

SGP TECHNICAL SERIES

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

Technical guidance on implementing
effective livelihood interventions



Livelihood enhancement not only empowers buffer village communities in the context of community organising, awareness-raising, and economic improvements. More importantly, it promotes sustainability and the responsible use of biological and natural resources.



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

Introduction

The ASEAN region's rich and diverse ecosystems provide significant economic benefits for its millions of people. These ecosystem services are the backbone of the region's economic development, and ensuring its sustainable use requires meaningful multi-stakeholder involvement. It is undeniable that rural communities depend on natural and biological resources for their food, protection, and livelihood; but the increasing population growth, as well as climate change manifestations are putting intense pressure on valuable ecosystems.

In ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs), livelihood support and enhancement for the communities — especially those who are in the buffer zones — are critical aspects of protected area conservation.

The draft Regional Action Plan for ASEAN Heritage Parks 2023–2030¹ recognises the need to engage local communities in sustainable livelihood development. By

supporting economic activities that emphasise sustainable use and value addition, anthropogenic pressures on ecosystems are relieved as the communities' dependence on natural resources is reduced.

Livelihood enhancement not only empowers buffer village communities in the context of community organising, awareness-raising, and economic improvements. More importantly, it promotes sustainability and the responsible use of biological and natural resources.

However, economic interventions in communities within conservation areas will only be successful if they are structured in a way that supports the interests of the communities. Nature-based enterprises with an inclusive social approach should be the model for designing livelihood schemes for communities in villages around conservation areas. This can be done by synergising the motivation and involvement of local governments and other stakeholders in the development of community-owned enterprises.

¹The draft Regional Action Plan for ASEAN Heritage Parks (2023–2030) was developed to provide guidance in the development of well-governed, well-designed, and well-managed AHPs to ensure integration into the global network and contribution to globally agreed goals.

The ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs)

Known as protected areas of high conservation importance, preserving in total a complete spectrum of representative ecosystems of the ASEAN region, the ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs) were established to generate greater awareness, pride, appreciation, enjoyment, and conservation of ASEAN's rich natural heritage.

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) serves as the Secretariat of the AHP Programme and the AHP Committee, and together with representatives from the 10 ASEAN Member States, they carry out activities to develop and strengthen the management of AHPs in the region. The ACB also facilitates the implementation of the Regional Action Plan for AHPs.



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

The Small Grants Programme by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (SGP)

In support of the AHPs, the Federal Government of Germany through the KfW Development Bank (KfW) aided the implementation of the Small Grants Programme by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (SGP). The SGP is an initiative aimed at sustaining biodiversity in the AHPs in line with the interests of local communities who directly depend on the selected parks, providing alternative livelihood opportunities to the locals, and strengthening the ACB's role in promoting biodiversity conservation in the ASEAN region.

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. A range of interventions were implemented, including those that focused on livelihood enhancement and community development.

SGP I provided economic and technical assistance to community-based organisations (CBOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs), including indigenous communities who are dependent on biodiversity for their livelihoods. Dozens of organisations received micro- to small-scale grants that promote the protection of biodiversity in selected AHPs and the economic development of the communities that surround these protected areas.

SGP I supported livelihood projects amounting to EUR 778,616 in GLNP and EUR 636,622 in Way Kambas National Park (WKNP) in Indonesia. For Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary (ILWS) in Myanmar, support for livelihood interventions totalled EUR 269,958.28. In the case of Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary (MKWS), also in Myanmar, support for ecological mangrove restoration and livelihood intervention totalled EUR 366,027.

The interventions resulted in more than 60 biodiversity-based products including food products like honey, banana chips, green tea, turmeric powder, ginger lemongrass drink, pineapple dodol, and cassava chips; agricultural products like organic rice and livestock; traditional medicine; artisanal handicrafts like clothes and shawls designed with natural dyes, ecoprint bags, savana knitwear, and woven bamboo crafts; and marine products like shrimp paste, fermented shrimp, shredded fish, fish nuggets, and tilapia.

Several ecotourism packages were also created and marketed using SGP I grants.

This technical brief specifically covers best practices and lessons learned from the livelihood interventions in project sites in Indonesia and Myanmar.

Supriyono is one of the farmers from Lau Damak and Batu Jongjong who benefited from Yayasan Sumatera Hijau Lestari's (YSHL) training on organic farming methods





SGP's support to livelihood projects



EUR 778,616

in GLNP

EUR 636,622

in WKNP

EUR 269,958

in ILWS

EUR 366,027

in MKWS (support for ecological mangrove restoration and livelihood intervention)



A member of the Kaya Ecoprint business group showcases exquisite fabric created by women entrepreneurs



More than 60 biodiversity-based products produced under SGP I.



Food Products

Honey, banana chips, green tea, turmeric powder, ginger lemongrass drink, pineapple dodol, cassava chips, marmalade



Agricultural Products

Organic rice, vegetables, and livestock



Marine Products

Shrimp paste, fermented shrimp, shredded fish, fish nuggets, tilapia



Artisanal Handicrafts

Clothes and shawls designed with natural dyes, ecoprint bags, savana knitwear, woven bamboo crafts



Traditional Medicine

Param Karo, Tawar Tasaken, and Tawar Peritahi

Best Practices

The vast diversity of biological resources and ecosystems around protected areas in Indonesia and Myanmar offers an equally broad

range of potential livelihood opportunities for the communities. Informed and guided by the existing practices of the people and improved by meaningful consultations, close coordination, and rigorous skills training, various sustainable livelihood projects are carefully implemented by the communities under the tutelage of SGP grantees, park authorities, and service providers.

AHPs in project areas in Indonesia and Myanmar are tourism sites, whose unique and impressive ecosystems and wildlife attract millions of visitors per year. Aside from agriculture, fisheries, and other odd jobs, tourism is also among the sources of income for households in the communities. Ecotourism development is one of the focuses of SGP, supporting micro and small businesses that also promote biodiversity conservation. Notable among these is the development of homestays, local guides, culinary or food products, and souvenir products.

Case study: *Building a culture of saving and investing with village revolving fund at MKWS*

In Myanmar's MKWS, mangrove forests are being depleted due to large-scale logging. Mangrove trees are being extracted for timber



Members of the Central Revolving Fund Committee

Table 1 (Left):

အမှတ်	အမျိုးအမည်	အရက်	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	အခြား
၁	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၃	၅	-
၂	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၅	-	၁
၃	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၁၅	-	-
၄	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၅	၅	၁
၅	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၅	-	၅
၆	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၄	-	၁၄
၇	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၁	-	၂
၈	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃	-	၄
၉	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	-	-	-
၁၀	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၈	-	၄
၁၁	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	-	-	၁၅
၁၂	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၅	-	၅

Table 2 (Right):

အမှတ်	အမျိုးအမည်	ပေးငွေ	ရရှိသည့်ငွေ
၁	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၅၅၀၀၀	၃၅၀၀၀၀
၂	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၅၀၀၀၀	၃၅၀၀၀၀
၃	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၅၀၀၀၀	၃၅၀၀၀၀
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၅	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၅၀၀၀၀	၃၅၀၀၀၀
၆	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၅၀၀၀၀	၃၅၀၀၀၀
၇	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၅၀၀၀၀	၃၅၀၀၀၀
၈	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၅၀၀၀၀	၃၅၀၀၀၀
၉	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၅၀၀၀၀	၃၅၀၀၀၀
၁၀	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၅၀၀၀၀	၃၅၀၀၀၀
၁၁	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၅၀၀၀၀	၃၅၀၀၀၀
၁၂	အကျိုးခံစားခွင့်ရသူ	၃၅၀၀၀၀	၃၅၀၀၀၀

Funds are rotated to beneficiaries who use it for income-generating ventures


and firewood use, mostly by communities who also sell the fuel wood to the city centres. The degradation of the important mangrove ecosystem resulted in a significant reduction of available spawning grounds and population of fish and crab species. The ecosystem's condition was further exacerbated by Cyclone Nargis in 2008 which severely devastated the mangrove forests and affected the wildlife hosted in the ecosystem.

Unfortunately, employment opportunities are scarce in the communities around MKWS, with majority relying only on subsistence farming, fishing, and odd jobs to get by.

In an effort to reduce the ecosystem pressure from human activities, SGP I grantee Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN) together with MKWS authorities, local organisations, and community beneficiaries launched a project to restore mangroves, while creating income opportunities for the impoverished communities. Under the *Restoring Mangroves and Creating Income Opportunities for the Mangrove-dependent Poor in the Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary* intervention, a revolving fund scheme was established in 12 villages to support their livelihood while contributing to mangrove restoration.

Together with MERN, the 12 villages held a consultation to discuss the purpose and objective of the revolving fund and whether it is relevant to the needs of the villages. Village Revolving Fund Committees were established in each of the 12 villages. 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, and must be capable of implementing their proposed income-generating activities which is supported by five guarantors. If not involved in the project activities, the applicant must be extremely poor.

In disbursing the revolving fund, a contract is first signed between MERN and the Central Revolving Fund Committee. After that, 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.

A photograph of a man, Win Nyunt, standing in a mangrove forest. He is wearing a patterned long-sleeved shirt and blue trousers. He is holding a mangrove sapling in his right hand and pointing towards the camera with his left hand. The background is filled with lush green mangrove vegetation and water.

The revolving fund demonstrates the significance of building strong institutional platforms for the poor. Apart from teaching lessons on financial and business management and establishing affordable financing for small-scale businesses in poor communities, the intervention encourages a culture of saving and investing in order to repeatedly benefit numerous households.

Win Nyunt, Chairman of Chaung Bye Gyi Village Revolving Fund, is a staunch supporter of mangrove reforestation activities in Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary

Funds are rotated every month to village beneficiaries who must use the funds for any income-generating activity they have chosen. 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 will first 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.

Twelve village revolving fund committees were established under the livelihood model to supervise the activities in the post-project period.

Various capacity building opportunities were provided to support the beneficiaries with their income generating activities. Livestock training and management including breeding and livestock vaccination were conducted to equip the beneficiaries with the necessary skills and knowledge to sustain their projects. Beneficiaries were also trained to operate the revolving fund, to develop their organisational skills, and to practise collective decision-making.

However, severe hot weather has proven to be a challenge, causing an outbreak of swine fever that affected much of the livestock. Organisationally, communication and coordination among the villages, and between the villages and the committee also need to be strengthened for the effective implementation of the project.

One criticism raised against the selection mechanism for beneficiaries is that it is limited 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 be involved eventually 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.

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Case study: Promoting sustainable fashion with Kaya Ecoprint

In Timbang Jaya Village, near GLNP in Indonesia, community members who are

working or used to work as seasonal farm labourers, runner trappers, and livestock herders were introduced to a new skill and enterprise that generates income while promoting the culture and wildlife of the community. With the guidance of Politeknik Wilmar Bisnis Indonesia (PWBI), the Kaya Ecoprint business group produces fabrics and even non-textile materials that are printed using natural dyes from plants.

It was in 2019 when the group was first introduced to ecoprinting by PWBI, an educational institution dedicated to nurturing entrepreneurs in Indonesia. Proving that there is beauty in nature, PWBI taught Timbang Jaya's women how 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. Because it does not utilise synthetic dyes and chemicals like conventional printing, this technique does not involve any industrial waste, allowing the group to practise and promote sustainability.

In sharing the ins and outs of ecoprinting, PWBI has demonstrated the value of forward-thinking among the women in Timbang Jaya, where sustainable fashion may not be a well-known



Siti Rokayah of the Kaya Ecoprint group gained both confidence and additional income under the SGP-supported livelihood initiatives in Gunung Leuser National Park

concept. 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 stunning, one-of-a-kind patterns that this technique produces.

Aside from ecoprinting skills and techniques, the Kaya Ecoprint business group also learned social media marketing techniques and organisational and financial management to help fuel their start-up. Demonstrating the various ecoprint techniques has also become one of the highlights of the guided tours to the national park, showcasing their skills and products simultaneously.

The business group put up their social media account, where they promote not only their products, but also their motivation to contribute to biodiversity conservation. They are slowly but surely gaining modest recognition online and in-person, participating in various trade fairs and exhibits where they are able to showcase their products and also get to learn from other community-based entrepreneurs.

The grantees continue to grow and learn from their experiences and improve their systems

and processes. By the second project cycle, they were able to generate an income of over IDR 39 million (USD 2,400) which is equal to more than IDR 5 million (USD 300) sales per month. This is roughly equivalent to an individual income of IDR 1,950,000 (USD 120) per person, which is much more than what they were previously earning as labourers, trappers, and herders.

Another positive impact was the unexpected discovery of a distinctive colour for Timbang Jaya ecoprinting products. Dyers found that mangosteen rind and mahogany tree bark produce dark red to light brown colours while ketapang leaves and mango leaves produce brownish green to yellowish green colours. These pigments have now become the distinct colour of Kaya Ecoprint.

SGP I further saw the potential of ecotourism as a source of income for micro and small businesses. Homestays, local tour guides, and exposure to local activities in the villages are slowly taking off, attracting adventurous tourists that are open to new experiences. The programme aims to support the improvement of ecotourism packages, promotions, and marketing and upgrade ecotourism infrastructure.

Case study: Boosting ecotourism in AHPs

Consisting of 60 accommodations, 48 cafes and restaurants, and 30 local product businesses, the ecotourism project in Batu Katak Tourist Village in GLNP is providing employment to more than 1,600 residents in the village, including 30 women who have formed a women's group conceptualising new food products and hospitality services for visitors. Through the project, tourism management was strengthened, developing new approaches to promote tour packages and strengthening local businesses and products such as processing and marketing of local food, herbal medicine, and offering lodging and homestay services.

Batu Katak Tourism Village is CHSE certified, the first of its kind in Langkat Regency with the Indonesian National Standard recognised by the Indonesian government. CHSE stands for Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environment Sustainability and forms part of the government's efforts to regain tourists' confidence in travelling safely, comfortably, and healthily in Indonesia" (Cabinet Secretary of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022).

Additionally, the village was also included in the Indonesia Tourism Village Award, a national-level competition and award recognition by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy.



Tourists enjoy the wonders offered by the Batu Katak Tourist Village in Gunung Leuser National Park

Meanwhile in WKNP, also in Indonesia, ecotourism activities in the Braja Harjosari Village such as river cruising and jungle trekking are growing popular among local and foreign tourists. Subsequently, souvenirs that feature the amazing biodiversity of WKNP, such as knitted products are also promoted and sold. Among them are knitted keychains and coin purses in the likeness of Sumatran rhinoceros, Sumatran tigers, and other wildlife.

SGP I also supported the crafting of village regulations, which have been included in the village medium work plan agenda (RPJMDes)

and advocated for public support for ecotourism activities through village funds. At least four tour agencies have collaborated with the Braja Harjosari community tourism group (Pokdarwis Braja Harjosari), including the collaboration with non-fungible token (NFT) startups that offer Elephant NFTs to support elephant conservation through ecotourism in the WKNP.

Eco-tour packages were also created and promoted under the grant received by Konsorsium Yayasan Konservasi Elang Indonesia Dan Yayasan Kehutanan Masyarakat Indonesia (YKEI-YKMI).



Konsorsium Yayasan Konservasi Elang Indonesia Dan Yayasan Kehutanan Masyarakat Indonesia (YKEI-YKMI) introduced ecotourism activities like birdwatching in Rantau Jaya Makmur and Tanjung Desa Tirto

Case study: Reducing pressures on habitats through sustainable agricultural production at ILWS

Thanks to the fertile alluvial soils in the lower Indawgyi basin, agriculture and farming remain the major livelihood activity of the communities around the ILWS in Myanmar. Reportedly nine per cent of all households depend entirely on fishing. Other livelihoods available for the communities include logging, collection of non-timber forest products, hill cultivation, and hunting.

However, the growing population in the community — which include a significant number of migrants — have been expanding their cultivation area even in protected parts of the sanctuary. Some ethnic groups practise hill rice swidden farming or shifting cultivation system ('taungya') where they clear and burn old-growth forest for planting rice plus other crops. After a couple of cropping seasons, the farmers shift to other areas where they repeat the process. However, they have been slowly expanding to areas that are designated as reserved forest, inadvertently causing deforestation and degradation.

Enforcing the law is challenging without providing the local communities alternative livelihood options. As a response, buffer zones are established for community forestry, agroforestry, and even fishing zones as well. Efforts to introduce sustainable farming practices are being done, as well as processing of fresh produce as value addition.

Through an SGP I grant, Fauna & Flora International implemented the *Sustainable Agriculture and Value Chain Development* intervention to promote organic farming as part of sustainable livelihood development to help alleviate human pressures from the ecosystem. By reducing the use of harmful chemical inputs and practising integrated farming systems and soil fertility management, farmers can both save from expensive agrochemical products while preventing the loss of vital soil nutrients that help in increasing productivity. Organic farmers were also introduced to the Participatory Guarantee System, a certification system that increases the value of their agricultural products.

Processing of fresh produce can also provide additional income for the communities. The



Farmer members of INFA are now championing organic farming in Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary



Organic rice production has flourished in Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary due to the Participatory Guarantee System

Green Garden Group, a micro-grantee, has developed green tea and turmeric powder, supporting the livelihood of 28 households in five villages. From the 20-acre tea tree farm, group members were able to produce 156 viss (250 kgs) of green tea, earning members a total revenue of MMK 2,808,000 (USD 1,340). The members received three drying and two

rolling machines, making their work quicker and more efficient.

Another micro-grantee, Friends of Wildlife, has established sustainable community fisheries management where the beneficiaries are able to process and sell shrimp paste and fermented fish.



Anthony Gammon, chairperson of the Green Garden Natural Green Tea Production Group, takes pride in his organisation's high-quality tea



Case study: Palm sugar production



With support from the SGP and its grantee 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

Another example of value addition to local products is the production and processing of palm sugar in GLNP. By improving their production techniques, palm sugar producers have significantly gained additional income. The price of palm sap has significantly increased to IDR 30,000 per kilogram, representing an increase of around 100 per cent. Farmers become more motivated seeing the income that is being generated and are further encouraged by the provision of energy-efficient stoves that are able to save on the use of firewood by at least 50 per cent. Processing time for palm sugar has also significantly decreased, making the production 30 per cent faster. The use of energy-efficient stoves also aids in ensuring good hygiene and high quality of the products.

From the palm sugar, the farmers also produced bandrek, a traditional hot beverage, made by mixing ginger, cinnamon, and palm sugar. Its warming properties make it a perfect drink for cold months, and it also serves as a natural remedy to help alleviate colds, sore throat, and flu.

Case study: Empowering women through sustainable economic activities

Women play crucial roles in agriculture, providing food and sustenance for the family. SGP projects are always conscious about addressing gender equality and are supporting activities that will empower the women in the communities.

The palm sugar sap innovation project provided opportunities for minority groups, particularly women, at every stage of its activities — from the production and processing to marketing. Women are organised into the Women's Work Association (PKP) that contributes to the processing of derivative products.

Nine PKPs were formed in total, consisting of 30 women.

Women who have actively produced palm sugar have stated that with the existing income level, they are optimistic that they can reduce the intensity of their work as farm labourers which consumes time and energy so they can have more time to care for their children and themselves. The participation of women in the Joint Business Unit managed by Badan Usaha Milik Desa (BUMDes) is also very significant, where the director, and two of the three managers are women.

In GLNP, women conservation cadres are operating credit unions, a form of microfinance



Myint Than Wai and other fisherfolks' wives in Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary transform fresh catch from the sea into various products like fermented fish and shrimp paste

institution that provides financing for rural communities. Credit unions also serve as savings and loan cooperative, where community members and aspiring entrepreneurs can access more affordable financing options. Through these credit unions, women are able to help other women in developing their businesses and helping their local economies.

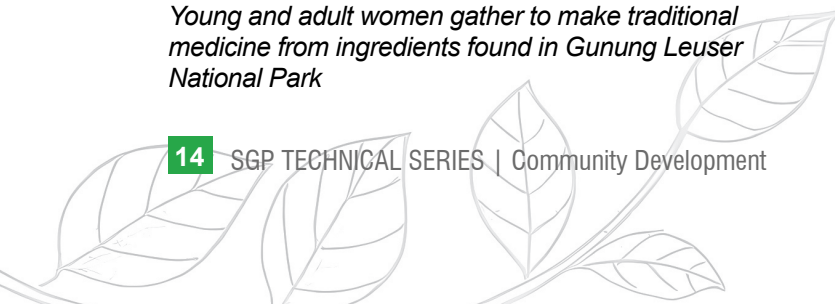
Also in GLNP, the Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Kebijakan (ELSAKA) used its SGP grant to

empower women's groups in Namo Sialang by teaching them to produce and market traditional medicines as part of a strategy to keep the 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 strengthened their awareness of sustainable natural resource management and sustainable use of



Young and adult women gather to make traditional medicine from ingredients found in Gunung Leuser National Park

Overall, SGP I opened many doors for women in terms of conceptualising new biodiversity-based products, gaining access to funds for expanding existing backyard businesses, receiving learning and networking opportunities, and proving that they can support their families and communities through livelihood and environmental restoration initiatives.



medicinal plants around GLNP as traditional medicinal ingredients.

Meanwhile in ILWS, women from the Nant Mee Laung Village have formed the Shanni Traditional Dance Group. Their main objective is to promote the traditional weaving of the community and celebrate and sustain the weaving culture of the Indigenous Peoples. The group also aims to provide job opportunities for young people in the village.

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Founded a decade ago, the Shanni Traditional Dance Group stands as a model of cultural preservation and community development in Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary



Lessons Learned

SGP I has supported various micro and small grants that contribute to biodiversity conservation by enhancing livelihood opportunities for the communities to reduce pressures on the ecosystem. It is clear from the case studies cited that the success of the livelihood projects also rests on the level and quality of community participation and their cooperation with the local and park authorities. The active participation and ownership of the communities are guaranteed when the economic activities and livelihood programmes are aligned to their needs and interests.



Honey products of Alas Kambas Marketing Cooperative

Recognising the interdependence of biodiversity with local economy has been among the crucial factors in the success of livelihood enhancement projects under the SGP. This accomplishment can also be attributed to the change in perception of the community. In WKNP for instance, beekeeping livelihood projects are supported by the national park due to its contribution for conservation — bees that produce honey need food provided by the forest, and bees that thrive from the forest to pollinate, helping in forest regeneration. In Alas Kambas, community members maintain the Air Mata Panganten (Tears of the Bride) tree which is among the staple food resources for trigona bees. Beekeepers are thereby encouraged to plant and nurture these trees and other plants to ensure the healthy population of bees.

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 their livelihood products, conservation becomes an important way of life for the communities around the protected areas.



The Alas Kambas Marketing Cooperative is gaining popularity for its stingless bee honey

Capacity development is also a vital component of any livelihood programmes. Skills training aims to build or hone the abilities of the beneficiaries so that they have understanding of the enterprises and its systems, and gain hands-on experience in the economic activity. For such training to be

effective, the resource persons must be able to encourage participation and facilitate learning. Resource persons must be able to impart not only theoretical and practical knowledge, but serve as an inspiration for the participants and small entrepreneurs to work harder on their project.



With the help of SGP grantee Lembaga Penelitian Pengembangan Sumberdaya dan Lingkungan Hidup (LPPSLH), some women in Way Kambas National Park are earning from crocheting small animals and other products

Learning methods must be appropriate to the capacity of the community. Therefore, utilising simple and convenient knowledge materials and training methods are crucial in ensuring capacity development among the communities.

The revolving fund programme shows the **significance of organisational development and strengthening** in carrying out livelihood projects. Strong and systematic organisations have clear systems and processes in terms of structure, planning, decision-making, and assessments to aid the organisations in their economic activities. This includes transparency especially in financial matters that are often the root cause of organisational conflict and misunderstandings.

Establishing networks and partnership can help facilitate production and marketing. For instance, the Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) Sada Niyoga in Rumah Galuh Village, called Bandrek Krimer Karomanise, has successfully developed its product marketing through cooperation with 63 outlets spread across the Langkat and Tanah Karo districts through a consignment system. Such partnership schemes with independent partners and supply partners can help facilitate production and licensing aspects, thereby upscaling the economic programmes.

Utilising technologies or innovations is key to livelihood efforts, especially those that are based on biodiversity products and are aimed to promote conservation. A good example would be the adoption of energy-efficient stoves to minimise firewood use by at least 50 per cent in palm sugar processing, which also sped up by 30 per cent. The energy-efficient furnace combined with a clean kitchen make the products more hygienic while maintaining its high quality.

Realising the valuable contribution of the palm sugar, the communities began to cultivate palm trees more systematically. Palm trees already grew naturally in the area, but the communities planted superior varieties that produce faster and in more strategic locations to make cultivation and harvesting easier.

Entrepreneurship and livelihood development bank on having an organised



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

system, albeit simple and community-friendly. For instance, the creation of the Standardised Production Unit ensures that a business plan has been prepared and human resources are able to handle and manage the business. They come up with relevant policies such as the agreement on the basic price of palm sap, palm sap syrup, and original palm sugar to help ensure standardisation and transparency among involved groups.

Such exercises of **professionalising sustainable livelihoods** are among the lessons learned from the various experiences of SGP I grantees. This also means prioritising product safety — training production staff in proper food handling, and using standard equipment to produce high quality processed products. A standard of practice can also be developed to help improve the production process. A community-based enterprise, no matter the size can always benefit from systematising their processes and imbibing an entrepreneurial attitude.



Gaps and Challenges

Even with the best intentions and preparations, there would still be a number of factors or variables that could derail the communities' efforts. In many cases, production and marketing are affected by **changing weather patterns**. For instance, participants to the ecoprinting projects are unable to commit specific schedules as they have to adjust their farming schedule and activities to accommodate the weather patterns that have become more unpredictable with the worsening climate change.



Soe Lin, chairperson of the Lwemun Village Bamboo Craft Association in Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, says the speed and quality of their production increased with SGP's support

From being simple farmers, foragers, trappers, and odd jobbers, it is a huge undertaking to become an entrepreneur. It entails a lot of changes that require **cultivating a business or entrepreneurial mindset** to successfully implement a livelihood project. It is important that the people have ownership of the projects, and that they have developed the necessary skill set. Constant motivation is also important, especially at the beginning or transition stage where income is yet to be earned.

Organisationally, a process must also be devised to boost the collective morale of the members and foster collaboration and cooperation. **Lack of trust and demotivation** due to perceived uneven task and job distribution between members can cause misunderstanding and rifts that will also affect the group's productivity in the long term. This can be allayed by involving beneficiaries in the planning and implementation of the project, and using an approach that is based on their needs and interests to encourage active participation.

Reliable, available markets are also a crucial challenge in sustaining community-based livelihoods. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic and the political situation in Myanmar that halted mobility and economic activities in the national parks and sanctuaries, a number of factors have been impeding the success of local businesses. These might include — but are not limited to accessibility, infrastructure, and relevance — factors that need to be addressed so as to pique the interest and support of tourists and the general public.

Project-wise, the length of time is also a significant factor in the viability and success of livelihood activities. It was noted by some of the grantees that the **time for project implementation** was too short to accomplish their objectives substantially and identify the impacts of their projects to the economic development of the community and also to the conservation of biodiversity in the protected areas.





Recommendations

Implementing community-based livelihood programmes is a challenging but critical endeavour in the race to protect vital ecosystems. Ensuring their success requires that all stakeholders are on board and are united in their common goal of achieving community development and conserving biodiversity.

The following are some recommendations to further improve the existing livelihood projects.

Enhance product development efforts



- Improve product quality through the introduction of a variety of production techniques, packaging, and services; taking into account consumer demands and needs
- Develop a wide variety of products to broaden market reach
- Explore and promote conservation-compatible livelihood opportunities

Develop entrepreneurial capacities and skills, including business management



- Ensure that the technical stages and activities are easily understood by simplifying the language used, providing appropriate training, and prioritising local factors that have the potential to have a positive impact
- Identify the skill sets needed for the planned products (e.g. sewing, etc.) and provide opportunities to develop and strengthen their skills
- Provide training and skills development on business planning and financial management
- Build capacity on product safety and standards, across value chains (production, processing, distribution, etc.)
- Practise and institutionalise transparency through clear accountability systems, documentation and recording systems, and reporting mechanisms

Strengthen product marketing and branding



- Maximise social media for promotion and sales and explore the potential of putting up online shops
- Enhance cooperation with local governments and other stakeholders to establish markets for ecologically-friendly products
- Work on product certification (e.g. eco-friendly, sustainable, green, halal, etc.) by relevant government or certification bodies to add value to products
- Strengthen market access through improving product quality and developing marketing methods to increase sales and income
- Explore creative marketing — for instance, the crystal palm sugar derivative product in the form of bandrek has the potential to be marketed locally through cooperation with existing traditional coffee shops
- Seek cooperation with shops or product outlets for consignment of locally-developed products

Encourage collaboration and sharing of best practices with other groups and skilled workers



- Explore partnerships with various stakeholders such as tourist guides and ecotourism groups, product outlets or shops, and local governments
- Establish or join a network or industry association of biodiversity-based products producers and sellers to foster sharing of best practices and lessons learned, as well as assist in cross-promotion of products and services

Develop upstream production activities



- Build upstream production facilities to produce supplies of natural dyes for ecoprinting production, which allows ecoprinting products to be produced faster and more efficiently







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