

Darwin Initiative Main: Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the “Project Reporting Information Note”:
(<https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources/information-notes/>)

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 20 pages** in length, excluding annexes)

Submission Deadline: 30th April 2024

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line

Darwin Initiative Project Information

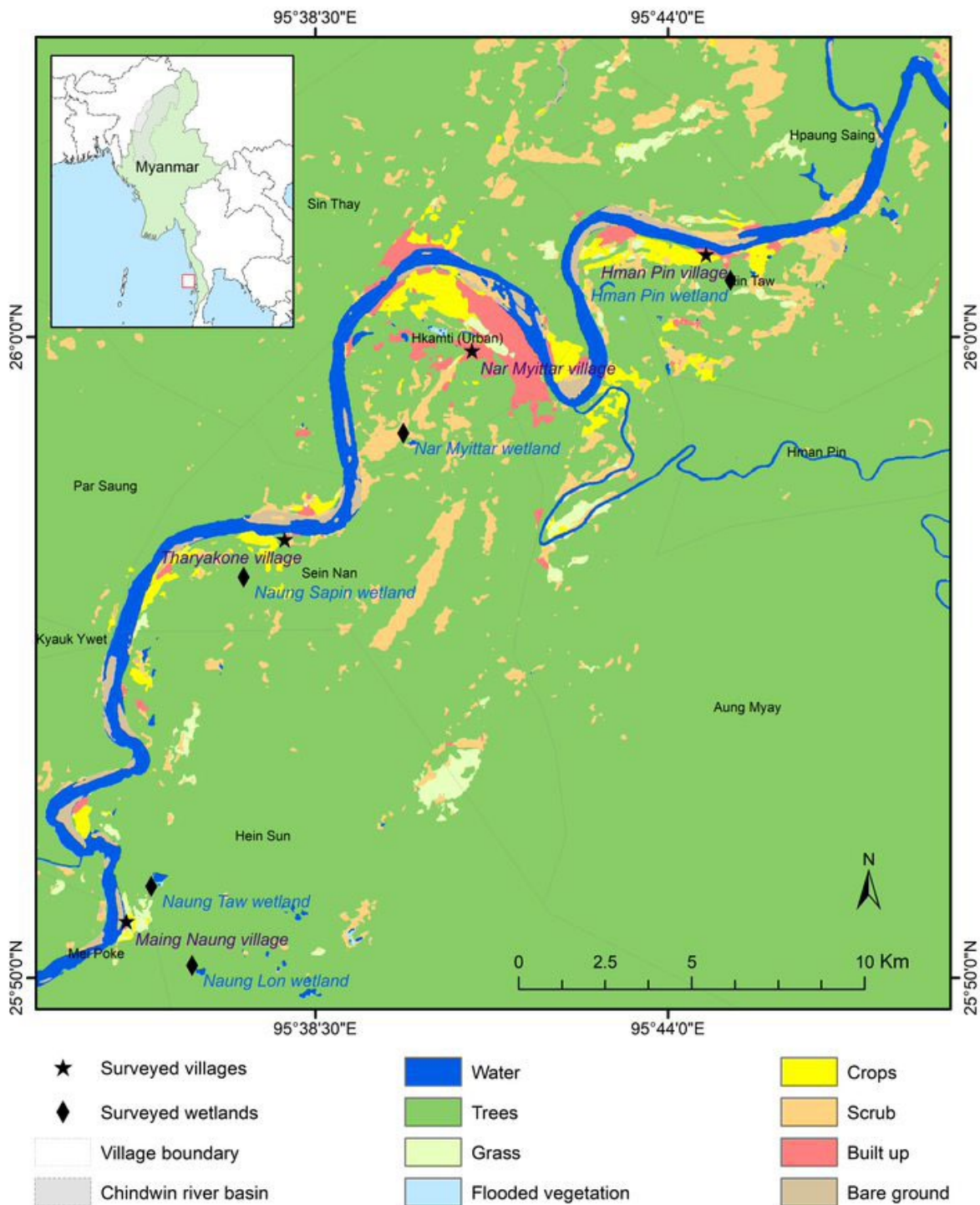
Project reference	27-009
Project title	Community-based integrated catchment management to conserve the Upper Chindwin River
Country/ies	Myanmar
Lead Partner	Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)
Project partner(s)	Myanmar Environment Institute, UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH), Naga Social Network Organization (NSNO)
Darwin Initiative grant value	£369,912.00
Start/end dates of project	01/10/2020 – 31/03/2025
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2023 – Mar 2024) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	Apr 2023-Mar 2024 and HYR4
Project Leader name	Thanapon Piman
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.sei.org/projects/community-based-water-management-chindwin/ https://www.sumernet.org/story/empowering-communities-in-the-upper-chindwin-basin-of-myanmar-through-hands-on-training-on-watershed-and-wetlands-conservation-a
Report author(s) and date	██████████ May 20, 2024

1. Project summary

Based on over six years of SEI’s research in the area, ecosystems within the Upper Chindwin River are rapidly degrading due to mining, deforestation, and agriculture as well as the impacts of climate change. Most people in the study area are poor and communities are mainly subsistence based and depend on ecosystems to maintain livelihoods. The health and wellbeing of these communities and ecosystems are intrinsically interlinked.

To restore ecosystems and support livelihoods, it is critical to involve communities in ecosystem restoration. The main aim of the project is to implement a set of tailored land and water management practices for wetland conservation in Upper Chindwin River, Myanmar, to protect and restore the Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) and secure sustainable livelihoods for villagers in the vicinity of the project area.

The project will implement community wetland conservation practices using knowledge from assessments of baseline conditions. Community conservation practices that benefit biodiversity as well as communities such as agroforestry and rice-fish systems will be explored and integrated into community action plans to reduce pressure on ecosystem. Conservation successes at the community level will be scaled up to link with policy makers at national and subnational levels to promote community-based catchment management and find solutions for longer term wetland and ecosystem protections.



2. Project stakeholders/ partners

Our British partners, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) and UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH), as well as our Myanmar partner, MEI, have all contributed to project planning and decision-making. In addition to planning, project partners have been in charge of

tracking project activities. Partners were consulted bimonthly and helped design and implement activities that were feasible given Myanmar's current political situation. Furthermore, the Embassy of Sweden and Australia issued directives that restricted the field implementation of project activities from January to March 2024.

Based on these discussions, a request to revise the project logframe was submitted to NIRAS and approved in January 2024. In December 2023, WWT requested that the project lead reallocate WWT funds to local Myanmar partners, namely MEI and NSNO, to support their local travel and implementation of on-the-ground activities wherever possible, as WWT partners continued to face travel restrictions to the study area.

Despite the difficult and challenging political situation in Myanmar, consortium partners were able to adapt and complete some of the planned activities. The inability to conduct fieldwork and organize training workshops in the study area due to security concerns remained one of the most pressing challenges to project implementation. Considering these challenges, a change request was submitted to BCF in February 2024 to extend the period of project implementation till March 2025, which was approved on March 15, 2024.

Partners have been consulted to determine which project activities can be prioritized, as well as potential routes for ensuring that the activities are completed. Our local partners, Naga Social Network (NSNO), and Myanmar partner, Myanmar Environment Institute (MEI), were instrumental in obtaining permission from government departments to conduct fieldwork in the study area for the year 2023-24, as well as ensuring the safety and security of the project staff and field team. Local project staff and local CSOs maintained constant communication to ensure the interests of local communities in the project implementation.

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

Following activities were undertaken in the third year of project implementation from April 2023-March 2024:

- **Activity 1.3** – Results from baseline assessment published as a peer-reviewed, open access research article titled ‘Assessment of Community Dependence and Perception of Wetlands in the Upper Chindwin Basin, Myanmar’ (██████████) ██████████
- **Activity 2.2** – Community Action Plans were developed for all four selected villages, and a community consultation was held at Nar Myittar in the month of March 2023 led by NSNO. During the discussion, the Village Working Committee (VWC) gave feedback on the CAP design and alternate livelihood implementation plan. Members of the VWC also identified roles and responsibilities, modalities of alternate livelihoods and community rules for preserving Wetlar wetland. During the meeting, the VWC also identified the activities that will be implemented in 2024 (**Annex 2: Discussion with VWC, Nar Myittar report by NSNO**)
- **Activity 2.3** - Training of Trainers were co-designed and conducted in Hkamti township of the Upper Chindwin Basin (July, 2023) and community training programs were designed and conducted in the month of August 2023.
 - a. **Community training programmes were co-designed** with support from Environmental Conservation Department (ECD) of Hkamti District and Myanmar Environment Institute in the month of July 2023. On May 30th, 2023, after continuous follow-up ECD granted permission to the project team to organize training sessions at the meeting hall in Hkamti for the year 2023.
 - b. **Capacity building training (or Training of Trainers) on wetlands conservation** at Hkamti township level was successfully organized from 28-31 July, 2023. This training was led by resource persons from MEI and co-facilitated by experts from SEI. This training capacitated 29 participants which included

members of the ECD officials, Village Working Committees, youth, women, and representatives of diverse ethnics having high reliance on wetland resources (**Annex 3: Training report and feedback**).

- c. **Community trainings on wetlands conservation** were conducted by Naga Social Network Organization (NSNO) at village level in the month of August, 2023 at four villages, Tharyarkone, Nar Myittar, Hman Pin and Maing Naung. These trainings were able to gauge community's interest in conserving wetlands for sustainable livelihoods (**Annex 4: Community Training report by NSNO**)
 - d. These trainings also led to **village level meetings chaired by the village heads especially in Maing Naung and Nar Myittar** to further discuss the community action planning and identify the activities community members were willing to undertake. The most interesting session during these informal trainings were the short discussions which allowed knowledge exchange especially among the village youth, women, and elders. An illustrative instance involves the village leader of Maing Naung village extending an invitation to the **villagers to discuss the negative consequences associated with illegal fishing, unsustainable extraction of aquatic resources and depletion of wetland resources**. The discussion also encompassed topics such as the importance of protecting fingerlings and their habitats within the wetlands, the various functions of wetlands, and the prudent utilization of these resources by the villagers. (**Annex 5: Discussion report for Nar Myittar by NSNO**)
 - e. A three-day training programme focused on **small-scale fish farming and aquaculture** in the month of September (17-20) to support poverty alleviation and livelihood diversification. Approximately, 40 participants were trained by Mr Win Maung Kyaw, Fisheries expert from Myanmar with sessions focusing on practical food processing demonstrations. The training was highly appreciated especially by the women participants as this provides them with an additional opportunity to avoid losses and generate additional income from post processing. (**Annex 6: Training report and feedback by Mr Win Maung Kyaw, Fisheries expert**)
- **Activity 3.1** – The hydrological assessment of Upper Chindwin wetlands was led by UKCEH, and it focused on analysing time series of discharges, water levels, evaporation, and rainfall across the Upper Chindwin basin to correlate wetlands' function with hydrometeorological data. Satellite data-derived products, such as NDWI and Freshwater Ecosystems Explorer, were used to investigate the seasonality of water permanence across selected five wetlands. (**Annex 7: Draft report on methodological framework for hydrological Assessment of wetlands of UCB**)

- **Activity 3.2** – In close consultation with the communities, the MEI team and SEI's GIS expert identified and demarcated conservation zones within five selected wetlands. Conservation zone maps are provided (see **Annex 8**). These conservation zones will help to maintain wetland water quality, ensure biodiversity conservation, and the wise use of selected wetlands by dependent communities.

MEI, in collaboration with NSNO and VWC of Nar Myittar, developed a wetland monitoring and evaluation plan (see **Annex 9**), which is also included in the CAP activities. The plan's overarching goal is to maintain wetland habitat quality, conserve biodiversity, and ensure wise use. The plan outlined five key indicators: species diversity and abundance, endemic and threatened species, wetland extent, water quality, and community engagement and awareness. The proposed plan will use a citizen science approach to monitor habitat and biodiversity, establish reporting frequency and criteria, engage the community, and implement adaptive management. Currently, baselines for the key indicators mentioned above have been established; a Training of Trainers (ToT) for NSNO is planned for April 2024, followed by community level trainings in selected villages with citizen science-based monitoring activities planned to begin in May 2024.

- **Activity 3.4** - Evaluate the performance of the habitat restoration activities and/or sustainable livelihood options adapted on wetland ecosystems by Y4

A plantation drive was undertaken by SEI and MEI staff with support from Environment Conservation Department, Hkamti. Under this drive 100 saplings of three indigenous species namely *Acacia mangium*, *Xylia xylocarpa* (Roxb.) and *Bauhinia* sp. were planted around Wetlar wetland. To further enhance awareness of communities and promote wetlands wise use, signage boards in Burmese were also installed at five locations around the Wetlar wetland.

- **Activity 4.3** – In the year 2023-24, two articles titled '**Local Stewardship to conserve Upper Chindwin Basin of Myanmar**' and '**Empowering communities in the Upper Chindwin Basin of Myanmar on wetlands conservation**' were published online to share the learnings from the project. Videos from the training sessions have also been uploaded on the YouTube channel of Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET) for wider reach.

(Access here <https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/news/2024/01/15/local-stewardship-in-myanmar/> ; <https://www.sumernet.org/story/empowering-communities-in-the-upper-chindwin-basin-of-myanmar-through-hands-on-training-on-watershed-and-wetlands-conservation-a>).

- **Activity 4.4** – A webpage for the project is developed and hosted by SEI-Asia. <https://www.sei.org/projects/community-based-water-management-chindwin/> where all project updates are posted regularly.

3.2 Progress towards project Outputs

Output 1: Baseline assessment of physical conditions, ecosystem services, key biodiversity hotspots and habitats, and existing practices of livelihood on water and land management, informing an endorsed habitat restoration plan and CAPs development.

- The results of the baseline assessment have been disseminated through a peer-reviewed article and are additionally accessible on the project website.
- Reports on biodiversity and water quality assessments conducted in specific wetlands are being utilized as the foundation for ongoing monitoring efforts.
- Wetland maps delineating conservation zones have been developed with assistance from MEI and NSNO, and these maps have been endorsed by the Village Working Committees following validation.

Output 2: Community Action Plans (CAP) focusing on integrated water-land ecosystem measures developed for and implemented in four priority villages.

- Community Action Plans (CAPs) have been developed for four specific villages, focusing on three primary areas: sustainable livelihood options, wetland conservation and restoration, and community capacity building and awareness.
- The CAP for Nar Myittar was presented to the village working committee, and feedback was gathered, clarifying roles and responsibilities.
- Training programs have been conducted to enhance the understanding of wetland ecosystems, conservation practices, and wise use among communities.
- Guidelines have been formulated for the implementation of sustainable alternative livelihoods, highlighting groundnut cultivation and pig farming as viable strategies. The implementation plan outlines criteria for selecting households to adopt these strategies, including factors such as annual income, reliance on wetlands, loan repayment capability, and willingness to engage in monitoring activities. Additionally, the plan delineates the modalities of a revolving fund for implementing these activities and includes a draft agreement to be signed by household heads and the Village Working Committee (VWC).

Output 3: Optimal ecological conditions agreed for endangered and key livelihood species and habitat restoration plan completed and shared

- Based on the information from Output 1, a monitoring and evaluation plan has been developed by MEI with support from SEI and NSNO to ensure biodiversity conservation and habitat maintenance for key species of selected wetland habitats.
- To support these activities and enhance community awareness, 5 signage boards have been put in place around Nar Myittar wetland and restricting unsustainable use of wetland resources.

Output 4: Recommendations published for upscaling CAP and conservation measures to other villages with Upper Chindwin Basin KBAs

- A project webpage has been launched where all knowledge products generated under the project can be easily accessed by interested parties for replication and upscaling.
- Lessons and learnings from community engagement and trainings have been published on BCF and SUMERNET website for wider audiences, links for which have been provided above.

3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

Outcome: The KBA in Upper Chindwin basin is providing improved and more secure habitats for endangered species and better livelihood pathways through enhanced ecosystem services for the local people

Outcome indicator 0.1: At least five conservation zones in priority wetlands are identified and demarcated for key endangered wetlands species

Comment: Conservation zones have been identified in the selected wetland sites, and GIS maps highlighting these areas have been prepared. These maps are now being used to enhance community awareness and promote the sustainable use of wetland resources while designing effective local rules and regulations in four selected villages.

Outcome indicator 0.2: Levels of fertiliser related determinants (e.g., Total Nitrogen, Ammonium Nitrite, and Total Phosphorus) kept within international standards and suggested by Norwegian Expert as a result of adoption of conservation practices by 2024.

Comment: - The initial baseline assessment has shown that the impact of fertilizers on water quality is low, with nitrate and phosphate levels remaining within international standards. Follow-up monitoring will be conducted next year to assess how the implemented conservation activities have further reduced the impact on the wetlands water quality.

Outcome indicator 0.3: At least 20% increase in income by 2024 for those adopting conservation and alternate livelihood practices (30 adopting the fish farming and 60 adopting other conservation practices) in selected 4 villages for CAP implementation

Comment: Implementation of sustainable livelihood activities has been challenging due to the political situation and travel restrictions in the study area. We plan to implement these practices next year and will monitor the resulting increase in income with the help of Village working committees and NSNO ; results will be reported in the next annual report

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Outcome level

Assumption 1: The political situation within Myanmar remains stable and no restrictions are imposed by the government on INGOs

Assumption 2: SEI and consortium partner relationship with Sagaing regional government remains strong for buy-in for the project.

Output level

Assumption 3: The selected villages are easily accessible without any restrictions from the government

Assumption 4: Regional and national government representatives, and various government agencies continue to be supportive and are receptive to policy recommendations.

Assumption 5: Policy makers and practitioners are sufficiently interested and engaged to take

part in the planned training course.

Comments:

- i. Random security checks by military regime in Hkamti township, seeking personal IDs and permission to conduct project activities on ground, has presented a new safety issue for the local project team.
- ii. Project has not been able to secure permissions from General Administration Department (GAD) to conduct activities across villages and wetlands due to current political situation and safety issues. Thus, we need to rely on our local CSO partner NSNO to undertake training and consultation activities, with a major focus of activity implementation at Nar Myittar village and Wetlar wetland.
- iii. Activities need to be planned way ahead in time as only limited options and flight seats are available to travel to Hkamti for other project partners including MEI and SEI team members from Myanmar to even travel from other states within the country.
- iv. Electricity supply, phone, and internet connectivity still present operational challenges in the field for which the team has to rely on old school methods of using physical prints and handouts during trainings and consultations with key stakeholders including local CSO partners, ECD members and community members.
- v. Travel restrictions for international partners still persist and they can be engaged only through online consultations.

3.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and poverty reduction.

- The project aims to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services in KBAs of the Upper Chindwin Basin through community-led water-land ecosystem management, while also fostering sustainable livelihoods.
- Through Community Action Plans, conservation initiatives, and capacity building programs, we anticipate a steady reduction in negative impacts from unsustainable practices, ultimately aiming to conserve and increase native species richness.
- Identified alternative livelihood options such as pig farming and ground nut will provide sustained income for local communities as part of the broader Community Action Plan. Initial funding for these activities at Nar Myittar village will be supported by the project and a mechanism will be put in place to ensure the investment benefits several other HHs of the community in the form of a revolving fund.
- Additionally, ongoing capacity building efforts have educated local communities in selected villages on effective natural resource management, enhancing economic benefits and promoting wise resource utilization. One key example has been positive response from the women of the community
- Furthermore, a wetland monitoring and assessment program, led by village working committees, has been established in Nar Myittar villages-based citizen science principles.
- Establishing conservation zones near wetlands and implementing community-level regulations for wetland resource use will further mitigate threats to wetlands and alleviate future pressures.

4. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements

Over the past year, the project has struggled to engage with policymakers or influence national policies, primarily due to the ongoing military coup and political instability in the country. Given the current situation on the ground, it is improbable that the project will be able to achieve any outputs related to policy engagement or influence unless there is a significant change in circumstances. Keeping this in mind, the activities under output 4 have been modified and the change has been approved.

5. Project support for multidimensional poverty reduction

- The identified alternative livelihood options will serve to support and enhance the income of designated households within each of the chosen villages. Initially, efforts will be directed towards households earning an annual income below 3.6 million kyats, with the aim of achieving an overall 20% increase by the conclusion of the project's implementation.
- Furthermore, the project will prioritize the wise use of wetland resources, upon which a significant portion of livelihoods in the targeted region rely. This will be achieved through ongoing conservation initiatives and community awareness efforts undertaken by the project.
- Additionally, the project has enriched community knowledge through training sessions focused on the post-processing of fisheries products. This initiative is expected to further improve livelihoods while alleviating the burden on communities.

6. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Please quantify the proportion of women on the Project Board ¹ .	40%
Please quantify the proportion of project partners that are led by women, or which have a senior leadership team consisting of at least 50% women ² .	0

GESI Scale	Description	Put X where you think your project is on the scale
Not sensitive yet	The GESI context may have been considered but the project isn't quite meeting the requirements of a 'sensitive' approach	
Sensitive	The GESI context has been considered and project activities take this into account in their design and implementation. The project addresses basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	X
Empowering	The project has all the characteristics of a 'sensitive' approach whilst also increasing equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups	
Transformative	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	

- Since the project's inception, the project team has prioritized the meaningful engagement of women and youth. Both demographic groups actively participated in baseline

¹ A Project Board has overall authority for the project, is accountable for its success or failure, and supports the senior project manager to successfully deliver the project.

² Partners that have formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.

assessments and focus group discussions, where they were provided a safe space to share their viewpoints and personal experiences.

- Across selected villages, village working committees were established with women holding key roles to ensure their consultation in decision-making processes.
- In the implementation of alternative livelihoods, household selection criteria include annual household income to ensure that project activities are beneficial and do not cause harm to marginalized households. This approach aims to assist households in overcoming poverty and improving their livelihoods through financial and/or knowledge support provided by the project.
- Training programs organized by the project have prioritized empowering women in wetlands conservation and alternative livelihoods. A female member of the village committee shared a favourable experience highlighting how the training she underwent in fish post-processing enabled her to boost her income while reducing the need to buy such products from the market.

7. Monitoring and evaluation

- In terms of monitoring and evaluating the project this year, we have established a structured approach. Quarterly project monitoring meetings and consultations are held, providing an opportunity for all project partners to share progress and provide feedback on overall implementation. During these meetings, monthly targets are set for each partner, followed by internal report reviews and feedback sessions.
- Feedback received during these sessions informs adjustments and modifications to project implementation. We particularly consider challenges faced by our local implementation partner, NSNO, on the ground. Close monitoring and evaluation have led to the submission of a change request form to NIRAS, seeking an extension of the project implementation time. This extension would allow our local SEI staff, MEI, and NSNO to effectively implement alternative livelihood strategies and support community capacity building.
- Furthermore, based on partner feedback and internal discussions, modifications were made to the project's log frame. These modifications consider the ground situation and identify activities that can be implemented, considering any delays and on-the-ground realities. These adjustments ensure that our interventions remain relevant and effective.

8. Lessons learnt

- Promoting rice-fish farming as an alternative strategy has been particularly challenging due to flooding in raining season and lean water supply during dry season with sandy soil in certain areas. There has been challenge in identifying suitable sites for implementing activities due to political unrest and limited access.
- Several concerns have also been highlighted by the village heads on developing fishponds at selected villages. These include land tenure issues, rules and regulations of land use, time and financial resources required pond preparation, water accessibility, labour availability, high inflation costs associated with these activities under uncertainty. Inflation is also a cause of concern for community's due to ongoing political unrest.
- Based on our continuous engagement with the communities, two sustainable livelihood activities have been identified as alternative livelihood options- Pig farming and groundnut cultivation (most villagers being farmers identify these as options for enhanced income) which are the focus of planning and implementation in Nar Myittar village.

9. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

- **Comment 1:** Various activities and reports are mentioned in AR3, but without evidence or documentation. It is understood that some of these activities were completed in previous years – ensure this is clear in your reporting against the logframe, and that future reporting includes clear provision of evidence in support of claims made of achievement of indicators for the reporting period.

Response: Thank you for the comment. We have taken a note of this and have provided all necessary documentation to support our indicator reporting as Annexes.

- **Comment 3:** Naga Social Network Organisation (NSNO) – they don't appear on the application as a partner. Please provide an overview of this organisation's track record to justify their heavy involvement in the project.

Response: Details of NSNO and their work are provided as ANNEX 11

- **Comment 4:** A chronological overview of field visits including their timings, purpose, and who was involved would help put project activities in context.

Response: A detailed list of field visits and training conducted under the project since its inception has been provided as Annex 12

- **Comment 6:** The project lost both of its socio-economists in 2021. This appears to have had an enormous impact on the project. Why has their replacement not been given priority? What can be done to address this?

Response: Chloe Pottinger-Glass, a socio-economic expert based in SEI Asia, joined the team last year. She has contributed to the project design, activity planning, and a peer-reviewed publication.

- **Comment 7:** There has been no mention of climate change – its impacts to date and projected impacts, and measures for adaptation and mitigation through the project. The Darwin Initiative does not explicitly demand this, but its explicit consideration in this project would be beneficial.

Response: UKCEH is currently conducting a hydrological assessment which also correlate the findings with climatic changes in the study area and full report will be shared in the next annual report. Draft methodological framework has been provided with this report as Annex.

- **Comment 8:** The project says it focuses on Land-Water management – but there's nothing in any of the documents read, about the Chindwin River, how its behaviour determines many human activities and how this might change in the future.

Response: Hydrological assessment led by UKCEH will analyse his aspect and draw inferences

- **Comment 9:** Why has Nar Myittar been selected as the one village for demonstration activities, when its wetland has low habitat value and the village Tharykone was identified as the primary user?

Response: As noted earlier in the report, this is the only priority village accessible to the field team for implementing conservation activities and conducting training sessions. Security concerns and the political situation make it extremely challenging to replicate these efforts on a larger scale.

- **Comment 10:** Please clarify the relationship between the CAP and conservation zones/habitat restoration. Is the latter included in the former?

Response: Yes, the Conservation zoning and habitat restoration and/or conservation are included within the Community Action Plan.

10. Risk Management

- The ongoing military coup in UCB continues to significantly hinder project implementation. These circumstances have compelled project partners to primarily engage online, limiting on-the-ground activities.
- Travel within the country this year has also posed significant challenges, particularly concerning the security of the project team. Additionally, travel warnings issued by

the Embassies of Sweden and Australia have further constrained SEI staff in Myanmar from traveling.

- NSNO has played a pivotal role in engaging with local communities in four villages. Considering travel restrictions and safety concerns, NSNO was chosen for its base in the Hkamti region, facilitating easier travel to selected villages and community engagement in specific activities.
- Due to the lack of permissions from General Administration Department (GAD), project activities have primarily focused on Nar Myittar, which offers relatively easier accessibility compared to other villages. However, there is interest from other village committees, particularly Maing Naung. Discussions and engagement in the upcoming year will prioritize this village if conditions permit.

11. Sustainability and legacy

- Under current circumstances in UCB, the governance of natural resources and authorities across levels are in question due to the ongoing military coup.
- The project now works independent of government stakeholders and is making efforts to ensure that Community Action Plans are endorsed by the Village Working Committees and the initial seed funding provided by the project to support community livelihoods is made available to community households in the form of a revolving fund to ensure the benefits from the project are realized for a long period of time.

12. Darwin Initiative identity

- The project's various outputs, including manuals, training materials, project factsheets, blogs, and reports, all recognize the financial backing provided by the Darwin Initiative.
- The project website explicitly attributes the Darwin Initiative as the funding agency.
- The peer-reviewed article also credits the financial support from the Darwin Initiative.
- The training videos available on the SUMERNET website also mention the Darwin Initiative and project partners.

13. Safeguarding

Has your Safeguarding Policy been updated in the past 12 months?	No
Have any concerns been reported in the past 12 months	No
Does your project have a Safeguarding focal point?	Yes, [REDACTED]
Has the focal point attended any formal training in the last 12 months?	No
What proportion (and number) of project staff have received formal training on Safeguarding?	Past: 20% [3] Planned: 40% [6]
Has there been any lessons learnt or challenges on Safeguarding in the past 12 months? Please ensure no sensitive data is included within responses. No	
Does the project have any developments or activities planned around Safeguarding in the coming 12 months? If so please specify. No	
Please describe any community sensitisation that has taken place over the past 12 months, include topics covered and number of participants. No	
Have there been any concerns around Health, Safety and Security of your project over the past year? If yes, please outline how this was resolved. No	

14. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)

Project spend (indicative since last Annual Report)	2023/24 Grant (£)	2023/24 Total Darwin Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	On track

Consultancy costs				On track
Overhead Costs				The rate for each organization remain the same this year but the average rate might change based on the utilization of the fund.
Travel and subsistence				Enhanced focus on local travel of partners to conduct in person training of trainers and engagement with local communities along with increased travel costs within Myanmar due to ongoing political coup
Operating Costs				Still facing restrictions in implementing activities on the ground. This is expected to be covered in the next year where the project focuses on implementation alternative livelihood activities with the support of NSNO
Capital items (see below)				We have utilized this budget to facilitate field work and plan to use the
Others (see below)				Restrictions on implementation are a factor for underutilization of funds under this head
TOTAL	£118,270.00	£114,734.52		

Table 2: Project mobilised or matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)

	Secured to date	Expected by end of project	Sources
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project (£)	NA	NA	NA
Total additional finance mobilised for new activities	NA	NA	NA

occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project (£)			
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11. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

N/A

12. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements or progress of your project so far (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes.

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds to edit and use the following for various promotional purposes (please leave this line in to indicate your agreement to use any material you provide here).

*If you have no photos or videos for reasons of sensitivity, then please state that clearly and the BCFs Comms team can work to create an alternative graphic.

Image, Video or Graphic Information:

File Type (Image / Video / Graphic)	File Name or File Location	Caption including description , country and credit	Social media accounts and websites to be tagged (leave blank if none)	Consent of subjects received (delete as necessary)
Video	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mn7TsA0RzJA	Training on fish farming	SUMERNE T YouTube Channel (SEI Asia)	Yes
Video	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rFkkMyZOJo	Training on wetlands conservation	SUMERNE T YouTube Channel (SEI Asia)	Yes

Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against logframe for Financial Year 2023-2024

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2023 - March 2024	Actions required/planned for next period
<p>Impact</p> <p>KBAs in the Upper Chindwin Basin have enhanced biodiversity and ecosystem service value as a result of community-based integrated water-land ecosystem management and enhanced sustainable livelihood pathways for local people.</p>	<p>The project has made substantial progress in establishing a baseline for wetlands management and biodiversity conservation in the selected wetlands and dependent villages. Community action plans to support these efforts have been prepared and are now being adopted by the village working committees for implementation. Sustainable livelihood options will be rolled out next year to further reduce the pressure on ecosystems within the Upper Chindwin Basin.</p>	
<p>Outcome</p> <p><i>The KBA in Upper Chindwin basin is providing improved and more secure habitats for endangered species and better livelihood pathways through enhanced ecosystem services for the local people</i></p>		
<p>Outcome indicator 0.1</p> <p>At least five conservation zones in priority wetlands are identified and demarcated for key endangered wetlands species</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conservation zones have been identified in the selected wetland sites, and GIS maps highlighting these areas have been prepared. These maps are now being used to enhance community awareness and promote the sustainable use of wetland resources while designing effective local rules and regulations in four selected villages. 	<p><i>Completed</i></p>
<p>Outcome indicator 0.2</p> <p>Levels of fertiliser related determinants (e.g., Total Nitrogen, Ammonium Nitrite, and Total Phosphorus) kept within international standards and suggested by Norwegian Expert as a result of adoption of conservation practices by 2024.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The initial baseline assessment has shown that the impact of fertilizers on water quality is low, with nitrate and phosphate levels remaining within international standards. 	<p>Follow-up monitoring will be conducted next year to assess how the implemented conservation activities have further reduced the impact on the wetlands water quality.</p>
<p>Outcome Indicator 0.3</p> <p>At least 20% increase in income by 2024 for those adopting conservation and alternate livelihood practices (30 adopting the fish farming and 60 adopting other conservation practices) in selected 4 villages for CAP implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of sustainable livelihood activities has faced challenges due to the political situation and travel restrictions in the study area 	<p>We plan to implement these practices next year and will monitor the resulting increase in income with the help of Village working committees and NSNO ; results will be reported in the next annual report</p>

<p>Outcome Indicator 0.4</p> <p>Mean catch per unit effort increases by 20 % by 2024 from a sample of 20 local fisherman within 4 selected villages included in CAP communities; catch will be monitored by communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To ensure sustainable fishing in the wetlands and enhance catch, we have established local rules and provided training to community members on sustainable fisheries practices. These efforts are expected to lead to an increase in fish catch, demonstrating the effectiveness of our actions. 	<p>The Village Working Committee (VWC) using knowledge from the Fisheries training will closely monitor catch as part of CAP implementation</p>
<p>Output 1</p> <p><i>Baseline assessment of physical conditions, ecosystem services, key biodiversity hotspots and habitats, and existing practices of livelihood on water and land management, informing an endorsed habitat restoration plan and CAPs development.</i></p>		
<p>Output indicator 1.1</p> <p>Scalable local ecosystem services assessment framework developed using principles from the RAWES Toolkit and delivered at nine villages within Hkamti township by end of Y2,</p>	<p>This indicator has been achieved and framework was shared as ANNEX with the annual report of 2022-23</p>	<p>No further action</p>
<p>Output indicator 1.2,</p> <p>Local assessment of key endangered and livelihood species completed, and optimal ecological habitat requirements agreed by expert working group by Q1 of Y3.</p>	<p>This indicator has been achieved and framework was shared as ANNEX with the annual report of 2022-23</p>	<p>No further action</p>
<p>Output indicator 1.3</p> <p>Detailed ecosystem services, land use, and habitat maps of five wetlands within Upper Chindwin Basin by end of Y2.</p>	<p>This indicator has been achieved and framework was shared as ANNEX with the annual report of 2022-23</p>	<p>No further action</p>
<p>Output indicator 1.4</p> <p>Optimal habitat restoration plan, completed by the end of Y3 for four selected villages (including practices such as Prevention of habitat modification, community awareness educating on losses due to conversion, protection of fish nurseries)</p>	<p>Habitat restoration activities have been included within the Community Action Plans developed for four selected villages and are attached as Annex with this report.</p>	<p>The CAP will be implemented in the year 2024-25 at all selected villages with support from Village Working Committees and Local partner, NSNO.</p>
<p>Output 2.</p> <p><i>Community Action Plans (CAP) focusing on integrated water-land ecosystem measures developed for and implemented in four priority villages.</i></p>		
<p>Output indicator 2.1.</p> <p>Four village groups for developing CAP are formed, including village and household heads, elders who have local wisdom, women and youth groups. Four pilot villages to implement CAP are selected by Y2.</p>	<p>This indicator has been achieved and framework was shared as ANNEX with the annual report of 2022-23</p>	<p>No further action</p>

<p>Output indicator 2.2.</p> <p>CAP co-developed with the village groups based on baseline assessment by the end of Y3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CAP is developed for four selected villages. NSNO has shared these CAP with VWC at Nar Myittar and they have been revised based on the feedback from VWC. 	<p>NSNO is currently sharing the CAP at three other villages while seeking feedback from VWC and also setting up implementation and monitoring groups at village level.</p>
<p>Output indicator 2.3</p> <p>Trainings conducted for villagers on integrated land water management practices and alternate livelihood practices such as fish farming during Y3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training of Trainers (ToTs) on fish farming and wetlands conservation was conducted with the support of fisheries experts and the Ministry of Environment and Industry (MEI). Subsequently, these trainings were replicated for communities, particularly Village Working Committees (VWCs), across selected villages by colleagues from NSNO, who themselves had been trained under the ToTs (Article published in DARWIN Newsletter) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trainings on Ground cultivation and Livestock management are planned for July-August 2024
<p>Output indicator 2.4</p> <p>CAP implementation underway at four villages by the end of Y3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CAP implementation has been initiated at Nar Myittar, where a plantation drive was conducted with support from ECD, signage boards has been placed near the wetland highlighting wetland values and also detailing wetland rules; a training was conducted for Community members on wetlands conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Another training will be conducted at Nar Myittar focusing on biodiversity and water quality monitoring in Y4. - Livelihood implementation strategy has been developed for Nar Myittar focusing on pig farming and groundnut cultivation. This will also be implemented in June 2024.
<p>Output indicator 2.5</p> <p>Conduct training for village committees to manage and monitor CAP implementation</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional Online trainings planned for April 2024 due to travel restrictions and political unrest in the study area.
<p>Output Indicator 2.6</p> <p>Organize and conduct a project review workshop with village committees and expert group at the beginning of Y4</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop is planned for October-November 2024, subject to the conditions on ground.
<p>Output 3.</p> <p><i>Optimal ecological conditions agreed for endangered and key livelihood species and habitat restoration plan completed and shared</i></p>		

Output indicator 3.1 Wetland hydrological and climate vulnerability assessments conducted for five selected wetlands by Q2 Y3	- UKCEH is currently undertaking a hydrological and climate vulnerability assessment. A draft methodological flow and preliminary results have been shared	- Assessment will be completed in the Q1 of 2024-25
Output indicator 3.2 Finalize wetland specific habitat restoration strategies and demarcate conservation zones in consultation with village communities by Y3	- These strategies have been incorporated within the Community Action Plans keeping in mind the current conditions and challenges in implementing two different plans.	- Consultations are ongoing in three of the selected villages
Output indicator 3.3 Community engagement strategy is developed and endorsed by village communities by the end of Y3	- This is underdevelopment in close coordination with the VWC and based on direct feedback and interests of the VWC.	- Our project partner MEI is now finalizing the engagement strategy in close coordination with SEI and local implementation partner NSNO.
Output indicator 3.4 Evaluate the performance of habitat conservation activities and/or sustainable livelihood options adapted on wetland ecosystems from Q1-Q3 of Year 4	- Activity implementation has begun in Nar Myittar village and Wetlar wetland. This wetland has been focus of the implementing conservation and training activities due easier access and fewer challenges in terms of teams security as compared to other villages within the study.	- Monitoring the impact of these activities will be initiated in Q3 of 2024-25 and performance will be reported in the next annual report.
Output indicator 3.5 At least 75% (approx. 350 villagers) of local community are aware of the rules and regulations of the conservation zones by end of Y3.		- Community survey will be conducted in Q3-Q4 of 2024-25 initially Nar Myittar and will be expanded to other villages depending on the local conditions and team security.
Output 4 <i>Recommendations published for upscaling CAP and conservation measures to other villages with Upper Chindwin Basin KBAs</i>		
Output Indicator 4.1 At least one policy brief published by Q1 of year 2024	-	- Since the focus of the project has shifting from engaging with government stakeholders to engaging and capacitating community, the Policy brief is now

		under revision to be more focused on community learnings and to recommend relevant actions for community based organizations in the region willing to champion the conservation of ecosystems through local action
Output Indicator 4.2 Impact story of the implemented CAP land and water conservation measures by the end of Y4.		- Will be undertaken in Q4 2024-25
Output Indicator 4.3 A series of communication and outreach materials created to increase public awareness on biodiversity conservation in Y1-4	- Two blogs were published during the year and also an article in the DARWIN Newsletter.	- One more blog will be published in the Next year highlighting the implementation of livelihood activities
Output Indicator 4.4 Design and develop a webpage for DARWIN Initiative – Community-based integrated catchment management for conserving the Upper Chindwin River Basin with support from the partners hosted on SEI Asia’s website	- Webpage has been designed and project related materials can be easily accessed	- Finalized project reports and materials will be updated on the website quarterly.

Annex 2: Project's full current logframe as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)

Attached as Annex 10

Annex 3: Standard Indicators

Table 1 Project Standard Indicators

DI Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year Total 1	Year Total 2	Year Total 3	Total to date	Total during project	planned the
DI-A01	Number of people in eligible countries who have completed structured and relevant training	People	Men	-	-	76	76	100	
DI-A01	Number of people in eligible countries who have completed structured and relevant training	People	Women	-	-	63	63	100	
DIA05	Number of trainers trained reporting to have delivered further training by the end of the project.	People	Number trained	-	-	5	5	5	
DI-B01	Number of new or improved habitat management plans available and endorsed	Number	New and in English	-	-	1	1	4	
DI-B01	Number of new or improved habitat management plans available and endorsed	Number	New and in Burmese	-	-	1	1	4	
DI-B05	Number of people with increased participation in local communities / local management organisations	Number	No. of Village working committees established	-	-	4	4	4	
DI-C06	Number of downloads of new peer reviewed publications	Number	Accessed per year	-	-	1900	2109	3500	
DI-D16	Number of households reporting improved livelihoods.	Number	Income	-	-	-	-	40	

In addition to reporting any information on publications under relevant standard indicators, in Table 2, provide full details of all publications and material produced over the last year that can be publicly accessed, e.g. title, name of publisher, contact details, cost. You should include publications as supporting materials with your report. Mark with an asterisk (*) all publications and other material that you have included with this report.

Table 2 Publications

Title	Type (e.g. journals, best practice manual, blog post, online videos, podcasts, CDs)	Detail (authors, year)	Gender of Lead Author	Nationality of Lead Author	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online)
<i>Assessment of Community Dependence and Perception of Wetlands in the Upper Chindwin Basin, Myanmar</i>	Journal Article	Saluja, R.; Prasad, S.; Lwin, T.H.; Soe, H.H.; Pottinger-Glass, C.; Piman, T. (2023)	Female	Indian	Resources Journal, MDPI, Switzerland	https://www.mdpi.com/2079-9276/12/10/112
<i>Local stewardship to conserve Upper Chindwin Basin of Myanmar</i>	Newsletter article	Ridhi Saluja, Than Htway Linn, Thanapon Piman, and Win Maung	Female	Indian	Darwin Initiative	https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/news/2024/01/15/local-stewardship-in-myanmar
<i>Empowering communities in the Upper Chindwin Basin of Myanmar on wetlands conservation</i>	Blog post	Ridhi Saluja , Than Htway Lwin , Win Maung , Thanapon Piman	Female	Indian	SUMERNET (Sustainable Mekong Research Network)	https://www.sumernet.org/story/empowering-communities-in-the-upper-chindwin-basin-of-myanmar-through-hands-on-training-on-watershed-and-wetlands-conservation-a

Annex 4: Onwards – supplementary material (optional but encouraged as evidence of project achievement)

Annex 1 - Research article titled '*Assessment of Community Dependence and Perception of Wetlands in the Upper Chindwin Basin, Myanmar*' published in Resources Journal (IF- 3.3, 5 year- IF -3.8)

Annex 2: Discussion with VWC, Nar Myittar report by NSNO

Annex 3: Training report on Wetlands conservation and feedback

Annex 4: Community Training report by NSNO

Annex 5: Discussion report for Nar Myittar by NSNO

Annex 6: Training report and feedback by Mr Win Maung Kyaw, Fisheries expert

Annex 7: Draft report on methodological framework for hydrological Assessment of wetlands of UCB

Annex 8: Conservation zones maps for five wetlands

Annex 9: Wetland monitoring and evaluation plan under Community Action Planning for Nar Myittar

Annex 10: Current accepted log framework of the project

Annex 11: Details of NSNO our local CSO partners

Annex 12: List of field visits and trainings conducted since project inception

Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the correct template (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and deleted the blue guidance text before submission?	✓
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to BCF-Reports@niras.com putting the project number in the Subject line.	✓
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with BCF-Reports@niras.com about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	✓
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	✓
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see Section 16)?	N/A
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	✓
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	✓
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	