



**BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects **Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus**

Half Year Report

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

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 2024

Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	30-002
Project title	Sustainable Wetland Management in the Central Ayeyarwady River Basin
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Myanmar
Lead Organisation	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	Ngwe Lwin/ Zaw Min Oo/ Nyein Chan
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31/10/2024, HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	Save Freshwater Together (https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550043969685&mibextid=LQQJ4d)

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

Output 1. Increased knowledge, attitude and behavior 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 survey at project start and end
The baseline KAB survey was conducted in Y1. The end-line survey will be conducted in Q4 Y3.

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 created in Y1 to share update on project activities. Additionally, a Viber group for the organic farming network was created in Q2 of Y2 to enable project organic farmers to share experiences and challenges.

1.3 Upgrade the Indawgyi Wetland Education Centre (IWEC) facilities to include improved water and sanitation facilities
A sanitation facility was constructed starting in November 2023 and completed in June 2024. This facility serves 50 students and includes 5 toilets and 3 urinals.

1.4 Conduct organizational resilience check at project start and end for local IWECA partners (Inn Chit Thu and Shanni Literature and Culture Association)
The baseline assessment was completed in Y1 and the end-line assessment will be conducted in Q4 Y3.

1.5 Provide organizational and technical training (incl. finance management, business planning, hospitality, visitor interpretation, and education) for local IWECA partners
There were no activities during the reporting period. Training on finance management and visitor interpretation and education is planned to be organized in Q3 Y2.

1.6 Support IWECA to deliver training/visitor programs for wetland management, including training modules/ materials
IWECA delivered awareness sessions to 274 visitors, including 164 students during the reporting period. Additionally, the center organized six international day events such as World Migratory Birds Day, World Environment Day, etc. with 351 students attending. From May to June, IWECA also organized weekly classes together with 30 students on wetlands conservation topics.

1.7 Research, develop and implement a 'Living Ayeyarwady Campaign' including village conservation awareness programs and social media campaigns for the wise use of wetlands
The project team launched a social media campaign on platforms like Facebook, reaching an audience of 650 people followers. Conservation awareness activities were also conducted across 11 villages, reaching 1,114 community members (male: 577, female: 537).

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

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

During the project period, the project team conducted the following key training sessions:

1. Gender equality, women's empowerment Training, 3 days in June 2024, total 35 participants (male:15, female: 20)
2. GPS and Data Collection Training along Ayeyarwady River: 1-day training at 8 villages in June, a total of 144 participants (male: 122, female: 22). Due to the nature of the activities, this training was suitable for men. For that reason, only 22 women have joined the training.
3. SMART training: 5 days of training in Yangon for project staff and representatives from the partner organizations. Total 7 participants (male: 6, female: 1)
4. Agro-based Value-Added Foodstuffs Production Training: 7 days training in July 2024 for 30 participants (male: 1 and female: 29).
5. Organic farming training: 3 days of training in August, at Sar Lal village and May Nu Kyun village, total of 85 participants (male: 45, female: 40)
6. Freshwater turtle taxonomy and conservation refresher training: 4 days in September at Bagan, total 31 participants (male: 17, female: 14)

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

This activity was conducted in Y1 and will be repeated at Q4 Y3.

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

To date, 12 FCZs have been established for fisheries co-management between fisheries' leasehold owners and village fisheries associations. Community patrols were carried out at these 12 FCZs from June to August.

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

During the reporting period, final boundary delineation for 11 Fish Conservation Zones/Areas (FCZ/A) was completed in September 2024, and a consultation meeting on the draft FCZ management plan was held across these sites. Additionally, assessments to identify potential

FCZ/A locations were conducted with leasehold fisheries owners and fishers at 15 sites in the Mandalay, Magway, Bago, and Ayeyarwady regions in August and September 2024, engaging 113 participants.

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

A total of 175 participants (139 males and 36 females) received training on FCZ patrolling, with patrols conducted over 20 days (10 days per month) during June and July. Nesting site monitoring is being carried out by two trained individuals, scheduled for 10 days per month from August 2024 through July 2025

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

The project established a small innovation grant facility to support fisher groups, with a specific focus on benefitting vulnerable populations, including landless fishers. These grants enabled the initiation of alternative livelihoods and improved fishing techniques, alleviating some of the economic pressures on fishers affected by conservation efforts. A total of 25 grants were awarded, benefitting 1,886 individuals (965 males and 921 females).

2.7 Provide gender training for fisheries associations

During the reporting period, a three-day training on gender equality was held in Bagan in June, with a total of 35 participants (15 males and 20 females) in attendance.

2.8 Support quarterly fish catch/ fish landing site monitoring of fisheries leasehold and 'open' community fisheries.

Project partners conducted fish catch and landing site monitoring at 12 locations (3 in Indawgyi lake and 9 in Ayeyarwady River) every two months.

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

No activities during this reporting period. However, these activities will be carried out in the coming winter season between November 2024 and February 2025.

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 the establishment of 5 local organic farmers associations

A total of 9 local organic farmers groups were formed to enhance collaboration among farmers, promote sustainable agricultural practices, and strengthen organic farming systems.

3.2 Conduct organizational resilience check at project start and end for the local farmer's associations

This activity will be conducted again at the start of the Year 3 report.

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

No activity during this reporting period. However, the project will expand this training to include both organizational development and small grants management for local fisher and farmer associations during the next reporting period.

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

This activity is ongoing. Nine organic groups were provided small grants to pilot organic farming. The participants in each group will have a chance to learn the organic farming practice in the pilot projects.

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

During this reporting period, the project teams successfully launched on-farm pilots aimed at introducing bio-fertilizers, bio-pesticides, and other innovative organic farming practices at 10 villages.

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

Internal control systems were established by 9 organic farmer groups from 10 villages during this reporting period.

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

This activity is an ongoing process. The PGS organic certification will be issued after the completion of organic farming pilot projects (activity 3.5).

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

During the reporting period, FDA certification for one group was successfully issued by the MSME department. Concurrently, participatory logo design sessions were held with local partners, farmers, and fishers to ensure the brand reflects the biodiversity-friendly nature of the products.

Output 4. Biodiversity-friendly market system of at least one fisheries product strengthened by promoting participation and collaboration of the 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 associations in the target villages on the PMSD approach

During the reporting period, PMSD and business training was conducted from 15-18. July 2024 for 12 participants from 2FoW, 2MSAM, 1BANCA partner organizations. In addition, marketing strategy and planning training was organized from 21~23. September 2024 at Yangon.

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

Assessment for fisheries products was conducted at 9 villages and four villages were identified to produce fish-based value-added products and fruit-based products. With the project's support, two village groups produced salted fish, plum jam, and wine.

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

During the reporting period, based on the selected products from the first year, the project villages produced salted fish and fruit-based value-added products. The project team facilitated meetings with 3 potential buyers and two hotels to explore collaborative opportunities and secure agreements for the purchase of products from local producers.

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

This is an ongoing process.

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

There was no project-related activity during this reporting period.

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

The project supported the implementation of the action plan for value chain improvements, the project provided targeted training on value-added processing, organic bio-fertilizer producing training, and sustainable practices. The Fisher and Farmer Association produces salty fish and fruit-based wine, jam and bio-fertilizer

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

In the next Q, the project will continue to support organizational development, bookkeeping and financial management training for farmer and fisheries groups.

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

<p>The Project team facilitated face-to-face and virtual meetings between local producers (fruit-based value-added and fisheries products) and potential buyers (2 hotels and 3 wholesale). Local producers have established initial agreements with buyers for products. The project team arranges to continue facilitating follow-up meetings and negotiations between buyers and producers.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>Due to the ongoing political instability, access to certain project sites has been limited, preventing regular visits and on-the-ground assessments, biodiversity surveys, and meetings.</p>	
<p>3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?</p>	
Discussed with NIRAS:	No
Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No
<p>Change Request reference if known: <i>If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome</i></p>	

<p>4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024) Actual spend:</p>
<p>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 2025)? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>4c. If you expect and underspend, then you should 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 to your project if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.</p> <p>NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.</p>
<p>5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</p>
<p>None</p>

<p>6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report. If your project was subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment please use this space to comment on any changes to international human rights risks, and to address any additional mitigations outlined in your offer letters. Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.</p>
<p>N/A</p>

Checklist for submission

<p>For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1st April 2024)</p>	
<p>Have you responded to any additional feedback (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.</p>	

If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	N/A
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of the submission email.	Yes
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	Yes
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	Yes
Have you reported against the most up-to-date information for your project ?	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Yes