

Small Grants Programme by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity at Nat Ma Taung National Park (Myanmar)

Nat Ma Taung National Park

Known as the “plant hunter’s paradise”, the 722,600-hectare Nat Ma Taung National Park (NMTNP) is home to a diverse range of flower species. It also serves as a sanctuary to more than 345 bird species and 35 mammal species including the critically endangered Chinese Pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*) and the endangered Western hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*).

The park plays a crucial role in providing livelihood and other ecological services to an estimated 68 villages. It also has significant scenic and spiritual value for the Chin ethnic people.

However, NMTNP is threatened by the population’s heavy reliance on shifting cultivation, the complex customary land tenure system, uncontrolled grazing, illegal selective logging, wildlife hunting, and unsustainable collection of non-timber forest products (NTFPs).

NMTNP’s significant biological resources and the challenges it faces make it a suitable pilot site for SGP I. The park received a total of **EUR 174,998** 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*)
- Nat Ma Taung National Park management
- Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) (*the service provider that managed the implementation of SGP I in NMTNP*)
- Conservation on Hill Ecosystem Association
- SPECTRUM
- Norwegian Environment Agency
- Village conservation groups, community-based organisations, and civil society organisations (*grantees*)
- 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.

Lessons Learned

- Forming of Township Protected Area Management Committee is a good initiative for improving coordination among relevant government departments
- Capacity building of local communities is really important for effective implementation of the management plan developed
- The improvement of park staff along the process of management plan development enhances the practicality of the management plan and sense of ownership on the management plan

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Sustaining biodiversity, changing lives with small grants

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



General Park Management

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

- Supported the development and updating of a Collaborative Management Plan (CMP) by awarding a **EUR 100,000** grant. The CMP was approved and adopted by MONREC in 2018 and served as the basis for succeeding interventions in NMTNP
- Established Township Protected Area Management Committees (TPAMC) in four townships
- Established the Township Protected Area Management Supporting Unit (PAMSU) to support the implementation of the CMP
- Supported the implementation of the "Strengthening SMART Law Enforcement System in Nat Ma Taung National Park for Reduction of Main Threats" intervention amounting to **EUR 74,998**
- Strengthened existing law enforcement through the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) system by training **14** rangers and **two** park managers, introducing **45** planning patrolling activities, conducting **626** patrol days and nights, and increasing patrol coverage from **24%** to **378%**
- Improved park management planning by increasing species and threats distribution reports
- Strengthened coordination among stakeholders by conducting **one** joint law enforcement operation, training **four** voluntary community guardians, conducting **six** coordination meetings, and implementing an awareness programme



Habitat and Species Management

A key component of the CMP, the habitat restoration sub-programme seeks to recreate a functioning ecosystem to ensure that it can sustain species populations.

- Supported the analysis of competence gaps of protected area staff

Next Steps

- Establish active community and civil society organisation conservation networks
- Promote participatory biodiversity monitoring as part of co-management
- Set up a community conservation volunteer system
- Strengthen habitat preservation, natural regeneration, gap planting, and forest fire protection



Livelihood Enhancement

Under the CMP, NMTNP stakeholders will reduce the pressures on the wildlife sanctuary by offering livelihood-related capacity development activities and introducing alternative sources of income.

- Conducted situation analysis of the socio-economics of the communities surrounding NMTNP, particularly the livelihoods in relation to available natural resources
- Conducted an ecotourism survey
- Identified priority villages for livelihood development and community capacity building

Next Steps

- Establish conservation agreements and benefit sharing mechanism between the park and the communities
- Develop community-based natural resources management



Community Outreach and Conservation Awareness

Enhancing community awareness among local communities about their crucial role in biodiversity conservation is also one of the major goals of the CMP for NMTNP.

- Conducted Knowledge, Attitude and Practice assessment in 31 villages to know the public's perception of the protected area and its values
- Increased community engagement during the development of the CMP

Next Steps

- Select competent staff and form a working group to implement community outreach and conservation awareness initiatives
- Build an education centre



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