



**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 2025

Please note all projects that were active before 1st October 2025 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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marine Science Association Myanmar (MSAM)• Friends of Wildlife (FoW)• Indawgyi Natural Farming Association (INFA)• Inn Chit Thu Social Development and Ecotourism Group (ICT)• Shanni Literature and Culture Association (SLCA)
Project Leader	Ngwe Lwin/ Zaw Min Oo/ Nyein Chan
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31/10/2025, HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	Save Freshwater Together (https://www.facebook.com/SaveFreshwaterTogether)

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).

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) 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.

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 a 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, Year 3.

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)

Due to the current political situation, in-person meetings for the FCA Network and the Organic Farmer Network have not been possible. However, the FCA and Organic Farmer Networks continue regular activities and knowledge sharing through Viber groups. Freshwater Facebook page remains active, reaching 7,196 views across 13 posts during the report. Moreover, to learn from other CSOs and NGOs, Knowledge Exchange Workshop on Community-Based Fisheries Management was organized in June 2025 with 28 participants (22 men and 6 women) attended.

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

This activity is completed in Y2.

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

Organization Resilience Checks (ORC) was completed in Y1 and Y2 as a baseline. Final ORCs for both organizations will be conducted again in Q4 of Year 3.

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

No activities during this reporting period. However, the project schedule to organize trainings on financial management, hospitality, and visitor interpretation in December 2025.

1.6 Support IWECE to deliver training/visitor programs for wetland management, including training modules/ materials

No activities at the IWECE due to the security situation.

But weekly student classes continued to be organized in three primary schools in Indawgyi area. Moreover, the plastic awareness campaign continued to be organized twice per month in Lonton village.

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

During the reporting period, the project conducted community awareness talks on fish conservation, wetland conservation, and protection of the Burmese Peacock softshell turtle across the 11 villages located along the Ayeyarwady River, reaching 562 Men, 673 Women. Awareness materials, including leaflets and a booklet, were distributed to support the campaign and reinforce key messages.

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 reporting period, the team organized the following key training sessions:

- Gender and Leadership Training – 5 days, 40 participants (16 men and 24 women)
- Market Strategy Planning Training – 3 days, 46 participants (13 men and 33 women)

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

The organizational resilience check was successfully conducted for 10 groups in Year 1 to establish a baseline for the local fisheries associations. The final assessment is planned in Quarter 4, Year 3.

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

During the reporting period, the project facilitated one additional fisheries co-management agreement between the leasehold owners and the FCA conservation group in Thu Ye See village. A total of 13 agreements have now been signed for the co-management of FCA.

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 a participatory consultation process

During this reporting period, the project successfully established one new Fish Conservation Area (FCA) in priority sites in the Ayeyarwady River, in collaboration with local communities and government representatives. The area was selected based on a combination of local ecological knowledge, fish population assessment, and village consultations. Community members actively participated in draft boundary mapping, and the project trained FCA members to patrol during the fish spawning season.

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

During the reporting period, the project trained community patrol teams (165 participants: 125 men and 40 women) in the use of the SMART patrolling tool, enhancing their capacity for data-driven monitoring and effective protection of Fish Conservation Areas (FCAs). From June to August, the teams conducted regular monitoring across 11 FCAs during the fish spawning season for a total of 30 days.

In August, community members in Indawgyi and Koe Lone began monitoring Burmese peacock softshell turtle nesting sites. This activity will continue until the turtle hatching season in June 2026.

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

During the reporting period, the project supported one microcredit grant to a Thu Ye See fisheries group in Ayeyarwady River, with special emphasis on landless and vulnerable fishers. The facility will provide microcredit funding for innovative, community-led solutions such as sustainable fishing practices and alternative livelihoods improvements.

2.7 Provide gender training for fisheries associations

During the reporting period, a Gender and Leadership Training was organized for fisheries and farmers group. Please see detail in activity 2.1.

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

Fish catch and landing site monitoring was conducted every two months at 12 locations (3 in Indawgyi Lake and 9 in the Ayeyarwady River). The activity is ongoing.

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

No activities were conducted during this reporting period. However, these activities are planned for the upcoming winter season, scheduled between November 2025 and February 2026.

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 farmer groups were formed to enhance collaboration among farmers, promote sustainable agricultural practices, and strengthen organic farming systems.

In the last year, a total of nine local organic farmers' groups were established in seasonally flooded wetland areas linked to fish conservation areas (FCAs). The group brings together

organic members committed to sustainable, chemical-free farming practices. Members received training on organic production, composting, and biodiversity-friendly techniques. These organic group continues to work on organic farming practices and are expanding with new members.

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

The Organizational Resilience Check for six local farmer organizations was completed in Q1 of Year 3, and a follow-up assessment is scheduled for the final quarter of Year 3.

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

During the reporting period, Gender and Leadership Training, and Market Strategy Planning Training were organized for fisheries and farmers group. Please see detail in activity 2.1.

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

During the quarter, nine farmer groups continued implementing organic cultivation practices in their demonstration plots, focusing on soil preparation, composting, and the use of natural inputs. Full implementation of FFS activities will continue in the next quarter as farmers progress through the organic production cycle.

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, nine organic farming groups continued to implement on-farm pilots introducing biofertilizers, biopesticides, and other innovative organic practices. Building on last year's successful activities, new farmers joined the initiative, expanding participation and strengthening local adoption of sustainable methods.

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

This activity was not implemented during the current reporting period, as the growing season starts in October along the Ayeyarwady River alluvial land. Implementation is planned for the next quarter.

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 by the end of the cropping season, following completion of the organic farming pilot evaluations.

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

The logo for value-added wine products was redesigned based on buyers' feedback during this period. The project team also developed a logo for the organic fertilizer product.

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

The Marketing Strategy and Planning Training was conducted during the reporting period for local partners and fisheries groups. Please see details in Activity 2.1.

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

In Year 1 and 2, the project assessed nine villages to identify potential value-added enterprises based on local resources. Two groups have continued to make progress in active production, developing salted fish and palm wine products that demonstrate the project's impact on income generation and resource utilization.

4.3 Conduct market research for and supply chain mapping for the selected products
During the reporting period, a 3-day Market Strategy Planning (Business Plan) Training was conducted in August 2025. Participants collaboratively analyzed market demand, key actors, and supply chain linkages for the selected products during the training. Moreover, in July 2025, the local partner FoW conducted a supply chain assessment for fish products in four villages in Indawgyi and then develop supply chain map.

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

During the reporting period, a 3-day Market Strategy Planning (Business Plan) training was implemented, attended by a total of 44 participants, including 13 men and 33 women. During the training, comprehensive business plans for three products (AYAR Lover Plum Wine, Ayar Sein Lan Organic Fertilizer, and Bagan Kyun Inn Salt Fish) were developed.

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

This activity was done in Y1.

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

During the reporting period, community groups in Kone Lone, Zee Khon and Sar Le villages continued producing salted fish, wine and bio-fertilizer, which were then distributed in Nyaung U, Chauk and Magway township, thereby maintaining the value chain for fishery-based value-added products, fruit-based products and agricultural input products.

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

No activities were conducted during this reporting period. In the next quarter, the project will continue to strengthen the capacity of new farmer and fisheries groups through bookkeeping and financial management training.

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

During the reporting period, the project team continued facilitating follow-up meetings and negotiations between buyers and producers. A negotiation was also held with the Magway Night Market manager and an MSME regarding the sale of plum wine in the supermarket at the Magway Night Market.

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.

Due to the ongoing political instability, access to certain project sites located in Nyaung U and Chauk Townships has been limited, preventing regular visits, on-the-ground assessments, biodiversity surveys, and meetings.

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
Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No
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>	

Guidance for Section 4: The information you provide in this section will be used by Defra to review the financial status of projects. This review will identify projects at random for spot checks on financial management and will include requests for evidence of the actual spend information provided below. Please ensure the figures you provide are as accurate as possible and that you have the evidence to support it. You do not need to provide it now.

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)

Actual spend [REDACTED]

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 2026)?

Yes ☐ No ☒ Estimated underspend: [REDACTED]

4c. If you expect an 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, and not later than 31st December. 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.

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 BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Suspensions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk

None

6. Project risk management

6a. If your project has an Overseas Security and Justice assessment, please provide an update on any related risks, and any special conditions in your award paperwork if relevant for your project.

N/A

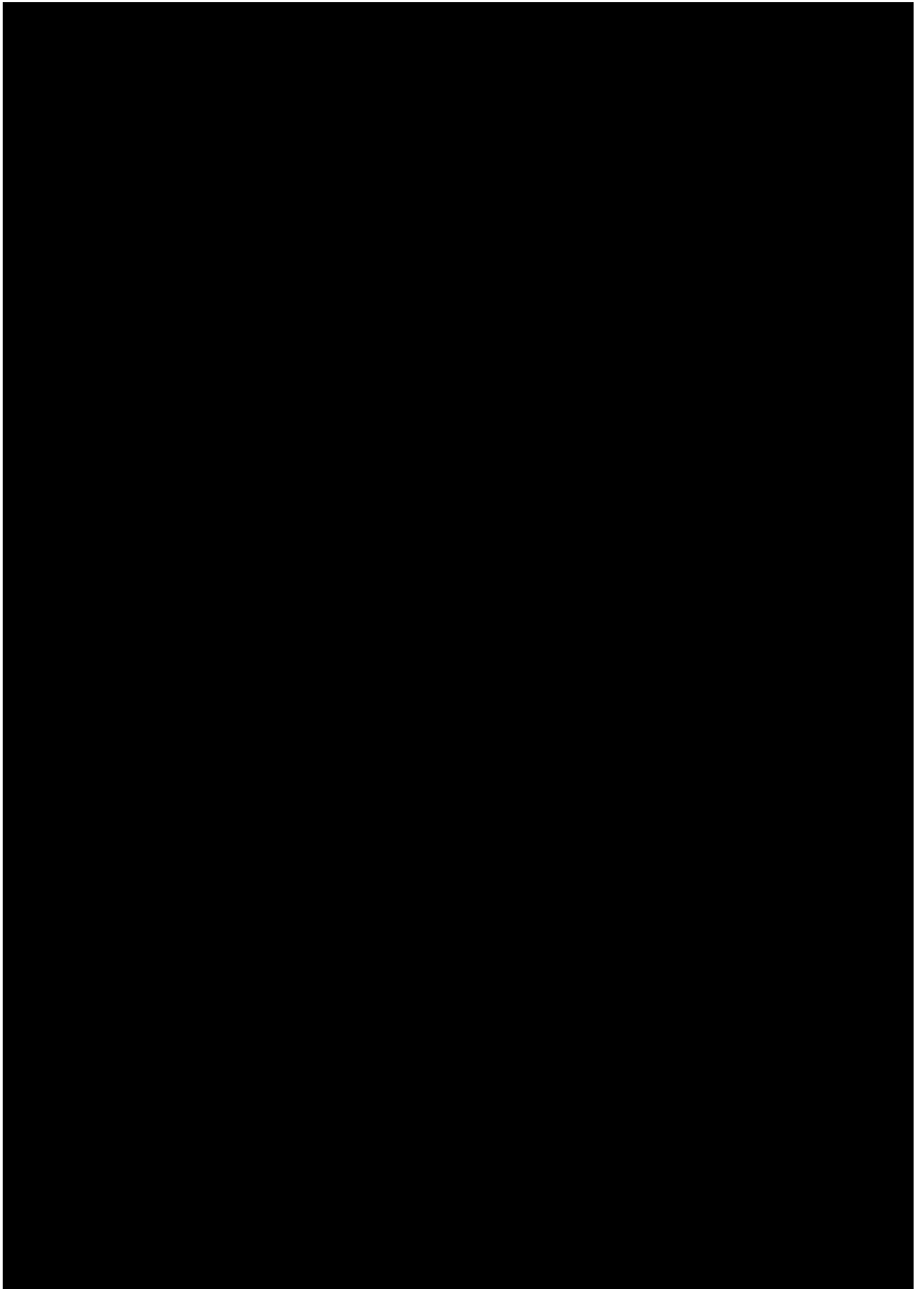
6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please provide further information, ensuring no sensitive data is included within responses.

Suspensions or allegations related to safeguarding concerns should be reported to ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk

7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent Annual Report. As a reminder, all projects that were scored as 'Not Yet Sensitive' in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment of their latest Annual Report should demonstrate how they are meeting the minimum GESI-Sensitive standard.



Checklist for submission

Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, and annexe other requested materials as appropriate.	Yes
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	Yes
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	Yes
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to BCF-Reports@niras.com	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Yes