

## Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the “Project Reporting Information Note”:  
(<https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk/resources/information-notes/> ).

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum** of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes)

**Submission Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

### IWT Challenge Fund Project Information

Project reference	IWT081
Project title	Enabling and promoting communities to tackle IWT in Southern Myanmar
Country/ies	Myanmar
Lead partner	Fauna & Flora International (FFI)
Project partner(s)	Freeland, KFD, Myeik University
IWTCF grant value	£380,725
Start/end dates of project	01/07/2020 to 31/03/2023
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2021 – Mar 2022) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	April 2021 to March 2022  Annual Report 2
Project Leader name	Saw Soe Aung, Ngwe Lwin
Project website/blog/social media	<a href="http://www.fauna-flora.org">www.fauna-flora.org</a>
Report author(s) and date	Saw Soe Aung, 06.05.2022

### 1. Project summary

Southern Tanintharyi, on the Myanmar-Thailand border, is one of Myanmar’s last strongholds for globally threatened species including tiger, Asian elephant, and Sunda pangolin. All are threatened by poaching and illegal trade, primarily across the border into Thailand. In response, FFI is supporting six local communities along key trade routes to help address these threats, in exchange for support in developing sustainable livelihoods and improved resource management. This will be complemented with improved law enforcement.

The expected outcome is for effective law enforcement and community-led stewardship that successfully deters poaching of target species for IWT in Tanintharyi, supported by stronger transboundary law enforcement.

Approximately 360 households in six villages (No's 3, 5 and 8, Ywahilu, 14 Mile and Pyigyimandai) will benefit from, gaining legally recognised rights and responsibilities to manage wildlife resources, reduced impacts of Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC), self-selected community and household-level benefits that enable livelihood diversification, and improved relations with authorities that help them to uphold those rights and responsibilities over wildlife resources.



**Fig (1) Project location: The project site lies within two townships in Myeik and Kawthuang Districts in Tanintharyi Division and is using a community and civil society-driven approach to address local wildlife trade and consumption, and to reduce hunting pressure.**

## 2. Project partnerships

**Village Development Committees (VDCs)** act as umbrella bodies for village governance, and have been used by FFI, since their establishment in 2017, to institutionalise community conservation and livelihood development activities and link them more directly to the actions of

Village Conservation Groups (VCGs), which we hope the VDCs will manage in the medium-term. During the reporting period, we consulted with all of those in the project 'long list' and based on those discussions and the limitations imposed by Covid-19 we identified six project focal villages: No's 3, 5, and 8, Ywahilu, 24 Mile and Pyigyimandai. During the project, we undertook further institutional development for the VDCs, on improved/sustainable livelihoods, small grants management and empowerment.

**The Forest Department (FD)** is very hierarchical, and local FD staff, with whom we interact most often, are often not given much autonomy from the regional and central levels. However, due initially to Covid-19 restrictions and then to security issues created by the military coup, in February 2021, we have had little contact with senior levels of FD, and so have necessarily focused efforts at the local level. We held discussions with local FD representatives during the project inception period in July 2020 and were able to gain their support for the legal registration for VDCs (see above) as community-based organizations. We were also able to discuss with them the nature of the hunting control measures to be implemented by the committees, and the sustainable livelihood activities that the project would support. Lastly, the FD is also represented in the nascent wildlife enforcement network, which is centrally mandated to bring together all the government agencies that have a role in curbing the illegal wildlife-trade; this includes FD, the general administration department (i.e., local government), customs, and police. We joined one of the Tanintharyi group's first meetings, in 2020, and introduced the project, sharing results of previous market monitoring surveys, and began to formulate plans to close wildlife markets, especially those on the main road to Thailand.

**The Karen Forest Department (KFD)** has run several wildlife protection units throughout its area of jurisdiction, mostly in Karen State, but, working with FFI, was able to establish a new group based out of a village near to Pyigyimandaion, on the main Myeik-Kawthaung road in 2019. During the project period, we prepared a sub-grant for this group to operate patrols in the project area, and KFD undertook staff training and provided them with equipment. They also participated in human rights training in 2019, organised by WWF as part of a wider collaboration to improve safeguards and standards within the KFD. The training was provided by the highly respected Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG), with WWF funding the course preparation and trainers, and the project supporting the participation of the Wildlife Protection Units (WPU) from the project area.

**Freeland** is a frontline counter-trafficking organisation established in Southeast Asia in 2000. Their team of law enforcement, development and communications specialists work alongside partners in Asia, Africa, and the Americas to protect the environment and vulnerable people from organised crime and corruption. They have three main areas of expertise; training for law enforcement officials, communications aimed to reduce consumer demand for wildlife products, and protected area support projects. Within this project, FFI has been collaborating with Freeland to improve transboundary monitoring, communication and information sharing for law enforcement between Myanmar and Thailand in the project area. In particular, Freeland is the main point of communication with Thai forest protection authorities in Chumphon Province, directly opposite Lenya Reserved Forest.

**Myeik University** was strongly affected by the pandemic, which led to restrictions on class sizes and our ability to meet with this partner. After the coup, the university was temporarily closed and has remained that way. Therefore, no wildlife market monitoring was undertaken in this reporting period. Nevertheless, we remain in-touch with individuals from the University and may be able to undertake monitoring activities, such as online and physical wildlife trade market surveys of tiger-prey species availability and consumption, with specific individual researchers that we have established working relationships with.

### **3. Project progress**

#### **3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities**

***Output 1: Six target communities take actions to address IWT due to the creation and retention of livelihoods benefits and human-elephant conflict (HEC) management.***

Concerning project management, the FFI team (including the Biodiversity, Livelihoods and Small Grants teams), together with the Myeik finance team, conducted a group discussion and scheduled a workplan for IWT project implementation in the first week of each month. This workplan is also shared at the weekly meetings of FFI Myanmar's Senior Management Team. For data sharing, the FFI patrol team has shared information with the Forest Department from Bokeyyin Township, via phone and Viber, upon returning from the field. Every month, the core project team shared updates and discussed the monthly workplan with FFI's UK-Based Wildlife Trade team.

*Activities 1.1 Support six community VDCs to gain legal recognition and agree VDC-level commitments including zero-tolerance to poaching and IWT, linked to livelihoods support.*

As mentioned in the Y1 annual report, the target for legal registration for community-based organization is 18 VCDs, with six of these being involved in the IWT project. In January 2021, two legal registrations were awarded. Due to a third wave of the COVID-19 virus in Myanmar, and the country's unstable political situation, many planned activities were postponed. Therefore, the registration of the remaining 16 VDCs remains under discussion with central government authorities and village leaders.

To gain official registration certificates, our team met with village leaders from Yatanaporn village and Ywahilu area in March 2022. The village leaders have requested that the legal registration process be suspended due to the current political situation.

*Activities 1.2 Establish, train and support VDC-level Village Conservation Groups (VCG; self-titled rotation of community steward teams, approximately 10/village) to undertake strategic SMART patrolling in village forests to monitor, deter and report IWT and HEC, and remove snares.*

We are proud to report that despite a challenging situation on the ground, the FFI team, in cooperation with the Chaung Nyauk Pyan VCG, actively and regularly patrolled confirmed tiger-breeding areas, during the reporting period. Each month, a six-man team patrolled for five continuous days. Five traps, including string snares and a pangolin net, were removed in January to February 2022. In comparison with 2020, when 317 snares were detected, the detection of snares decreased dramatically, to only 40, in the patrolled area.

It is worth noting that the patrol effort in 2021 was not as sustained as the previous year, due to covid-19 restrictions and the prevailing security issue, and it is possible that this had an impact on the number of snares found. However, the rate of snare detection within each patrol also decreased, though patrol effort remained the same, and this *per-unit-effort* decrease represents a promising sign that the project's engagement with communities close to the forest area is having a positive impact. The current political and security situation, and the government restrictions on forest access, likely also contribute to deterring hunters from entering the forest and laying snares.

In addition, working together with the VCG, two signboards were erected in Pygyimadi, Yatanaporn Village in December 2022.

A session of Training of Trainers (ToT), on IWT and HEC related issues, was conducted at Pygyimandi office in November 2021. A total of four participants, representing four villages (No's. 5 and 8, Maw Taung, Tanintharyi Township and Chaung Nyuk Pyan and Warchaung from Bokeyyin township) participated; the relatively small number of participants was due to official covid-19 restrictions on public gatherings.

In May 2021, our team worked with local communities from the Ywahilu area to check camera traps and collect data. Normally, traps are checked every month but, because of travel restrictions, imposed by the military government, we were only able to check 11 of the 26 trap points. Based on camera-trap results, 31 species (mammals, birds, and reptiles) including the project's target species, were recorded. A total of seven tiger-prey species (guar, Chinese serow, muntjac, wild pig, Malayan tapir, and mouse deer) were recorded.

Due to the Myanmar military coup, and to Myanmar's third Covid-19 wave, we did not check the permanent camera traps from June to October 2021. In November 21, we started to check the

permanent points with VCG from Chaung Nyauk Pyan. Due to the long months in the forest, some of the camera traps have been damaged by humans, weather, and elephants. Because of the political situation, some access to some areas remains heavily restricted and the Karen Army did not allow the project team to travel there. For this reason, some camera traps must be moved. Currently, 10 permanent camera traps were set up, in five 4km<sup>2</sup> grid cells, in the Ywahilu area where tigers often pass by.

Our team also conducted five patrol days in January 2022, inside the Lenya Reserved Forest, with the Chaung Nyauk Pyan VCG. Based on these patrols, two rope snares and one old Pangolin net snare were confiscated and destroyed, and seven wildlife observations were made (tracks of gaur, tiger, elephant, muntjac and tapir were observed as were scratch marks of bear and sign of wild pig).

In February 2022, our team, with the Chaung Nyauk Pyan VCG, carried out patrols in the Payar tan area, near Yatanpron Village where hunting pressure is high. During the patrol, one old pangolin net was destroyed and signs of nine species recorded (Gureny’s pitta, plain pouched hornbill, tiger (pug mark), guar, elephant, muntjac, bear (scratches), wild pig, and mouse deer).

In March 2022, our team, with the Chaung Nyauk Pyan VCG, patrolled and checked camera-traps in the Ywahilu area. Based on patrolling results, only one pangolin net was discovered, and seven species recorded (elephant, gaur, bear, wild pig, dusky langur, white-handed gibbon and great hornbill).

From the camera traps that we recovered, 30 species, including two project target species (elephant and pangolin), were recorded in the Ywarhilu area. Camera trap images captured during the reporting period did not reveal any signs of illegal wildlife trade in the project area.

*Activities 1.3 Support VDCs to consult their community to democratically identify and implement priority livelihood diversification at community and household-levels, e.g. animal husbandry, home vegetable gardens, cash crops, and/or vocational training.*

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the political situation, we did not provide the second tranche of small grants in 2021 but did manage to monitor the use of grants distributed in 2020, with monthly checks carried out by village facilitators and then reported to our office (Table 1).

Village	Activity	Income (Apr & Sep-Mar)	Beneficiaries
Green Initiative (No 3, 5, 8)	Pig = 8 chicken = 144 Viss	MMK [REDACTED]	6 hunters
ManDai	Chicken = 105 Viss Duck = 15 Viss	MMK [REDACTED]	8 hunters
Ywahilu	Pig = 20 chicken = 100 Viss	MMK 0*	14 members including hunters

Table 1: Yearly income of project’s main target villages, based on monthly checks and monitoring updates (\*18 pigs died of heat-related disease; chickens were subsistence)

Fortunately, as COVID-19 has been steadily declining since August 2021, we were able to provide a second grant to the Mawtaung area VCD (No’s 3, 5 and 8) which benefited 234 households, including hunters, and received official registration on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2022, in the Mawtaung area.

On 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022, in Yatanabone village, where our target area is situated, we provided small grants to 22 households, that directly rely on forest products, with 240 Viss (local chicken) 10 Viss Duck and coffee plants (300 plants).

*Activities 1.4 Support VDC-level oversight and management to implement small grants scheme to enable livelihood diversification.*



In March 2022, as a first step, a small grant was provided to the Green Initiative Association, which is officially registered in Mawtaung area (No's 3, 5 and 8). Our team guided them on how to implement it. The Green Initiative Association is made up of a total of 234 households, including hunters.

*Activities 1.5 Train VCGs in Human Elephant Conflict (HEC) mitigation and establish early warning system for HEC avoidance.*

Due to the political situation and Covid-19 pandemic, neither the Wildlife Task Force (comprised of the Forest Department and the Community Elephant Guards) or the new Tanintharyi regional Illegal Wildlife Trade Working Group (Forest Department, Police, General Administration Department and Customs) were able to implement any activities during the reporting period.

A total of 10 HEC-mitigation signboards were replaced last year, as they had become faded and damaged. In addition, we provided 50 spotlights to three villages experiencing HEC (War Chaung and Chaung Mon Ngar villages, and the Yuzana palm oil area) to be used to drive elephants away at night. According to information on HEC to date, as reported by our network in the villages, one female elephant died of natural causes in July 2021 (this was confirmed by a veterinarian).

In February 2022, one female elephant was injured by snares but, with the help of the Bokpyin Township Forest Department, was released. The FFI team have agreed the implementation of a snare removal campaign with the Forest Department, to take place on 5th April 2022. The village facilitator monitored HEC four times a month, sending relevant HEC information back to the FFI office (Table 2).

Date	Incidents	Location	HEC condition	Comms Method
20.5.2021	Crop damage	Yuzana, Chaung Mon Ngar & Sin Kaw Chaung	Low to medium	Monitored by (VF)
15.6.2021	Crop damage	Yuzana, Chaung Mon Ngar and Pan Mone Chaung	Low to medium	Monitored by VF
5.7.2021	Crop damage	Yuzana, Chaung Mon Ngar	Low to medium	Monitored by VF
31.7.2021	One female was dead	Bo Dar Village	High	Though Viber/ phone by FD
13.8.2021	Crop damage	Yuzana and Chaung Mon Ngar	Low to medium	Monitored by VF
7.2.2022	Crop damage	Lenya	Low to medium	Monitored by VF
14.2.2022	Crop damage	War Din and Yuzana	Low to medium	Monitored by VF
14.2.2022	Injured female elephant reported and released by local FD	Karathuri (Kyauk Gyi)	Medium to high	Though Viber by FD
17.2.2022	Three individual elephants observed	Chaung Ka Pet Village	Low to medium	Monitored by VF
24.2.2022	Crop damage	Chaung Ka Bet	Low to medium	Monitored by VF
28.2.2022	Crop damage	Chaung Mon Ngar	Low to medium	Monitored by VF

Date	Incidents	Location	HEC condition	Comms Method
3.3.2022	Crop damage	War Din	Low to medium	Monitored by VF
4.3.2022	Crop damage	3 Mile (Lenya)	Low to medium	Monitored by VF
16.3.2022	Crop damage	Chaung Mon Ngar	Low to medium	Monitored by VF

Table 2: HEC updates provided by the War Din Village Facilitator (VF).

*Activities 2.1 Support newly established KFD ten-person WPU to undertake strategic, intelligence-led patrolling using SMART and CyberTracker software*

Based on reports provided by KFD on the activities of the Lenya Wildlife Protection Unit (WPU) as part of their sub-grant, several species and signs of human activity were observed (Table 3).

Patrol Period	No. of people	No. of Patrol	Observation	
			Direct observation	Indirect observation
15-27/04/21	4	12	Gibbon call, monkey troop, wood-cutting, forest clearance, five hunters	Claw mark of Bear
17-28/04/21	5	12	Gibbon song and calling of dusky langur	Elephant tracks, peacock sign, small scale logging (five loggers)
04-15/11/21	7	13	Calls of gibbon and hornbill species	wild pig, poacher's hut, bear scratches, muntjac, guar, banteng, elephant with juvenile, tapir and pangolin
03-15/12/21	7	13	gibbon call and the sound of black powder gun	wild pig, poacher's hut, bear scratches, muntjac, guar, banteng, elephant with juvenile, tapir and pangolin
07-18/01/22	7	12	gibbon and peacock calls, and sounds of black powder gun	hut, logs, gibbons, porcupine snare, elephant tracks, eagle species, tapir, wild pig, shifting cultivation

Table 3: Summary of patrol data (April, May, Nov, Dec 2021 & January 2022)

From February 15th to March 2nd, 2022, KFD gave WPU training in Ah Mal Hta, near Htee Khee; the 5th WPU training carried out by KFD Mergui-Tavoy District. A total of 52 participants were trained in GPS use, map reading, physical training, patrolling and data collection, photography for wildlife data collection and KFD's WPU SoP. Seventeen days of training were planned but this was reduced to 12 days as, unfortunately, some of the trainees contracted covid-19. For these 12 days they were able to cover the major skills and knowledge needed for WPU to carry out patrolling and wildlife data collection.

*Activities 2.2 with all stakeholders, co-establish a mechanism for community members to document and report illegal activity to VCGs, FD and KFD, including building trust, shared identity and ownership, and overcoming barriers to reporting*

As mentioned in the Year 1 Annual Report and agreement of IWT workshop, a total of three signs were posted at township entry points (Tanintharyi, Bokepyin and Karathur1) in 2021. Two signs were posted in Payartan area, where hunting pressure is high.

In 2021, we trained local communities (ToT) in systematic report writing and HEC mitigation. Unfortunately, due to the impact of political restrictions, only four village representatives attended. They all are planning to send the report to FD for coming year 2022, when the political situation is stable.

Our team already prepared five signboards related to wildlife law and protected species, to be set up in Y3. The four areas to be targeted are hotspots for wildlife trade and hunting such as Mawtaung, Yatanapone, Pyigyimandi-Lenya, Bokepyin and Karathuri.

*Activities 2.3 Work with FD and KFD to develop and pilot standardized systems for joint monitoring and analysis of all project data on IWT occurrences and trends, for planning and sharing with police.*

Although ceasefires were signed between the KNU and the government in 2012, the conflict has continued in some areas of Southeast Myanmar, even prior to the coup, and attacks and other military activities have increased since February 2021. Therefore, no activities to encourage coordination between Myanmar government and KNU institutions could realistically be planned or facilitated during the reporting period.

*Activities 2.4 Establish VCG representation in the Tanintharyi Region Wildlife Law Enforcement Task Force (WLET), e.g. on planning and enforcement actions*

The first meeting of the Tanintharyi Region Wildlife Law Enforcement Task Force (WLET) took place on 25 August 2020. Further meetings had to be postponed due to the political and public health situation. As COVID-19 has been steadily declining since August 2021, and larger gatherings are now permitted, we are currently discussing with FD (Tanintharyi and Kawthaung Township) to hold another IWT law enforcement task force workshop. For this reason, the FD accepted a proposal to hold an IWT law enforcement Task Force workshop in 2022. The Forestry officer from Tanintharyi is currently liaising with their departments such as the Police, General Administration Department, Municipal and Customs to agree on a suitable date.

FFI will facilitate the attendance of members of the VCG, who will share their activities at the workshop when the proposed date is confirmed.

*Activities 2.5 Work with Freeland to build relationships and systematic cooperation and sharing of actionable information between FD, KFD, Tanintharyi Regional WLET, and Thai Authorities.*

Based on reports provided by Freeland on their activities as part of the sub-grant, they undertook the following work to deliver on Activity 2.5 as appropriate in the current political circumstances (see Annex 4 for full report):

*Identifying and documenting border crossings to reduce transboundary crime through warning signs and reactive monitoring.*

Mapping unofficial border crossings proved difficult, as the number of crossings was underestimated. Access to, and use of crossings varies and depends on degree of isolation and the quality/ruggedness of terrain (including the presence of deep rivers).

Local law enforcement agencies have in-depth knowledge of IWT at many crossings but treat it as a low priority and there seems to be a lack of awareness that IWT is a transnational organized crime. There is a reluctance to prosecute IWT as it requires time and effort with little return.

Although this component is now complete, we will continue gathering additional data about crossings, including their size, frequency of use, and cellular phone signal strength. We have sufficient information to start placing the warning signs and cameras at locations where they will be most effective.

*Gap assessment for completing PA connectivity on Thai side to understand conservation connectivity of PAs on the Thai side of the border.*

During several visits to three wildlife sanctuaries and one non-hunting area, we worked alongside officials to gather and collate GIS data relating to the various protected areas on the



Thai/Myanmar border. We were able to confirm the entire border area is now integrated into various levels of environmental protection, with the minimum level of protection afforded to Protected Forests; remaining sites fall under three IUCN Protected Area designations; Wildlife Sanctuary, National Park, and Non-hunting Area. The formal protected areas have regular infrastructure and staffing, including headquarters and sub-stations.

*Designing, producing and erecting warning banners for key access routes in Thailand.*

Tri-lingual awareness signs were designed, laid out and translated on schedule. Translations were completed in Thailand and then reviewed by independent local translators, park staff and FFI Myanmar. We obtained approval to use the logos of various Thai law enforcement agencies, to demonstrate collaboration and foster cooperation between partners.

We produced 12 vinyl banners and distributed them to four sites; the non-hunting area and three wildlife sanctuaries. We supported the construction of frames for the banners and each site erected them during December, utilising their rangers. There is a request from the parks for additional banners, and there has been interest in these signs from other transboundary areas in Northwest Thailand.

*Purchase, donation, training and deployment of GSM Cameras to monitor border crossings and high-risk poaching areas.*

Ten Spartan GSM cameras were donated to four focal sites and three mini-courses on their use were conducted in December 2021, with a total of 28 rangers trained. Also, during November, a short enforcement ranger course was held at SDNK North Upper during which 15 rangers and 5 officials. Training involved a theory session at each PA headquarters, followed by a practical session in a remote area. The rangers were then shown how to check and download the on-line images. The cameras have been operational since December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and have already uploaded many images of poachers and people in the forest collecting non-timber forest products.

*Servicing wildlife survey cameras to understand more about key wildlife species and threats.*

During the last quarter we conducted wildlife survey’s to Sadej Naikrom South and Sadej Naikrom North (Upper). However, at the time of writing, surveys to Sadej Naikrom North (lower) remain suspended, due to the continued presence of covid in the communities around the park, which has affected rangers as well as villagers. The cameras have been left in place in SDNK North lower since June 2021 and it is highly likely some have been damaged by moisture (or elephants and poachers).

During each survey rangers were taught how to use the cameras, complete data sheets, and help review images post survey. Basic analysis includes counting independent captures from each survey and compiling simple presence check lists. Photographic evidence demonstrates tigers and leopards are both still present, although at low densities and at least 6 prey species (red muntjak, Fea’s muntjak, serow, wild boar, sambar and gaur).

From 28<sup>th</sup> February to 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022, we provided Basic Enforcement Ranger Training Course in Sadej Naikrom Krom Luang North (Upper) Wildlife Sanctuary. A total of 16 participants attended.

For school outreach we conducted a short training course, in March, for outreach staff from three PA's in SDNK. This was followed by several events in schools that allowed the rangers to practice their educational awareness skills (Table 4).

โรงเรียน (schools )	สถานที่	Level	Villager/Student			Staff	Total	Location	
			Male	Female	Teacher				
บ้านทองอินทร์	บางสะพานน้อย	มัธยม 7-9	10	21	5	13	49	47P0529030	1214080
ศูนย์การเรียนรู้ตำรวจตระเวนชายแดน	บางสะพานน้อย	ประถม 4-6	12	15	3	10	40	47P0533093	1233831
Total / 2022			22	36	8		89		

Table 4: Schools visited by newly trained rangers.

Also, in March, 16 rangers received training to help their patrols become safer and more effective. They are already using these skills and poacher arrests have been made, with site visits to all

four PA's to check banner location, provide on-job-training to all in the use of the Spartan GSM cameras.

*Activities 3.1 Develop recommendations based on field experience, evaluation and learning for community engagement in enforcing Myanmar's biodiversity and forest laws in concert with authorities*

No activities were planned during the reporting period.

*Activities 3.2 Share recommendations from practical field experience of community-level responses to IWT with key stakeholders in Myanmar and at relevant national, regional and international forums.*

No activities were planned during the reporting period.

### **3.2 Progress towards project Outputs**

***Output 1: Six target communities take actions to address IWT due to the creation and retention of livelihoods benefits and human-elephant conflict (HEC) management.***

In addition to the military coup, in February 2021, the second and third Covid-19 waves hit Myanmar, killing more people than the first, and further work was temporarily stopped. Because of these effects, all staff returned to their native towns, to work from home, as required by the public health measures implemented by the government. As a result, we could not provide livelihood support to project stakeholders and our staff could not join monitoring trips. However, our facilitators at each village were able to provide full monthly updates to the project team, remotely.

Fortunately, as COVID-19 has been steadily declining since August 2021, we could start our activities to check camera traps and to patrol in the Warhilua area, where tiger breeding has been evidenced. In addition, 10 warning signboards were erected in the HEC area in 2021, and we provided two small grants to Mawtaung Area and Yatanaporn village on 28 March of 2022.

On March 26, 2022, we worked with the Tanintharyi Township Forest Department to organize a IWT workshop; the proposed date will be the second week of May 2022, after discussion with the Forest Department.

On March 27th, 2022, we decided with veterinarians to give livestock husbandry training in Yatanaporne, where we have already provided a small grant.

***Output 2: Improved law enforcement capacity and effectiveness resulting from improved collaboration and communication between communities and enforcement authorities.***

Due to the third wave of Covid-19 and political situation, activities involving direct collaboration between communities and enforcement authorities had to be temporarily postponed during the reporting period. FFI will facilitate representation of the VCG on the upcoming IWT Law Enforcement Taskforce workshop thereby initiating official cooperation and communication between rural community members and enforcement officials.

***Output 3: Approach and learning from community-level responses to IWT documented and shared nationally (and globally) to promote replication in Myanmar.***

No activities were planned during the reporting period.

### **3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome**

The project outcome is: "Effective law enforcement and community-led stewardship deters poaching of target species for IWT in Tanintharyi, supported by stronger transboundary law enforcement."

Our project site is in three districts: Tanintharyi, Bokpyin and Kawthaung. Of these, Bokeyyin has already conducted legal action to combat wildlife trafficking in 2020. As mentioned in Annual Report 1, we planned to hold a workshop with the local community and stakeholders in the other two districts. Similarly, for livestock training, we discussed giving the training with veterinarians

from Bokeyyin Township. The training will be held in Yatanapone Village at the last week of April 2022.

There are positive indications that the small grant support (Activity 1.3) is enabling the hunters who directly rely on the forest in the Mawtaung, Yatanapone, and Ywahilu areas, to significantly reduce their poaching activities. We have now provided the first small grant to the VCD from Mawtaung area VDC, and they manage this themselves. In addition, we provided chickens, ducks, and coffee plants to local hunters, from Yatanapone village, in March 2022. In parallel, the number of snares encountered by patrolling teams (Activity 1.4) has decreased from the previous year, and camera traps did not capture any images of wildlife crime incidents.

Bi-monthly surveys of wildlife-meat sellers, and checks of their storerooms, by the village facilitator of Lenya Village, revealed that sales and availability of game has declined in 2021. It is, however, important to note that the current political and security situation in the region, as well as government restrictions on forest access, are also likely to be contributing to deterring hunters from entering the forest and laying snares.

### **3.4 Monitoring of assumptions**

Three months after the military coup in Myanmar 2021, cases of Covid-19 infection had risen again. Restrictions were put in place to control the spread of the disease in some high-risk areas, and the number of infected people increased daily. In Myanmar and neighboring countries, the rate of Covid-19 infection increased rapidly every day. Due to these kinds of restrictions, FFI's head office in Yangon advised staff to suspend activities, encouraging them to work from home. In response, the FFI team were able to arrange stakeholder meetings online, using mobile phones, Viber, and Messenger, with the communities, and used Zoom to meet with government stakeholders and partners. Most of the stakeholder consultation and inception meetings were organized using Viber.

After August 2021, COVID-19 infection rates began to steadily decline and the FFI team began to focus on implementing activities in the field. In October 2021, the Ministry of Health and Sports banned gatherings of 100 people or more, but from January 1, 2022, gatherings of 200 people were officially permitted again. This is a sign that the public health situation is improving and we therefore hope to make good progress with implementation of activities involving large meetings in Year 3.

### **3.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on illegal wildlife trade and poverty reduction**

The project aims to contribute to stable, or increasing populations of tiger, Asian elephant, and Sunda pangolin in Myanmar. This is being achieved through community-led wildlife stewardship and improved law enforcement. Local communities play a key role in achieving higher level impact on biodiversity conservation, however, it is important that local communities have legal recognition from the government, to work on biodiversity conservation activities.

FFI has always considered that human wellbeing, livelihood development and poverty alleviation are necessary to consider while protecting wildlife species and their ecosystems. Therefore, FFI has supported livelihood development assistance to communities working with them through our small grant scheme. For this project, we have supported the provision of livestock and seedlings to poachers, as alternative livelihood initiatives, to reduce poaching pressure. A total of 34 pigs and 349 Viss (582.4kg) of chicken and duck have been provided through small grant support from the project last year (2021). Yearly income is described in activities 1:2. Currently, a total of 250 Viss (400kg) of chicken and duck and 300 coffee plant have been provided through small grant support from the project.

We have provided a total of 3,500,000 Kyats (2000 USD). This grant will be implemented by VCD from Green Initiative Association.234 households, including hunters, will benefit from the grant. The monthly profits will be used every two months or for community service.

#### 4. Thematic focus

According to global leaders at the IWT Conference Series, our projects must align to one or more of four themes:

1. Reducing demand for IWT products
2. Ensuring effective legal frameworks and deterrents
3. Strengthening law enforcement
4. Developing sustainable livelihoods to benefit people directly affected by IWT

Of these, numbers 2,3 and 4 are supported by our project; Myanmar is a developing country and can be considered to have weak law enforcement. Therefore, more legal education and impacts should be carried out to make the public aware of legal issues. FFI is now implementing sustainable livelihoods in the villages to directly benefit the people affected by IWT. For example, hunters who are heavily dependent on the forest are changing their livelihoods by providing small-grant funding. Specific and significant achievements of our project, this year, are given in Section 9.

#### 5. Impact on species in focus

Please describe the impact your project is having on the species in focus. Please support all comments with evidence and use indicators from your logframe.

Our goal is for stable or growing populations of tiger, Asian elephant and Sunda pangolin, protected by community led wildlife guardianship and effective law enforcement.

**Tiger:** of the 22 tigers in Myanmar, at least eight are at our IWT project site (Southern Myanmar), according to 2018-2019 camera traps. In 2019, two these were killed by local hunters from the Ywahilu area. Similarly in 2019, a data-sharing collaboration with the Freeland Foundation, from Thailand, we determined that one of the six remaining tigers (identified by comparing stripe patterns on camera trap images) travelled between Myanmar and Thailand. There have been no incidences of poaching reported in the project area, during the reporting period.

**Elephants:** elephants in Myanmar are now being killed for their skin and other body parts. **Since 2013, more than 110 elephants have been reported killed, primarily in the Bago Yoma and Ayeyarwady Delta**, where a lack of antipoaching patrols has left elephants at risk.

At the beginning of the project area, chronic HEC led to the deaths of two people and six elephants, between 2019 and 2020. Sometime in mid-2021, two elephants were killed, despite a slight decrease in HEC and an overall decrease in elephant mortality. No elephant poaching was recorded during the two years of the project (Indicator 2.2)

According to camera trap data, eight or nine elephants, including calves, are recorded annually, and the number of elephants is not expected to decline, although the number of elephants could not be properly regulated. Therefore, we think that the population census of elephants should be conducted in Tanintharyi Division in the near future. In order to estimate the elephant population, the severity of poaching and the long-term survival of elephants, and to continue building the capacity of the Tanintharyi VCG, we should consider providing systematic training, using regional expertise and experience (Indicator 1.5).

**pangolin:** before starting this project, trade on pangolins was commonplace. From the beginning of the project to the end of this year, there has been no evidence of pangolin trading, coincident with the implementation of the IWT task force, VCGs and Myeik University. Similarly, border controls between the two countries have led to significant declines in both sides of the market (Indicator 2.2).

Generally,, to ensure the long-term sustainability of the target species, and reduce illegal trade, the relevant departments, Myanmar Forest Department (MFD), the Karen Forest Department (KFD), Freeland and the Thai authorities should hold annual consultation meetings (Indicator 2.5).

## 6. Project support to poverty reduction

The main target group for poverty alleviation and livelihood development is the wildlife poachers. FFI has provided livestock (please refer to section 2.5 for details) to the prioritized groups, through its small grants scheme. This support is aimed at providing sustainable livelihood options to hunters that have made an agreement with FFI to refrain from poaching wildlife. This support was provided last year, and the impacts are detailed above, in activities 1.3.

Notable achievements this year were (1) communities realizing how to avoid or reduce HEC, often a driver of elephant poaching, (2) no hunters were detected on camera trap images between 2021 and 2022, according to camera trap analysis.

## 7. Consideration of gender equality issues

FFI will consider gender in community engagement, benefits, and capacity building support at local and national levels. Gender inequality is prevalent in Myanmar and promoting the inclusion of men and women at all levels will help challenge this. Activities at community-level will consider gender differences in VDC development and participation, resource usage, roles in IWT, and impacts of HEC, IWT and project activities. FFI will draw on institutional technical expertise and guidance on 'Gender in Conservation' to support this. Project monitoring and reporting will disaggregate data by gender. During the reporting period, 117 women benefited from small grants and efforts from the FFI livelihood officer to encourage women to join VDCs have resulted in almost half of VDCs members being women (15 women out of 34 VDC members in total).

## 8. Monitoring and evaluation

At the Ywahilu tiger breeding monitoring site and Payartan area, the VCG operated from May to November 2021, and January to March 2022 (Table 5), with eight-members patrolling for five days per month. In February, the FFI team and Chaung Nyauk Pyan VCG patrolled in the Payartan area, where tiger was recorded by camera traps in 2020. The data was managed with SMART and used to produce a monthly report. (See Annex 4)

Sr. No.	Confiscated Items	Months (2021-22)					
		May	Nov	Dec *	Jan	Feb	March
1.	pangolin net	3	3	0	1	1	1
2.	steel wire	0	0	0	0	0	0
3.	Strings	17	12	0	2	0	0
<b>Total</b>		20	15	0	3	1	1

Table 5: Patrol data showing snare removal efforts in the tiger breeding area, for the periods during May -November and January-March 2022 (\* no patrol in December)

In 2021 (baseline), there were six HEC cases recorded; in 2022, seven cases were recorded so far. 10 HEC awareness and illegal wildlife poaching signboards (baseline 0) were installed.

## 9. Lessons learnt

There have been unprecedented challenges during Year 2 of this project, because of Covid-19 lockdowns being imposed across the globe. The FFI team has also undergone several lockdowns and travel restrictions within the third covid-19 wave in the country, causing delays to a workshop with the participation of local community and stakeholder in the other two districts (Tanintharyi and Kawthaugn).

The first obvious impact is that a small grant, awarded to hunters, has contributed to a decline in wildlife meat sales in markets (Buyer). Secondly, the installation of warning signs in areas where HEC is most prevalent has helped significantly reduce the frequency of crop damage events and, ultimately, elephant deaths, compared to previous years. Finally, the number of traps reported on SMART patrols has declined significantly in the project area, compared to previous years,

due, at least in part to the cooperation of local communities, especially in snare removal and patrol activities.

To protect species in the longer-term, either government- or community-led conservation measures that restrict access and activities, such as no-hunting zones or protected areas, are needed.

Due to the political tensions following the military coup of February 2021, information sharing between Thai, Myanmar and Karen authorities could not realistically be facilitated in Y2 (activities 2.3 and 2.5). The project team has adapted to this situation by strengthening their involvement and contribution to information-sharing forums with other INGOs, as part of the newly established Tiger Working Group. The INGOs involved all have working relations with government authorities, on both sides of the border, and can therefore facilitate the dissemination of relevant wildlife crime-related reports and observations. The project team are also in regular contact with project partner Freeland, based in Thailand.

In response to persisting challenges surrounding field work in Tanintharyi in early 2021, we have also increased the allocation of funds to Freeland this year and will continue to do so in Year 3, as agreed with LTS through a Change Request (approved in April 2022). The work carried out by Freeland as part of this project (see activity 2.5) provides important insights into the extent to which the Thai/Myanmar border is used, providing key routes for the movement of poachers and wildlife products between the two countries. Understanding this is a key step towards improving enforcement against transboundary commercial poaching.

#### **10. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)**

N/A

#### **11. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere**

N/A

#### **12. Sustainability and legacy**

The project aims to protect significantly threatened wildlife species inside the Southern Tanintharyi landscape and in proximity to the Myanmar-Thailand border, from poaching and illegal trans-boundary trade, by contributing to the development of sustainable livelihoods, improved resource management and improved law enforcement.

During the reporting period, international and national stakeholders, such as WWF, WCS and Forest Department, have also expressed interest in working together to stop the illegal Wildlife trade in Myanmar. To reduce the illegal wildlife trade and human-tiger conflict (HTC), we formed the MM-Tiger Working Group with INGOs (WWF, WCS), through which we share news and update information every two months.

By 2021, we achieved our goal of providing small grants to six villages (No's 3, 5 and 8, Ywahilu, 14 Mile and Yatanabon and Pyigyimandai). FFI is currently able to support small grants for one of the two village-level VCD (Green Initiative Association) that were officially registered in 2021. This team (Green Initiative Association) is currently working on setting up payments in implementing the small grant program.

The exit strategy has not changed. FFI will monitor the situation and will make changes to exit strategy if necessary, and it will be reported on in upcoming reports.

#### **13. IWT Challenge Fund identity**

All project activities with communities, partners and government stakeholders convey that the activities are supported by the IWTCF, including publications, training materials and workshops resources featuring the IWTCF logo.



## 14. Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

The information regarding Covid-19 impacts on the project is provided in section 3.4.

Myanmar's Ministry of Health counts nearly 20,000-recorded deaths from COVID-19, up to the end of 2021 – the fourth highest mortality rate in south-east Asia. The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the project in 2021, the number of COVID-19 fatalities in the third wave of coronavirus exceeded the combined total of COVID-19 deaths in the first two waves of the pandemic, according to the junta-controlled Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS).

The MOHS requires residents to stay at home except for going to work and allows only one person per household to leave the house at a time to buy food and essential supplies, and only two people to leave the house together to visit a clinic or hospital for necessary medical care. If residents must leave their homes for any reason, they must seek permission from their ward administration in all regions. Due to the third wave of coronavirus, FFI head office in Yangon suggested to follow covid-19 prevention regulation such as social distancing, hand wash, facemask wearing and vaccination support.

After August 2021, COVID-19 has been steadily declining, the MOHS announced that gatherings of more than 100 people were allowed. Similarly, On January 1, 2022, gatherings of 200 people were officially allowed again. Due to this improvement of the public health situation, FFI team will focus on implementation of activities in the field until end of the year.

## 15. Safeguarding

Please tick this box if any safeguarding or human rights violations have occurred during this financial year.

If you have answered yes, please ensure these are reported to [ODA.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ODA.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk) as indicated in the T&Cs.

FFI's Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy & Procedure was developed in December 2014 and last updated in March 2018. The policy applies to Members of Council and its sub-committees, FFI employees, temporary staff provided through agencies, volunteers and interns, contractors, consultants, service providers and any third parties who carry out work on behalf of FFI, in partnership with FFI or in conjunction with FFI. The policy demonstrates the organisation's commitment to safeguarding children and adults at risk and to complying with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; confirms the arrangements and procedures in place to safeguard children and adults at risk, including FFI's code of conduct; and provides clear guidance on how to raise, and how FFI responds to, concerns and allegations regarding the maltreatment of children and adults at risk. The policy expressly states that FFI does not tolerate sexual exploitation and abuse of any kind.

FFI's Anti-bullying and Anti-harassment Policy was developed in March 2018. The policy applies to Members of Council and its sub-committees, FFI employees, temporary staff provided through agencies, volunteers and interns, contractors, consultants and any other third parties who carry out work on FFI's behalf. The stated purpose of the policy is to ensure a safe, welcoming and inclusive working environment, which is free from intimidation, threats, discrimination, bullying or harassment; to communicate clearly FFI's zero-tolerance of any form of bullying or harassment; to define the terms 'bullying' and 'harassment' and provide examples, so that there is a clear understanding of the types of conduct that are prohibited; to communicate the importance of reporting incidents of bullying and harassment; and to communicate the procedures in place to manage incidents of bullying and harassment. The policy expressly states that bullying or harassment of any kind against a person or group of people, whether persistent or an isolated incident, will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

FFI's Whistleblowing Policy was developed in June 2013 and last updated in December 2019. The policy applies to FFI employees. The stated purpose of the policy is to encourage employees to report suspected wrongdoing in the organisation as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected. It provides guidance on how to raise those concerns and aims

to reassure employees that they can raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

FFI's partner due diligence procedures include checking whether any safeguarding concerns have arisen with the partner concerned and the Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy & Procedure forms part of contracts and agreements with third party contractors and sub-grantees. We are also currently researching LMS platforms (Learning Management Systems) which would enable online training in policies & procedures.

We monitor updates in Government and Charity Commission guidance and review our policies and procedures accordingly.

In terms of social safeguards, FFI has publicly available position papers on our approach to Livelihoods and Governance, Free, Prior and Informed Consent, Gender in Conservation, Displacement and Restrictions on Access to Resources and Conservation, and Rangers and Human Rights (links below). Our specialist Conservation, Livelihoods and Governance team supports regional FFI staff and partners to take a holistic, people-centred approach to biodiversity conservation, and ensure project activities are strongly aligned with these principles.

## 16. Project expenditure

**Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (April 2021-March 2022)**

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2021/22 Grant (£)	2021/22 Total actual IWT Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)	████████	████████	██	
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs	████████	████████	██	
Travel and subsistence	████	████	██	
Operating Costs	████████	████████	██	
Capital items (see below)	████	████	██	
Others (see below)	████████	████████	██	
<b>TOTAL</b>				

## 17. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project during the reporting period (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes

N/A

<b>Do you have hard copies of material you need to submit with the report?</b> If so, please make this clear in the covering email and ensure all material is marked with the project number. However, we would expect that most material will now be electronic.	No
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	Yes
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	Yes
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	