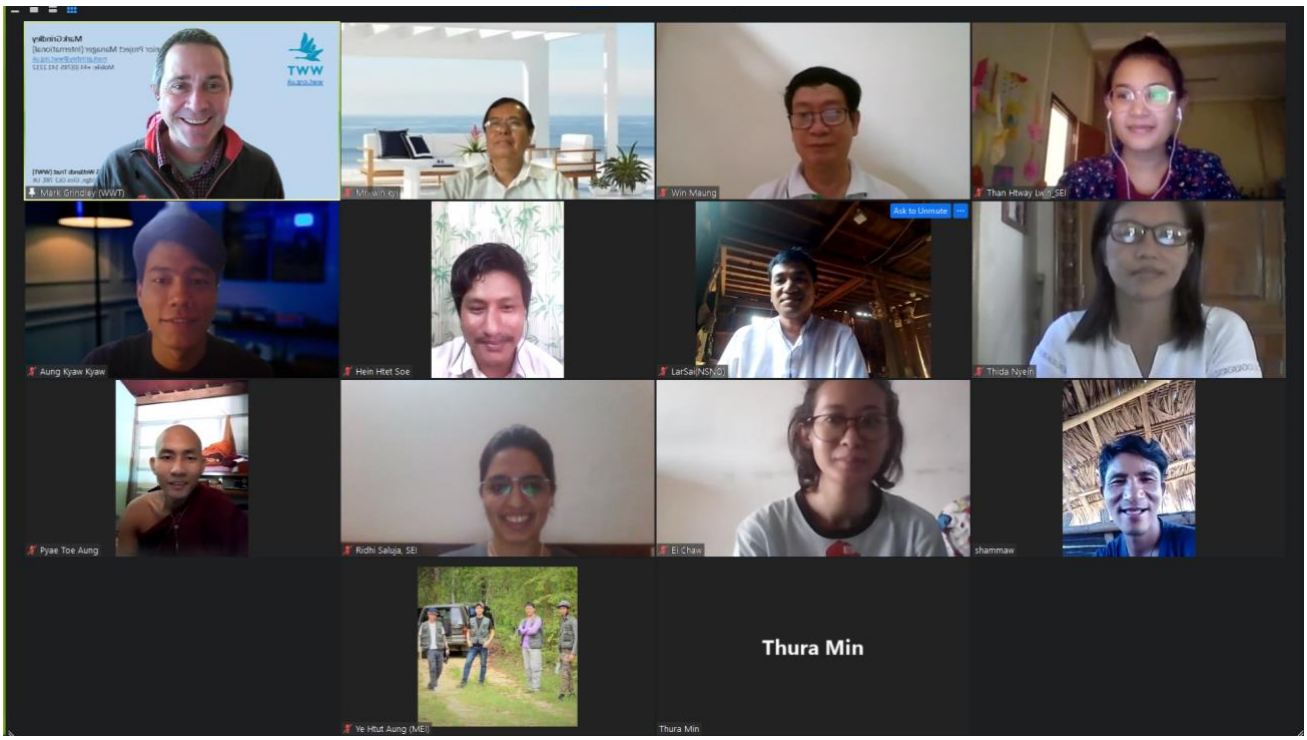

TRAINING COURSE REPORT:

RAPID VILLAGE ASSESSMENT FOR CHINDWIN WETLANDS

to the Stockholm Environmental Institute

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December 2021

Introduction

This brief report summarises a training course provided by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust over three half days in November 2021. The course was designed to give 12 trainees (Annex 1) an introduction into the methodology to be used for Rapid Village Assessments in the priority villages of the Darwin Initiative-funded project "Community-based integrated catchment management for conserving the Upper Chindwin River".

The project aims to preserve ecosystems to support livelihoods and implement community measures for the conservation of wetlands that support and sustain resilient livelihoods, and the results of the RVA are intended to help prioritise villages for the next state of project activities, including more in-depth surveys and the development of Community Action Plans (CAP) to establish sustainable agricultural, mining and water management practices.

Course overview

Overall outcome	Participants understand the components of the RVA, where they come from and why they were included, and are confident and skilled to pilot the RVA process in one or two villages
Dates	Mon 22 Nov, Wed 24, Fri 26
Timing	0730 to 1130 each day (UK) 1400 to 1800 each day (Myanmar)
Language	The course was delivered in English with some translation by Than Htway Lwin (SEI) and Dr Win Maung (MEI) of key technical terms and to cross-check comprehension. Group discussions were not facilitated by the trainers and took place in Myanma.

Content

Day 1 (Monday 22 November)		
Theme: Background to the Project and RVA		
10 mins	Introduction, course summary, participants etc	Mark Grindley, WWT
15 mins	What is a wetland?	Mark Grindley, WWT
10 mins	Background to the project: site description, review of survey results to date	Ridhi Saluja, SEI
20 mins	Initial results from wetland mapping	Andy Bamford, WWT
76 mins	Introduction to wetland ecosystems services	Rob McInnes*
30 mins	Discussion: Types of wetland ecosystems services	All
10 mins	Review of Day 1 and close	Mark Grindley, WWT

Day 2 (Wednesday 24 November)		
Theme: RAWES concepts and implementation		
5 mins	Introduction to Day 2	Mark Grindley, WWT
24 mins	Recognising, demonstrating and capturing wetland ecosystem services, Part 1-2	Rob McInnes*
10 mins	Practical exercise: Group discussion	All
27 mins	Rapid Assessment of Ecosystems Services – Introduction, Part 1-3	Rob McInnes*
30 mins	Breakout Group Activity and feedback (2 groups)	All
20 mins	Sketch mapping of wetlands (Andy Bamford)	
10 mins	Introduction to the Ramsar and Selection Criteria	Mark Grindley
10 mins	Overview of the RVA approach	Mark Grindley
5 mins	Quick review of Day 2 & Participant Survey	Mark Grindley / All

Day 3 (Friday 26 November)		
Theme: Completing the RVA		
10 mins	Contextual Information Cover Sheet	Mark Grindley
20 mins	Village Profile Datasheet	Mark Grindley
20 mins	Sketch Mapping and Ground Truthing Transect	Mark Grindley
20 mins	Practical exercise: Sketch mapping of your home	All
20 mins	Breakout exercise: Shortlisting habitat types for the sketch mapping and RAWES	All
20 mins	Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services (RAWES) – recap	Mark Grindley
20 mins	Breakout exercise: Defining How Important and Scale of Benefit for services in the project site	All
10 mins	Wetland Site Threats Assessment	Mark Grindley
10 mins	Rapid Reptile Survey	Mark Grindley
10 mins	Rapid Bird Survey	Mark Grindley
5 mins	Training close: Next steps, thankyous and farewells	All

Aims and Objectives of the RVA

The Rapid Village Assessments will collect field data to short-list priority wetlands for community management, and to screen the wetlands against the Ramsar assessment criteria (see below). The RVA uses seven tools/methods as listed in Table 1, around which the course was structured.

Table 1. Summary of steps and objectives in the rapid village assessment methodology

Step #	Tool	Objective
1	Contextual Information Cover Sheet	Document the RVA process
2	Village Profile Datasheet	Gather/update basic village data
3	Sketch Mapping and Ground Truthing Transect	Gain overview of the site for reference in later steps; provide data to ground-truth the habitat map
4	Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services (RAWES)	Rapid assessment of ecosystems services
5	Wetland Site Threats Assessment	Identify key threats following the Ramsar standard typologies
6	Reptile interview survey checklist	Rapid Reptile Survey
7	Expert field surveys	Rapid Bird Survey

Participant survey

A pre-course assessment was conducted to understand trainees academic and professional background, familiarity with key concepts and methods of the RVA, and their learning priorities and anticipated outcomes. Although it was expected that the participants would complete the survey themselves, it is not clear if that was the case.

Subject	Highest	High	Average	Low
Ecology and function of wetlands	0	10	1	0
Wetland ecosystems services	0	10	0	1
Group interviews/facilitation	1	4	6	0
RAWES	4	6	0	1
METT	4	6	0	1

Subject	Highest	High	Average	Low
Sketch mapping	0	9	2	0
Rapid bird surveys	1	4	5	1
Socio-economic surveys	0	1	10	0

Monitoring and Evaluation

The participants experiences with the course were evaluated after each day to gauge how well the course was delivering, and what tweaks might be necessary.

Question: “Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements (from 0 = don’t agree to 5 = strongly agree).”

Questions on Completion of Day 1	Average (*n* = 11)
The training will meet all of my personal objectives/expectations	4.50
I fully understand the background to the SEI Chindwin project	4.27
I know the purpose and details of the RVA training, and who is providing it	4.18
I understand how the wetlands included in the project were selected and mapped	4.00
I am able to ask questions where needed	3.77
I know what to expect over the next two days of training	3.73
I understand in general what the Ramsar criteria are, and where to find more information	3.73
I am fully able to follow the English-language presentations	3.55

Note: Questions have been reordered from highest to lowest score for easier interpretation.

Questions on Completion of Day 2	Average (*n* = 9)
I feel confident to participate as a member of a RAWES survey team	4.6
I understand the different categories of wetland ecosystems services	4.4
I understand what the Ramsar site selection criteria are	4.2
I understand what the Convention of Wetlands of International Importance is	4.2
I understand how to evaluate the relative importance of each ecosystem service	4.2
I have a good idea of the wetland types and ecosystems services that are relevant to the Chindwin project	4.1
I feel confident to undertake sketch mapping of our target wetlands	4.0
I understand how to estimate the scale of each ecosystem benefit	3.8

Note: Questions have been reordered from highest to lowest score for easier interpretation.

Questions on Completion of the Course	Average (*n* = 11)
The training met my personal objectives/expectations	4.6
I fully understand the steps in the RVA process and why they are included	4.4
I had lots of opportunity to ask questions and share my own experiences	4.4
I feel confident about conducting or supporting the CVA (based on my role in the project)	4.3
The training was too difficult to understand	1.1
The training was too long (both each day, and overall)	1.8

Questions on Completion of the Course	Average (*n* = 11)
We did not have sufficient group activities and joint discussions	1.2
I would like to work with WWT on wetland conservation again	5.0

Note: Questions are in the same order as they were asked. Note that three questions were phrased in a negative form to balance the positive bias of the questions after Day 1 and 2.

The results of the participant survey were used to adjust the course at it progressed; for example, more emphasis was put on Myanmar-language validation of key learning and unsupervised breakout-group discussions following the feedback from Day 1.

Recommendations for Modifications to the RVA

During the course it emerged that two amendments to the RVA would make it easier to administer and the results more useful for the project.

Firstly, it made sense to define the RAWES criteria for the importance of each service and the scale of the benefit it provides. Although it is suggested in the IUCN practitioners guide that the survey team will discuss these aspects in advance of the field work, it had not been explicitly included in our training as we assumed the survey team would do it as part of their preparations for the field. In practice, it made more sense to do it together as part of the training.

The conclusion of the trainees was that the following definitions (in red) should be used:

Scale of Benefit	Importance of Benefit	
Local = Survey village	++ = Significantly positive	Benefiting >1000 people and/or regularly/frequently and/or significantly contributing to human wellbeing
Regional = Chindwin basin	+ = Positive	Benefiting <1000 people, and/or irregularly/infrequently and/or slightly contributing to human wellbeing
Global = International *ie, meaning across international borders, or more widely within SEA or possibly beyond)*	0 = Negligible	Either very small or zero benefit
	- = Dis-benefit	As +, but only negatively affecting wellbeing of <1000 people and/or only slightly affecting wellbeing
	-- = Significant dis-benefit	As ++, but negatively affecting >1000 people and/or regularly or frequently and/or significantly affecting wellbeing
	? = Gaps in evidence	Unknown

NB: Wellbeing primarily means human, but could also refer to other ecosystems benefits.

Secondly, the sketch mapping prior to the RAWES is very important as it defines the area that is being considered, but also the types of vegetation that are found within it. Although the IUCN practitioners guidance does not really say how the habitat types should be arrived at, it became clear during the training that it would improve standardisation and help the field team if at least the main habitat types were defined in advance of sketch mapping. We therefore included a breakout group exercise in Day 3 to review the Ramsar wetland sub-types and identify which were or might be present in the project site. It is recommended that the resulting list (Annex 2) be confirmed in the field and the final list included in the RVA handbook and used during the RVAs.

ANNEX 1: LIST OF TRAINEES AND AFFILIATIONS

The participants are listed in alphabetical order:

#	Name of Participant	Organisation
1	Aung Kyaw Kyaw	Myanmar Environment Institute
2	Ei Ei Chaw	Myanmar Environment Institute
3	Hein Htet Soe	Stockholm Environment Institute
4	Pyae Toe Aung	Myanmar Environment Institute
5	Shan Maw	Naga Social Network Org
6	Than Htway Lwin	Stockholm Environment Institute
7	Thida Nyein	Myanmar Environment Institute
8	Thura Min	Myanmar Environment Institute
9	U Lar Sai	Naga Social Network Org
10	Win Kyi (Dr)	Myanmar Environment Institute
11	Win Maung (Dr)	Myanmar Environment Institute
12	Ye Htut Aung	Myanmar Environment Institute

ANNEX 2: WETLAND TYPES IN THE UPPER CHINDWIN

The following is taken from the Ramsar Classification System for Wetland Type, which is provided on page 12 of the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS), 2009-2014 version, available from https://www.ramsar.org/document/blank-offline-ris-word-form-for-new-designations.

Ramsar Definitions for Inland Wetlands

CODE	DESCRIPTION	Present?
L	Permanent inland deltas	No
M	Permanent rivers/streams/creeks; includes waterfalls	Yes
N	Seasonal/intermittent/irregular rivers/streams/creeks	Yes
O	Permanent freshwater lakes (over 8 ha); includes large oxbow lakes	Possible
P	Seasonal/intermittent freshwater lakes (over 8 ha); includes floodplain lakes	Possible
Q	Permanent saline/brackish/alkaline lakes	No
R	Seasonal/intermittent saline/brackish/alkaline lakes and flats	No
Sp	Permanent saline/brackish/alkaline marshes/pools	No
Ss	Seasonal/intermittent saline/brackish/alkaline marshes/pools	No
Tp	Permanent freshwater marshes/pools; ponds (below 8 ha), marshes and swamps on inorganic soils; with emergent vegetation water-logged for at least most of the growing season	Yes?
Ts	Seasonal/intermittent freshwater marshes/pools on inorganic soils; includes sloughs, potholes, seasonally flooded meadows, sedge marshes	Yes?
U	Non-forested peatlands; includes shrub or open bogs, swamps, fens	No?
Va	Alpine wetlands; includes alpine meadows, temporary waters from snowmelt	No
Vt	Tundra wetlands; includes tundra pools, temporary waters from snowmelt	No
W	Shrub-dominated wetlands; shrub swamps, shrub-dominated freshwater marshes, shrub carr, alder thicket on inorganic soils	Yes?
Xf	Freshwater, tree-dominated wetlands; includes freshwater swamp forests, seasonally flooded forests, wooded swamps on inorganic soils	No?
Xp	Forested peatlands; peatswamp forests	No
Y	Freshwater springs; oases	No?
Zg	Geothermal wetlands	No
Zk(b)	Karst and other subterranean hydrological systems, inland	No?

Ramsar Definitions for Human-made Wetlands

CODE	DESCRIPTION	Present?
1	Aquaculture (e.g., fish/shrimp) ponds	No?
2	Ponds; includes farm ponds, stock ponds, small tanks; (generally below 8 ha)	Yes?
3	Irrigated land; includes irrigation channels and rice fields	Yes?
4	Seasonally flooded agricultural land (including intensively managed or grazed wet meadow or pasture)	Yes
5	Salt exploitation sites; salt pans, salines, etc.	No
6	Water storage areas; reservoirs/barrages/dams/impoundments (generally over 8 ha)	Yes
7	Excavations; gravel/brick/clay pits; borrow pits, mining pools.	No?
8	Wastewater treatment areas; sewage farms, settling ponds, oxidation basins, etc.	No?
9	Canals and drainage channels, ditches.	Yes?