUE and fisher household income, among others.

RCA continues to collect ongoing data on a monthly basis from trader invoices and purse seine log books, as well as trader length-weight surveys and self-reporting of participating fishers on catch and by-catch. Data on by-catch has been particularly problematic as few fishers are willing to report on incidences of threatened or restricted marine species. This has limited our ability to estimate Bycatch Per Unit Effort/BPUE as initially envisioned. This issue was highlighted in Darwin's review of our first annual report, with a recommendation to revise related indicators (see section 2a below).

"Pelagic Data Systems" GPS tracking devices have also been attached to a selection of ten purse seine vessels (supported by vessel owners and DoF). These data loggers have been deployed and are transmitting data on purse seine vessel activity. As most of the purse seine vessels do not operate during the rainy season (July – September), the PDS devices have been relocated to alternative vessels (primarily baby trawl and long-line fishers) to enable additional data collection during this period, and will be returned back to the purse seine vessels when they resume fishing activity in October.

Ongoing data collection efforts involve continual technical support from WCS and University of Exeter to local partner RCA in standardized data collection, entry, and management. Summaries of fisheries data will be integrated into discussions with the co-management committee to inform the development and implementation of the co-management plan as well as facilitate interactions between community-based fisher groups, government agencies, and

other stakeholders. This information will also help to further clarify important fish habitat areas, refine rules and regulations for sustainable fisheries, and reduce conflicts and IUU.

Progress towards Output 3: A strategy to reduce unintended bycatch of marine vertebrates has been developed and implemented by local fishing communities.

As part of the June co-management workshop, discussions were held with community fisher representatives, DoF, and other stakeholders in relation to by-catch. Data was presented from the participatory mapping exercises including maps of where marine vertebrates and species of concern are found. Consistent with our previous understanding, discussions on strategies to reduce by-catch centered around incentives, as most if not all species caught provide important income for poor fishers. As noted above, through our ongoing data collection efforts, we have found that specific information on by-catch has been particularly problematic as few fishers are willing to report on incidences of threatened or restricted marine species. These challenges have limited our ability to estimate Bycatch Per Unit Effort/BPUE. We have subsequently revised the by-catch related indicators in response to Darwin's review of our first annual report.

As a result of these challenges, we continue to consider other strategies that might be deployed for reducing bycatch. Time-area management of fisheries will likely be one of the most effective approaches, and discussions are on-going for how this may be integrated into the co-management plan. Results of participatory mapping of dugong and fisheries activities will help inform the design of seasonal-area closures to reduce potential interactions with fishing activity. In addition, we will continue to explore and pilot where possible the introduction of specific gear technologies or modifications. While community fishers have not yet been receptive to date, we believe this is primarily due to a lack of familiarity and experience with their use. This gear could include for example, circle hooks to reduce turtle bycatch, acoustic deterrent devices for cetaceans, and lights on nets for turtles. This will be a continued effort and dialogue to encourage mutual learning to further understand how best to mitigate bycatch.

Progress towards Output 4: Lessons learned from fisheries co-management planning and practices are shared to boost national fisheries resource governance capacity.

As one of the first inshore fisheries co-management pilot projects in Myanmar, many useful lessons are being learned in Kyeintali that can inform further replication and policy reform. During the reporting period, we have shared experiences through a number of fora, including: The Community-Led Coastal Management in the Gulf of Mottama Project planning meetings; presentation at the International Marine Protected Areas Congress 4 in Chile in September; and presentation at a US-ASEAN conference on marine issues in Bangkok.

With separate funding, we are also now replicating the fisher household surveys and participatory mapping activities in an additional 12 communities in western Ayeyarwady Region. Our partner RCA will serve as a trainer in these efforts, which we anticipate will also establish a foundation for a new co-management initiative in one coastal area that had been previously identified as a site for replication. During the upcoming Annual Forum, we will be inviting community representatives and other stakeholders from Ayeyarwady Region and Mon State to learn directly from the Kyeintali co-management committee and experiences.

We have also been sharing project learnings through social media and other communications outreach. In terms of our social media reach, we have broadcast messages about conservation and WCS Myanmar projects to an extensive audience, with over 2 million visualizations during the period from April 1 to September 30, 2017. On Facebook, we reached an audience of 1,461,689 people and have generated 215,179 engagements, while on Twitter we have recorded 39,553 impressions and 599 engagements during the same period.

2a. 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.

At the end of August 2017, violence and social unrest erupted in northern Rakhine State, sending hundreds of thousands of refugees across the border into Bangladesh. While the situation has not directly affected the project location in the southern part of the state, the tense situation has had indirect effects. Activities were temporarily put on hold for a short period but have since resumed. At present, it is not anticipated that the situation will significantly affect the project budget or timetable of activities.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: **Yes**

Formal change request submitted: **Yes**

Received confirmation of change acceptance **Yes**

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g., more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

3b. 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 rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

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

As reported previously, our partner Pyoe Pin has had some delays in securing its third phase of operating funds from DFID. While we anticipate a successful resolution soon, in the meantime we have sub-contracted to RCA directly to support their work.

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/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 22-035 Darwin Half Year Report**