

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

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

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2022

Project reference	DEF001 IWT 081
Project title	Enabling and promoting communities to tackle IWT in Southern Myanmar
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Myanmar
Lead partner	Fauna & Flora International
Partner(s)	Freeland, KFD
Project leader	Saw Soe Aung / Ngwe Lwin
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	October 2022_HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	www.fauna-flora.org

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

The imposition of COVID-19 restrictions have been steadily declining in Myanmar since August 2021, and larger gatherings are now permitted by the government. However, the current political situation is still unstable and volatile in some parts of Myanmar. Therefore, depending on the situation on the ground, we have carried out our planned activities according to the log-frame. During the reporting period, we have worked some activities, with communities and respective departments, online or via mobile phones, to implement the success of project.

Progress during the report period is as follows:

Activity 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.

The tiger and tiger-prey camera-trap survey is on-going and, with the support of local communities, a total of 10 permanent camera traps have been deployed in 4-grid cells (each cell is 4km x 4km). **In July and September 2022**, the FFI team worked with local communities from the Chaung Nyauk Pyan Village to inspect camera traps and change batteries and SD cards. Based on camera-trap results, 36 species (mammals, birds, and reptiles), including all target species (tiger, elephant and pangolin), were recorded. A total of seven prey species of interest, (gaur, sambar, Chinese serow, muntjac species, wild pig, Malayan tapir and mouse deer species) and two hunters were also recorded. Of these, one is listed as Critically Endangered, six are Endangered, nine are Vulnerable, and three are Near Threatened, in the IUCN Red List.

The patrolling area is Ywahilu, which is known to be a tiger breeding area. During the **July-September period**, FFI staff and five Village Conservation Group (VCG) teams conducted patrols in this area, covering a total distance of 108 kilometres in fifteen days (120 working hours). Threats to wildlife and illegal activities were recorded, including 73 wildlife observations (monkeys, birds, mammals and reptiles), two cases of encroachment and one snare (immediately

destroyed by the patrol team). During the patrolling period, we found no sign of tiger, pangolin or elephant trade, or other illegal activities. All data collected by the FFI teams are entered into the SMART software database and analysed. SMART is a globally adopted system for park monitoring and management, producing accurate reports to direct patrol efforts against illegal activity in protected areas and other key important biodiversity area.

Activity 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.

For livelihood section, depending on the current conditions on the ground, the FFI project team monitored the progress of VCDs with FFI village facilitators every month, in order to achieve long-term progress.

In order to systematically handle the financial management of the Village Development Committee (VDC), the FFI team gave and tested refresher training, in **book-keeping, and income/outcome management, on July 24 2022**, at Mawtaung Area. 12 VDC members (4 Men and 8 Women) attended in this course.

In addition, the FFI project team plan to provide further livelihood support for three Villages (14 Mile, 4 Mile and Nantaung Taung) in October 2022 as well as monthly training, over a three-month period, on a different topic each month: livestock husbandry, agriculture and gender equality.

Activity 1.5 Train VCGs in Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) mitigation and establish early warning system for HEC avoidance

To mitigate HEC in the long-term, our three target communities and volunteer focal points in each village are in regular contact with project staff and FFI’s village facilitator, or the nearest FD post, via telephone, providing up-to-date information on elephant observations and/or HEC events. In accordance with the permission of the Ministry of Health, we have already made arrangements with Grow Back for Prosperity Organization (GBP; a non-profit organization working with the people of Myanmar to foster peace between people and elephants) to provide the HEC training to local people who are actually suffering from HEC accidents.

For patrolling, the FFI team worked with the VCG from Chaung Nyauk Pyan, patrolling two areas, focusing on an HEC area outside of Lenya Reserved forest. **In April and May 2022**, the patrol team (FFI, FD and the VCG) focused on this HEC area in order to know the current threats and trade of wild elephant. During the patrol period, we did not see any sign of elephant threats, except some small-scale lead mining, and one old pangolin net was removed and destroyed. Based on patrolling result, FFI team sent the relevant HEC information and threats to Forestry Department occasionally.

Unfortunately, **on 30 September 2022**, one elderly man from Chaung Mon village was killed by elephants, thought to be in “musth” (a state of heightened hormone levels in males, associated with the breeding season). Because of this incident, in the next months, we will work with FD to raise awareness and to reduce the likelihood of such events. In addition, our part time village facilitator monitored HEC four times a month, sending relevant HEC information back to the FFI office. In the same way, our network of volunteers (8 persons) always send the latest information about HEC cases by phone, Viber and so on (Table 1).

Table (1); human elephant conflicts during the reporting period.

HEC Village (Area)	Event/Crop damaged						Note
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	
Yuzana	Oil palm	Oil palm	Oil palm	Oil palm	Oil palm	Oil palm	Herd raids same plantation every month
War Chaung	X	betel nut	X	X	X	betel nut	
War Din					betel nut		

Ban Khwan	X	X	X	X	X	X	No HEC incidents
Chaung Mon Ngar	X	betel nut	X	X	betel nut	1 pax killed	On person killed by musth elephant
Bodar	X	X	X	X	X	X	No HEC incident
Pan Mone Chaung	X		X	X	betel nut	betel nut	More than 30 trees damaged
Yie Ngan Gyi Chaung	X	X	X	X	X	X	No HEC incidents
Sin Kaw Chaung	betel nut tion	X	X	X	X	X	
Kyauk Gyi	X	X	X	X	X	X	No HEC incidents

Activity 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 newly formed Lenya Wildlife Protection Unit (WPU), as part of their sub-grant, they were only able to conduct their patrol activities in **September 2022** due to the weather and insecurity conditions at their patrol area. Based on their patrol report, their 8-men team monitored key species presence and illegal activities over 13 days (288 hours), from September 12 to 24, 2022. Threats to wildlife and illegal activities were recorded, including, 33 wildlife observations (monkeys, birds, mammal and reptiles), four cases of human activity (hunter camp, old and new hut, gun shots). During the patrol period, the team also listed and recorded rare and endangered tree species.

Activity 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

On **3 of April 2022**, the FFI project team, including Bokeyyin Township Forestry Department (BFD), erected three noticeboards, to warn people of the dangers associated with elephants crossing the road, at main points of entry to focal townships, and notices of the wildlife law, and the species it protects, to help reduce illegal wildlife trade (IWT).

To ensure the safety of government and departmental staff, on **June 14, 2022**, an online IWT workshop, was held with the Forestry Department of Tanintharyi Township. In the workshop, attended by 11 departments, including VCGs, we discussed township-level wildlife law enforcement plans to combat IWT. In the workshop, Myeik University, BFD and the VCGs presented how they have worked together with FFI to reduce IWT and to support environmental protection. All participants agreed to start raising awareness of the new wildlife law (2018) amongst local communities, including a campaign to encourage restaurant owners to commit to not selling bush meat, or to trade wildlife or wildlife products on their premises, and to continue erecting noticeboards at key points of entry to focal townships. Although it was planned to proceed with the campaign after the IWT workshop, it was temporarily suspended due to the political situation. Once the situation has stabilized, we will implement the campaign as planned (we are currently in discussions to hold this in December 2022).

Activity 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 the activities, During this phase of the project activities (**Updates to July - October 2022**) are slightly different from last years which were more about understanding the challenges at Sadeth Naikrom (SDNK) Wildlife Sanctuaries. This part of the project aims to resolve some of the issues previously

discovered by fostering better connections with law enforcement agencies as well as closer relationships with local communities. Activities this period included the following;

1. Engaging Law Enforcement stakeholders through regular meetings

This aspect of the project has experienced some delays as there was a lack of confidence by park management of each site engaging the local police, border police and military. Although they all regularly meet during emergencies, such as the times additional support is requested during interdictions, the parks were all hesitant in reaching out to Law Enforcement agencies during non-emergencies. This was not immediately apparent and it was only as we asked why funds were not being utilised that we became aware of this issue.

In late September they discussed matters with each park and agreed on a solution that Freeland would convene the meetings and introduce this project and activities and ask for assistance in achieving the project goals. Such gatherings would form the foundations for discussions about how the various agencies could connect and assist by conducting joint actions. They have requested assistance from Pol. Col. Sombat Teungwiwat, a retired Police officer and board member of Freeland, as he has the age and experience to bring all the LE stakeholders together.

Apart from illegal wildlife trade the border areas around all three SDNK sanctuaries are subject to an enormous problem with illegal migrants being escorted (and sometimes trafficked) through the parks on the way to find employment near Bangkok or further south in seafood processing factories. The meetings with law enforcement agencies have the potential to be extremely useful if all the organisations can synchronise their work. We plan to start the first roundtables in November and conduct two per month to January 2023.

2. Community Outreach to schools and communities in and adjacent to Sadej Naikrom

They conducted a two-day outreach training course for officials from the three SDNK wildlife sanctuaries. Totally sixteen officials learned how to plan and implement their own educational outreach and processes to engage community members. Immediately following the training activity Freeland accompanied the officials into two local schools to practice their new skills delivering fun-filled activities to students. Combined in the two schools 58 students (22 male and 36 female) were engaged.

3. Purchase new wildlife survey cameras

Cameras purchased and prepared for use in the field. Over the last period we purchased 20 new cameras from USA and imported them to Thailand. (Freeland cost shared additions), then they manufactured metal boxes to protect the cameras from the elements, poachers and elephants. These cameras are Spartan brand and of high quality. They have a 2-year manufacturer's support program. So, any problems within this period the cameras will be replaced. Preparing them for the field involves making the custom boxes in Bangkok, attaching steel cables, painting them and acquiring the key-alike locking system. This process takes at least a month, but help prevent unnecessary loss to theft or animal damage.

4. Servicing wildlife survey cameras to monitor key wildlife species and threats

To detect presence of tigers, pangolins and other target species in order to identify better protect areas where they reside. Adding tiger data into national tiger identification database. Process. Cameras are deployed in the forest in the three protected areas and checked every 3 months. During these checks participating rangers taught how to set cameras, record data and catalogue this data once back form the survey.

Evidence of Indochinese tigers and Indochinese leopards were obtained and a number of other important species were also recorded including Marbled cat, Asian elephants, Malayan Tapirs and Fea's muntjak

5. Servicing of Spartan GSM poacher-monitoring cameras

The project four protected areas (3 x SDNK) and Khao Chairat Non-hunting Area (which lies to the north of Sadej Naikrom) are still in possession of the Spartan NCAP cameras. Unfortunately, as there was a gap in project funding the parks could not afford to continue paying for the SIM data time and the cameras were removed from the field for safe keeping. SDNK North (lower) bought their own SIM cards but were not in a position to pay the international fee to use the Spartan on-line data base and viewer facility and consequently they could not operate the cameras.

They agreed to fund the air time under this new phase of the project and purchased time on the Spartan on-line data base and viewer. However, none of the officials in the parks had the technical ability to reinstate the cameras. Their technician visited them to reinstall the cameras, but since none of the protected areas had active SIMs he was thwarted and unsuccessful.

At the time of writing we just agreed with the 4 sites that we would conduct one further short training course for them on how to use the cameras. The technician will travel to SDNK North (Lower) and conduct a 3 day training in November on how to set these cameras up. They will be able to sponsor the SIMs, air time and Spartan on-line data base and viewer until the project ends in January.

Although these GSM cameras are very effective they do need a relatively high level of technical ability to set them up and then maintain them. Once officials are competent in these processes and use them regularly they find it comparatively easy to operate and put the camera to good use monitoring for poachers.

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.

The following three points are notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months.

- Due to the military coup (February 2021) and to covid-19 restrictions (for much of the 2020-2022 period), some field work has been delayed and certain activities initially listed in the proposal are no longer suitable. As a result, the original log-frame and budget are no longer fully representative of the project as it can be implemented on the ground. Therefore, it will be necessary to revise the log frame moving forward and, accordingly adjust the budget for the remaining funds. This will allow for the project to continue in a practical and effective manner, up to its completion in 2023. The following table gives an indication of the level of revision required and this will be further detailed in a formal change request, to be submitted separately.

No	FRC code	Activities (Budget)	Remaining Budget (GBP)	Notes
1	D07	Partner - Myanmar-Thai cooperation exchange	████████	Submit change request to allocate
2	F06	Student-led wildlife market research	████████	Submit change request to allocate

- Fortunately, although the political situation is changing all the time in our project area, all staff were safe during the reporting period, and one advantage was that some activities could be carried out in accordance with project log-frame.
- In addition, the IWT workshop could only be held on online for the safety of Departmental staff and village conservation groups.
- Registration process for village level organizations has stalled as they are no longer willing to deal with the relevant government department because of the current political condition.

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

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS:	Yes/No
Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes/No
Change request reference if known:	

4a. 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: £

4b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.
If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

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

1. While the rainy season has been particularly heavy this year all sites within the IWT project area were accessible, except the Ywahilu area.
2. We are confident that we can deliver a number of activities as the covid-travel restrictions are now being lifted and we are in discussion with the Forest Department from Kawthaung township to hold the IWT workshop for the month of December 2022.
3. Due to delays in the disbursement of funds from FFI HQ (associated with regime-induced complexities with International Monetary Transfers), we should reconsider and discuss with KFD how we can extend to implement their activities within the project period that were delayed for two months.

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

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

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**