

# asean BIODIVERSITY

SPECIAL EDITION, SEPTEMBER 2024



Supporting collaborative  
and sustainable solutions  
for people and nature in  
the ASEAN region



Small Grants Programme  
by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity  
German Financial Cooperation  
KfW No. BMZ 2011 66 545



KfW



ASEAN CENTRE  
OF BIODIVERSITY



## ASEAN BIODIVERSITY SPECIAL EDITION

**Citation:** ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (2024). Supporting collaborative and sustainable solutions for people and nature in the ASEAN region. 116 pages

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**Disclaimer:** This publication was produced by the ACB with support from KfW Development Bank (KfW) through the Small Grants Programme by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (SGP).

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**Technical guidance:** GITEC-IGIP GmbH

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**Sustaining the successes achieved under SGP I**

## MESSAGE

When the Small Grants Programme by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (SGP) was launched in 2014, we were filled with enthusiasm for the possibilities ahead for our pilot sites in Indonesia and Myanmar. A decade later, we celebrate the remarkable successes achieved by the grantees and their partners in Gunung Leuser National Park (GLNP) and Way Kambas National Park (WKNP) in Indonesia, and Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park (AKNP), Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary (ILWS), Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary (MKWS), and Nat Ma Taung National Park (NMTNP) in Myanmar.



It is with great pride that I now present this special edition of the ASEAN Biodiversity Magazine – a collection of stories that highlights the numerous partnerships formed, over 60 biodiversity-based products and services launched, habitats restored, species conserved, alternative incomes generated, and hundreds of locals trained under various livelihood and conservation initiatives.

These stories pay tribute to the immense effort invested in planning and executing each intervention, and to everyone who played a part in these initiatives. A crucial lesson from our SGP pilot projects is that sustainable and effective biodiversity conservation in ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs) requires community-based management and supportive policy frameworks. To promote and sustain this approach, significant attention must be given to empowering local communities and institutions.

This participatory approach is now enshrined in the Collaborative Management Plans (CMPs) developed in the six pilot sites through multi-stakeholder consultations involving government agencies, park management staff, community-based organisations, civil society groups, and private sector partners supported by the SGP. This fundamental shift from top-down planning to a more inclusive process marks a pivotal transition from an exclusionary to a participatory framework in AHPs, thus enabling more effective, long-term solutions to address threats.

Embracing the participatory approach led to the establishment of six Township Protected Area Management Committees (TPAMCs) and one District Protected Area Management Committee, and the recruitment of 11 volunteer community guardians in AKNP and NMTNP. They work with park management in law enforcement activities in their respective AHPs.

We have witnessed the beginning of a shift in mindset among locals, especially in buffer villages, as they reduce their dependence on critical ecosystems and embrace sustainable alternatives such as honey farming, permaculture, livestock raising, food processing, ecoprinting, and other environment-friendly livelihood options. Notably, there has been a significant move from mass tourism to community-led socialised ecotourism, fostering meaningful connections with local cultures and environments.

We applaud the women who played a significant part in this change by seizing opportunities to join community-based organisations, learn new skills, earn extra income to support their families, and participate in habitat restoration. The SGP has truly opened doors for homemakers and other women to venture into backyard industries, with some assuming leadership positions.

In Myanmar's MKWS, a revolving fund supported by the SGP was established to lessen the locals' reliance on the national park. So far, over MMK 100 million (EUR 42,633) has been distributed, benefiting 12 villages. The SGP initiative has fostered a self-sustaining investment cycle, supporting diverse livelihood opportunities, such as crab farming and pig

These significant achievements would not have been possible without the collaboration of partners from various sectors—the foundation upon which everything else is built. We are grateful to the governments of Indonesia and Myanmar, all the agencies involved in the SGP, the park management and employees of the six AHPs that served as pilot sites, our project implementing agencies and service providers, grantees, communities in project sites, international and local NGOs, community-based organisations, private sector and academic partners, and all those who contributed to this programme. Together, we have built a model for small and micro-grants in the AHPs.

Our deepest appreciation goes to the Federal Government of Germany through the KfW Development Bank (KfW) for supporting efforts that demonstrate that conservation and livelihood can work hand in hand, and that, YES, SMALL GRANTS WORK.

As we celebrate the wins from the SGP's pilot run in the respective AHPs, I urge everyone to share the best practices learned from the pilot projects. This knowledge-sharing can help transform more people and communities into dedicated allies in conservation. I hope it will foster a deeper understanding of the protected areas' resources and become an invaluable educational asset for surrounding communities, particularly the younger generation.

Lastly, I call on park management, the communities, and our other partners to sustain what we have started. The onus is on all of us to ensure that the seeds we have sown this past decade will flourish and benefit more communities.

**Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim**  
Executive Director  
ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity

## The Small Grants Programme by the ACB (SGP)

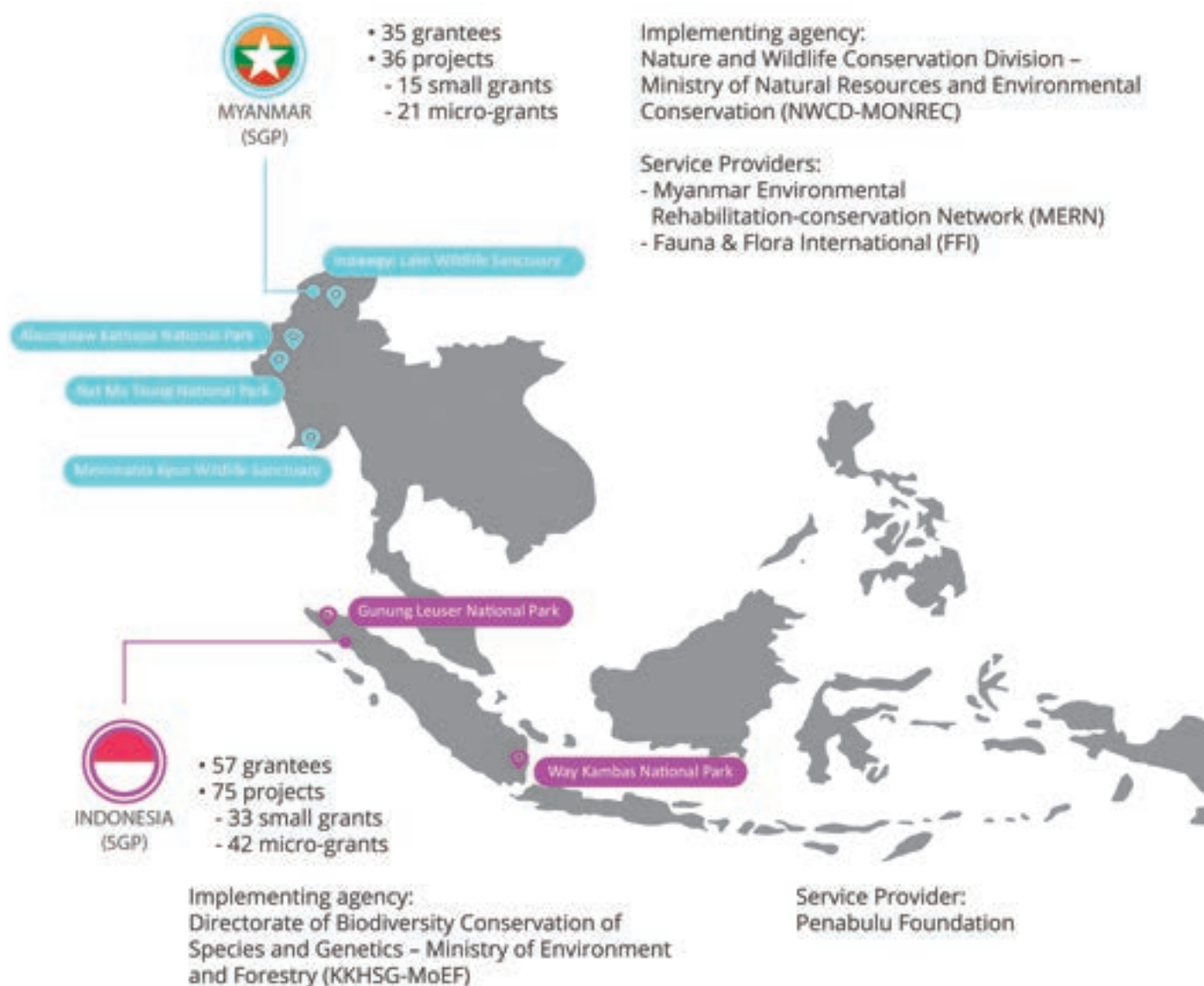
The Small Grants Programme by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (SGP) was established to support two ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs) in Indonesia and four AHPs in Myanmar. This was made possible with a significant grant from the Federal Government of Germany through the KfW Development Bank (KfW).


The SGP aims to improve biodiversity protection, improve the livelihood of the communities directly dependent on AHPs, and strengthen the role of ASEAN Member States (AMS) in promoting biodiversity protection among AMS.

SGP I commenced in 2014 to support the implementation of the national component in Indonesia and Myanmar, and the regional components of the programme with an overall grant amount of EUR 10 million.

Micro-grants and small grants, which were implemented between six months and one year, focused on thematic areas including ecotourism, habitat and species management, community development, community outreach and conservation awareness, law enforcement, wildlife research and monitoring, general park management, and sector policy development.

### SGP I Implementation Sites





# SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME:

## A story of 'collaboration, balance, and sustainability'

The ASEAN Biodiversity Magazine talked to Ms. Corazon de Jesus, Jr., Small Grants Programme Coordinator about her views and key takeaways from the SGP.

**What three words come to mind when you hear the SGP?**

Collaboration, balance, sustainability

**What are your major takeaways or lessons learned from the SGP?**

Too many. In every aspect and element of the programme, there are so many takeaways and lessons.

- Develop the monitoring and evaluation mechanism early on, and ensure that the design of grant projects applies this
- Level off with each of the partners on the design and structure of the programme, and get assurance that they understood it. Regularise meetings that will serve as a reminder and re-orientation of the programme
- Simplify terminologies and language used in any document related to the programme, make sure that you are in the same boat and understanding, and that it is not getting buried later down the line.
- Financial management and procurement are crucial parts of the SGP. Understanding this theoretically will likely be different when there are scenarios that do not necessarily align with the theories, depending on the situation the

grant project may be facing. While policies should be honoured, flexibility needs to also be considered.

- Learn and understand the government dynamics, structure, and culture. It took a while to get used to the differences between Myanmar and Indonesia—there were easy parts, there were really challenging ones, there were similar-to-an-extent areas. These all need to be carefully considered in coordination and building relationships with the partners.

**What did you and the SGP team set out to do when the programme was still on the drawing board? Were all these objectives achieved?**

When the programme was at its beginning stages, there wasn't really a 'team'. It's always been an ACB programme, spearheaded by the Programme Development and Implementation (PDI) Unit then (now Programmes Department). The goal was primarily to have that balance of conservation and livelihood interventions, to engage communities, and realise a more collaborative management in the AHPs.

I can say that this was achieved, but there's still so much to be done, can be done, and could have been done.

**As someone who closely coordinated with various SGP stakeholders and visited some of the project sites, are there any projects, experiences, or grantees that stood out to you? If yes, please share why.**

The development of the Collaborative Management Plans in Myanmar stood out because these were the first grants. In a way, these grants set the standard process for all succeeding grants. Further down the line, the mangrove restoration grant in Meinmahla Kyun is also very striking for me because this was implemented during the pandemic and amidst unstable peace and order situations in the area. When we had the chance to visit and monitor the project sites in the first quarter of 2024, all the hard work done by the grantee, Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN) was very evident, with the involvement of community and AHP management, working closely together even with the challenges. The project itself provided a good model of both conservation and livelihood. It was clear that the stakeholders understood this and had the sense of ownership with all that they have done. The revolving fund mechanism in the communities has a promising means to continue and be sustained. The park management recognised the important role of the communities in the restoration activities.

In Indonesia, Kaya Ecoprint by the women of Timbang Jaya Village stands out for me. The ecoprint grant project not only highlighted the participation of women. It is also a good example of wise and creative use of resources in the community and making a good livelihood out of it. Their products have reached far and wide already, and it's worthwhile to extend further support and link them with organisations that they can further cooperate for development of the craft and marketing their products.

Each of the micro and small grants actually stand out in each of their unique outputs and products, some may be for reasons that pose as challenging in terms of the manner of its implementation, but that's a whole different story.

**If you were to make an elevator pitch about the SGP, what would you say?**

It works! The SGP exemplifies an ideal synergy of conservation and livelihood. The collaboration of park management and other stakeholders, particularly the communities and local population living adjacent to the parks, in the management of the protected area contributes not just to the conservation of the protected area, but more so in allowing for the participation and involvement in how the protected areas are protected and conserved. In a similar manner, park management recognises and acknowledges that they can also be involved in supporting the livelihood of communities; their knowledge and familiarity with the protected area's resources become a wealth of education for surrounding communities, especially for the younger generations, so that they become allies and partners in conserving the protected area, and assisting them to explore possibilities for alternative livelihood without extracting resources from the protected area.

**What's next for the SGP?**

Upscaling the projects, especially those that have the potential to be further improved and replicated in other areas. Promoting the methodologies and innovations developed in the communities. Replicating these in other AHPs and its surrounding communities. Bringing these small-scale livelihood successes into a wider platform that would not only promote the products, but also uplift the confidence of the communities and stakeholders involved. Get the involvement and commitment of local, regional, and national government agencies to support the innovations, and institutionalise such mechanisms of collaboration between park management and communities.

**Anything to add to the points above?**

In spite of the challenges faced in setting up the structures, guidelines, and policies (which until now seems to be evolving even when it's about to end), the lessons and failures provide opportunities to adapt and innovate further.





# SGP AT GUNUNG LEUSER NATIONAL PARK

"The SGP has successfully filled resource gaps, especially from the financial and human resources aspects. The cross-cutting themes of biodiversity conservation and livelihood improvement have been relevant to reducing pressures on the forest ecosystem. The impact can be seen from the decrease in forest disturbances due to increasing people's awareness of the importance of the forests."

- Dr. U. Mamat Rahmat, S.Hut., M.P.  
Head, Gunung Leuser National Park



## Gunung Leuser National Park

The 1,092,692-hectare Gunung Leuser National Park (GLNP) is known as one of the components of the Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra, a UNESCO Heritage Site. In addition to being an ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP), GLNP also forms part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves in Asia and the Pacific. It is particularly significant for conservation because it is the only forest in the world where the Sumatran orangutan, tiger, elephant, and rhinoceros can be found.

The park plays a crucial role in providing livelihood and other ecological services to locals in surrounding villages. However, GLNP is threatened by forest clearing due to the increasing population's heavy reliance on small-scale agriculture, encroachment, illegal logging, and other challenges. GLNP's significant biological resources and the challenges it faces make it a suitable pilot site for SGP I.

### SGP at a Glance in GLNP

<b>EUR 1,223,567</b> worth of grants	<b>38</b> grants supported (17 small grants and 21 micro-grants)	<b>EUR 778,616</b> awarded to support livelihood projects
<b>More than 20</b> biodiversity-based products produced	<b>1,100</b> beneficiaries benefitted from capacity building on community economic empowerment	<b>240</b> beneficiaries empowered through direct capacity building on ecotourism
<b>EUR 444,951</b> awarded to support conservation initiatives	<b>101</b> beneficiaries empowered through capacity building on wildlife conservation	
<b>66</b> locals benefitted from direct capacity building on restoration	<b>7</b> PERDES or environmental park regulations on conservation issued	<b>524</b> women empowered to implement conservation activities



# REDESIGNING LIVES:

**Kaya Ecoprint promotes sustainable fashion while empowering women**

**Project Title:** Training and Mentoring for Ecoprinting Batik Production Startup as an Effort to Increase the Income of Environmentally Friendly Communities in Timbang Jaya Village - Gunung Leuser National Park Area

**Grantee:** Politeknik Wilmar Bisnis Indonesia (PWBI)

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** EUR 4,995

**Beneficiaries:** Kaya Ecoprint group in Timbang Jaya Village

**Location:** Timbang Jaya – Bohorok Resort

**W**hen the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the world came to a standstill, residents of Timbang Jaya Village—an ecotourism spot located in North Sumatra, Indonesia—faced significant livelihood challenges. With the loss of income from ecotourism and other sources, many households struggled to make ends meet.

The women, who were predominantly homemakers, had limited opportunities to earn additional income and support their families. When Politeknik Wilmar Bisnis Indonesia (PWBI) offered an alternative way of earning income and putting food on the table, the women of Timbang Jaya did not hesitate to grab the opportunity.

What started as a simple livelihood project in Timbang Jaya has resulted in the formation of Kaya Ecoprint, a group of empowered women who became entrepreneurs to promote a clothing supply chain that is ecologically and socially responsible.

It was in 2019 when the group was first introduced to ecoprinting by PWBI, an educational institution dedicated to nurturing entrepreneurs in Indonesia and a grantee under the Small Grants Programme by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (SGP).

Proving that there's beauty in nature, PWBI taught the women of Timbang Jaya to use natural dyes—extracted from various types of leaves and flowers—to print unique and intricate designs in clothes, shawls, bags, and other fabrics and non-textile materials. Unlike conventional printing that uses synthetic dyes, this technique does not



“Before joining the ecoprint community, I spent the day idling at home. After joining the community, I became more productive with ecoprinting.”

– **Nurma Indah Sari**,  
a member of Kaya Ecoprint

involve any industrial waste, allowing the group to practise and promote sustainability.

Over the years, ecoprinting has been gaining popularity in the global fashion industry as it takes steps to shift toward sustainable and environment-friendly practices. More and more eco-conscious designers are appreciating the one-of-a-kind patterns that this technique produces.

Since Indonesia is endowed with immense biological resources and boasts several endemic plants, ecoprinting may also become one of the country's signature products in addition to batik.

The women of Timbang Jaya easily learned the ins and outs of ecoprinting and embraced sustainable fashion.

Kaya Ecoprint has transformed homemakers into successful entrepreneurs and helped ensure sustainability of their business. With the help of PWBI and SGP, members of the Kaya Ecoprint group underwent training on marketing, social media promotion, and human and financial resource management. They created connections with potential partners so they could better penetrate the ecoprinting market and get closer to potential customers, by allowing them to participate in exhibitions and using their products as corporate giveaways.



The products designed and sold by the Kaya Ecoprint group

“My husband’s income from farming is hardly enough for our needs, so having another source of income allows us to buy food for the whole family and some other things like school supplies,” says Siti Rokayah, a 38-year-old mother of three and ecoprint craftsperson.

She added, “We did not know that the solution to our problem was right before our eyes. Because of Kaya Ecoprint, our lives became better. We gained additional income and we became more confident. But more than that, we learned to value nature more than ever.”

The group has also since expanded its business — in addition to creating beautiful clothes and other materials, the women of Kaya Ecoprint now

provide ecoprinting demonstrations to tourists visiting GLNP.

As more of Timbang Jaya’s women embraced ecoprinting and the opportunities that come with it, the original Kaya Ecoprint group further grew. A new group, Cantik Lestari Ecoprint, was created to accommodate more ecoprint craftspersons.

For the women of Timbang Jaya, life will never be the same again. With the homemakers’ sheer grit and determination and the invaluable support from SGP and PWBI, they were able to uplift their livelihood, as well as enrich their skills and confidence, all while making their mark in environmental conservation.



“I wish this group will grow and be more widely known to the public. I am happy. I enjoy it because my husband and family support me. My dream is to have my own studio, have additional members, invite more housewives and other villagers to join me in these activities to increase their income.”

- **Siti Rokayah**, ecoprint craftsperson



**Project Title:** Developing Various Flavoured Banana Chips Business for the Batu Jongjong Village Community in the Context of Strengthening Sustainable Livelihoods and Protection of the Gunung Leuser National Park (TNGL) Area

**Grantee:** Yayasan REPALA Indonesia

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** EUR 3,817

**Location:** Batu Jongjong Village, Bahorok District, Langkat Regency



The women of Batu Jongjong produce the flavourful banana chips

## Batu Jongjong Banana Chips: Promoting women empowerment through chips production



A delicious, deep-fried snack, the Batu Jongjong Banana Chips brand is produced by the women villagers of Batu Jongjong in Langkat Regency. Available in sweet, spicy, and savoury flavours, the banana chips production has significantly contributed to the economic empowerment of the women in the area.

Yayasan REPALA Indonesia (REPALA) and the community are working together to reach a wider market to further boost the village's economy. Their goal is to help build a tourism school in their area to support children and continue economic development.

"The production of banana chips has enabled the community to learn how to organise and manage a business that augments the income of our village. We are happy to finally be able to share experiences, information, and knowledge."

– **Joko Sunaryo**, Director, REPALA





## Karomanise Palm Sugar and Bandrek: Sugar palm farmers reap sweet success

Living amid Gunung Leuser's vast palm tree plantations, many villagers are palm tree farmers. Before learning the proper way to market and sell raw sugar palm fibres, they used to sell raw sugar palm fibres directly to collectors. With support from the SGP and its grantee Yayasan Resiliensi Lingkungan Indonesia (RELUNG), 40 sugar palm farmers increased their income after improving their production techniques and learning how to produce and market their own pure crystal palm sugar or ant sugar. "We are very happy because our palm sugar is valued higher than the market price by Badan Usaha Milik Desa (BUMDES) or village-owned enterprises. Palm sugar can also be stored longer because it is dry so we are not worried and can better manage when we can sell," said Juliana Br. Depari, a member of Farmer Production Kitchen Supply Partners in Rumah Galuh Village.

With ginger and other spices aplenty in the park, the villagers also started producing bandrek, a traditional hot, sweet and spicy beverage that people drink to warm themselves. The spicy drink Karo Bandrek and creamy Bandrek Krimer Karomanise are sold in jars and sachets. The villagers produce up to 2,500 packs per week and distribute them across more than 60 outlets in Langkat Regency. They dream of expanding the market for Karomanise products.

**Project Title:** Sugar Palm Sap-based Product Innovation for Strengthening Community Economy in Buffer Village of Gunung Leuser National Park

**Grantee:** Yayasan Resiliensi Lingkungan Indonesia (RELUNG)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 99,986

**Location:** Rumah Galuh Village

"For a long time, we have not progressed as sugar palm farmers. But now, we have produced our own product and we are now selling them online. We are not dependent on BUMDES anymore. Yesterday, I heard that the product reached Malaysia. This has a lot of good impact on us as it increases our ability to earn and our kids become proud of us to be called sugar palm farmers. Now that the ant sugar product is sold online, the name has become more elegant."

– Aldo Reguna,  
Finance Officer,  
RELUNG



### Palm farmers use energy-efficient stoves in GLNP

Under the same project, RELUNG also developed low-cost and energy-efficient stoves for palm sugar production that reduces reliance on firewood by at least 50 per cent. Farmer beneficiaries say that they are also able to cook palm sugar 30 per cent faster than the usual time. According to RELUNG, this innovation allows palm sugar producers to conserve firewood and save money. Moreover, energy-saving stoves combined with a clean kitchen ensure that their products are more hygienic.

**Project Title:** Improve Community Livelihoods and Restore the Ecosystem of Gunung Leuser National Park based on Participatory Approach

**Grantee:** Yayasan Pesona Tropis Alam Indonesia (PETAI)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 75,708

**Location:** PIR ADB C3, Besitang



## Sereh Jahe Ginger Lemongrass Drink and Honey: Conservation forest farmers' groups venture into home-based industries

Groups of orange and coffee farmers were trained by Yayasan Pesona Tropis Alam Indonesia (PETAI), an SGP grantee, to plant other crops while also restoring the ecosystem of Gunung Leuser. Now known as Kelompok Tani Hutan Konservasi (KTHK) or conservation forest farmer groups, the villagers have built a home-based industry that produces a variety of traditional health products from lemon and ginger such as powdered ginger citronella sachets, liquid ginger lemongrass, and marmalade—all of which are currently being sold in the market. Some of them have also ventured into small-scale honey farming.

Under the SGP grant, they also learned how to prepare seeds and graft. They are now learning how to make organic fertiliser from compost, manure, and other environment-friendly materials.

“PETAI Foundation trained our KTHK group on food production, including making ginger lemongrass drinks. With PETAI’s assistance, we were able to become a home-based industry that is active in farming. Our ginger lemongrass drink is easy to sell. We get a lot of support from consumers.”

– **Asih Suwarsih**, Conservation forest farmer



“We used to farm coffee and plant chillies or vegetables. When we met PETAI, they expressed interest in developing this small village and suggested we do honey farming. With PETAI’s guidance, we learned about honey farming and its harvest schedule. We are very happy because of this new experience. Our dream is to broaden the reach of our products nationally and internationally.”

– **Jaka Marelin Sitepu**, leader of Maju Terus Hari Hersada



**Project Title:** Improve Livelihoods of Communities Through Non-Timber Forest Product Development in Marike and Bekancan Resort, Gunung Leuser National Park

**Grantee:** Yayasan Sorik Marapi Indonesia (SRIMPI)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 89,763.27

**Location:** PIR ADB and Marike

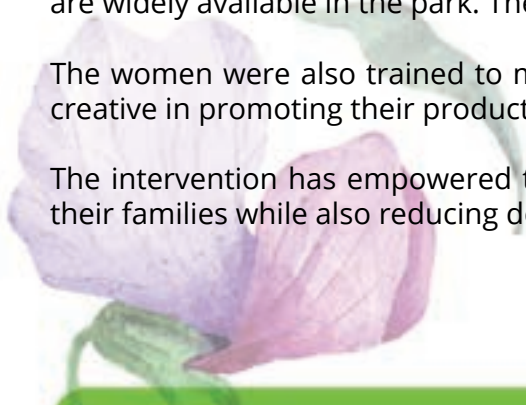


## Sehit Butterfly Pea Flower Tea, Honey, Natural Seedlings, and Banana Chips: Promoting sustainable forest management

To curb deforestation in Gunung Leuser and promote sustainable forest management, Yayasan Sorik Marapi Indonesia (SRIMPI) worked with communities in Marike and Bekancan Resort to develop non-timber forest products (NTFPs). With support from the SGP, SRIMPI encouraged women in the buffer village to produce telang tea from a mix of butterfly pea flower, ginger, and lemongrass, which are widely available in the park. They also produce telang banana chips and honey kutata.

The women were also trained to market Sehit Telang tea as a health drink. They have become more creative in promoting their product in village and school activities, as well as through social media.

The intervention has empowered the women of Marike and Bekancan to earn additional income for their families while also reducing dependence on timber forest products.



"We hope that our project will run smoothly and will be sustainable so that there will be lots of orders and there will be money coming in for those of us who are unemployed."

**Sri Nur Prabu Anissa**  
Field Technical Staff, SRIMPI





**Project Title:** Empowerment of Women's Groups in the Utilisation and Marketing of Traditional Medicines in Namo Sialang Village, Batang Serangan District, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra

**Grantee:** Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Kebijakan (ELSAKA)

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** EUR 4,934.50

**Location:** Namo Sialang Village, Batang Serangan District, Langkat Regency

## Traditional Medicines: Conserving biodiversity while maintaining natural medicine heritage

In Gunung Leuser, Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Kebijakan (ELSAKA) used its SGP grant to empower women's groups in Namo Sialang by teaching them to produce and market traditional medicines. Its strategy is to keep communities' traditional medicine heritage alive, while also providing women a source of livelihood and reminding them that it is important to protect nature's pharmacy—the forest.

Using a mentoring approach, ELSAKA gathered 50 women and increased their awareness of sustainable natural resource management and the sustainable use of medicinal plants around Gunung Leuser.

They underwent training on cultivation of medicinal plants like Serai Wangi, a type of lemongrass. The villagers received a total of 20,000 seeds that were planted in two hectares of agricultural land and residents' yards.

After the cultivation training, a few village elders mentored younger women on processing NTFPs or medicinal plant species such as Param Karo, Tawar Tasaken, and Tawar Peritahi—all of which are abundant in the forest. After the training, two women's groups merged to form a traditional medicine production group called Kelompok Perempuan Peduli Konservasi Taman Nasional Gunung Leuser (KPPK TNGL) or GLNP Conservation Concerned Women's Group. The group now sells their products within and outside Namo Sialang.

To widen the market for the medicines, 10 women learned setting up an online shop and marketing strategies.

Support has also poured in from several sales outlets around the village of Namo Sialang by helping to market the traditional medicines.

The Tangkahan Tourism Institute (LPT) has expressed its commitment to support KPPK TNGL by including the package of traditional medicinal ingredients in the Tangkahan tour package.

According to ELSAKA, an important win of the project is the mobilisation of women to become promoters of conservation by increasing their knowledge about medicinal plants and their benefits, as well as how to sustainably cultivate these plants and process them into traditional medicine.



Women in Namo Sialang gather to make traditional medicines



A woman farmer uses organic fertiliser on her plants

**Project Title:** Increasing the Capacity of Village Communities to Increase Revenue and Strengthen Conservation Initiatives of the GLNP Buffer Zone

**Grantee:** Yayasan Sumatera Hijau Lestari (YSHL)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 49,994.90

**Location:** Lau Damak and Batu Jongjong Villages

## Liquid Organic Fertiliser: Promoting organic farming methods

Steering farmers away from costly chemical fertilisers that damage soil quality and harm the environment, the Yayasan Sumatera Hijau Lestari (YSHL) organised 50 people from the Lau Damak and Batu Jongjong Villages into farming groups that use organic farming methods.

Under an SGP grant, YSHL trained farmers on how they can use their house yards to plant organic cayenne pepper, long beans, eggplant, tomatoes, gambas, mustard greens, kangkung, and cucumber. They taught them how to make liquid organic fertiliser (LOF) with household organic waste using the bucket stack method. They also trained them to calculate the costs incurred in one planting period by using chemical instead of organic fertilisers, enabling the community to understand that using LOF saves them money while protecting the environment.

The farmers also received 20,000 cacao and sugar palm seeds sown across 5.59 hectares of productive land.

A related activity is counselling on the establishment of agricultural product marketing cooperatives to gain skills and know-how in harvesting produce and its derivative products while they wait to harvest their cacao and sugar palm.

The SGP intervention has increased the capacity of farmers in terms of knowledge, skills, and awareness in organic farming management—something that they can implement and pass on to their families, neighbours, and fellow farmers.



“Before we met YSHL, we used chemical fertiliser and the rice didn’t grow well. I’ve always wondered why the rice didn’t grow well even after I’ve used enough fertiliser. Maybe the chemicals damaged the soil and made it worse over time. With YSHL’s recommendation, we started making and using LOF. We found out that it doesn’t destroy the land. In fact, we noticed that the soil is loose and that there are lots of animals like worms in the soil. So now, we only use chemicals to supplement. LOF helps. The vegetables are more delicious if you use LOF.”

– **Supriyono**, farmer, Gusun Suka Mulia

**Project Title:** Promoting Agribusiness and Small & Medium Enterprise (SME) Developments as Alternative Livelihood of Communities Around Gunung Leuser National Park Area III

**Grantee:** Yayasan Orangutan Sumatera Lestari - Orangutan Information Centre (YOSL - OIC)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 44,979

**Location:** Bukit Mas, Telagah, and Halaban villages



## JELES Ginger Drink and Rosella Tea: Enabling women-led agripreneurship

In the villages of Bukit Mas, Telagah, and Halaban, the Yayasan Orangutan Sumatera Lestari - Orangutan Information Centre (YOSL - OIC) used its SGP grant to support 100 households in transforming unproductive land into permaculture sites. Planted with ginger, tomatoes, lemongrass, eggplants, chillies, and other vegetables, the home gardens made the households self-sufficient in terms of daily food consumption. Organic produce from larger plots of land were sold to neighbours and the local market.

The women-led home industry groups in the three villages also produce ginger powder that has been licensed under the name JELES and has received a production permit from the Health Department of Langkat District. They also produce and market dried Rosella flower buds and Rosella jam. With support from the SGP, the groups have created their business plans to expand their home garden production and broaden their reach.



By reducing the villagers' spending on vegetables and helping them earn additional income from selling some of the vegetables and by-products, YOSL-OIC aims to curb forest-clearing for farming.



"We hope that our project will run smoothly and will be sustainable so that there will be lots of orders and there will be money coming in for those of us who are unemployed."

– Fera Irmawati, Group Leader  
Mekar Lausar Lestari Women's Farmers Group

"It's like magic. I didn't expect that the land that was not used before is now so beautiful with various vegetables. Our vegetable needs are available here. I will also share them with neighbours."

- **Hamidah**  
*a resident of Telagah*

Women in Telagah Village in their permaculture garden



Produce from the permaculture gardens provide villagers with vegetables for personal consumption. Some also sell vegetables in the local market to earn extra income

Trainings on permaculture, microfinance, and product marketing are conducted to empower women's groups



# PROTECTING THE GIANTS OF SUMATRA:

## Involving communities in elephant conservation



The mahouts at the Tangkahan Special Animal Training Center take care of rescued elephants

**B**y clearing forest areas and dense grasslands to make room for smaller animals and lush vegetation, the mighty elephant plays a crucial role in shaping landscapes and maintaining balance in natural ecosystems.

Unfortunately, these keystone species are being poached on a massive scale for their ivory tusks. They are also under grave threat from villagers who launch retaliatory attacks when elephants enter human settlements or damage their crops.

In GLNP, the Veterinary Society for Sumatran Wildlife Conservation or VESSWIC (formerly known as Ganesha Aksara Sumatra Foundation) used its grant from the SGP to protect the critically endangered Sumatran elephant (*Elephas maximus ssp. Sumatranus*), specifically the rescued elephants at Tangkahan Village in North Sumatra.

"This project intends to involve community groups in *ex-situ* elephant conservation in Tangkahan by capacitating them to provide grass for the elephants and encouraging their involvement in elephant health tourism," said Drh. Aulia Ulfizar of VESSWIC.

The Tangkahan Conservation Response Unit (CRU), which manages the Tangkahan Special Animal Training Center (PLSK), is the community group that cares for elephants. With support from SGP, it maintains the three-hectare grass garden by ensuring that it is filled with grass sufficient for 10 elephants, cleaning the rearing facility, and processing the elephant dung into compost. Regular deworming, tetanus vaccination, and vitamin administration are also conducted in the PLSK.

**Project Title:** Community Assistance and Involvement in the Management of the Sumatran Elephant Special Animal Training Center (PLSK) in Gunung Leuser National Park to Support Elephant Welfare which is Potential and Beneficial as a Source of Income for Communities in Tangkahan

**Grantee:** Veterinary Society for Sumatran Wildlife Conservation (VESSWIC)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 77,057

**Location:** Tangkahan



These efforts have kept the elephants healthy, maintaining an ideal Body Condition Index value and a low level of digestive parasite infections.

Another partner community group, the Tangkahan Tourism Institute, conducted a training on ethical elephant tourism for 40 tour guides and 10 mahouts (elephant caretakers) to protect the health and welfare of the elephants.

Under the project, VESSWIC also launched a guidebook on “Healthy Tourism with Elephants” and built an information gallery that displays tools used in elephant care and photos of an elephant’s anatomy and physiology.

“So far, the community has been indirectly involved in elephant conservation through the tourism industry in Tangkahan. The community understands that the presence of elephants in Tangkahan and the national park provides economic value to the tourism industry, thus, the preservation of elephants and their habitat is included in the agenda of community groups,” says Ulfizar.

The intervention has seen positive impacts for both elephants and the community involved. VESSWIC expects the project to improve the livelihoods of local people who depend on the park and likewise contribute to achieving the goals of the SGP on the protection of wild animals and their habitats, and improvement of area and species management.

“The grass comes from the community. We connect with them to plant the grass and we buy it using the funds from the project. This results in an increase in income for the community people. Grass, sugar cane, banana, and everything else needed in feeding the elephants are from the community.”

– **Cece Supriyatna**, elephant mahout and nurse at Tangkahan





With support from the SGP, Yayasan Pariwisata Berkelanjutan Indonesia (DESMA Center) helped breathe new life into the ecotourism industry in Batu Katak Village

# DESMA CENTER:

## Strengthening community-based tourism management in GLNP

**Project Title:** Digitalisation for Ecotourism Development and Promotion in the Gunung Leuser National Park in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

**Grantee:** Yayasan Pariwisata Berkelanjutan Indonesia (DESMA Center)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 91,477

**Location:** Batu Katak Tourism Village

**Website:** [visitleuser.com](http://visitleuser.com)

**T**ucked away in a small corner of GLNP in North Sumatra, the remote and idyllic town called Batu Katak Tourism Village is growing in popularity among tourists, especially among those who want to immerse themselves in a plethora of diverse and endemic fauna and flora.

It is a far cry from a few years ago, when Batu Katak was not as well-known despite its proximity to famous tourist attractions around the area.

Today, this small village is making a big splash in ecotourism, especially after receiving a Cleanliness, Health, Safety & Environment Sustainability (CHSE) certification. This is the first CHSE certification for the tourist attraction category in Langkat Regency with the Indonesian National Standard (SNI), provided by a government-recognised certification body.

With support from the SGP, Yayasan Pariwisata Berkelanjutan Indonesia (DESMA Center) helped breathe new life into the tourism industry in Batu Katak after it was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

DESMA Center's intervention has equipped small businesses with tools to enhance their ecotourism services and products and improve their market access. For instance, businesses were introduced to new approaches so they can further develop and better promote their tour packages and lodging services.

DESMA Center built [visitleuser.com](http://visitleuser.com), a digital platform where small business owners can offer their products and services. This enabled small business owners to offer their products and services to a wider audience and strengthen their collaboration with relevant stakeholders for commercial purposes.

“As wellness, safety, and health protocols are becoming more important considerations for the tourism industry after the COVID-19 pandemic, digitalisation is an effective strategy to encourage sustainable and resilient tourism and reinforce tourism products and destination development. It is important to ensure that tourism is reintroduced in a more sustainable and environmentally sensitive way,” says Dicky Mardyan, co-founder and director of DESMA Center.

He added, “The project has encouraged the development of smarter tourism systems through digitalisation in order to support community-based businesses, improve tourism product quality and tourist attraction information, and promote ecotourism in GLNP Area III.”

In addition to creating the platform, DESMA Center empowered dozens of women by teaching them to create new menus that highlight local ingredients and fruits, which are offered as part of tour packages.



The SGP-supported project helped create more women entrepreneurs

A single mother of three, Herniati is among the residents of Batu Katak whose life has changed because of ecotourism. She, along with other members of the women’s group Arih Ersada, received a series of training on hospitality and tourism from DESMA Center. Apart from helping her get a job at the Batu Katak Ecotourism Institute as a ticketing officer, the training allowed her to sell snacks and souvenir items to tourists in her spare time.



Herniati (left) is grateful for the opportunity to earn



Women beneficiaries feel empowered as they reap the benefits of their livelihood training

Under the SGP grant, DESMA Center was able to sign Memoranda of Agreement with universities and travel agents; acquire and share new knowledge on business mechanism for both business-to-consumer and business-to-business; renovate key facilities; create training modules; prepare new tour packages with structured itinerary and quotation; share new tour guiding methods; and produce promotional videos.

For DESMA Center, the end goal of its ecotourism initiative is to encourage local business owners and other actors to protect natural and cultural resources in GLNP after reinforcing the crucial role they play in sustaining their livelihood.

With the help of the SGP, DESMA Center has transformed the Batu Katak Tourism Village into a thriving ecotourism destination.



“We are thankful to DESMA Center because it trained us to become better tour guides and digital marketers. We developed new guiding techniques that aided us in entertaining and interpreting for the guests. The enthusiasm and human resource capabilities that we developed helped us cope with the crises thereafter, including the flood that damaged many of our facilities in November. Some were also trained to produce banana chips and traditional juice drinks. We are grateful that guests keep on coming.”

– **Tetap Ukur Ginting**, Chairperson of the Batu Katak Tourism Institute



## STRENGTHENING DATA COLLECTION IN GLNP

YEL used its SGP grant to strengthen GLNP's Conservation Data and Information Unit (UDIK) by procuring necessary equipment and providing training support for park staff.

**Project Title:** Strengthening Conservation Management Around the Biodiversity Research and Monitoring Stations of Sikundur

**Grantee:** Yayasan Ekosistem Lestari (YEL)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 90,829.79

**Location:** Sikundur

**T**he availability of comprehensive and up-to-date biodiversity data is an integral requirement to assess the status of biodiversity, craft conservation strategies, and implement conservation actions. To improve data gathering in Sikundur Biodiversity Research and Monitoring Station, YEL used its SGP grant to establish a model of community-based human-wildlife conflict mitigation.

It supported GLNP's existing data management system called Conservation Data and Information Unit (UDIK) by procuring additional servers and providing further training support for park staff to strengthen data management and support data optimisation. With YEL's assistance, UDIK was improved to better manage data from biodiversity surveys, SMART patrols, and threat and conflict surveys in GLNP.

The SGP initiative has succeeded in increasing conservation initiatives in GLNP through supporting identification and monitoring of key species like orangutans and other wildlife, conducting capacity building for park authorities, and mobilising local community groups to assist in monitoring and mitigation of human-wildlife conflict.

**"With the upgrades made to UDIK like the additional servers and the training support provided to us, management of biodiversity data became easier."**

– **Siti Hidayat**, Data Analyst of GLNP management





**Project Title:** Strengthening Conservation of the Gunung Leuser National Park (GLNP) through Biodiversity Management in Area 3, Stabat

**Grantee:** Yayasan Pesona Tropis Alam Indonesia (PETAI)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 69,366.84



## Centre of Conservation Data: Strengthening biodiversity management through web-based applications

Access to reliable biodiversity data is essential for effective park management and conservation efforts. Strengthening data collection and management is a must in a treasure trove of fauna and flora like GLNP. Under the SGP, Yayasan Pesona Tropis Alam Indonesia (PETAI) developed a centre of conservation data in partnership with the GLNP management.

They developed web-based applications aimed at supporting efficient and integrated management at the AHP. Following a series of consultations and focused group discussions to determine the forms, user, application interfaces, and content needed for application development, the organisation created three applications that will facilitate the management of data and information needed in planning, implementing, and monitoring and evaluation of GLNP management.

E-Pustaka was designed to collect and digitise management plan documents, reports, research and survey results, books, and other documents so the files can be easily found. E-JaSa is a platform that can be used to register potential partners who wish to collaborate with GLNP and existing GLNP partners. E-Ticketing was designed to document the process of selling tickets for GLNP tours without having to physically issue valuable documents or paper tickets. All information related to electronic ticketing is stored digitally on the AHP's computer system.

Apart from supporting PETAI in designing the applications, SGP I also supported the purchase of necessary equipment including camera traps, GPS, compass, binoculars, and densiometers.

Related capacity-building activities were also conducted. GLNP database operators were trained on using the new web-based applications. Park management and staff also underwent training on how to prepare inventory and biodiversity monitoring strategy, focusing on surveying and monitoring key species, as well as their habitats.

The local communities also benefited from capacity building as officials and community representatives from four resorts underwent training on identification, inventory, and biodiversity monitoring. In addition to studying biodiversity inventory, they also learned about human-wildlife conflict mitigation and analysis of potential disasters.

The intervention produced three manuals on standards and methodologies for biodiversity survey and monitoring.

An initial survey confirmed the presence of elephants in large pockets of the population. Data like this are fed into management strategies related to the elephant population and their habitat. Overall, initial surveys led to updated data on species and habitats in GLNP and will be taken into consideration in improving the restoration of the ecosystem in the conservation partnership area.

Over the long term, PETAI believes that the intervention will accelerate the realisation of GLNP as a source of knowledge for Sumatran tropical rainforests.



**Project Title:** Community Awareness Improvement on Taman Nasional Gunung Leuser (TNGL) Biodiversity Conservation

**Grantee:** Yayasan Ekosistem Lestari (YEL)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 52,680

**Location:** Sikundur

Conducting environmental education activities in communities and schools to boost conservation awareness is a key objective of YEL

## YEL mainstreams biodiversity into education

To improve stakeholder awareness on the urgency and importance of conserving the vast biodiversity of the national park, YEL launched a comprehensive environmental education campaign in GLNP. Workshops were conducted together with the community stakeholders to jointly identify the issues and problems in and around the area then map out concrete solutions to address them.

Through this participatory process, the stakeholders—community and park authorities alike—concur on perspectives, common goals, and commitment to GLNP biodiversity conservation.

Acknowledging the AMS' thrust of mainstreaming biodiversity into education, YEL signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Head of Education Officer of Langkat District to include the *Tropical Rainforest Text Book* in the school curricula. Students from elementary, junior high school up to senior high school use the text books to increase their knowledge about the environment, eventually helping them appreciate and value biodiversity. The initiative also supported the Training of Trainers for 30 elementary school teachers from 15 schools, making them more effective environmental educators. Although mostly conducted online at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, both teachers and students found the *Tropical Rainforest Text Book* helpful and enjoyable.

To augment the virtual discussions, students were invited to visit Pusat Pendidikan Lingkungan Hidup's (PPLH) Ecofarming Center at the Timbang Lawan Village where information materials about the environment were presented and students were able to see first-hand various environmental conservation activities. The Ecofarming Center also serves as the headquarters of the TNGL Care Community Forum secretariat.

Also part of YEL's intervention was a six-day Conservation Camp which was attended by 300

students in the Bahorok sub-district and other surrounding areas. Interactive discussions, presentations, and games made the camp an enjoyable experience while learning more about the biodiversity of GLNP.

Among the highlights of the Conservation Camp is the selection of 30 Conservation Ambassadors. The Conservation Ambassadors were chosen through a rigorous process, assessing their understanding of conservation based on writings that the participants made and published on their social media platforms. To sustain their engagement, the Conservation Ambassadors developed their own programmes for conservation, which include promoting GLNP's conservation activities.



Conservation Ambassadors promote environmental protection in Gunung Leuser National Park



# WHEN WOMEN MEAN BUSINESS: Women-led credit unions empower female budding entrepreneurs

**F**or women residing in three villages around Gunung Leuser, small loans have a big impact—they do not just put food on the table but also provide a means to escape the clutches of poverty.

Having limited or no access to banks and traditional financial services, some villagers in Kuta Gajah, Sei Musam, and Sampe Raya fall prey to loan sharks who charge exploitative interest rates and drive borrowers to more financial ruin.

But those days are over, thanks to the establishment of three credit unions in these villages. In a bid to break the cycle of poverty, the SGP supported the creation of these microfinance institutions that bridge financing gaps in remote and rural areas.

Operated by women conservation cadres, the savings and loan cooperatives have helped women in these villages generate income and provide sustainable livelihood for their families. With small, collateral-free loans, women do not have to spend sleepless nights worrying about how to make ends meet.

More than being able to dodge ruthless loan sharks and easing their cash flow problems, the cooperatives have awakened the villagers' entrepreneurial spirit. By starting their own small businesses, these women can provide employment to others and uplift the livelihood of their villages—one small loan at a time.

**Project Title:** Strengthening Women's Participation in the Preservation of Gunung Leuser National Park through Sustainable Livelihood Development

**Grantee:** PARAS Foundation

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 34,812.10

**Location:** Sei Musam, Kkuta Gajah, Sampe Raya.

**Beneficiaries:** 30 women conservation cadres from 3 villages



# MEETING HALFWAY: Paving the road to co-exist with wildlife

Biodiversity corridors connect isolated patches of habitat and help conserve local species populations

**Project Title:** Collaborative Action to Protect and Improve Biodiversity Conservation in Gunung Leuser National Park Area III

**Grantee:** Yayasan Orangutan Sumatera Lestari – Orangutan Information Centre (YOSL-OIC)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 99,369.28

**Location:** Barak Induk, Sekoci Lapan Resort

**A**long the 36-kilometre road straddling between the districts of Karo and Langkat in North Sumatra, more than 2,000 vehicles are seen driving at great speeds every day. Cars and motorcycles zip across the pavement that cuts through the immensely biodiverse GLNP, the last place where orangutans, tigers, elephants, rhinoceros, and leopards live together.

While highways that wind along forests such as Karo-Langkat road were developed to connect humans, they pose a major dilemma for animals that live in the area. Crossing the road would put wildlife at risk of injury, or worse, death, in a car collision. But if they chose to stay put, they would risk separation from their families.

For arboreal animals such as orangutans, which heavily populate the GLNP, roads also prove to be a barrier as these create huge gaps between tree canopies used to move around.

As part of the efforts to reduce roadkill incidents involving wildlife, a biodiversity survey was conducted on the impact of the Karo-Langkat road construction. Supported by the SGP, the surveys and monitoring were used by GLNP managers in making decisions regarding the protection and management of biodiversity of the national park.

In the case of the Karo-Langkat road survey, the findings were crucial in identifying the location of wildlife corridors, which seek to connect two or more natural habitats of animals that have been disrupted by the highway. Researchers recommended additional 11 locations to serve as natural canopy bridges for arboreal animals, while another site was determined to be the most ideal for terrestrial wildlife corridors or bridges.

In addition to carrying out surveys and monitoring, the programme allowed the grantees to put up two monitoring posts, warning road signs, and information regarding the presence of wildlife in the area.

The findings from the biodiversity survey for the Karo-Langkat road construction revealed that coexistence is possible connecting people without hampering the free movement of wildlife in their natural habitat.



Biodiversity survey at Karo-Langkat in Gunung Leuser National Park

“Generally speaking, SGP shows remarkable success in boosting biodiversity conservation efforts and livelihoods. In the context of WKNP, these goals go hand in hand as it attempts to transform biodiversity conservation with ecotourism development in collaboration with the local communities. The SGP comes at just the right time in supporting our goals through its micro- and small grants related to these interconnections.”

- Kuswandono, S.Hut.,M.P  
Head, Way Kambas National Park

# SGP AT WAY KAMBAS NATIONAL PARK

Tourists enjoy a river tour in  
Way Kambas National Park

## Way Kambas National Park

Stretching across 125,600 hectares in Lampung province, South Sumatra, Way Kambas National Park (WKNP) is home to Indonesia's largest expanse of lowland evergreen rainforest and is one of Asia's top birdwatching destinations.

WKNP is intertwined with the lives of residents in 38 adjacent villages, where agriculture serves as the primary livelihood. Many locals grow crops like rice, cassava, corn, cocoa, pepper, bananas, and coconuts in their village plantations. Some residents also rely on fishing and harvesting forest products to supplement their income. With the rise of ecotourism, an increasing number of locals are finding new opportunities as tour guides, homestay providers, and food vendors—offering visitors a chance to experience the park's unique biodiversity firsthand. Meanwhile, others work for agricultural companies to cultivate pineapple, banana, crystal guava, dragon fruit, Indian apple, and mango.

This ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP) is not just a source of livelihoods, it is a vital refuge of the world's most critically endangered species, including the Sumatran elephant (*Elephas maximus ssp. sumatranus*), Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*), and Sumatran tiger (*Panthera tigris ssp. sumatrae*), and the endangered Malay tapir (*Tapirus indicus*) and siamang (*Hylobates syndactylus*). With 50 mammal species, 315 bird species, 48 freshwater fish species, 17 amphibian



species, and 300 species of flora, the park is considered a biodiversity hotspot.

However, a significant challenge facing Way Kambas is the lack of clear boundaries between the national park and surrounding villages. This leads to issues such as poaching, illegal logging, hunting, and unsustainable fishing practices. The blurred borders also contribute to frequent human-wildlife conflicts, particularly with elephants, causing damage to crops and property, and sometimes leading to injuries and deaths.

To address these challenges, the SGP has focused on reducing these conflicts, promoting alternative livelihoods, and fostering stronger relationships between park management and local communities.

### SGP at a Glance in WKNP





POKDARWIS Braja Harjosari has addressed challenges related to human-elephant interactions in Way Kambas National Park

**Project Title:** Ecotourism Development by POKDARWIS in Braja Harjosari Village through NFT Collector Support to Support Sumatran Elephant Conservation in TNWK

**Grantee:** POKDARWIS Braja Harjosari Cooperative

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** EUR 5,000

**Location:** Braja Harjosari and nearby communities

**Website for Reservations:** <https://safariwaykambas.com/>

# POKDAWRIS BRAJA HARJOSARI

Transforming conflict into  
coexistence through ecotourism

**B**raja Harjosari, a picturesque village in the buffer zone of WKNP, is popular for its lush landscape, vibrant wildlife, and fertile farmlands. However, the idyllic setting also faces a unique challenge—finding a way for humans and elephants to live together in harmony.

For Agus, a 45-year-old resident of Braja Harjosari, this struggle is all too familiar. Local communities and elephants often clash as they compete for the same space and resources, inevitably encroaching into each other's territories. Almost every night, wild elephants raid the villagers' corn and pineapple fields, wreaking havoc on their crops and properties, as well as causing injuries and casualties on both sides.

"These elephants used to forage on our crops and destroyed our properties. Because this has continued for decades, people in our village saw them as enemies," Agus shared.

The safety concerns for both humans and elephants have created a conflict-ridden relationship. The raids severely impacted villagers' livelihoods,

pushing some to venture into the park in search of food.

Recognising that solving this complex issue requires collective effort, Agus and fellow villagers formed the POKDARWIS Braja Harjosari in 2015 and laid the foundation for more organised ecotourism activities in the village.

While the COVID-19 pandemic halted the tours in WKNP from 2020 to November 2023, POKDARWIS still worked on improving its services and inviting more community-based enterprises in its circle.



Agus of POKDARWIS is a staunch advocate of pursuing alternative sources of livelihood to reduce pressures on Way Kambas National Park



The ecotourism package of POKDARWIS includes homestay for local and foreign visitors of Way Kambas National Park

With a micro-grant they received from SGP in 2022, they jump-started a comprehensive ecotourism project in their village and other nearby villages and eventually became a cooperative.

POKDARWIS or Kelompok Sadar Wisata in Bahasa, meaning “tourism awareness group”, lived up to its name by developing tourism service packages that include all aspects of ecotourism in their area. A total of 51 locals were trained on various ecotourism-related skills. This included 11 homestay owners, who learned how to welcome guests, manage housekeeping, standardise facilities, serve food, and speak basic English. Another 16 locals participated in focus group discussions, where they learned about organisation and financial management before coming together to form a tourism service cooperative. Additionally, 24 villagers underwent training on the whole gamut of nature tourism to boost their knowledge of biodiversity, birdwatching, wildlife observation, and managing day tours and a night safari.

Following these capacity building efforts, POKDARWIS worked with the locals and partners to create ecotourism packages centred on 12 unique activities for visitors, including agro-tourism, birdwatching, night safari, cultural shows, cycling, culinary adventures, elephant feeding, and homestays in the village, among other activities.

POKDARWIS Braja Harjosari has grown into a thriving ecotourism hub, offering a wide array of services. The cooperative sells assorted souvenirs and offers transportation services for local and foreign tourists, as well as wildlife enthusiasts who flock to witness Way Kambas’ biodiversity and way of life up close. Part of its tours are visits to community-based organisations like Rajut Savana

for crochet-making and Alas Kambas Marketing Cooperative for honey production.

As soon as the WKNP re-opened to tourists in December 2023, the cooperative included the Elephant Training Center or PLG among the destinations offered in their tours.

“The conflict has been a way for us to work together with SGP, its service provider Penabulu Foundation, and the park management in discovering our potential. Through the help we received, we can now run our homestay, manage the cooperative’s money, and explore other income-generating activities. We do not need to go inside the park because we have everything here,” says Agus.

In addition to creating a sustainable source of income for village members, the tour packages have become key to resolving the human-elephant conflicts in the area. Since the elephants have become a main point of interest among tourists, the villagers now view the animals not as competitors for resources but as their biggest allies in improving their livelihood.

The villagers also partnered with WKNP authorities and neighbouring towns to ensure the welfare of these magnificent animals. Using the SGP grant, they worked together to strengthen the Elephant Response Units (ERUs) composed of locals working with trained elephants. Guard huts at several points were constructed, GPS collars were procured and installed on some wild elephants to trace their movements, and equipment and safety gears were supplied to the Masyarakat Mitra Porhut or MMP (Forest Police).



The team that helps reduce the negative interactions between the community and wildlife at Braja Harjosari in Way Kambas National Park

To date, there are 10 camps with a total of 55 trained elephants, who not only play a critical role in conservation, but also participate in tourist activities such as feeding sessions, allowing visitors to interact with them in a safe and educational environment.

A keen supporter of POKDARWIS and the elephants is Gajah Society, which is composed of collectors of randomly generated non-fungible tokens (NFTs) on Ethereum Blockchain and is also a social project dedicated to elephant conservation. The cooperative has an agreement for regular visits with members of Gajah Society. They also have similar arrangements with the travel agency Odyssey Institute and Local Escape.

POKDARWIS takes great pride in empowering the local community, and fostering the development of ecotourism as a strategy for indirectly mitigating human-wildlife conflict in the WKNP buffer zone.

“The capacity of the targeted participants has increased, a management system has been established with the tourism service cooperative, and the total earning of income from ecotourism has doubled up to IDR 40 million (EUR 2,330.63) from the previous IDR 20 million (EUR 1,165.31),” shares I Wayan Toni Candra, head of POKDARWIS.

Along with self-sufficiency in sustainable ecotourism management, Toni says “the increased revenue is expected to help the cooperative to further develop its facilities and services and contribute more to the human-elephant conflict mitigation efforts.”

The true cornerstone of the project’s success lies in the remarkable shift in the local communities’ perspective. From viewing elephants as adversaries, they now consider them their greatest allies—a testament to the power of how

cooperation and conservation can transform conflict into coexistence. Today, both the villagers and the gentle giants share the landscape of Braja Harjosari in harmony, each calling it home.



“This project has been contributing to human resources capacity building in ecotourism development. It has contributed to the conservation efforts in WKNP by empowering the local communities affected by human-elephant conflict to have alternative sources of income through the sustainable implementation of ecotourism.”

- I Wayan Toni Candra, Head of POKDARWIS

## Rajut Savana’s crocheted animals

Founded in 2018, Rajut Savana is a group of women entrepreneurs from Way Kambas National Park. While they are not SGP grantees, they form part of POKDARWIS Braja Harjosari’s partner small and medium-sized enterprises featured in its ecotourism packages. According to Mbak Yani, the group’s secretary, they create various crocheted animals, keyrings, pouches, bracelets, bags, and knitwear for local and foreign buyers. As part of the ecotourism in Way Kambas, they demonstrate the art of crocheting and invite tourists to try creating their own bracelets or keyrings. Rajut Savana hits monthly sales of IDR 1.5 million (EUR 87.39) by selling more than 100 pieces of crocheted products.



## Creating Sweet Success: Way Kambas farmers find alternative source of livelihood in honey farming



**Project Title:** Escalation of Honey Business Forest Farmers Group in Way Kambas National Park

**Grantee:** Alas Kambas Marketing Cooperative

**Grant Type:** Small grant

**Amount:** EUR 49,973

**Location:** Rantau Jaya

Various honey-based products of Alas Kambas Marketing Cooperative

The warm and humid forests of Way Kambas are home to *Trigona* bees, a stingless bee species known for their efficient foraging habits and small size, making them ideal partners for sustainable honey production.

With support from SGP, several villages near WKNP are harnessing the unique properties of this bee species, offering local communities an alternative livelihood while easing pressures on the park's natural resources.

Assessments conducted found that among livelihood options, honey production is one industry that has the greatest potential for success in almost all buffer villages in Way Kambas.

The villages of Rantau Jaya Udik II, Tegal Yoso, Raja Basa Lama I, Labuhan Ratu IX, Braja Harjosari, Braja Yekti, Braja Kencana, and Ranjau Jaya Makmur received grants to produce *Trigona* honey. With SGP's assistance, they were able to procure honey logs that were distributed across villages.

All honey originating from the buffer villages of Way Kambas is marketed under the brand Madu Way Kambas.

"In almost all villages where SGP Indonesia has provided assistance, the programme has played

an important role in developing the *Trigona* honey business. The initiative not only provides a better source of income for the local community, but also helps in maintaining the sustainability of the surrounding environment and strengthens the presence of local bees as part of the national park's biodiversity. Assistance for the development of *Trigona* honey is also intended to support activities related to negative elephant-human interactions in the WKNP," the Penabulu Foundation shared in its final report to SGP.



Pariyanto, a member of Alas Kambas Marketing Cooperative, is grateful for the assistance they received from SGP



Tourists learn about Trigona bees and honey-based products from Alas Kambas Marketing Cooperative

In the villages of Braja Harjosari, Braja Yekti, and Rantau Jaya Udik II, Alas Kambas Marketing Cooperative has unified 89 farmers from five farmers' groups. Previously isolated in their respective villages, these farmers now form a vibrant network, pooling their expertise and passion for honey production and building strategic relationships to widen their reach.

Formed in 2022, Alas Kambas now manages a total of 140 honey logs—20 at their cooperative office and 120 distributed across villagers' backyards. They follow a meticulous process, extracting honey with care to avoid contamination and ensure both safety and an extended shelf life.

Pariyanto, a farmer and a member of the cooperative, credits the cooperative members' knowledge on honey production technology to Perkumpulan Desa Lestari, an organisation that empowers communities by promoting sustainable environmental management in Indonesia.

Alas Kambas offers a variety of stingless bee honey products, including raw honey in 250 ml bottles, honey sticks, honey body soap, and dishwashing soap. In addition, the cooperative produces ginger

candy using locally grown ginger from the locals' backyards.

The cooperative's production method complies with Halal standards and meets the safety standards for Indonesia's Sertifikat Produksi Pangan Industri Rumah Tangga (PIRT) or Certificate of Production for Household Food Industry. This ensures that their products are not only high-quality, but also safe for consumers

*"I am very grateful to SGP. I am proud to be part of the cooperative because of the knowledge I gained from managing the organisation and earning additional income. It also allowed us to work closely with farmers' groups from other villages. Our dream is to train others on how to produce honey and manage their earnings."*

**- Pariyanto, member of the Alas Kambas Marketing Cooperative**

The cooperative's customer base includes local communities, as well as people in Java (including major cities like Jakarta and Bali). Online platforms like Facebook Marketplace and WhatsApp groups have been instrumental in connecting them to a broader audience. Additionally, their products are also available in local retail stores, including drug stores. "We also have resellers now. We have the same price whether you buy from us directly, from retailers, or from resellers.

Today, their monthly gross sales hit IDR 2.5 million (EUR 145.66). "Online sales contribute IDR 1.5 million (EUR 87.39), while local buyers and retailers make up the remaining IDR 1 million (EUR 58.26). After expenses, a solid 15 per cent of that revenue

becomes net income, shared among cooperative members at year-end," Pariyanto shared.

He added that honey production enables them to earn additional income to supplement their earnings from planting rice, corn, and rubber trees.

"I am very grateful to SGP. I am proud to be part of the cooperative because of the knowledge I gained from managing the organisation and earning additional income. It also allowed us to work closely with farmers' groups from other villages. Our dream is to train others on how to produce honey and manage their earnings," Pariyanto said.

## Sustainable honey production

Stakeholders of the SGP projects in WKNP champion beekeeping projects for their dual benefits: conservation and community livelihoods. Bees rely on forest flora for honey production, and in return, pollinate and help regenerate the forest.

In Alas Kambas, locals nurture the Air Mata Panganten (Tears of the Bride) tree, a crucial food source for Trigona bees. Beekeepers are encouraged to plant and care for these trees and other flora, ensuring a thriving bee population.

Such practice is reminiscent of the principles of the circular economy where resource users make conscious effort to sustainably use and manage natural resources and allow it to regenerate and renew. As the community realises the economic incentives of protecting biodiversity that support the production of



Packaged raw Trigona honey produced by Alas Kambas Marketing Cooperative

their livelihood products, protecting nature becomes integral to their way of life.

# HATCHING HOPE: How salted duck egg production helps protect wildlife

**Project Title:** Strengthening the Capacity of Effective Early Warning Systems and Duck Farming Efforts in Supporting Activities to Reduce Negative Elephant-Human Interaction in Braja Luhur

**Grantee:** KTH Trans Api

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** EUR 4.982,76

**Location:** Braja Luhur

Members of the KTH Trans Api ventured into duck farming to help reduce pressures on Way Kambas National Park's forests

**T**he farming community of Braja Luhur in WKNP relies heavily on rice cultivation. While rainfall is essential for their livelihood, excessive downpours often lead to flooding, soil erosion, and crop damage. This struggle forced locals to poach wildlife, cut trees, and engage in other illegal activities within the national park to survive.

At 28, Deni Prastyo, a resident of Braja Luhur, proposed a bold idea of venturing into duck farming to create an alternative source of livelihood and curb illegal activities in the forest.

Fuelled by his determination and his childhood dream of uplifting his community, Deni rallied fellow villagers—some notorious for their park transgressions—to establish KTH Trans Api. Their mission? To raise ducks and sell salted eggs, thus providing a sustainable livelihood that steers them away from forest crimes.

KTH Trans Api soon became an SGP grantee, receiving an initial capital of IDR 3 million (EUR 174.79) and 250 ducks. Part of the funds were used to construct a budget-friendly enclosure for their feathered flock.

Deni knew the funds were insufficient for feeding

the ducks, completing infrastructure, and achieving full operation. Nevertheless, he persevered, hoping that additional support will come along the way. To better ease their financial burden, Deni regularly transports the ducks in cages of its members who have just harvested rice grains from their nearby rice fields. This way, ducks can be fed with 50 per cent concentrate, while they get the rest of their diet as they forage on the fields for leftover grains.

Months later, KTH Trans Api secured a loan from a private group and an additional IDR 14 million (EUR 815.72) grant, along with technical training from Yayasan Pendidikan Konservasi dan Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (YAPEKA), another SGP grantee. Deni and his team also received IDR 6 million (EUR 349.59) from Yayasan Kanopi Indonesia. With these additional funds, KTH Trans Api diversified into livestock farming.

**“SGP is like a magnet for other funding. After it became our pioneer funding agency, other grants followed. We received funding for two projects on goat farming from the national park and the Ministry.”**

- Deni Prastyo, Program Manager of the KTH Trans Api



A duck cage of one of KTH Trans Api's members where the ducks were transported to feed on leftover rice grains from adjacent rice fields

"SGP is like a magnet for other funding. After it became our pioneer funding agency, other grants followed. We received funding for two projects on goat farming from the national park and the Ministry," Deni proudly shared. He added, "SGP catapulted our business, expanding our market and fostering collaboration. We acquired new skills and ventured into year-round livestock farming. Rainy seasons no longer haunt us."

Today, KTH Trans Api boasts a membership of 20 dedicated individuals and a thriving flock of 400 ducks. Their daily operations yield a net profit ranging from IDR 150,000 (EUR 8.74) to IDR 200,000 (EUR 11.65), primarily through the sale of salted eggs to their loyal patrons. They have also partnered with the Ministry of Social Affairs, providing ducks



Duck eggs produced by KTH Trans Api are turned into salted eggs

to elderly community members who are seeking supplementary income.

Previously, KTH Trans Api supplied salted eggs to Super Indo in Bandar Lampung, a prominent supermarket chain with branches across Java Island and Southern Sumatra. However, they had to pause for a while to work on improving their supply chain and meet the latter's weekly demand. Currently, the group focuses on consigning their eggs to smaller stores and directly supplying eggs to their patrons.

KTH Trans Api shares its success with the Braja Luhur community by giving 15 eggs to each neighbouring family, totalling 2,300 eggs.

Beyond that, Deni and other KTH Trans Api members actively encourage locals to join their group and steer clear of illegal activities within WKNP. Deni shared, "Those who previously engaged in illegal activities in the forest were initially apprehensive about interacting with park management. However, through several meetings and conservation training activities, they have come to understand the importance of protecting the park. It is crucial for communities, park rangers, and officers to collaborate. This project has successfully brought these parties closer together."

The success of KTH Trans Api has also inspired neighbouring villages to explore duck farming, creating a positive ripple effect throughout the region.



Dodol Way Kambas is a sought-after Halal-certified souvenir item in Way Kambas

## Partnerships, pineapples and progress: A recipe for success

**P**ineapple dodol, a chewy caramel-like mixture of grated pineapple, coconut milk, flour, and sugar, is one of the most sought-after delicacies produced by Kelompok Wanita Tani (KWT) RBI Berjaya, a women farmers' group in Labuhan Ratu IX, a buffer village in WKNP.

The pineapples used by the group are sourced from the corporate social responsibility programme of PT GGP called MSMEs (UMKM) Partnership, an innovative circular economy model applied to communities, specifically focusing on utilising pineapples that do not meet export standards. These pineapples are transformed into value-added products such as dodol and jam. The management of these pineapple-based goods is entrusted to local MSMEs within the surrounding villages like KWT RBI Berjaya to help provide economic opportunities and empower households, particularly women.

"We get the pineapples at IDR 3,000 (EUR 0.17) per kilogram. This is cheaper compared to market prices. If we had to buy ingredients at the market rates, we would not earn a profit," shared Eva from KWT RBI Berjaya.

For every 38-40 pieces of pineapple, the women produce 20 kilograms or 100 packs of dodol. Each pack weighs 200 grams, has a shelf life of 20 to 25 days, and can be sold at IDR 15,000 (EUR 0.87).

According to Eva, profit is distributed among KWT RBI Berjaya's members every six months. The profit distribution depends on the number of hours each

**Project Title:** Livelihood System Improvement in Communities around Way Kambas National Park and Simultaneously Reducing Threats to Biodiversity and Ecosystem

**Grantee:** Yayasan Pendidikan Konservasi dan Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (YAPEKA)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 99,903

**Location:** Braja Harjosari Labuhan Ratu IX

**Website:** <https://yapeka.or.id/dodol-nanas-madu-way-kambas/>



Eva, a member of KWT RBI Berjaya, looks forward to expanding their dodol business by exploring other seasonal fruit options

member contributes to the production process. For every hour spent making dodol, members earn IDR 3,000 (EUR 0.17) .

To boost KWT RBI Berjaya's production and sales, the SGP grantee YAPEKA provided equipment and packaging assistance to the group.

"With the equipment provided by SGP, production became easier for the workforce. Having that kind of support adds to our enthusiasm to continue this business," said Efiyana, another member of KWT RBI Berjaya.

Visitors at Way Kambas are now familiar with the red, white, and yellow packaging of Dodol Way Kambas, which is now considered as one of the most sought-after Halal-certified souvenir items from the park.

In addition to buying the local treat, tourists also get the opportunity to interact with KWT RBI Berjaya members and learn first-hand about the process of making pineapple dodol.

# Tackling human-elephant conflict in Tegal Yoso Village: A collaborative success story

With 40 per cent of its 224.86 hectares falling within the elephant home range in Way Kambas, Tegal Yoso village faces significant human-elephant conflict. The villagers' monoculture crops, primarily corn and rice, attract elephants, resulting in crop damages, several human-elephant encounters, and deaths of some people.

To address this pressing issue, the villagers partnered with Yayasan Konservasi Way Seputih (YKWS), an environmental group dedicated to improving forest management in Lampung Province. Supported by the SGP, they launched a project to alleviate pressure on the WKNP forests while enhancing the livelihoods of buffer zone residents. This initiative aimed to empower Tegal Yoso villagers to manage human-elephant conflicts effectively, boost village income through sustainable natural resource use, and raise public awareness and participation in the park's conservation efforts.

The project commenced with the collection of baseline data, including land cover, land use, and the home range conditions of wild elephants intersecting with the agricultural and settlement areas of Tegal Yoso Village.

With YKWS' support, the villagers established three women's groups and empowered them by enhancing their skills in utilising farmyards to bolster family food security. Concurrently, farmers' groups received advanced training in honeybee farming techniques, focusing on colony splitting to boost honey production.

In addition to capacity-building activities, they implemented integrated mitigation techniques, such as elephant-adaptive farming strategies using mixed cropping patterns and planting species that elephants avoid—some of which are candlenut (*Aleurites moluccanus*), jengkol (*Archidendron pauciflorum*), petai (*Parkia speciosa*), and some species of lemongrass.

The grantees also used SGP's assistance to organise forest patrol and conflict response teams composed of 25 ERUs that include the MMP, local community members, mahouts and their trained elephants. The grant also enabled them to build monitoring huts, purchase SMART patrolling equipment, and provide honorarium for patrollers.

“Previously, efforts to deal with human-elephant conflict were ineffective due to locals patrolling



Tatang Supriano and Hartato from forest farmer group LEMBAH have dedicated their time to addressing human-elephant conflict in Tegal Yoso Village

**Project Title:** Optimization of Natural Resource Potential in the Buffer Zone of the Way Kambas National Park Under SGP Cycles 2 and 4

**Grantee:** Yayasan Konservasi Way Seputih

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Total Amount:** EUR 62,450.81 (two cycles)

**Location:** Tegal Yoso Village

**Website:** <https://www.ykws.or.id>

individually to protect their own land with no coordination,” shared Tatang Supriyono, a member of LEMBAH, a KTH at Tegal Yoso Village. “Now, things have changed. Stakeholders are working together in a coordinated effort. Park management has installed GPS collars on the leading wild elephants to track their movements. The ERU constantly updates the village patrollers about the elephants' coordinates and warns when



The ERU in Tegal Yoso in Way Kambas National Park received training, a monitoring hut, and equipment to support their patrolling operations

the wild elephants are near the villages. When this happens, volunteers and the residents use fireworks and megaphones to make noise and scare elephants away, while the ERUs, specifically the 10 trained elephants and their mahouts, help drive wild elephants away. It's different now. Everyone helps," he added.

To sustain the project's successes, efforts are underway to pass on knowledge and skills to the next generation by establishing a school that will teach bee farming and biodiversity conservation.

"The locals are very happy because they can feel a big change and now enjoy a more peaceful life after participating in the projects supported by SGP. You can even see how mindsets have shifted. "

- **Tatang Supriyono, member of the KTH at Tegal Yoso Village**

Some also hope their children can access agricultural and forestry schools so they can sustain the initiatives implemented.

## SOP for human-elephant conflict mitigation in Tegal Yoso

**Y**KWS has taken a proactive approach to address human-elephant conflicts, through a project dubbed "Preparation of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Human - Elephant Conflict Mitigation in Tegal Yoso Village" under an SGP micro-grant.

The guidelines for patrolling were created based on the collective experiences of local residents, gathered through focus group discussions. These community insights were combined with technical knowledge from ERU personnel, Forestry Police, and mahouts. The collective wisdom from these three-stage discussions culminated in a workshop led by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Komunitas Untuk Hutan Sumatera (KHS), and Yayasan Forum Rembug Desa Penyangga (FRDP). A total of 120 locals benefitted from this transfer of technical knowledge.

The workshop's outcomes were formalised in a decree by Tegal Yoso's village head,

**Project Title:** Preparation of Standard Operating Procedure on Human-Elephant Conflict Mitigation in Tegal Yoso Village

**Grantee:** Yayasan Konservasi Way Seputih

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** EUR 4,989

**Location:** Tegal Yoso Village

**Website:** <https://www.ykws.or.id/>

establishing an SOP for residents. This SOP not only empowers locals to safeguard their agricultural lands but also supports WKNP rangers in guiding elephants back into the conservation area, ensuring a sustainable and peaceful coexistence.



Tour boats parked at Tanjung Tirto riverside

**Project Title:** Developing Way Pegadungan River Down Tour Focused on Birdwatching in Way Kambas National Park to Improve Community Livelihood and Biodiversity Conservation

**Grantee:** Konsorsium Yayasan Konservasi Elang Indonesia and Yayasan Kehutanan Masyarakat Indonesia

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 50,000

**Location:** Tanjung Tirto Village, Rantau Jaya Makmur Village, and Cabang Village

**Website:** <https://elangindonesia.or.id/id/tentang-ykei/>

## Sustainable tourism in action: Enhancing ecotourism in Way Kambas

**B**elieving in the transformative power of ecotourism to protect endangered forests, three buffer villages have teamed up with Yayasan Konservasi Elang Indonesia (YKEI) and Yayasan Kehutanan Masyarakat Indonesia (YKMI) to enhance ecotourism in Way Kambas.

With support from the SGP, this YKEI-YKMI partnership launched a new and exciting ecotourism package—the Way Pegadungan

Riverside Tour. This unique route offers visitors the chance to explore birdwatching hotspots, enjoy local culinary adventures, engage in agro-tourism, shop for handmade souvenirs, and experience life in riverside villages. The tour is across three stops: Ranjau Jaya Makmur Village, Tanjung Tirto Village, and Cabang Village.

Gunawan, chairperson of YKEI, highlighted that while WKNP has three existing routes for observing



Project partners of Way Pegadungan River Down Tour pose in front of one of the many signages and information materials produced with SGP's support

wildlife, especially birds, they were disorganised. To showcase the 63 bird species in the area in a more efficient manner, YKEI-YKMI and the communities established a better structured tour.

“By doing this, we can increase regular tourist visits for observations and improve visitors’ experience,” he said. After formalising the collaboration among community groups, YKEI-YKMI, park management and staff, and other partners, the project team assessed birdwatching tracks, training needs, and infrastructure requirements. They then formed three tourism cooperatives, namely Koperasi Jasa Berkah Bungur Bahari (BERBUNGA) in Tanjung Tirto, Koperasi Wisata Jaya Lestari Makmur in Cabang, and Koperasi Kertosono Pelita Sejahtera (KERTAS) in Rantau Jaya Makmur. These cooperatives enabled the communities to obtain tourism service permits for various activities in Way Pegadungan.

The cooperatives consist of 20 tour guides and five national park staff who received ecotourism management and tour guide training from experts. Some locals also learned to organise homestays, meal planning, souvenir creation, and transportation. Women’s groups were trained to cook, sell, and serve culinary treats for tourists.



YKEI-YKMI and the communities purchased birdwatching equipment in support of ecotourism activities in Way Kambas

In addition to building local capacity and skills, YKEI-YKMI and the communities set up essential infrastructure, including pier facilities in each village for safe docking, six observation sites, a floating hut in Tanjung Tirto, a rest area in Ranjau Jaya Makmur, and trampolines in the three villages. They also installed eight information boards and created a WhatsApp group for coordination purposes. A radio rig was also installed in three strategic spots to facilitate communication for the tour implementation team.

Sudarto, KTH chief and cooperative member, shared that ecotours began in 2022. “Each ecotourism package costs IDR 1.5 million (EUR 87.39) for 25 people, including a river boat ride, birdwatching, local culinary treats, and an agri-tourism experience with tangerine and watermelon harvesting.”

Men’s groups handle boat rides, maintenance, and driving, while women’s groups manage culinary services. Villagers cook and serve food in floating huts. For each trip, IDR 300,000 (EUR 17.47) is allocated for gas, IDR 150,000 (EUR 8.74) per person for the crew and guide, and the remaining payment goes to the village cooperative.

“We receive positive feedback from local and foreign tourists who enjoy relaxing in nature. We have many repeat guests who are thrilled to see wildlife like langurs, monkeys, and various birds,” said Andi, a 23-year-old KTH member serving as one of the tour guides.

“This initiative aligns with WKNP’s goal of empowering buffer villages through community organising, awareness-raising, and strengthening local economies,” Gunawan stated in the project completion report.



Members of Koperasi Jasa Berkah Bungur Bahari

## Tackling human-elephant conflict: Labuhan Ratu IX Village's innovative approach

Like many other buffer villages in Way Kambas, Labuhan Ratu IX Village's major challenge is handling human-elephant conflict.

"In the past, everyone panicked when elephants came into the village. Villagers didn't know how to respond," recalled Parmin, a member of Yayasan Forum Rembug Desa Penyangga (FRDP). The community-based organisation was established to help address conflicts between elephants and communities in buffer villages.

"Previously, patrollers used fireworks to warn the communities and scare off the elephants; but the use of fireworks has since been disallowed as it can be hazardous," said Ahmad Suyuti, chairperson of FRDP.

Determined to find a safer, more effective solution, FRDP partnered with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and sought assistance from the SGP to establish an early warning system that would alert the village members of approaching elephants.

Using the micro-grant they received, FRDP developed a community-based human-elephant conflict early warning system that is integrated with Labuhan Ratu IX's farming system. "This system takes both social and economic approaches into account, helping the community adapt to managing interactions with elephants," Suyuti shared.

In addition to using an early warning system and building infrastructure barriers such as the government-funded concrete canals and riprap walls along the four-kilometre national park border, FRDP planted flora that turn off elephants. "We used natural barriers such as lemongrass and salak (snake fruit with thorny trees) as elephants hate their smell. We also installed bee logs in different locations so that honeybees will sting the elephants who try to cross the borders where the bee hives are situated. We devised the honeybee system to stop elephants from entering the village," Suyuti explained.

FRDP created SATGAS KMG or Elephant Conflict Task Force to implement conflict resolution. Members of the task force underwent training on how to use the alarm system and how to handle human-elephant conflict as first responders. They

**Project Title:** Development of a Community-based Human Elephant Conflict Early Warning System Integrated with the Agricultural System in Labuhan Ratu IX Village as a Buffer Village for the Way Kambas National Park Area

**Grantee:** Yayasan Forum Rembug Desa Penyangga (FRDP)

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** EUR 5,000

**Location:** Labuhan Ratu IX



Parmin and Ahmad Suyuti perform important roles in coordinating the response to human-elephant conflict cases at Labuhan Ratu IX in Way Kambas National Park

also learned about a healthy crop cultivation system based on the principles of Integrated Pest Management.

The task force collaborates with the Forest Police, acting as community forestry partners that jointly conduct patrols along the national park and the village borders. They conduct training to identify strategies that will deter the elephants from crossing to their villages and damaging their crops.

"This collaboration, which is supported by the SGP, has resulted in a more organised management of the human-elephant conflict," said Parmin.

The distribution of honey logs to the villagers has also been done by FRDP, not only to drive away the elephants, but also to add a business component to their SGP grant. They also learned to make plant pots from elephant dung obtained from WKNP's Elephant Training Center (PLG). While the pots cannot yet be sold commercially due to licensing issues, FRDP hopes that future sales will increase SATGAS members' income and support elephant deterrence activities in the village.

# ENHANCING LIVESTOCK FARMING AND CONSERVATION IN BRAJA KENCANA

**Project Title:** Livelihood Optimizing in Livestock Sector Through Pen Management and Livestock Feed Innovation in WKNP Buffer Villages (Braja Kencana Village)

**Grantee:** Peduli Konservasi Alam Indonesia Foundation (Peka Indonesia)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 33,316,26

**Location:** Braja Kencana Village



Good pen management and alternative feeds led to bigger and healthier cows at Braja Kencana

**S**ituated at the buffer zone of WKNP, Braja Kencana Village has great potential in livestock farming as 60 to 80 per cent of the community depend on it for livelihood. However, poor pen management and low-quality feeds, especially during the dry season, have been their greatest adversaries in achieving full productivity and quality. Farmers also spend up to 35 hours a week cutting tons of grass in the park to feed their cattle, putting pressure on its ecosystem.

To address these issues, Yayasan Peduli Konservasi Alam Indonesia (PEKA) partnered with a forest farmers group in Braja Kencana called the KTH Wana Jaya Kencana to make livestock farming more efficient and sustainable, as well as minimise its impact on the forest.

Supported by a grant from SGP, they embarked on a project that sought to boost productivity, improve pen management, ensure a steady feed supply during dry seasons by using innovative and healthy feed alternatives, and reduce grass cutting.

By the end of 2022, PEKA successfully trained 30 members of KTH Wana Jaya Kencana in alternative feed production and pen management. Through the grant provided to them, they were able to secure a digital livestock scale and alternative feed processing facilities consisting of a chopper unit, land rental for 2,500 square metres, 8,000 grass seeds, 30 fermentation barrels, and plastic rolls for 30 fermentation tanks.



Members of KTH Wana Jaya Kencana appreciate the learning opportunities they received through an SGP grant

Additionally, two tons of feed concentrate, and 30 litres of Effective Microorganism-4 (EM4) were distributed to 30 members of KTH Wana Jaya Kencana to help increase the weight of livestock. The project also supplied essential pen management tools such as 30 household compost processors, 30 shovels, and five cattle floor models to enhance farming practices.

Members of the KTH Braja Kencana enhanced their livestock farming methods and technologies through site visits to the Livestock Office (East Lampung District), Bogor Agricultural University, and PT Indo Prima Beef. PEKA also facilitated a capacity-building comparative study at PT Indo Prima Beef. Furthermore, animal feed laboratory test results from the Feed Technology Lab, Faculty of Animal Husbandry, Bogor Agricultural University, are expected to bolster KTH Wana Jaya Kencana's ability to produce and market high-quality feed in the future.

"We appreciated the lessons on how to find good alternative food without encroaching on the national park's forests, specifically how to plant and harvest our own King Grass and Pak Chong to feed our cattle. Through the grant provided by SGP, we also learned how to make our own concentrates to improve nutritive balance," shared Didik Sudebyo, head of KTH Wana Jaya Kencana.

Didik and his fellow KTH member, Jarwo, observed that their cows are growing faster and healthier. "Their weight is increasing because of all the nutrients they are getting," Jarwo said. They measure the cows' weight using scales provided by SGP. "By knowing the weight of the cow, we cannot be fooled by buyers," he added.



KTH Wana Jaya Kencana's grass plantation



KTH Wana Jaya Kencana's cattle enclosure

PEKA reported a 15 per cent increase in meat productivity from October to December 2022 due to good pen management and the use of alternative feeds like silage and concentrate. Farmers from KTH Wana Jaya Kencana shared that with the help of PEKA and SGP, they were able to increase the selling price of their cows by 30 per cent. Additionally, they no longer need to spend many hours gathering grass in the park.

"The community also generated IDR 6,215,000 (EUR 362.12) from weighing services offered to other livestock farmers and sales of concentrate and King Grass as of February 2023," said Rado Puji Santoso, project manager from PEKA, in the project completion report.

Keen on saving for capital to purchase their own land for planting grass, further expanding their business, and starting a compost business, KTH Wana Jaya Kencana members agreed not to distribute profits among themselves yet. "We are very enthusiastic to learn more and grow more," Didik said.

In addition to the economic benefits, the project has lessened the farmers' dependence on the forest, as grass harvesting within WKNP was reduced by 1.53 tons per day. "In the past, we used to go to the forest to cut grass whenever we needed food for our cattle. We were worried about the impact on the park's ecosystem. Now, we have alternative sources of food for our livestock," Didik said.

With the improvements observed among the cattle of the KTH's members and their additional income-generating activities, many community members from both inside and outside Braja Kencana aspire to join the group. Paying forward to the help it has gathered from SGP and PEKA, Didik and other members of the group are eager to share their knowledge on the best cattle-raising practices with other farmers within and outside their village.



**Project Title:** Community Strengthening in an Effort to Increase Income and Preserve the Way Kambas National Park (WKNP) Forest Area

**Grantee:** Konsorsium WATALA – REPONG Indonesia

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 29,994

**Location:** Rajabasa Lama Village, Labuhan Ratu District, East Lampung Regency

**Website:** <https://watala.or.id/>

Bottled honey products by KTH Rabala One Jaya

## Community empowerment and conservation: A success story from Rajabasa Lama Village

**R**ajabasa Lama Village is located in Labuhan Ratu District, home to more than 3,000 residents, nearly 70 per cent of whom depend on farming work at the PT GGP plantations that border Way Kambas. Additionally, some villagers engage in cassava farming, though they face challenges due to the crop's low selling price.

To uplift livelihoods and promote conservation, the WATALA – REPONG Indonesia consortium, supported by the SGP, launched a community strengthening project. This initiative aimed at boosting incomes and conserving WKNP through organic farming, honeybee cultivation, and community participatory patrols.

Partnering with KTH Rabala One Jaya, a group of male forest farmers, the project focused on institutional strengthening, creating essential documents, and enhancing communication and negotiation skills with stakeholders.

To ensure women's involvement, KTH Rabala One Jaya, WATALA, and the WKNP extension officer formed the Pelangi Rabala One Jaya Women Farmers Group (WFG). They developed organic vegetable farming, established demonstration



A KWT member of WATALA shows the organic chillies planted by the women farmers group in Rajabasa Lama Village

plots, and ventured into producing klanting, peyek, and organic fertiliser.

"We concentrated our activities on organic agriculture to ensure food security for families in Rajabasa Lama. We want to teach locals how to live healthy by growing chilli, eggplant, pak choy,

mustard, tomato, basil, kale, and squash right in their own backyards. Organic agriculture also allows them to save on production costs. Expenses are cheaper but the selling price is higher than non-organic vegetables. Lastly, organic vegetables are also environmentally friendly," shared Sunarni Widyastuti, a member of WATALA.

She added that one of the advantages of participating in the project is reducing the need to buy vegetables in the market. "They just pick the vegetables in their respective yards, reducing household expenses by at least IDR 100,000 (EUR 5.83) per month."

The project's success extends to conservation efforts, with community members participating in patrols to secure the WKNP and its surroundings.

"A multi-stakeholder joint patrol team, known as the Community Participatory Patrol Team (CPPT) was established under the SGP implementation. This patrol team consists of two representatives from WKNP management (government), two members from KTH Rabala One Jaya (community), one representative from WATALA (non-governmental organisation), and one representative from an agricultural firm (private sector). This formation is part of the efforts to strengthen human-elephant

conflict mitigation patrols in the Rawa Bunder Resort area. Since the operation of CPPT, 57 out of 110 incidents of elephant interaction recorded during the period of January 2021 to June 2022 were considered negative," WATALA noted in its project completion report.

The CPPT also helped prevent forest fires and curb illegal activities. Additionally, the team undertook an ecosystem restoration activity covering one hectare.

"The national park is greatly helped by the existence of the KTH because the forest farmers have a security guard post that facilitates security and quick response when there is a fire and when elephants enter the village. With this project, the group has become more organised. It really helped reduce illegal activities in the national park. The SGP fostered a shared sense of responsibility and belonging between the community and park management. Because the national park does not belong to ranger officers alone, but it belongs to all of us people who live around the national park area," said Firmansyah, WKNP extension officer.

Rajabasa Lama Village stands as a testament to the power of community-driven efforts in achieving economic and environmental sustainability.



Some members of the WFG Pelangi Rabala One Jaya (left) and KTH Rabala One Jaya with WKNP extension officer (right)

# FROM CROWDS TO CONNECTIONS

## The shift to socialised ecotourism at PLG



An elephant and its mahout at the Elephant Lecture Center in Way Kambas National Park

**E**stablished in 1985, the Pusat Latihan Gajah (PLG) or Elephant Training Center, has long been a sanctuary for rescued and captured elephants in Way Kambas. After a brief hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic, the centre re-emerged in 2022 with a fresh identity as the Pusat Lektur Gajah (Elephant Lecture Center). This rebranding signifies its expanded mission: not only to train elephants but also to serve as a pivotal hub for reducing human-wildlife conflicts and championing wildlife conservation through a wealth of information and activities.

The rebranding marked a significant shift—from mass ecotourism to socialised ecotourism. While mass ecotourism aims to attract large crowds to natural destinations to stimulate local economies, it often risks environmental and cultural degradation. In contrast, socialised ecotourism

emphasises scheduling smaller groups and nurturing meaningful connections with local cultures and environments.

“The PLG was a popular tourist destination in Lampung, attracting 50,000 visitors every year. The former PLG offered elephant attractions and shows,” shared the Penabulu Foundation in its final report to SGP. According to the organisation, a new ecotourism concept was introduced by the SGP grantees Yayasan Cakra Madani Selia (CAKRA) and Aliansi Lestari Rimba Terpadu (ALeRT) to PLG, prioritising animal welfare and the active engagement of buffer zone villages of the WKNP in developing sustainable ecotourism.

At the core of this change is limiting visitors that can have a direct impact on the welfare of elephants in PLG, preserving the elephants’ habitat, and

**Project Title:** Masterplan of conservation-based nature tourism in the Way Kambas National Park

**Grantee:** Yayasan Cakra Madani Selia (CAKRA)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 35,000

**Location:** Lampung Area

**Project Title:** Preparation of PLG Tourism Arrangement in Way Kambas National Park  
Socialization of the new concept of PLG tourism management in Way Kambas National Park

**Grantee:** Aliansi Lestari Rimba Terpadu (ALeRT)

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** EUR 5,000

**Location:** Lampung Area

**Website:** <https://alertindonesia.org/>

promoting the development of village tourism in WKNP.

“In December 2023, PLG reopened its tourism activities with a new concept: Visitors shouldn’t see elephants as attractions like those in a circus. Close encounters and elephant rides were discontinued. This is a good move because with the new concept, elephants are no longer stressed from the hordes of visitors who come into direct contact with them. Now, visitors can appreciate the elephants from a safe and respectful distance. Even the trash and the noise were significantly reduced,” shared Esti Anggraini, an elephant veterinarian at the PLG.

This shift also entailed recalibrating the centre’s strategies to earn income. Instead of the elephant shows, tourists can feed and bathe the elephant and pose for a photo for a corresponding fee.

They can also join jungle track tours with the elephants to experience nature more closely, while in the late afternoon, they can enjoy the beautiful sunset scenery at the PLG as they enjoy scrumptious food prepared by the PLG’s partner cooperative.

The progress made by PLG would not be possible if not because of the joint efforts of the government and dedicated organisations like CAKRA and ALERT in crafting conservation-based nature tourism master plan and information campaign materials that served as the former’s blueprint and toolkits in implementing the socialised ecotourism.

To develop the master plan, CAKRA employed various data collection techniques to consult various stakeholders that have an involvement in the plan. Among the key recommendations identified were establishing cooperatives, securing business licences, preparing tourism infrastructure, and developing integrated tourism management.

“Integration between WKNP, PLG, Way Kanan, and the buffer villages is central to this approach, fostering a cohesive and sustainable tourism model,” CAKRA noted in its project completion report.

Meanwhile, ALERT focused on orienting the WKNP staff and the four buffer villages of Braja Harjosari, Labuhan Ratu VI, VII, and IX to the new ecotourism concept and their role in ensuring its implementation and success. The organisation designed and distributed socialisation tools like films, banners, and flyers, and organised face-to-face discussions. “Efforts to organise PLG tourism sustainably not only focus on conserving biodiversity to enhance the destination’s attractiveness but also aim to increase community participation in tourism management, boost the local economy, and improve education and public health,” ALERT stated in its project completion report.

While the shift led to a decline in the number of park visitors, organising the tours in smaller groups now allows visitors to develop a deeper connection with nature in an environment that protects elephant welfare and promotes sustainable income generation for the surrounding communities.



The interior and exterior portions of the redesigned PLG visitor centre feature new information materials which help tourists learn more about the Sumatran elephants and other WKNP key species such as Sumatran tigers, Sumatran rhinoceros, and orangutans

# SGP AT INDAWGYI LAKE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

"The key to the project's success is that the local community fully cooperated in biodiversity data collection and livelihood development. The community was also consulted for the management plan activities. During the project period, new committees in the state, district, and township levels were formed in the Indawgyi protected area to support relevant government departments and CSOs. The park warden of the Indawgyi AHP was a secretary of the township committee. The new committee provided support to complete the zonation process."

- Ngwe Lwin  
Country Director  
Fauna & Flora International

Seabirds welcome tourists to Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary  
© Wai Phyo Maung



Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary is a refuge for resident and migratory water and shore birds

## Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary

An AHP, an East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) and Ramsar site, and a Biosphere Reserve, the 77,525-hectare Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary (ILWS) was established to protect local waterfowl and their habitats.

The 12,000-hectare Indawgyi Lake is the largest inland lake in Southeast Asia and the third largest in the world. It is a sanctuary for a diverse range of plant and animal species, including the critically endangered Baer’s Pochard (*Aythya baeri*) and the endangered teak (*Tectona grandis*). It provides regionally important habitats to thousands of migratory and resident waterbirds.

With its immense biological resources, the wetland plays a crucial role in providing livelihood to local communities. Farming remains the major source of livelihood owing to the rich alluvial deposits in the lower Indawgyi basin. Households in the sanctuary mostly rely on wet rice agriculture for food and income. The lake’s vast fish diversity also makes fishing an important source of protein and livelihood for Indawgyi households. Fishing, which mostly involves gill nets and prawn traps, is largely restricted to lake, wetland, and riverine habitats,

with the exception of core zones designated as no-take zones.

The sanctuary’s beauty also holds immense potential for ecotourism to become an important economic activity in ILWS. It is recognised as one of the prime locations for future nature-based activities like birdwatching, hiking, and kayaking. The pagodas and the various Shan traditional festivals have potential to draw crowds.

In addition to livelihood opportunities, the wetland also provides ecological services to local communities and serves as a critical mechanism for disaster risk reduction.

Unfortunately, the rich natural resources and beauty of ILWS are not spared from threats that endanger biodiversity – including local mining, wildlife exploitation, traditional agriculture, overfishing, water pollution, and boundary conflicts, among many other issues.

The ILWS’ significant biological resources and the challenges it faces make it a suitable pilot site for SGP I.

### SGP at a Glance in ILWS

<b>EUR 667,265.28</b> worth of grants	<b>EUR 100,000</b> grant awarded to support the development and updating of a collaborative management plan (CMP)	<b>22</b> locals became part of the newly created village-based informant network that supports law	<b>EUR 94,997</b> awarded to support the implementation of the Law Enforcement Programme for ILWS
<b>81,500</b> hectares of the sanctuary are now protected under the law enforcement programme	<b>EUR 88,670</b> awarded to support community forestry development initiatives including the establishment of <b>13</b> Community Forestry User Groups	<b>20</b> More than biodiversity-based products produced	
<b>EUR 90,618.70</b> awarded to support sustainable community fisheries management efforts	<b>160</b> acres of degraded forests restored	<b>120</b> households received firewood-saving stoves that reduced firewood consumption by <b>50%</b>	
<b>10</b> fish conservation zones established	<b>EUR 88,674.00</b> awarded to support sustainable agriculture and value chain development initiatives	<b>EUR 90,665.58</b> awarded to support community-based sustainable tourism and education	<b>EUR 25,000</b> awarded to support the Indawgyi Conservation Awareness Program for Conservation and Sustainable Development Initiative



# IECDA PROMOTES COMMUNITY FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT IN INDAWGYI

Members of community forest user groups (CFUGs) helped restore degraded forest lands in Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary

**Project Title:** Community Forestry Development in Indawgyi Biosphere Reserve, Kachin State

**Grantee:** Indawgyi Environmental Conservation and Development Association (IECDA)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 88,670

**Location:** Kachin State

The diverse forests of Indawgyi provide refuge for the critically endangered Baer's Pochard (*Aythya baeri*), the endangered banteng (*Bos javanicus*), and several other globally threatened mammal species. They are a critical source of food, medicine, and other needs of people living within the protected area. However, the sanctuary is threatened by alarming rates of deforestation.

To address the issue, the Indawgyi Environmental Conservation and Development Association (IECDA) has turned to community forest development, a participatory natural resource management that promotes the involvement of local communities in forest management.

With a vision to safeguard the sanctuary's forests, promote a healthy and thriving environment, and ensure that bamboo and timber are harvested sustainably and efficiently, the group has been actively supporting community forest user groups (CFUGs), as well as the diverse ethnic communities that call the region home.

The IECDA is using a blend of technical expertise and financial assistance to empower communities surrounding the wildlife sanctuary in a bid to address the alarming rates of deforestation and forest degradation that threaten the area's ecological balance. Over the years, they have adopted robust forest management practices, which in turn, have fostered a sense of stewardship and collaboration among the residents.

With the help of the SGP, IECDA has rolled out a series of impactful initiatives designed to nurture both the land and the communities. One of their cornerstone efforts involves conducting educational programmes that raise awareness among residents. These programs are crafted to inspire and inform, fostering a deep-rooted understanding of and appreciation for the environment.



A community forest in Kachin State

Under the project, a total of 13 CFUGs have emerged, each dedicated to raising environmental consciousness within their villages. Through a series of outreach initiatives, these groups have shed light on critical issues facing their communities, including the threat posed by corporate ownership of forested areas. Villagers have been made aware that such ownership could strip them of their traditional rights to harvest resources, including the valuable bamboo that has long sustained their way of life.

Efforts have also been made to educate villagers about the significance of watershed forests. These vital ecosystems play a crucial role in maintaining the quality and availability of water sources, ensuring the sustainability of their communities.

A series of trainings on community forests were also conducted to increase the effectiveness of CFUGs.

Beyond educational activities, IECDA has also sought the help of the communities to do their part in helping the forest flourish. Over 50,000 forest protection trees or giant trees have been planted to serve as sentinels, shielding the delicate ecosystem from harm and preserving its natural beauty for generations to come. The local

communities also planted over 25,000 perennial crop trees, anticipating benefits within five to six years. In total, the association and the communities have restored 160 acres of degraded forest land.

In addition, IECDA has been instrumental in creating community-managed forests in strategic buffer zones. These green sanctuaries serve as a protective embrace around the core forest areas, nurturing biodiversity and offering a tangible way for communities to connect with and care for their natural surroundings.

To safeguard these precious areas, IECDA has established regular patrols to prevent illegal intrusions. These vigilant efforts not only protect the forests but also reinforce the community's role as guardians of their own environment.

IECDA also obtained four forest certifications from four villages to protect against local encroachments. Efforts to secure additional certifications continue.

The partnership between IECDA and the communities is akin to the forest they seek to protect – with each new sprout, there's a promise that together, they will grow Indawgyi's forests.



Thousands of trees were planted in community-managed areas

A photograph of two farmers wearing traditional hats and clothing, working in a field of tall green plants. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

# FIELDS OF CHANGE:

## Community thrives with sustainable agriculture practices

Farmers have embraced organic farming in Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary under the SGP-supported *Sustainable Agriculture and Value Chain Development Project*

**Project Title:** Sustainable Agriculture and Value Chain Development in Indawgyi Biosphere Reserve, Kachin State

**Grantee:** Indawgyi Natural Farming Association (INFA)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 88,674

**Location:** Kachin State

In the lush, fertile plains of the lower Indawgyi basin in Myanmar, agriculture is not just an occupation but a way of life. For years, the communities around the ILWS have had their lives intertwined with the lake.

However, as these communities grew with the arrival of new migrants, their agricultural practices have begun to stretch into the protected parts of the wildlife sanctuary. Unfortunately, this has led to deforestation and degradation of precious forest reserves.

To provide new avenues for income while ensuring a harmonious coexistence with nature, an innovative solution has emerged: the *Sustainable Agriculture and Value Chain Development Project*. Initiated by the Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and Indawgyi Natural Farming Association (INFA) with support from the SGP, this intervention champions organic farming as a sustainable livelihood, designed to alleviate human pressure on the delicate ecosystem.

A key element of this initiative is the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), a collaborative organic certification system that seeks to add a premium to organic products, such as organic rice. Designed for small groups of farmers, it involves implementing capacity building and educational activities and creating seed plots to ensure sufficient seed supply.

Under the PGS, more than 300 farmers have embraced organic farming and earned organic certification. By 2023, this sustainable system had flourished, with 314 dedicated farmers cultivating an impressive 1,049 acres.

Processing fresh produce into value-added products also provides additional income for the community. The Green Garden Group, a micro-grantee, has made remarkable strides in this area. They have developed green tea and turmeric powder, supporting 28 households across five villages.



Information materials prepared by INFA



Farmer-members of Indawgyi Natural Farming Association produce organic rice using the Participatory Guarantee System

By supporting organic farming, the communities around Indawgyi are not only protecting the environment they call home, but also nurturing a brighter, more prosperous future for themselves and the generations that will follow.

“I participated in the PGS educational lectures around 2019-2020 and gained valuable knowledge from them. Currently, PGS is working to prevent agricultural chemicals from entering the lake water and to implement an agricultural system suitable for the changing climate. As part of this effort, they conduct educational activities and create seed plots to ensure sufficient seed supply. ACB provides funds to support these initiatives, including arranging market transport and providing bicycles for use. Demonstration plots have been established on six one-acre plots on both the east and west banks to engage residents. With ACB’s project support, we continued to implement the PGS system. By 2023, 314 farmers have cultivated 1,049 acres using this system. We have also produced the necessary inputs for organic agriculture.”

- Han Myint Zaw, Auditor, INFA





# GREEN GARDEN NATURAL GREEN TEA PRODUCTION GROUP: Supporting Indawgyi's organic tea farmers

Women members of the Green Garden Natural Green Tea Production Group grind tea leaves using equipment provided by the SGP

**Project Title:** Green Garden Natural Tea Planting and Production Project

**Grantee:** Green Garden Natural Green Tea Production Group

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** MMK 6,000,000 (USD 2,863.25)

**Location:** Lwemun Village, ILWS

In the tea-rich villages of Indawgyi, the Green Garden Natural Green Tea Production Group (Green Garden Group) stands as a testament to sustainable agriculture and community empowerment. The organisation was established in 2019 by a coalition of 16 tea farmers from three villages.

The project objectives are clear and potent as the tea they produce supports livelihood development for tea farmers in the Indawgyi region, cultivates high-quality and high-value tea products, provides consumers with authentic and high-quality tea, and expands the community of environment-friendly tea growers.

Initially, the group had only two tea machines which limited their production capacity. The introduction of three drying and two rolling machines supported by the SGP has streamlined processing, allowing members to handle larger quantities efficiently. Today, they are able to meet the growing demand for their products while maintaining quality.

In one season, for example, they saw a yield of 156 viss of green tea, translating to a total revenue of MMK 2,808,000 (USD 1,340) for the members—a significant achievement that underscores the project's viability and impact.

With 20 acres of mature tea farms hosting 1,500 old trees and another 20 acres allocated for new growth populated with 3,696 saplings, the group has maintained a delicate balance between tradition and expansion.





Green Garden Group produces high-quality tea leaves

“Farmers using the tea machines can pay in instalments of MMK 100,000 per year (USD 47), rather than pay the full price upfront. Once the machine is paid off, the farmer owns it. The extra funds from machine payments will be used for educational lectures aimed at increasing the number of new farmers,” shared Anthony Gammon, chairman of the Green Garden Group. He added that they plan to purchase new machines and continue to share them with the farmers.

Green Garden Group also plans to expand its tea farms further, preserve century-old trees, enhance the quality of its green tea, and strengthen market connections.

The group has connected with the Green Land Group in the Indawgyi region to enhance sales and produce high-quality tea in larger quantities.

They will also welcome more farmers into their fold and share their knowledge through study tours while maintaining their tradition of regular annual meetings.

As Green Garden Group continues to flourish, they embody the essence of growth—not just in their crops but in their community’s prosperity and well-being.

“Initially, farmers sold tea to a limited group of customers. After partnering with the ACB, they were able to produce high-quality and visually appealing tea, which enabled them to increase market penetration.”

- **Anthony Gammon**,  
Chairperson of Green  
Garden Group





# INDAWGYI SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION:

## Breathing new life into Indawgyi through improved waste management

**Project Title:** Improved Sanitation and Waste Management in Indawgyi Biosphere Reserve, Kachin State

**Grantee:** Indawgyi Social Development Association (ISDA)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 88,640

**Location:** Buffer zone of Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary and adjacent area

The HandyPod is an innovative solution for waste management challenges

In a world where environmental issues often seem overwhelming, a small group in the ILWS has zeroed in on a pressing concern faced by locals every day—waste management.

For the Indawgyi Social Development Association (ISDA), the transformative movement it has started is already taking root. Supported by the SGP, ISDA launched a campaign to raise awareness and boost local participation in solid waste management, addressing a problem that impacts the community's health and the natural beauty of Indawgyi Lake.

One of ISDA's most innovative contributions has been the introduction of HandyPods—a natural, eco-friendly water treatment system. These systems, crafted with local materials, filter wastewater effectively, reducing sewage discharge into the lake. To date, there are 117 toilets and sanitation systems installed across nine villages.

Beyond the tangible improvements in sanitation and waste management, the HandyPods have become the heart of a broader awareness campaign. This initiative encourages communities to explore effective sanitation systems, discover better alternatives, and actively participate in waste management efforts. Through workshops and outreach activities, ISDA has empowered villagers and students across 12 villages and enhanced their understanding of plastic waste management.

"Thanks to the ACB project, our operations are now more efficient than before," said Tin Moe Aung, Chairperson, ISDA. "Previously, only one or two villages could benefit from these improvements, but now every village around the lake can participate."



To celebrate these achievements and promote ongoing awareness, ISDA organised a World Toilet Day event, uniting the community in a shared commitment to proper waste management.

Through its tireless dedication and innovative approach, ISDA has demonstrated the power of grassroots action and the ripple effect it can create in communities.

“Our connection with the local people has strengthened, fostering a sense of community. We look forward to sustaining the positive impacts through more partnerships in the future.”

**-Tin Moe Aung,**  
Chairperson, ISDA





# BEYOND THE CATCH: Empowering fisherfolks' wives to reel in their own financial success

Myint Than Wai and other housewives in Indawgyi earn from selling fermented fish and other seafood products

**Project Title:** Sustainable Community Fisheries Management in Indawgyi Biosphere Reserve, Kachin State

**Grantee:** Friends of Wildlife (FoW)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 90,618.70

**Location:** Buffer zone of Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary and adjacent area

**M**yint Than Wai, a resident in one of the communities around ILWS, is a fisherfolk's wife who transforms fresh catch from the sea into various products like fermented fish and shrimp paste.

In the past, her work involved hours and hours of painstaking hand grinding with a mortar and pestle, which only allowed her to produce 15 pounds of products a day. Those days are over, thanks to Friends of Wildlife (FoW), a non-governmental organisation that sought funding through the SGP.

Under the programme, FoW provided Myint Than Wai and other women in the Indawgyi area with 13 grinding machines that can process 20 to 30 pounds of fish and shrimp in just one hour. To say that the machines have increased their productivity is an understatement—they can now produce four or five times more products than before.

The machines, which have become a lifeline for residents around the wildlife sanctuary, also lightened Myint Than Wai's and others' financial worries. Under their agreement with FoW, they will only pay for the machines when circumstances allow. This means that if sales of the products hit rough waters, they do not have to lose sleep over their payment as their instalment schedule will be adjusted accordingly.

The benefits of the machine have gone beyond its initial purpose – it has even allowed Myint Than Wai to pay it forward. She offers grinding services for free to fellow fisherfolks' wives who can bring in raw materials like shrimp to be processed, while she charges a modest fee





Myint Than Wai and her husband prepare shrimp paste using their grinder from SGP

of MMK 500 (USD 0.24) to MMK 1,000 (USD 0.48) to others. She doesn't stop there – Myint Than Wai also generously shares her knowledge, guiding others on how to make the most of the machine for grinding.

In addition to providing the machines, FoW has also embarked on activities aimed at encouraging sustainable fishing practices in the communities. These include knowledge-sharing and awareness-raising events, as well as training on fund

management and livestock farming. To prevent harmful fishing practices, the group has also engaged communities in discussions on illegal fishing gear, the removal of ghost nets or traps, and self-patrolling.

With each cast of the net and a gentle tug of the line, fisherfolk around the Indawgyi area are embracing a profound commitment to safeguarding the marine ecosystem they rely on, not just for themselves but for generations to come.





**Project Title:** Hepa Pig Raising

**Grantee:** Aung Tarahfu Pig Raising Group

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** EUR 2,429

**Location:** Buffer zone of Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary and adjacent area

Win Ngai, member of Aung Tarahfu, is grateful for the pig farming practices that he learned through the SGP support

## Aung Tarahfu Pig Raising Group: Fostering community and innovation in pig farming

Pig breeders in ILWS used to work individually using traditional pig farming methods. In 2021, they banded together and formed the Aung Tarahfu Pig Raising Group to improve pig farming practices in the protected area. With support from the SGP, the group's membership has grown to 15 individuals collectively raising 30 pigs by 2023.

Transitioning from traditional local pig breeding systems, the group embraced innovation after participating in technical training on pig raising and preparation of pig feeds. According to Win Ngwe of Aung Tarahfu, they have successfully implemented both meat breeding and hatchery breeding systems, significantly enhancing the group's productivity and quality of livestock.

Establishing a connection to a pig farming network with SGP support has been instrumental in overcoming hurdles; including the constant risk of disease affecting their livestock, difficulties in accessing veterinary services during critical times of

illness, and the high costs associated with purchasing commercial pig food, which they were unable to produce independently.

Farmer-members of the Aung Tarahfu Pig Raising Group say the intervention has enabled them to produce and distribute feed capsules at a subsidised rate, thereby reducing operational costs.

They benefit from advance notice of potential swine disease outbreaks.

In pursuit of sustainability, the group has instituted a communal fund. Each member contributes MMK 20,000 (USD 10), amassing a reserve fund of MMK 300,000 (USD 143) annually. These funds are pivotal for continuous improvement and expansion efforts. Aung Tarahfu Pig Raising Group's commitment remains steadfast. They want to empower members through sustainable pig farming while contributing positively to the community's economic growth and conservation efforts.





**Project Title:** Value-added Products Processing for Local Product

**Grantee:** Green Land Social Development Association

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** MMK 9,000,000 (USD 4,294.87)

**Location:** Loneton, ILWS

## Green Land Social Development Association: Promoting green entrepreneurship among Indawgyi's women

Unfolding in Indawgyi is a notable change spearheaded by the Green Land Social Development Association (Green Land), a women-exclusive organisation that is redefining backyard entrepreneurship and sustainability. Khin Mar Kyi, the visionary chairperson of the group, has led a movement that turns non-timber local raw materials into high-value products, empowering women and invigorating the economy.

Four years ago, a handful of determined women banded together to form Green Land. They sought to harness the bounty of the sanctuary and create products that resonate with their cultural heritage and conservation targets. Starting with sesame powder and dry tea, they embarked on a journey of growth and discovery.

The turning point came when they received an SGP grant, which provided not only financial aid but also invaluable training. The assistance catalysed an expansion in both their product line and their vision. Today, the group boasts an eclectic array of offerings, including ginger powder, green tea, organic dried melon, various natural wines like sour fruit and mulberry, and an assortment of herbal wines.

More than the biodiversity-based products they produce and sell, Green Land has become a model of opportunity, creating jobs for women and nurturing green entrepreneurs. From an initial 10 members in 2020, the group has blossomed into a collective of over 50 women.

According to Khin Mar Kyi, the intervention has enabled dozens of women to start their businesses and earn additional income for their families. With a sustainable source of livelihood, families are less likely to enter the wildlife sanctuary and engage in illegal activities.

Green Land conducts monthly association gatherings, which are not just social events, but strategic sessions to source raw materials and craft finished products.

The SGP's contribution extends beyond knowledge to essential equipment like fruit slicers and oil mills, streamlining production and fostering efficiency. The group's recent acquisition of 30 mustard seed mills is a testament to their commitment to growth.



Green Land's line-up of biodiversity-based products



**Project Title:** Embroidered Handicraft Making Project

**Grantee:** New Generation of Shanni Association

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** MMK 10,000,000 (USD 4,772.08)

**Location:** Loneton, ILWS

Nang Mi Mi San from the New Generation of Shanni Association looks forward to selling their products in more locations

## New Generation of Shanni Association (NGSA): Embroidering a greener future

The New Generation of Shanni Association (NGSA) began with a mission to safeguard the environment of Indawgyi Lake, embarking on a comprehensive garbage collection initiative across the surrounding villages. Alongside these efforts, it held educational sessions to raise awareness about environmental protection.

Recognising the scarcity of job prospects for Indawgyi's young women, NGSA applied for a grant under the SGP. This paved the way for a budding embroidery enterprise that has provided over 50 young women in the AHP with employment opportunities. They now earn a living from knitting, crocheting, and embroidery.

According to Nang Mi Mi San, secretary of NGSA, artisans craft exquisitely embroidered shawls, comfortable sleep shorts, and intricate floral patterns on diverse items. The venture has since grown to include sweater knitting, producing stylish hats, clip headers, and more artisanal products.

"When we received support from the SGP, young women in the Indawgyi region began participating in knitting and embroidery. Embroidery classes were provided through the SGP's support, attracting not only young people but also middle-aged married women. Many expressed interest in taking further courses. Graduates of the courses contribute five per cent of their earnings to fund our organisation," Nang Mi Mi San said.

With the combined resources of NGSA and contributions from trainees, Nang Mi Mi San said they are excited to introduce new courses and refreshers for alumni. The group's creations are displayed in stalls at the Shwe Myinzue Pagoda festival, local boutiques, regional celebrations, and tourist hotspots in Indawgyi.

"We aim to expand our market to larger cities such as Moe Ning, Hopin, Myitkyina, and Hommalin. We are also working on connecting with CPED to sell at their locations," said Nang Mi Mi San.



An array of colourful products from NGSA



Bamboo artisans and their products

**Project Title:** Handicraft Making Project

**Grantee:** Metta Lay Nyin Social Development Group

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** MMK 8,963,000 (USD 4,277.22)

**Location:** Lwemun Village, ILWS



## Metta Lay Nyin Social Development Group: Crafting a sustainable future for bamboo artisans

The Lwemun Village Bamboo Craft Association, also known as Metta Lay Nyin Bamboo Crafts Association (Meeta Lay Nyin), was established by a group of artisans in May 2013.

In 2019, they started utilising new kinds of bamboo from the Indawgyi region, which was previously undervalued, to create eco-friendly bamboo products for the tourism industry. Through the initiative, they endeavoured to provide alternative employment opportunities to locals and reduce their dependence on illegal logging activities.

Wanting to improve their bamboo craft, the association sought expert advice and technical training. Through a micro-grant from the SGP and support from FFI, members of Metta Lay Nyin underwent training sessions in 2023 that led to profitable outcomes. The group also received bamboo processing equipment that has increased both the production rate and the quality of their handicrafts.

The association now produces various bamboo-based items like chairs, helmets, trays, and mats, using nine varieties of bamboo. Sold both online and in local shops, the products have also become popular at tourist spots such as the Widow Pagoda. To sustain Metta Lay Nyin's activities, members contribute 10 per cent of their sales to the association's fund.

They are expanding their market reach through collaborations with travel service groups such as Inn Chit Thu and Mya Ma Nyo, as well as plan producing and selling more items in the long term.

They will also offer advanced training for export markets and enhancing craftsmanship by learning from experts in the Inle region.

"Thanks to ACB, we received equipment such as a bamboo diaper mat machine which has increased the speed and quality of our production. This has improved the smoothness and popularity of our materials, allowing us to sell more in the market."

- Soe Lin, Chairperson, Metta Lay Nyin





**Project Title:** Traditional Weaving

**Grantee:** Shanni Traditional Dance Group

**Grant Type:** Micro-grant

**Amount:** EUR 4,761

**Location:** Nyaungpin Village, ILWS

Ma Moe Nga, a member of Shanni Traditional Dance Group, takes pride in her group's products

## Shanni Traditional Dance Group: Weaving opportunities for Indawgyi's artists

Founded a decade ago, the Shanni Traditional Dance Group stands as a model of cultural preservation and community development in Indawgyi. The folk ensemble has not only graced countless stages with their vibrant performances but has also taken a hands-on approach to caring for their village through dedicated garbage collection initiatives.

The group's mission is threefold. "Apart from preserving and showcasing the rich Shanni culture, we aim to create sustainable employment for our members, as well as make traditional Shanni attire both affordable and accessible," said Ma Moe Nga, a member of the group. These objectives reflect their deep commitment to cultural heritage and economic empowerment.

Their aspirations caught the attention of the SGP, which awarded them a micro-grant. They used the assistance to facilitate weaving classes for members, enabling them to master the art of creating traditional Shanni textiles. They also received six looms and an initial capital that helped kickstart their venture.

Today, they produce exquisite traditional Shanni cloth, shirts, and shawls that are not just symbols of cultural identity, but also promote sustainable fashion. These products are currently on sale, offering a piece of Shanni heritage to others.



Artists from Shanni Traditional Dance Group and their products

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# INDAWGYI LAKE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY: A model for collaborative wetland management for biosphere reserves in Southeast Asia

**Project Title:** Establishment of a Five-Year Protected Area Management Plan for Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary

**Grantee:** Fauna & Flora International (FFI)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 100,000

**Location:** ILWS

The park management of Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary has formed meaningful relationships with FFI, the ACB, and other stakeholders to address conservation challenges in the park

In a groundbreaking initiative under the SGP, a diverse group of stakeholders has developed a five-year collaborative management plan (CMP) for ILWS, a biosphere reserve. The plan is aimed at transforming the protected area into a model of wetland conservation in Southeast Asia.

The CMP is the result of concerted efforts by park management, government agencies, village conservation groups, civil society organisations, community-based organisations, the private sector, and other stakeholders. This inclusive strategy aims to balance sustainable development with wetland conservation, serving as a beacon for similar ecosystems in the region.

Key interventions recommended include integrating sustainable development with conservation efforts, creating a revolving fund system for local communities, and providing alternative livelihood opportunities such as livestock breeding. Additionally, the establishment of community nurseries is expected to alleviate pressures on local biodiversity.

Central to this strategy is the empowerment of local communities. They are entrusted with pivotal roles in law enforcement, environmental awareness campaigns, livelihood initiatives, ecosystem restoration, and monitoring activities. This approach fosters community ownership and ensures that conservation efforts are aligned with local needs and knowledge.

The CMP stands as a testament to the power of unity in addressing environmental challenges and paves the way for a sustainable future for Southeast Asia's precious wetlands.



# PROMOTING COLLABORATIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT IN ILWS

Soe Myint, a forester at Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, is always on the watch for threats and other issues at the park

**Project Title:** Law Enforcement Program for Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary

**Grantee:** Fauna & Flora International (FFI)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 94,997

**Location:** ILWS

Recognising the urgency of strengthening law enforcement to protect the AHPs, FFI worked with park management in ILWS to employ collaborative law enforcement interventions, while raising communities' awareness of the parks' significance, providing alternative livelihood opportunities, and implementing habitat restoration.

Under the SGP-supported *Law Enforcement Programme for Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary*, one key intervention was the creation of village-based informant networks.

Launched in January 2018, this grassroots intelligence-gathering operation empowers villagers to discreetly report illegal logging while fostering collaboration in protected area management.

Informants are recruited through casual conversations in tea shops and targeted outreach to community forestry groups. This diverse coalition includes farmers, hunters, journalists, religious figures, and educators, all united by a common goal. Their anonymity is strictly protected to ensure their safety.

By 2020, this network had grown significantly, aiding in threat detection and the preservation of biodiversity within the sanctuary. Notably, former participants of the Indawgyi Conservation Awareness Program have continued their involvement. Additionally, farmers from surrounding buffer zones contribute their local knowledge to pinpoint critical biodiversity hotspots—key to protecting species like the hog deer and numerous wetland birds.

A covert network of 50 vigilant informants emerged between 2018 and 2020, serving as the forest's eyes and ears. Nearly half of these individuals engaged in monthly dialogues with an FFI agent, relaying updates on forest crimes. The intelligence collected was compiled and filtered by FFI, forming comprehensive reports that were delivered to ILWS' park warden each month.

This village-based informant network is seen as a game-changer for forest conservation efforts. It significantly expanded patrol coverage by enriching the rangers' knowledge with precise locations for safe patrolling—a feat that once seemed impossible.

The network was also instrumental in detecting logging camps inside the AHP. In 2018, 22 of the 26 large logging camps detected in ILWS were discovered by informants. In addition to revealing the logging camps, the network also helped identify a total of 18 logging businessmen and the locations of their camps. Information provided led to four arrests related to illegal logging in 2018.

The network also helped reduce irregularities in the park after revealing the web of corruption

related to illegal logging. Armed with the voice recording of their interviews with illegal loggers, informants revealed information about givers and receivers of bribes, including the systems they used to subvert the law.

To further expand monitoring initiatives, the village-based informants supported the creation of community-based forest monitoring units that assisted in regular patrol activities.

As the network further grew in 2020, informants also started reporting on major hunting hotspots inside ILWS, including information on hunting threats faced by wetland birds and threatened species like the hog deer.

Beyond gathering and reporting intelligence, the village-based informant network bridged the gap between government authorities and local communities whose relationship had been marred with tension and lack of trust. The collaborative law enforcement initiative led to a change in local communities' perceptions of government authorities following their realisation that not all park staff were involved in bribery.



Collaboration among various stakeholders was key to the success of the SGP in Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary



# SGP AT MEINMAHLA KYUN WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

“The key lesson we learned from the project is that it is possible to collaborate and engage the local community in implementing successful conservation efforts. Initially, the focus was solely on government-led governance, but our approach shifted to include public education, governance planning, and patrolling projects. In terms of data, permanent sample plots were established on Meinmahla Island and surveys that were conducted before the interventions revealed new plant species. With ACB’s support, these projects enabled effective collaboration between authorities and the community, leading to successful conservation outcomes.”

- Than Soe Oo  
Program manager  
Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN)



## Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary

**N**estled in the Ayeyarwady Delta, Meinmahla Kyun is a 13,700-hectare wildlife sanctuary—an important haven for wildlife and the lifeline of the local community. It safeguards the last remaining mangrove forests and serves as refuge for various species, including freshwater turtles and dolphins, estuarine crocodiles, and resident and migratory water and shore birds. It is home for 59 fish species, 12 prawn species, 10 crab species, 40 mangrove species, and 53 species of medicinal plants.


Recognised internationally as an East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership and Ramsar site, the coastal wetland is considered the last green space in the Ayeyarwady Delta that protects the largest population of the critically endangered native mangrove tree species, *Sonneratia griffithii*. It

is a sanctuary for the locally endangered crocodile and several globally vulnerable species such as the Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*) and long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*).

Beyond its ecological importance, MKWS is a lifeblood for 15,525 people across 22 villages who rely on the wetland's natural bounty—34% on fishing, 28% on farming, and 38% on collecting firewood or medicinal plants as their source of income. The sanctuary does not help households alone but acts as a natural barrier that obstructs cyclones and floods in this area. However, MKWS threats from illegal hunting, logging, unregulated fishing, traditional agriculture, and pollution all put this precious ecosystem at risk, making it a suitable pilot site for SGP I.

### SGP at a Glance in MKWS

<b>EUR 581,027</b> worth of grants	<b>EUR 366,027</b> grant awarded to support actions to restore MKWS' dwindling mangrove forest, while introducing alternative sources of income	<b>More than 720</b> hectares of mangrove restored
<b>193,770</b> seedlings of 18 native mangrove species (including <i>Sonneratia griffithii</i> , <i>Bruguiera cylindrica</i> and <i>Bruguiera sexangula</i> ) cultivated in community nurseries	<b>441</b> households benefitted from income-generating activities	<b>12</b> village revolving fund committees established
<b>EUR 25,000</b> grant awarded to support community outreach and conservation awareness	<b>EUR 100,000</b> grant awarded to develop a Collaborative Management Plan (CMP)	
<b>EUR 90,000</b> grant awarded to implement a law enforcement programme	<b>48</b> beneficiaries empowered under livelihood capacity building	<b>2,000</b> fuel-efficient stoves distributed



# MEINMAHLA'S MANGROVES:

## Turning the tide for one of the most threatened mangrove habitats in the world

Than Soe Oo, Program Manager, MERN

**Project Title:** Restoring Mangroves and Creating Income Opportunities for the Mangrove-dependent Poor in the Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary

**Grantee:** Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN)

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 366,027

**Location:** Buffer zones at MKWS

**Website:** <https://mernmyanmar.org/>

**Than Soe Oo**, Program Manager of the Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN) and Tun Tun Zaw, program officer of MERN and project officer of the MKWS Project, shared their thoughts on the *Restoring Mangroves and Creating Income Opportunities for the Mangrove-dependent Poor in the Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary* intervention.

**SGP Team: What in your view are the biggest challenges faced by MKWS?**

**Than Soe Oo:** The biggest challenge to conserve MKWS is the heavy dependence of locals on the park due to the limited employment opportunities. To meet their daily needs, they engage in activities such as firewood collection, logging, Thinpaung (a mangrove species) production to generate fuel and housing materials, and other harmful practices that threaten the park's ecosystems. This reliance on the park is the greatest challenge to effective conservation.

**SGP Team: What is the goal of Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN)?**

**Than Soe Oo:** MERN was established in 2009 following the Nargis cyclone that struck in 2008. Initially, it was formed with 14 local organisations but has grown now to 33. MERN aims to protect forests and biodiversity, impacting both government policy and the public. Improved conservation in the Ayeyarwady region could significantly benefit globally endangered species such as crocodiles and Irrawaddy dolphins, which are highly protected under Myanmar's Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Law and provide a vital habitat for migratory birds.

**Tun Tun Zaw:** Our organisation leads the SGP implementation in collaboration with Ecosystem Conservation and Community Development Initiatives (ECCDI) and Myint Myat Thu Doe Nalone Thar (MMTDNLT). As a mangrove expert, I focus on building local capacity through mangrove conservation activities, raising awareness, and enhancing the island's ecological value.



**Tun Tun Zaw**, Program Officer, MERN and Project Officer, MKWS Project

**SGP Team: Can you discuss the key components of the SGP intervention in MKWS?**

**Than Soe Oo:** The SGP has established a revolving fund to reduce the locals' dependence on the national park. Currently, over MMK 100 million (EUR 42,633) has been provided to benefit 12 villages. Managed by village authorities, these funds support livelihoods through activities such as raising pigs, ducks, goats, and crabs. Additionally, some use the funds to increase their income by selling vegetables. This approach helps reduce excessive reliance on the national park, aiding in environmental and biodiversity conservation. These SGP-supported projects are crucial as they support biodiversity conservation initiatives while creating employment opportunities for locals.

**SGP Team: What is the key to the success of this intervention?**

**Tun Tun Zaw:** The key to success lies in project design that ensures sustainability of the project's outcome. First, the community is trained to build their capacity then become actively involved in mangrove restoration activities. Wages received from the restoration project can be invested in income-generating activities, supported by livelihood training (entrepreneurship) in areas such as crab farming and pig raising.

The revolving fund system was established not only for those involved in restoration projects, but also for the extremely poor and unemployed. Many have used the funds for ventures like pig farming, duck farming, and crab farming. By establishing their livelihoods, locals will be less dependent on Meinmahla Kyun's mangroves.

Part of the benefits the locals gain from these activities include having been able to pay off their

debts, cover their daily expenses, invest in future livelihoods, and purchase essential equipment like boats.


**SGP Team: What are the main lessons you learned from your participation in the SGP?**

**Than Soe Oo:** Since the start of the SGP in 2014, we have learned valuable insights and identified some gaps. With Myanmar's 54 national parks, we have learned that systematic management across all parks is more effective. However, even with the correct strategies, practical implementation sometimes faced challenges due to limited time, leading to unmet needs.

Another key lesson is the importance of involving local communities through the CMP, which we implemented with ACB's support. This experience helped us realise that traditional management alone might not be sufficient for effective conservation. In addition, ACB's step-by-step support has enhanced our financial resources and provided necessary technology like computers which are needed to support conservation efforts.



Locals actively participated in mangrove restoration efforts



# THE ROOTS OF TOMORROW:

## Communities lead the charge to mangrove restoration

Win Nyunt, Chairperson of Chaung Bye Gyi Village Revolving Fund

**A**mid the coastal wetlands in Bogale Town in Myanmar, a group of villagers can be seen standing ankle deep in the sticky mud, rhythmically digging holes in the firm clay, while others are carefully burying mangrove saplings to fill the holes. Despite the intense heat and exhausting physical work, they relentlessly waded through shallow waters, knowing all too well the significance of their task at hand.

They are members of communities actively involved in efforts to restore MKWS' dwindling mangrove forest. Designated as both an AHP and a Ramsar site, the sanctuary spans across nearly 13,700 hectares and is home to the country's largest population of saltwater crocodiles, as well as other endangered or threatened species and plants.

Meinmahla, which means "beautiful woman," has also become the main source of livelihood for more than 8,000 households across 22 surrounding villages. Living up to its role as a sanctuary, it acts as a buffer against natural disasters caused by climate change.

But over the years, the health of the mangrove forest declined due to illegal cutting and over-exploitation of firewood, both for local use and export to Yangon. Due to the limited number of staff and facilities, the park staff had been unable to effectively stop illegal activities of some villagers such as unlawful fishing, hunting, and cutting of trees.

The situation worsened after Cyclone Nargis in 2008, which destroyed 50 per cent of all the trees in the island. As the survival of both flora and fauna in the sanctuary become threatened, the involvement of nearby mangrove-dependent communities has become more critical than ever.

Recognising this urgent need, MERN, with a grant from the SGP, worked with local stakeholders to revive the once-thriving mangrove forest and create income opportunities for the surrounding communities.

Launched in April 2022, the goal of the intervention was clear for all involved – restoring the health of the mangrove ecosystem was not a one-off plan, but rather a sustainable set of actions that will drive systematic change. For this to happen, they knew there should be one essential ingredient: solid community involvement. By mobilising the local communities to directly participate in resolving a decades-long problem, residents would feel a sense of empowerment and ownership in protecting the mangroves essential for their livelihood and safety.

Before even digging patches for actual mangrove planting, MERN focused on raising community awareness and building capacity for mangrove conservation. Several workshops were conducted to cultivate a sense of appreciation among locals of the importance of mangrove forest for their life security,



The SGP-supported mangrove restoration area



Local communities in Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary actively participated in the SGP-supported mangrove restoration project

food and fuel. They were also briefed on the need to restore mangroves and the different ways to revive the mangrove's health. Training was held on various topics—from site-species matching to nursery establishment and developing better hydrology and proper planting methods.

"We trained local people from 12 rural villages to improve their capacity in mangrove planting. The high-performance courses included nursery establishment, high-value planting methods, techniques for filling empty spaces, mixed farming methods, and training for Pinchen Phongxing business practices. We also provided training on ecosystem-based mangrove establishment methods. This project is the first of its kind in the region," said Tun Tun Zaw, Program Officer, MERN.

For Win Nyunt, Chairperson of Chaung Bye Gyi Village Revolving Fund, the knowledge gained from the training sessions was a game changer. "We collaborated with project staff on enrichment planting, which has deepened our understanding on how to effectively plant these mangroves. Thanks to the animal husbandry training provided, local communities have become proficient in raising livestock. Consequently, their income has increased compared to before. This has led to improved livelihoods," he shares.

After successfully implementing awareness-raising and capacity building activities, MERN and the communities began the restoration efforts, by addressing the location's hydrology issue. In the southern part of the sanctuary, a low land area was deprived of tidal circulation due to sand cover, causing some mangrove trees to die. By digging a 2,000-metre trench, they were able to give access to the tide, allowing for the ecological restoration of mangroves. Additionally, this project provided income to more than 30 labourers from surrounding villages.

MERN and the communities restored more than 720 hectares of mangroves using both natural and artificial restoration methods. Natural restoration activities included ecological mangrove restoration and regeneration improvement felling (RIF) of more than 500 hectares. Artificial restoration activities, on the other hand, involved enrichment planting of valuable species in nearly 190 hectares, as well as gap planting, mixed plantation, and rare species plantation in another 30 hectares of land. In addition, local communities were encouraged to establish community nurseries, with MERN buying the seedlings from them for additional income. As a result, several community nurseries were set up, producing 193,770 seedlings for different types of plantation.

*"The Restoring Mangroves and Creating Income Opportunities for the Mangrove-dependent Poor in the MKWS Project provides income for locals and helps restore the mangroves in Meinmahla Kyun. To make it happen, we collaborated with various international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as FFI, ACB, MERN, ECCDI, and the CSOs MMTDNL and Alintan (Ray of Light). These groups worked with us on conservation activities and educational outreach programmes."*

**-Sai Wunna Kyi, Park Warden of MKWS**





# CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF SAVING AND INVESTING: The village revolving fund at MKWS

Members of the central revolving fund management committee

**S**ince the project started, mangrove trees have become a new source of business for nearby villages in MKWS. Increased awareness and involvement in the mangrove restoration show promising success in providing alternative, more sustainable livelihoods for locals, helping them shift away from illegal activities.

Apart from purchasing seedlings from local communities' nurseries, MERN formed "Cash for Work" activities, where villagers got compensated for various types of jobs such as land clearing in mixed plantation areas and digging up water ways for ecological mangrove restoration.

What distinguishes the MKWS from other mangrove restoration projects was the creation of a revolving fund scheme in 12 villages to support their livelihood while contributing to mangrove restoration.

MERN trained 32 representatives from the 12 villages on the importance of mangroves and the revolving fund.

Together with MERN, the 12 villages then held a series of consultation meetings to discuss the purpose and objective of the revolving fund and whether it is relevant to their needs. The 12 village revolving fund committees were established under the livelihood component of the project to supervise the activities in the post-project period.

A central revolving fund committee was also formed to supervise the project, determine the responsibilities and obligations of the members, and ensure the implementation of the activities and the systematic operation of the revolving fund. The committee members also jointly select the beneficiaries according to the criteria that they have set.

"To qualify, an applicant must be a permanent resident of the village, must be a participant in the mangrove establishment activities of the project, must be capable of implementing his or her proposed income-generating activities which is supported by five guarantors. If not involved in the project activities, the applicant must be extremely poor," explained Thein Lwin, Chairperson of the central revolving fund management committee.

According to Tun Tun Zaw, included in the category of "extremely poor" are individuals who do not have stable jobs or financial security. These are casual workers or those without consistent employment. Members whose proposals will be approved for loans from the revolving fund would invest their money in livelihood activities and pay back the money with a low interest rate of between 1.5 to 3 per cent monthly. "To give back to the community members who participated in the mangrove restoration

activities, and further encourage others to follow suit, their proposals are prioritised for approval," Their Lwin said.

The revolving fund process begins with the signing of a contract between MERN and the central revolving fund committee. Next, another contract is signed between the central revolving fund committee and village revolving fund committee. Finally, a contract is signed between the village revolving fund committee and the selected beneficiaries.

Funds are distributed monthly to village beneficiaries who utilise the funds for any income-generating activity they choose. Separate bank accounts have been opened for the relevant village revolving fund committees. The revolving funds must be repaid within the year, and at the specified time. Before the next rotation, the central committee would assess the status of the activity implemented by the current beneficiary. Only after considering the merits of the activity will they approve the beneficiary to qualify for the next rotation. Revolving funds will be re-disbursed after considering the merits. In the last month of the specified period, all funds issued must be returned to the bank. The returns or profits from the village development activities supported by the revolving fund are used proportionately for the conservation of MKWS.

To ensure the success of this livelihood component, beneficiaries received capacity building that were

conducted on the revolving fund concept and management, livestock raising particularly pigs and ducks, as well as crab fattening.

Beneficiaries were also trained to operate the revolving fund, to develop their organisational skills, and to practise collective decision-making.

One criticism levelled against the selection mechanism for beneficiaries is its limitation to those who took part in the mangrove nursery and, therefore, was not inclusive of everyone in the community. The rationale behind these criteria, according to MERN, is to foster a sense of responsibility among community members and shift away from the dole-out system. More members of the community will eventually be involved after the initial rounds if the revolving funds perform well.

Overall, the communities remain enthusiastic about the project and are looking for ways to further improve its implementation. One recommendation to ensure its sustainability is to increase the participation of youth and women in the village revolving fund committee.

For the communities surrounding MKWS, turning the tide on mangrove loss has changed their lives for the better, offering them a spark of hope for improved biodiversity and economic empowerment in the years to come.

The image shows two handwritten tables in Burmese, likely serving as financial records for revolving funds in 12 villages. The tables are written on lined paper and contain columns for activity names, numerical counts, and monetary values. The left table is dated 28.1.2024 and the right table is dated 25.1.2024. The tables list various activities such as pig raising, duck raising, and crab fattening, along with their respective financial amounts and some additional notes.

Records of funds disbursed in 12 villages are maintained and updated by the central revolving fund management committee



## REAPING THE REWARDS: How mangroves have redefined livelihood in Meinmahla's buffer villages

Aung Than Kyaw and Cho Sweet ventured into pig raising with SGP's support

**T**he vast diversity of biological resources in Meinmahla holds promise for the livelihood of local communities. Guided by traditional wisdom and bolstered by collaborative efforts, these communities embark on sustainable projects under the mentorship of MERN, park authorities, and other partners.

To reduce the pressure on the park's mangroves, MERN and its partners developed income opportunities centred on non-mangrove resources and nurtured micro-entrepreneurs, including activities such as pig raising, duck raising, and crab fattening.

### Success Stories on Sustainable Livelihoods

#### Pig Raising at Padaekaw Village

Aung Than Kyaw's family embarked on a journey that not only transformed their livelihood but also contributed to the preservation of local ecosystems. Following their participation in the SGP-assisted mangrove restoration initiative, they received a grant of MMK 200,000 (EUR 85.27) under the project's revolving fund.

Rather than merely viewing this as a financial aid, they saw it as an opportunity to create sustainable income. They invested MMK 140,000 (EUR 59.69)

in raising a pig. Over the next five months, the pig thrived under their care. Its market value grew significantly, reaching approximately MMK 600,000 (EUR 255.80). Instead of selling it immediately, the family made a strategic choice: they would continue breeding.

"If the sow produces five piglets, we'd earn about MMK 700,000 (EUR 298.43), and the sow would remain as profit," Aung Than Kyaw shared. By investing the fund wisely, they have elevated the livestock's value to MMK 1,300,000 (EUR 554.23). "This pig-raising business has become an earning and savings scheme for our family," he said.

Cho Sweet feeds one of their family's pigs





Sein Gyi, who received assistance from MERN and SGP, takes pride in being a duck farmer

### Duck raising at Mee Laung Kwin Village

Sein Gyi received 50 ducks under the SGP-assisted revolving fund. These ducks have gradually multiplied, reaching to about 200 to date. Duck eggs from this backyard venture are sold at MMK 300 (EUR 0.13) per piece. The daily income generated is approximately MMK 30,000 (EUR 12.79). After deducting food and labour costs, about MMK 10,000 (EUR 4.26) remain as profit.

“The income from duck farming has reduced our dependence on the area around Meinmahla Island. With the profit from duck farming, my

family and I were able to open a small grocery in our house. Thanks to the revolving fund from the project, we were able to establish our own small business. We no longer have to work away from home as we used to. We can now comfortably earn an income from home,” said Sein Gyi.

The project’s revolving funds played a pivotal role in empowering him to have his own business, significantly improving his and his family’s quality of life.



A duck farm in Mee Laung Kwin Village



Tin Oo learned about crab fattening under an SGP-supported livelihood project

### Crab fattening at Chaung Bye Gyi Village

When crab farming ponds were established in Chaung Gyi Village through the help of the SGP grant, Tin Oo was one of the villagers who took the opportunity to learn about crab farming and fattening. “ACB has provided us with both financial support and systematic training on crab farming. The instructors explained the feeding rates, growth periods, and growth rates of the crabs in detail,” he said.

Tin Oo’s crab farming journey has seen both triumphs and challenges. Despite the recent heatwave affecting profits, he remains undeterred. He shared that raising small crabs can yield a return

of about MMK 200 (EUR 0.09) from an initial MMK 100 (EUR 0.04), effectively doubling the investment and resulting in about a 90 per cent profit. He is experimenting with raising female crabs because he thinks it could be more profitable.

Tin Oo’s vision extends beyond his own success. “This business is highly profitable, and I want everyone to participate and benefit from it,” he said. For him, it’s not just about profits—it’s about empowering the entire community through sustainable livelihood.

### Cooking up success with efficient stoves at Padaekaw Village

Under the SGP, 2,000 fuel-efficient stoves were distributed to households around MKWS. The use of these stoves reduced fuelwood consumption by 50 per cent, lessened the risk of fire, and shortened cooking time, allowing villagers to do other chores or jobs. Their compact design saves space and enhances mobility. Additionally, the stoves emit less smoke, helping to protect the environment and reduce the demand for firewood, thereby, contributing to the preservation of mangrove forest.

“Previously, cooking a meal would require about 10 pieces of firewood. Now, with the fuel-efficient stoves, cooking the same meal only requires about 6 pieces of firewood. This saves on fuel costs and frees up more time, allowing me to do other tasks and spend more time with my family,” said Mya Nu, a homemaker and a fuel-efficient stove user.



Mya Nu is happy with her savings from using her fuel-efficient stove

# FOSTERING COLLABORATIVE management planning in Meinmahla

**Project Title:** Establishment of a Five-Year Protected Area Management Plan for Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary

**Grantee:** Fauna & Flora International

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 100,000

**Location:** MKWS

Collaboration played a key role in promoting park stewardship in Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary

The management of protected areas, including AHPs, plays a crucial role in Myanmar's national strategies for conserving biological resources. Historically, governments and their partner organisations predominantly followed a top-down management approach, where plans were developed at higher levels and passed down to environmental agencies and parks for implementation. However, this approach has been criticised for failing to consider the views and needs of stakeholders directly impacted by these management plans.

In MKWS, the SGP supported the development and updating of a CMP, signalling a pivotal shift from an exclusionary to a participatory framework. MKWS had its first five-year management plan in 2014, following a series of consultations involving representatives from government agencies, park management staff, community-based organisations, civil society groups, and private sector partners. The CMP was officially approved and adopted by the Myanmar Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC) in 2018.

This shift from top-down planning to a consultative, inclusive process has been praised as a breakthrough, enabling more effective, long-term solutions to address threats. The collaborative plans emphasise joint decision-making and action between park authorities and local communities, fostering a more sustainable and holistic approach to protected area management.



# NATURE'S CALL: How community outreach and awareness is driving forest conservation in Meinmahla

Myo Oo of Myint Myat Thu Doh Na Lone Thar says his group is proud to serve as a bridge between the SGP-assisted mangrove restoration and livelihood project and the local community. Engaging with communities is a crucial part of the organisation's task

**Project Title:** Conservation Awareness and Community Outreach in Meinmahlakyun AHP  
**Grantee:** Fauna & Flora International  
**Grant Type:** Small Grant  
**Amount:** EUR 25,000  
**Location:** MKWS

**A**t a community near MKWS, village members regularly lead learning sessions about their crucial role in conserving biodiversity.

The group belongs to the Mobile Awareness Conservation Unit, which also includes park staff and various NGO representatives. Supported by the SGP, the group seeks to inspire communities to care about the natural resources around them and the environment they live in.

Under the Conservation Awareness and Community Outreach in Meinmahla Kyun project, a community informant network was established, allowing residents to become the wildlife sanctuary's own guardians. In addition to establishing a hotline number where tips come in, the group has devised a reward-based system to further encourage village members to report environmental crimes.

In recent times, there had been a series of discussions that sought to raise the community's awareness regarding rules and values of the MKWS. One of the most notable discussions they have held is the awareness component of *Restoring Mangroves and Creating Income Opportunities for the Mangrove-dependent Poor in the MKWS* Project. In addition to learning sessions on the importance of mangroves, community members were taught ways how to cultivate and restore mangroves.



“Before understanding the value of the mangroves, we used to cut down trees whenever we wanted and sold them at will. Sometimes, we overexploited the resources. Thanks to the awareness projects espoused by the SGP, we now understand the value of these mangroves and actively participate in their conservation,” said Than Win Aung, one of the community members.

The group’s efforts have not stopped there. Under the project, they have also put up signposts with the information and regulations of the wildlife sanctuary in strategic places such as fish landing sites in target villages; distributed a series of awareness materials like posters and leaflets in key areas; conducted outreach activities; and

engaged monasteries and religious leaders to promote conservation of natural resources and the protection of MKWS.

More than passing key information to village members, the project seeks to empower them and continue the communication chain with other residents. “Currently, we educate others about the benefits of these mangroves and involve those who still don’t understand,” Than Win Aung added.

By tirelessly working to foster knowledge-sharing on biodiversity conservation, community members are on the right path to creating change not just for themselves, but for future stewards of the sanctuary.



Than Win Aung helps educate his neighbours at Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary about the benefits of taking care of mangroves

# EYES AND EARS OF THE FOREST:

## Communities on the frontline of wildlife sanctuary protection

**Project Title:** Law Enforcement Programme for Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary

**Grantee:** Fauna & Flora International

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 100,000

**Location:** MKWS

Locals have stepped up to protect the wildlife sanctuary that they call home.

**H**aving lived in the small town of Bogale in the south-western part of Myanmar for decades, community members have grown all too familiar with the issues around the MKWS.

The sanctuary was rapidly declining as poverty-stricken residents, driven by the need to survive, turned to illegal extraction of natural resources for their livelihood.

“To address their daily sustenance needs, locals engaged in activities such as illegal logging and fishing that threatened the sanctuary,” said Than Soe Oo, Program Manager at MERN.





Things finally began to improve in 2019 with the establishment of a collaborative law enforcement and patrolling strategy, supported by an SGP grant.

To empower locals and heighten their sense of ownership, park management and their partners encouraged residents of Bogale and neighbouring towns to participate in environmental protection efforts.

Patrolling teams were organised, consisting of wildlife sanctuary staff, representatives of township fishery department, police force in Myanmar Township, and six village members, to protect the area from illegal activities such as firewood extraction in no-take zones, unsustainable fishing, and poaching.

In addition to key activities such as the development of standard operating procedures for patrolling, the programme introduced the communities to the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) method. This tool allows patrollers to collect and analyse threat-based information, enabling them to adapt their management strategies accordingly.

Reflecting on the programme's impact, Than Soe Oo remarked, "With the help of ACB's Small Grants Programme, we have been able to engage and collaborate with the local communities in protecting the national park. The programme made us realise that it really takes a village to protect the wildlife sanctuary and its natural resources," he concluded.

# SGP AT ALAUNGDAW KATHAPA NATIONAL PARK



The picturesque Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park

“There are key lessons we learned from the implementation of SGP in Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park: 1) A collaborative management approach for AHPs stands out as a best practice to promote community participation in park management; 2) Initiation of protected area constituency through the Township Protected Area Management Committee (TPAMC) foster effective coordination among stakeholders; 3) Capacity building for both local communities and park staff is crucial for the successful and effective implementation of management plans; and 4) An all-inclusive approach for management plan development including conceptual model development is important. Refining the interventions ensures understanding of park staff about management plans and holding multiple public hearings enhances the participation of communities.”

**Naw May Lay Thant**

National Landscape Coordinator, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

# ALAUNGDAW KATHAPA NATIONAL PARK



A temple inside Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park

**S**traddling the Mingin and Kani Townships in Myanmar's Sagaing Division, the 159,761-hectare Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park (AKNP) was established as a wildlife sanctuary in 1984, designated a national park in 1989, and declared an ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP) in 2003.

This park is not only a hub for biodiversity but also a major Buddhist pilgrimage site, housing the holy remains of Buddha's disciple, Maha Kathapa, in a natural cave. Each year, about 230,000 pilgrims visit the park during the religious festival.

The park's hilly accented valley provides sanctuary for a rich array of wildlife, including several endangered and vulnerable species. Among its residence are the endangered Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*), banteng (*Bos javanicus*), and tiger (*Panthera tigris*), as well as the vulnerable clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*) and gaur (*Bos gaurus*).

AKNP also preserves one of Myanmar's largest remaining teak forests (*Tectona grandis*) and other plant and animal species including 487 bird species, 92 reptile and amphibian species, 32 mammal species, 464 plant species, and hundreds of other species of fauna, making it a vital sanctuary for biodiversity.



Children get to know the majestic Asian elephant

AKNP supports the livelihoods of 56,371 people across 65 villages, including monks who care for Maha Kathapa's shrine. The 10,826 households primarily rely on subsistence agriculture, growing key crops such as rice, peanuts, maize, and tomatoes. While villages with better access adopt modern farming techniques, more remote communities stick to traditional methods. Employment opportunities are scarce, with most income derived from agriculture, livestock, non-timber forest products (NTFPs), and in some cases, illegal logging.

Many landless villagers migrate for work in jade, gold, and amber mining, or illegal logging, while those who stay in the village work as daily labourers. Labour shortages during planting and harvesting seasons also further hamper agricultural productivity.

Villagers primarily raise buffaloes and cows for agricultural purposes, while a few keep pigs for meat. Chickens are rarely raised for meat or eggs due to the high initial investment, difficulties in sourcing feed, and costly transportation. To manage livestock and forage efficiently, two-story shelters are built, with cows housed on the ground floor and forage stored upstairs.

Each household maintains livestock and has designated yards for animals and forage storage. Buffaloes are typically allowed to graze freely near the village. In Pya Village and nearby small villages in Minkin Township, buffaloes are used for agricultural work and horses for transporting various goods.



A bird feeds its young at the Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park ©Kyaw Naing Lin

Due to limited off-farm income opportunities, many communities depend heavily on extracting natural resources from AKNP and its surrounding forests.

Despite its abundant natural resources and breathtaking beauty, AKNP faces significant human-induced threats. illegal logging, unsustainable collection of NTFPs and fuelwood, illegal hunting, agricultural encroachment, poison fishing, weak law enforcement, and lack of awareness about the benefits and value of wildlife all jeopardise the park's biodiversity.

These rich biological resources, coupled with the urgent conservation challenges make AKNP an ideal pilot site for SGP I.

## SGP at a Glance at AKNP



# COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN: Fostering stewardship among locals in Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park



**Project Title:** Strengthening Conservation through Management Planning for Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park - ASEAN Heritage Park

**Grantee:** Wildlife Conservation Society

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 100,000

**Location:** AKNP

AHP staff at Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park worked with their partners in crafting the park's CMP

**M**anaging protected areas, including AHPs, is a cornerstone of national strategies for conserving biological resources. Historically, governments and their partner organisations have relied on a top-down management approach, where plans are developed at higher levels and then handed down to environmental agencies and parks for implementation. Since this method has faced criticism for failing to incorporate the views and needs of various stakeholders whose lives are directly impacted by these management plans, SGP I pilot locations worked on new plans that are built on collaboration. By bringing communities, park officials, and various stakeholders together, they have crafted management plans that not only protect ecosystems but also align with the needs of those who depend on them.

## *Shifting from exclusionary to participatory planning*

Reconciling the management of protected areas with the social and economic needs of local

communities is no small feat - it's a monumental challenge that demands a comprehensive, all-hands-on-deck approach. The key to success? Actively engaging local communities as partners in every step, from planning to implementation.

Recognising this, the SGP stepped in to support the development and updating of park management plans, transforming the process from an exclusionary top-down model to more inclusive, a participatory framework. This shift puts the people who live alongside these ecosystems at the heart of conservation efforts, ensuring that their needs are balanced with the health of the environment.

In 2014, AKNP, ILWS, MKWS, and NMTNP drafted their first five-year management plans through township-level consultations involving key government agencies, park management, community-based organisations, civil society, and private sector partners. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

(MONREC) approved and adopted these CMPs in 2018, setting the foundation for future interventions in these parks.

“Developing a park management plan is a necessary first step for identifying conservation needs and livelihood opportunities for the deployment of future small grants,” the WCS wrote in the project completion report.

In AKNP, park staff led the drafting process with support from the WCS and the Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (BANCA). The process involved comprehensive assessments and baseline data collection. Active participation from relevant departments in Yinmabin, Kani, Mingin, and Pale Townships was crucial in establishing the TPAMC. Community members also played a vital role, contributing invaluable insights during consultation meetings.

“Developing a park management plan is a necessary first step for identifying conservation needs and livelihood opportunities for the deployment of future small grants,” the WCS wrote in the project completion report.

“Conservation targets such as habitats and key wildlife species were identified, taking all inputs from the park staff. Threats on the conservation targets were also categorised. All potential interventions to reduce the identified threats were also developed,” said Naw May Lay Thant, WCS’s National Landscape Coordinator, in the project completion report.



Stakeholders work together to protect wildlife at Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park

## Ten approaches and strategies were identified in the management plan<sup>1</sup>.

Law enforcement and patrolling activities	The existing Elephant Protection Unit, applying the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) system, should be expanded for the entire national park when additional budget and resources are received. Monthly law enforcement review meetings should be conducted to ensure efficient monitoring, planning, and reporting of law enforcement activities.
Conservation education, awareness, and outreach activities	The construction of a new Environmental Education Centre and renovation of the existing one should be considered, along with village and school-specific education activities.
Community livelihood enhancement and income generation activities	The effective coordination with other relevant organisations such as GRET and PACT (USAID), which have implemented these activities in many villages around the national park, is essential.
Community capacity development	The capacity of the community should be built by conducting capacity needs assessments.
Ecotourism development	Ecotourism should be seen as an opportunity for income generation for local communities.
Collaboration with relevant government departments	AKNP should promote collaboration to achieve more effective conservation interventions.
Park staff capacity development	The capacity of AKNP staff should be built for effective implementation of the management plan.
Wildlife and habitat surveys and monitoring	To ensure the effectiveness of the management plan, monitoring activities must be conducted.
Collaborative buffer zone management	This will enhance community participation in AKNP management.
Sustainable financing system	This system should take into account the financial sustainability of AKNP.

### *Institutionalising co-management structures at AKNP*

Empowering local communities is at the heart of this co-management strategy. They are integral to law enforcement, environmental awareness campaigns, livelihood initiatives, ecosystem restoration, and monitoring activities. This approach not only fosters a strong sense of ownership among communities but also ensures that conservation efforts are tailored to local needs and traditional knowledge.

Recognising the value of local involvement in conservation, management, and livelihood projects, SGP grantees, park management, and community partners advocated for the formal inclusion of local representatives in management units. This initiative led to the establishment of three key groups, further institutionalising community involvement in park governance.

<sup>1</sup> The Republic of Union of Myanmar, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park Management Plan (2018-2019 to 2022-2023)

**The Township Protected Area Management Committee** – The CMP facilitated the institutionalisation of co-management through the creation of the TPAMC. This committee serves as a co-management platform for the AHPs, bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders, including government agencies, park management and staff, law enforcement agencies, civil society organisations, and local communities.

Under the AHPs' co-management models, the TPAMC plays a crucial role in addressing local conservation issues and concerns, ensuring community representation in township environment and conservation meetings, and actively involving local communities in decision-making processes for the AHP. As of mid-2024, TPAMCs have been established in three AKNP townships, with the CMP laying the groundwork for similar committees to be formed in additional townships. Additionally, one District Protected Area Management Committee has been formed.

**Protected Area Management Supporting Unit** – Closely linked to the TPAMC is the Protected Area Management Supporting Unit (PAMSU), a multi-stakeholder group established to aid in the implementation of the CMP. Members of PAMSU have clearly defined responsibilities outlined in their terms of reference, ensuring the effective execution of the CMP objectives.

PAMSU is praised as an exemplary model of meaningful community participation in protected area management. By collaborating with other stakeholders, PAMSU members monitor the progress of management plans, support communities, conduct joint law enforcement activities, make collective decisions for co-management, and encourage local community involvement in these activities. This model not only promotes local involvement but also fosters a shared sense of responsibility for conservation outcomes.

**Community Guardians and Volunteers** – To tackle the challenge of limited park staff, the CMP introduced the selection of voluntary community guardians from AKNP townships. These guardians play a crucial role in co-management activities of the park, participating in various activities such as community-based biodiversity monitoring in buffer zones.

In addition to their monitoring duties, the guardians lead environmental awareness initiatives, reaching seven out of 65 villages in the park. They also conduct joint law enforcement patrol activities, covering 74,842.12 kilometres of parkland. As focal points for livelihood interventions, community guardians have facilitated sustainable programmes. Their involvement not only bolsters conservation efforts but also strengthens the connection between local communities and the park's sustainable management.

### *Sharing lessons learned*

One of the key takeaways from this project, according to Naw May Lay Thant, is that the “participation of community and park staff in all management planning processes is critical.” He emphasised that “identifying and building the capacity of local partners is key for successful implementation of the management plan.” Finally, in the project completion report, he further noted that the TPAMC “is a great idea and should be extended to District, State and Regional levels.”

In assessing the project, the grant authority lauded the CMP approach as a breakthrough, transitioning from top-down planning method to a more consultative and inclusive process, more responsive to long-term ecological and community needs.



Inventory group visit Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park  
© Hmu Thet Paing



# FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: Engaging communities in Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park

A community briefing at AKNP

**Project Title:** Conservation Awareness and Community Outreach in Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park

**Grantee:** Wildlife Conservation Society

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 24,999

**Location:** AKNP

Local community collaboration is crucial in managing AHPs. By raising awareness about the value and importance of biodiversity, human threats such as illegal logging, poaching, and unsustainable resource use can be significantly reduced. Communities can realise that sustainably utilising biological resources benefits their livelihoods in the long term, fostering a more harmonious relationship with their environment.

Mobilising communities and empowering stakeholders in conservation actions help build a sense of ownership, which is vital for protection and sustainable use of biological resources. In AKNP, the WCS, through its SGP I grant, implemented a community outreach project in collaboration with park management, staff, and the PAMSU. Together, they developed a community strategy focused on school, village, and pilgrim awareness campaigns, as well as refurbishing the park's education centre to strengthen environmental education. The outreach efforts reached over 2,000 students across eight schools, and involved seven villages, who learned about AKNP's biodiversity and how they can help conserve

the park's flora and fauna. The schools received copies of an environmental education awareness booklet to integrate conservation awareness into education.

Meanwhile, residents received signboards, posters, pamphlets, and photos of rare species inhabiting the park. By engaging locals and enhancing their knowledge of the surrounding species and the impact of losing these flora and fauna, the project partners hope to spark a change in mindset among villagers.

"This project is designed to address the seven goals outlined in the AHP Regional Action Plan (RAP) 2015-2020, with a focus on Goals 3, 4, and 7," WCS stated in the project completion report. Goal 3 aims to enhance the capacity of AHP managers, staff, and other stakeholders to ensure effective management. Goal 4 focuses on improving, sharing, transferring, and applying scientific knowledge and technologies for effective park management. The introduction of GPS tracking and SMART monitoring systems under this goal will help reduce illegal logging. Goal 7 seeks to strengthen communication and promotion strategies, fostering a greater understanding of conservation issues among the public.



Educating young people in Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park about the importance of conserving flora and fauna is a priority intervention under the SGP



Villagers listen to a talk about the conservation of Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park



Tourists flock to Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park to visit temples during the religious holiday

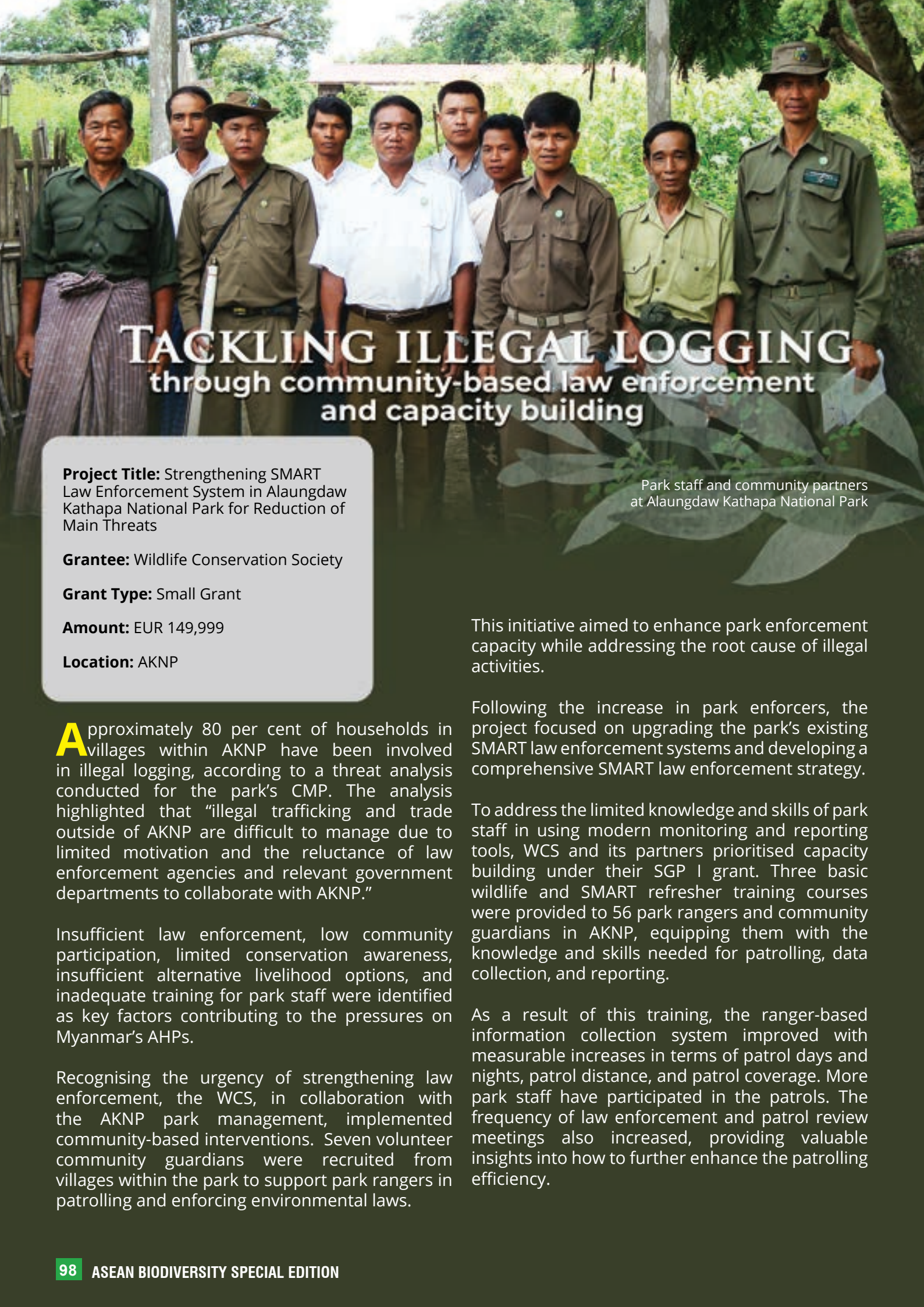
In December 2019, AKNP staff, PAMSU, and WCS conducted a large-scale awareness campaign for tourists visiting the park during the annual religious festival. They refurbished the AKNP education centre and prepared various educational materials to encourage pilgrims to protect the park by being responsible visitors. “The community outreach campaign during the religious festival reached one million pilgrims, educating them about the importance of protecting AHP and the rare wildlife species as part of the country’s natural treasures,” reported WCS.

One of the project’s goals is to empower park staff to implement the conservation awareness and community outreach campaign. To this end, the project partners developed a manual on community awareness strategy to guide park employees in engagement techniques, enhancing their capacity to raise awareness among local populations.

“The community outreach campaign during the religious festival reached one million pilgrims, educating them about the importance of protecting AHP and the rare wildlife species as part of the country’s natural treasures.”

– Wildlife Conservation Society

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, WCS reported that the project successfully strengthened awareness of AKNP’s biodiversity and ecosystem services. It also increased understanding of the need for collaborative law enforcement to protect wildlife and ecosystems.



# TACKLING ILLEGAL LOGGING

through community-based law enforcement  
and capacity building

Park staff and community partners  
at Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park

**Project Title:** Strengthening SMART Law Enforcement System in Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park for Reduction of Main Threats

**Grantee:** Wildlife Conservation Society

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 149,999

**Location:** AKNP

Approximately 80 per cent of households in villages within AKNP have been involved in illegal logging, according to a threat analysis conducted for the park's CMP. The analysis highlighted that "illegal trafficking and trade outside of AKNP are difficult to manage due to limited motivation and the reluctance of law enforcement agencies and relevant government departments to collaborate with AKNP."

Insufficient law enforcement, low community participation, limited conservation awareness, insufficient alternative livelihood options, and inadequate training for park staff were identified as key factors contributing to the pressures on Myanmar's AHPs.

Recognising the urgency of strengthening law enforcement, the WCS, in collaboration with the AKNP park management, implemented community-based interventions. Seven volunteer community guardians were recruited from villages within the park to support park rangers in patrolling and enforcing environmental laws.

This initiative aimed to enhance park enforcement capacity while addressing the root cause of illegal activities.

Following the increase in park enforcers, the project focused on upgrading the park's existing SMART law enforcement systems and developing a comprehensive SMART law enforcement strategy.

To address the limited knowledge and skills of park staff in using modern monitoring and reporting tools, WCS and its partners prioritised capacity building under their SGP I grant. Three basic wildlife and SMART refresher training courses were provided to 56 park rangers and community guardians in AKNP, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed for patrolling, data collection, and reporting.

As a result of this training, the ranger-based information collection system improved with measurable increases in terms of patrol days and nights, patrol distance, and patrol coverage. More park staff have participated in the patrols. The frequency of law enforcement and patrol review meetings also increased, providing valuable insights into how to further enhance the patrolling efficiency.

Over a three-year period, rangers and community guardians conducted 37 law enforcement and SMART patrol review meetings, aligning with the CMP recommendations for monthly reviews to ensure efficient monitoring, planning, and reporting. In total, 769 patrol days were logged, with an average of 30 people joining in each patrol. These patrols covered eight stations, traversed a total distance of 74,852.12 kilometres, resulting in 536 enforcement actions.

Using the SMART platform also enhanced the capacity of rangers and guardians to record wildlife species distribution and threats, as well as map the distribution of species and the threats they faced. A total of 37 wildlife and 37 threat distribution reports were generated, alongside 12 quarterly species distribution maps, 36 monthly species distribution maps, and one map identifying wildlife habitats in need of monitoring.

The enhanced patrolling system allowed park authorities to make informed decisions on species monitoring and law enforcement strategies.

“This project enabled the park to address its main threat—illegal logging. The effectiveness of law enforcement and patrolling activities was strengthened through planning, assessing, and monitoring using the SMART system.”

– Wildlife Conservation Society

New patrol and law enforcement equipment were also purchased using the SGP grant to further complement the increased capacity

“This project enabled the park to address its main threat—illegal logging. The effectiveness of law enforcement and patrolling activities was strengthened through planning, assessing, and monitoring using the SMART system,” shared WCS in the project completion report. However, WCS highlighted that since illegal logging remains a significant challenge, efforts to curb it must continue.



A deciduous forest at Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park

Through this initiative, AKNP staff and authorities gained practical knowledge that enabled them to clearly identify the direct and indirect threats faced by the AHP, as well as the causal factors of those threats. Additionally, conservation interventions were more easily planned, assessed, monitored, and shared among stakeholders.

The training also strengthened the communication and collaboration between park staff and the

community guardians, fostering a common understanding of the need to protect the AHP and the actions required to achieve this goal.

Embracing technology and lessons learned from their SMART refresher training exposed park managers, staff, and community rangers to tools that enhanced their efficiency, contributing to improvements in park management.



A meeting on law enforcement updates at Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park

## Addressing fuelwood dependency with fuel-efficient stoves in Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park



By using fuel-efficient stoves, the project team aims to help reduce deforestation

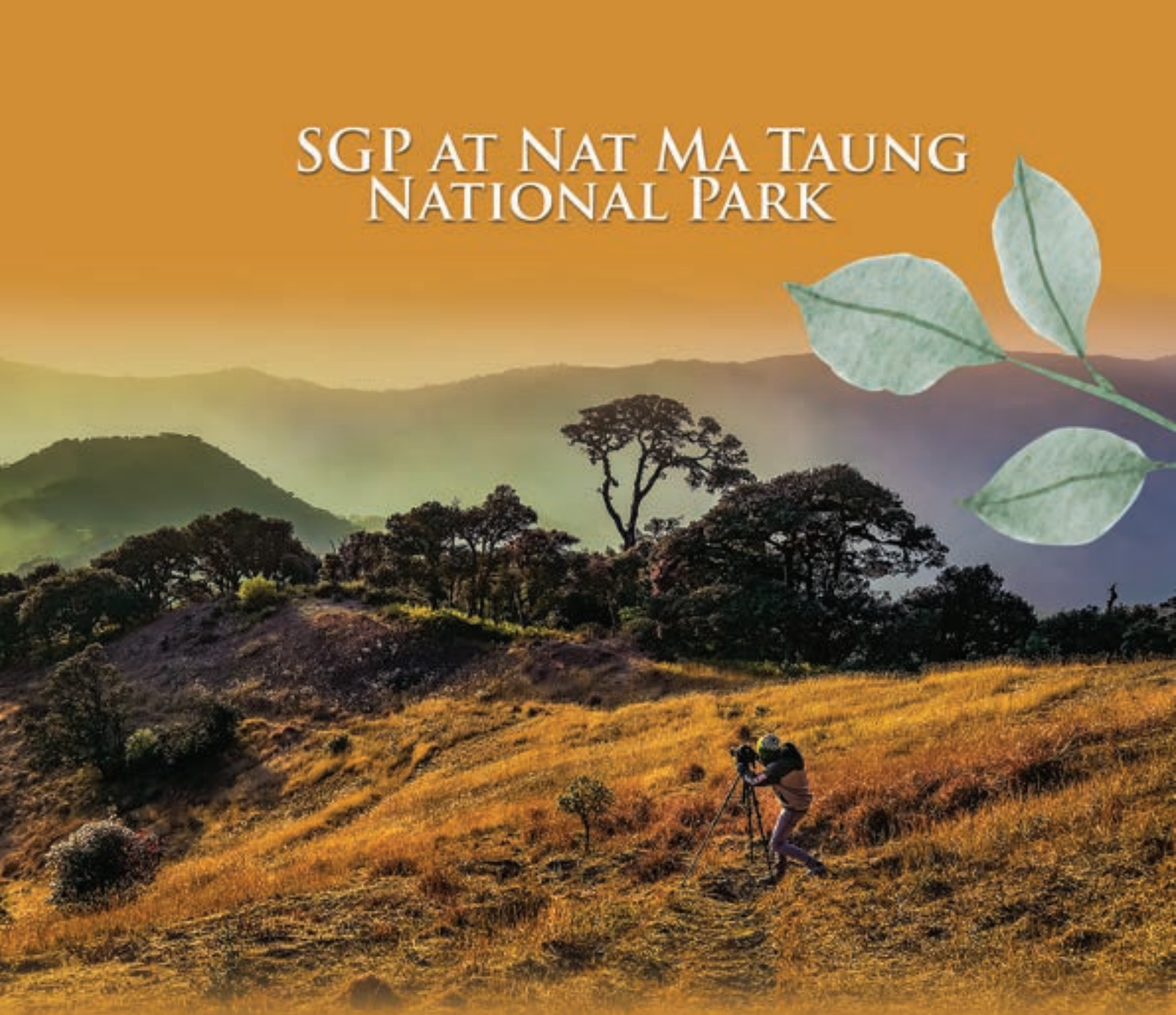
**M**ost villages in AKNP, except for Po Oo Village and Sa Ka Village in Gangaw Township, Magway Region, lack access to electricity and therefore rely heavily on fuelwood for energy. A survey conducted by the Forest Department revealed that the average household in these villages consumes approximately 2.5 tons of fuelwood annually. Additionally, significant amounts of fuelwood are used to create fires that keep insects away from cows. It is estimated that 64 villages around AKNP collectively extract about 4,960 tons (7,022.6 cubic meters) of fuelwood each year from the surrounding forests to meet their needs.

AKNP's highlights the need to introduce fuel-efficient stoves to ensure the efficient use of fuelwood before alternative energy sources, such as natural gas, can be provided. Under the management plan, AKNP promotes the use of

these stoves in priority villages to curb illegal logging and excessive extraction of fuel wood. In addition to raising awareness about the stoves and distributing them to households, park management also plans to conduct training on how to make fuel-efficient stoves and facilitate the creation of a local market for fuel-efficient stoves made by the community.

To address the issue, SGP distributed 300 fuel-efficient stoves to households around AKNP. Although specific data on fuelwood consumption reduction in AKNP is not yet available, similar initiatives in MKWS and GLNP have demonstrated a 40 to 50 per cent decrease in fuelwood usage following the adoption of these stoves. This reduction not only alleviates pressure on the surrounding forests but also saves households time on fuelwood collection and reduces indoor air pollution, improving health outcomes.

# SGP AT NAT MA TAUNG NATIONAL PARK



The scenic Nat Ma Taung National Park

© Kyaw San Linn

“One of the most important lessons we learned from the SGP in NMTNP is that teamwork really matters. By forming the Township Protected Area Management Committee (TPAMC), we brought together various relevant government departments, improving coordination and making decision-making smoother. Equally crucial is building up the skills of local communities. When locals are empowered and understand the ‘why’ behind the management plan, they are much better at putting it into action. Lastly, park staff play a key role too, when they are involved in shaping the plan, not only does the plan become more realistic, but the staff also feel a stronger sense of ownership. In short, it takes a local community, officials, and park staff all working together to protect these precious natural areas.”

**Naw May Lay Thant**

National Landscape Coordinator, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

# NAT MA TAUNG NATIONAL PARK



The view of sunset at the Nat Ma Taung National Park  
© Kyaw San Linn

**S**panning 722,600 hectares and straddling the Kampetlat, Matupi, and Mindat Townships, Nat Ma Taung National Park (NMTNP) was declared an ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP) in 2012. It is renowned as a “plant hunter’s paradise” due to its rich floral diversity. The park’s rugged and verdant mountain terrain is home to an estimated 2,500 species of plants and 35 species of orchids, including *Potentilla montisvictorade*, *Rhododendron burmanicum*, *Roseoea australis*, and *Hyponodopsis spatulate*.

It is also a sanctuary for over 345 bird species and 35 mammal species, including the critically endangered Chinese Pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*), the endangered Western hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*), and the White-browed Nuthatch (*Sittivictoriae*), which is endemic to the park.

Towering in NMTNP is the 10,500-foot Mt. Victoria, the highest mountain in Chin Hill, Chin State and the third highest peak in Myanmar. Known as Khaw Nu M’cung or “Earth Mother Goddess” to locals, the mountain is more than just a landmark,

it is a symbol of deep spiritual and cultural importance for Chin ethnic peoples, a witness to their rich history and traditions. Tourists usually visit Mt. Victoria during Chin National Day to explore traditional arts and crafts, archery, and local food, as well as to meet with Chin womenfolk with their famed tattooed faces.

NMTNP is vital, not just for its wildlife, but also for the economic and ecological services that it provides to more than 64,000 residents from 68 villages. The park’s 10,280 households rely mostly on a farming practice called shifting cultivation, also known as slash and burn, which involves clearing patches of natural vegetation, such as forests or grasslands to grow crops. Once the soil’s fertility is depleted, they move on to a new fertile spot. Some farmers also practise Taungya or hill cultivation or intercropping, an agroforestry method that combines crops and trees on the same land. Elephant foot yam is also grown extensively in villages and has been one of the main sources of cash income among villagers.



Flowers at Nat Ma Taung National Park

To supplement their agricultural activities, local communities also collect non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in the forest, such as edible leaves, fruits, and mushrooms. Additionally, the extensive collection of orchids and medicinal plants provides households with extra income. Many households also raise livestock, including chickens, goats, and pigs, primarily for personal use, but they can be sold in times of need.

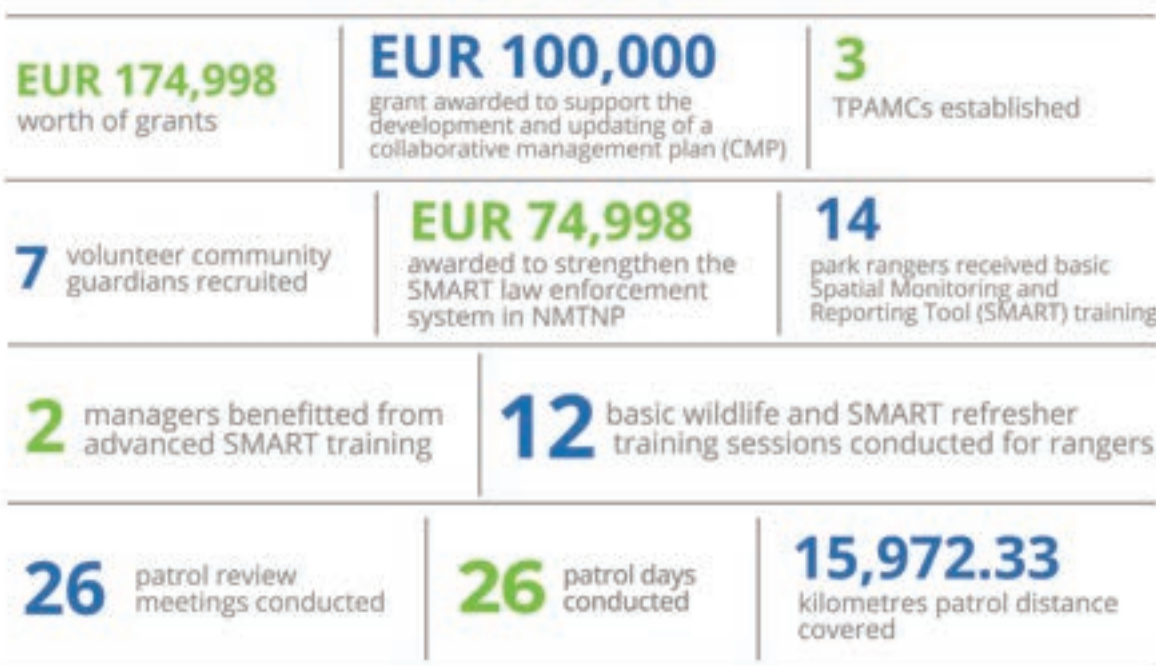
However, life in NMTNP is not without challenges. The community's heavy reliance on shifting cultivation, combined with unsustainable collection of NTFPs, uncontrolled grazing, illegal selective logging, and wildlife hunting, threatens both the environment and their way of life. A complex customary land tenure system and

limited alternative source of income add to the difficulties.

The pressure to make ends meet sometimes drives many villagers to engage in illegal activities, such as logging and collecting rare orchids. These practices often stem from a lack of awareness about the value of ecosystem services and wildlife laws.

Despite these challenges, NMTNP's natural beauty and rich biodiversity make it an ideal place to try new conservation strategies. It is an ideal pilot site for initiatives like SGP I, where stakeholders can work toward finding solutions that protect both the park and the local community.

## SGP at a Glance in NMTNP



# COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION:

## Promoting inclusive management planning in Nat Ma Taung National Park

Participatory mapping in Nat Ma Taung National Park



**L**ike all SGP pilot sites in Myanmar, NMTNP prioritised strengthening conservation efforts in the AHP by crafting a five-year CMP. This plan focuses on conserving and restoring healthy mountain ecosystems, protecting biodiversity and habitats, and enhancing the livelihoods of local communities living in and around the park.

Back in 2014, NMTNP got a big boost from the SGP, along with teams from the WCS, MERN, and even the Norwegian Environment Agency (NEA). They teamed up with local NGOs Spectrum and the Conservation on Hill Ecosystem Association (CHEA) to develop and update the park's management plan. The three TPAMCs, which include community representatives, also provided significant inputs in shaping the plan.

**Project Title:** Strengthening Conservation through Management Planning for Nat Ma Taung National Park - ASEAN Heritage Park

**Grantee:** Wildlife Conservation Society

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 100,000

**Location:** NMTNP



A PAMSU meeting at Nat Ma Taung National Park

**A**t the heart of the park's CMP is a conceptual model with five key targets: conserving mountain evergreen forests, conserving pine forests, maintaining the unique savanna, protecting threatened species such as the White-browed Nuthatch, and preserving the natural and cultural value of Mt. Khaw Nu M'cung, "Earth Mother Goddess" cherished by locals.

Given the Chin people's heavy reliance on shifting cultivation and their complex customary land tenure system, WCS and their partners realised that to make the conservation plan work, they first had to understand these traditions deeply. "Verifying rights and privileges given through the land settlement process and achieving consensus between communities and the park on buffer areas is crucial for more effective collaborative management in buffer zones," WCS stated in its project completion report.

Getting everyone to agree on the CMP was no easy feat, shared WCS, an SGP grantee in two Myanmar pilot sites. "Unlike other protected areas and AHPs, NMTNP has a vulnerable finger-shaped boundary. Additionally, local Chin ethnic peoples have practised shifting cultivation as their traditional agricultural system for many years. These conditions made the development of a

management plan a big challenge. It took time to achieve consensus from all stakeholders," said WCS.

Emphasising the importance of an inclusive approach, WCS collaborated with CHEA and Spectrum, holding public hearings and community consultations to gather feedback on the draft management plan. According to WCS, these events "made the process more transparent and promoted greater public participation." The planning team gathered the locals' views and recommendations, which then fed into the planning process.

Empowering park staff was another important part of the process. The park staff took the lead in baseline data collection, stakeholder engagement, and drafting the management plan. "Working on the CMP enhanced the park staff's sense of ownership of the management plan," said WCS. The organisation added that the "identification of conservation targets such as habitats and key wildlife species, threats and indirect threats, and conservation interventions through inputs from the park staff produced a realistic and pragmatic conceptual model which served as guiding principles for the development of the management plan."

WCS also underscored the relevance of creating TPAMCs, highlighting how they promoted a coordinated mechanism between relevant government agencies and community representatives in addressing issues related to protected areas. “Providing training to communities also enhanced collaboration between communities and the park,” WCS stated.

To get a deeper understanding of the people’s needs, the team conducted a socio-economic survey across 31 of 68 villages, did participatory land use mapping, and held surveys to assess how people felt about the park and its conservation efforts. From this extensive groundwork, the planning team outlined seven key objectives that reflected both conservation priorities and the needs of the local communities.

While improvements in biodiversity through an effective management process have yet to be fully realised, “the CMP is considered a breakthrough from the old practice of top-down decision-making, this plan is all about working together and bringing everyone to the table. It’s a shift to a more inclusive process that considers the more responsive to threats requiring longer-term solutions rather than just short-term fixes,” an assessment of the project stated. It is also lauded for building partnerships among park management staff, community-based organisations, and local communities, showing that real progress is made when everyone works together.

## NMTNP CMP Objectives<sup>2</sup>

- To conserve the watershed areas of main rivers and streams - Lemro River, Myitha River, Saw Stream, Maw Stream, Salin Stream, Che Stream, Yaw Stream, and Mon Stream
- To maintain the cultural, spiritual, and scenic values of Mt. Khaw Nu M’cung
- To conserve mountain ecosystems including mountain savannah grasslands, oak and rhododendron forests, and pine forests
- To protect two endemic bird species inhabiting NMTNP
- To reduce main threats which negatively impact the ecological integrity of the park
- To promote ecotourism as a tool for alternative livelihoods for communities and a source of income for park management
- To improve community livelihoods while promoting community participation in park management

<sup>2</sup> The Republic of Union of Myanmar, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Natmataung (Khaw Num Cung) National Park Management Plan (2018-2019 to 2022-2023)



A community outreach activity in Nat Ma Taung National Park

## Boosting SMART law enforcement in NMTNP

**N**MNTP faces some big challenges. The excessive collection of orchids and other NTFPs, illegal logging, and poaching are all major threats to NMTNP's ecosystems and biodiversity, according to the park's CMP.

During the management planning for the park, strengthening law enforcement and involving communities in park management and protection were identified as key strategies that will curb these threats.

Taking inspiration from their work at the other sites, the WCS worked in tandem with NMTNP management to implement community-based law enforcement interventions. This initiative included recruiting and training four volunteer community guardians from local villages to assist park rangers in patrolling and enforcing environmental laws.

With an increase in park enforcers on the ground, the project aimed to enhance the existing SMART law enforcement systems and develop a comprehensive strategy for its implementation.

The SMART system, which was developed by a partnership founded by CITES-MIKE, Frankfurt Zoological Society, North Carolina Zoo, WCS, World Wildlife Fund, and Zoological Society of London, is crafted to boost anti-poaching initiatives and enhance law enforcement efficiency within

**Project Title:** Strengthening SMART Law Enforcement System in Nat Ma Taung National Park for Reduction of Main Threats

**Grantee:** Wildlife Conservation Society

**Grant Type:** Small Grant

**Amount:** EUR 74,998

**Location:** NMTNP

established conservation areas and management zones. It streamlines the processes of collecting, storing, communicating, and evaluating data related to patrol activities, outcomes, and threat assessments. By fostering seamless information exchange among ranger teams, analysts, and conservation managers, the SMART approach plays a crucial role in significantly bolstering the protection of wildlife and their habitats.

Recognising the need to improve the knowledge and skills of park staff in using modern monitoring and reporting tools, WCS and its partners prioritised capacity building under their SGP I grant. Fourteen rangers underwent basic wildlife and refresher SMART tool training courses, equipping them with essential skills for



Community guardians (in green shirts) work with park management and staff to improve law enforcement in Nat Ma Taung National Park



Park rangers and community guardians underwent training on SMART law enforcement

patrolling, data collection, and reporting. Two of park's managers also received advanced SMART training that involved processing and evaluation of data, improving feedback mechanisms between managers and rangers, applying adaptive patrol management, and improving site management practices.

The impact of these combined efforts has been significant. The combined efforts of rangers

and guardians resulted in 26 law enforcement and SMART patrol reviews to ensure efficient monitoring, planning, and reporting of activities.

Over the course of the project, park rangers and community guardians logged an impressive 626 patrol days covering a total of nearly 16,972.33 kilometres—a massive increase of 24 to 378 per cent compared to the coverage recorded in previous years.



With their newly gained knowledge and skills, the park rangers and community guardians can implement intelligence-led patrolling and law enforcement



A community guardian at Nat Ma Taung National Park during a participatory land use mapping workshop

The team also introduced new intelligence-led patrolling strategies, adding 45 planning and 45 intelligence entries into the SMART database. Since SMART supports an intelligence-based approach, any additional planning and intelligence gathering mechanisms can be useful in patrolling. Additionally, the team conducted one joint law enforcement operation to tackle illegal activities more effectively.

These efforts are already making a difference. “Strengthening law enforcement and SMART patrolling in NMTNP has enabled stakeholders, especially park staff, to clearly identify and

address both direct and indirect threats. This clarity has been crucial for the effective implementation of the park management plan,” stated WCS in the project completion report.


The organisation emphasised that “from the outset, park managers and field staff have been deeply involved in the management plan, ensuring a thorough understanding and commitment to its execution. Their collaboration with relevant government agencies through the TPAMC has further enhanced participatory management planning by incorporating valuable community feedback.”



The park rangers and community guardians interact with villagers

It was not just about law enforcement, WCS and the park team also knew they needed community support to protect NMTNP effectively. Thus, park rangers and community guardians organised two awareness-raising activities for the villagers. These initiatives aim to inspire more residents to voluntarily report illegal activities, allowing park staff to respond swiftly and effectively.

In reviewing the lessons reported by grantees across the SGP pilot sites, a major theme emphasised is that threat monitoring and law enforcement such as SMART patrols benefit from robust community collaboration. As villagers become more aware of the laws and penalties for illegal activities and wildlife crime, the possibility of a shift in mindsets and perspectives increases.



## SUSTAINING THE SUCCESSSES ACHIEVED UNDER SGP I

**S**ustainability is one of the major recurring themes among pilot projects of the SGP. A common concern mentioned by SGP grantees in interviews is the need to sustain the active involvement of the stakeholders after the project period to ensure that communities will continue to reap the benefits of the various interventions.

**Clarissa C. Arida**, Director of the Programmes Department of the ACB, shared her views on sustaining the SGP's wins in pilot AHPs in the ASEAN region with the ASEAN Biodiversity Magazine.

She is actively involved in SGP I from the planning period more than a decade ago, the launch in 2014, the project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation on the ground in both Indonesia and Myanmar, coordination with partners, sharing of best practices, and planning of the next steps. She is a staunch advocate of driving local actions and building partnerships to create significant and lasting impact on global biodiversity.

**In your view, what are the biggest wins for biodiversity and all stakeholders under SGP I?**

Engagement and empowerment, taking part in this regional initiative of the ACB through the SGP for ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs) are the biggest wins for biodiversity and stakeholders. For biodiversity, empowerment and capacitation of stakeholders, providing for sustainability of SGP lessons and gains are key achievements of the SGP in this ASEAN initiative. Stakeholders in SGP encompass indigenous peoples and local communities, women's groups, youths, along with the park management, district authorities, and national agencies in-charge of the environment and biodiversity conservation. For stakeholders, taking part and engagement

empowers them and their rights are recognised and are exercised through the SGP interventions.

The conservation outcomes of the SGP through support to updating of protected area management plans in the pilot AHP sites as well as through support to sustainable livelihood to communities around protected areas to reduce pressures to natural resources within the parks—these are landmark achievements as shown by the various outputs and project deliverables—contributing to the conservation and sustainable use and management of biodiversity.

**What can be done to sustain these wins and the momentum gained from the programme? What steps are ACB taking?**

Let us encourage park management and national authorities to continue the engagement in the exercise of their duties. SGP has planted the 'seeds' and park management has shown their support and commitment as well to pursue sustainable livelihoods and in working with the communities in and around the AHPs.

Let us continue to engage partners (civil society, private sector, and local authorities) to sustain the initiatives, including continued awareness raising on the values of biodiversity and the need to protect it.

**What is your message for everyone who took part in the project?**

Let us continue and strive further to build on the lessons and gains of the SGP. Let us all continue to contribute and be counted in our own ways in delivering conservation outcomes and improving the lives of communities dependent on nature.

# Let's share the lessons from the Small Grants Programme by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity!

Get to know the grantees from the SGP pilot projects in Indonesia and Myanmar and learn from their inspiring stories and best practices.



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