

Small Grants Programme by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity at Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary (Myanmar)

Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary

The 13,700-hectare Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary (MKWS) was established to protect the remaining mangrove forests and serve as refuge for freshwater turtle and dolphins, estuarine crocodiles, and resident and migratory water and shore birds.

An East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership and Ramsar site, the coastal wetland is regarded as “the last vestige of green space in the Ayeyarwady Delta.” It protects the largest population of the critically endangered *Sonneratia griffithii* mangrove species. It is a sanctuary for several globally endangered species such as the Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*) and long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*).

The wetland plays a crucial role in providing livelihood and other ecological services to local communities, as well as a critical mechanism for disaster risk reduction.

However, the sanctuary is threatened by illegal hunting, small-scale logging, unregulated fishing, traditional agriculture, and pollution, among many other issues.

MKWS' significant biological resources and the challenges it faces make it a suitable pilot site for SGP I. The park received a total of **EUR 581,027** in grants.

Meaningful partnerships fostered

The following agencies and organisations worked together to achieve wins through the SGP:

- Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (NWCD-MONREC) (*the implementing agency*)
- MKWS park management
- Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN), Ecosystem Conservation and Community Development Initiative (ECCDI), and Myint Myat Thu Doh Na Lone Tar (MMTDNLT) (*grantees*)
- Community-based groups
- ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity
- GITEC Consulting Group

Launched in 2014, the **Small Grants Programme** by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (SGP) is an initiative aimed at sustaining biodiversity in the ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs) in line with the interests of local communities who directly depend on the selected parks, providing alternative livelihood opportunities to the locals, and strengthening the role of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) in promoting biodiversity conservation in the ASEAN region.

SGP I was implemented in four AHPs in Myanmar and two AHPs in Indonesia.

Small grants, big impact

SGP touched the lives of local communities in MKWS and nearby locations and created a wave of impact.



“The main lesson learned from the project is we achieved the ability to engage and collaborate with the local community in conservation efforts. Previously, the focus was mainly on governance by the authorities, which did not achieve significant progress. Later, the approach changed to include planning for governance, educating the public, and implementing patrolling programs. In terms of data, Permanent Sample Plots were established on Meinmahla Island, and surveys were conducted before any interventions. According to the surveys, new plant species were found within these sample plots. Thanks to the support from ACB, these effective programs allowed authorities and the community to collaborate closely and successfully carry out conservation efforts.”

Than Soe Oo
Program Manager, MERN

Sustaining biodiversity, changing lives with small grants

SGP I supports a range of conservation and livelihood activities that fall under several thematic areas.



Livelihood Enhancement and Habitat and Species Management

Under the “Restoring Mangroves and Creating Income Opportunities for the Mangrove-dependent Poor in the MKWS” grant worth **EUR 366,027**, SGP I supported the restoration of MKWS’ dwindling mangrove forest, while reducing the pressures on the wildlife sanctuary by offering livelihood-related capacity development activities and introducing alternative sources of income.

- Supported the cultivation of **193,770** seedlings of **18** mangrove species in community nurseries
- Provided job opportunities to local communities during restoration like raising of seedlings and digging of ditches
- Supported the establishment of a revolving fund that provides seed funding for those who want to start businesses and will allow locals to benefit repeatedly
- Backed the establishment of **12** village revolving fund committees to supervise the activities in the post-project period
- Provided income-generating activities to **441** households
- Empowered **48** beneficiaries by supporting livelihood capacity building
- Funded the distribution of **2,000** fuel-efficient stoves



General Park Management

SGP I increased local communities’ sense of ownership of park management as they participated in the co-management of MKWS.

- Supported the development and updating of a CMP that is centred on co-management by awarding a **EUR 100,000** grant. The Collaborative Management Plan (CMP) was approved and adopted by MONREC in 2018 and served as the basis for succeeding interventions in MKWS
- Supported the Law Enforcement Programme for Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary amounting to **EUR 90,000**
- Boosted collaboration among stakeholders in crafting an inclusive management plan
- Supported the establishment of a Conservation Committee at Bogalay township
- Supported plans to establish a Village Ranger Programme
- Backed plans to establish law enforcement and patrolling strategy, using Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) method



Community Outreach and Conservation Awareness

The SGP enhanced community awareness among local communities about their crucial role in biodiversity conservation.

- Supported the “Conservation Awareness and Community Outreach in Meinmahla Kyun AHP” intervention amounting to **EUR 25,000**
- Backed the establishment of a local informant network trained to distribute knowledge on biodiversity conservation
- Supported the awareness component of “Restoring Mangroves and Creating Income Opportunities for the Mangrove-dependent Poor in the MKWS” including learning sessions on the importance of mangroves and ways to cultivate and restore mangroves
- Under the CMP, a Mobile Awareness Conservation Unit composed of community representatives, MKWS staff, and NGOs was created to conduct village-level outreach activities



Scan this QR code to know more about the various grants and interventions implemented in MKWS.



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