



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**15<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2018**

## **Indawgyi Wetland Education Centre – a new learning experience at Indawgyi Lake Biosphere Reserve**

***Exploring biodiversity and cultural values of Indawgyi Lake and its surrounding landscape, the Indawgyi Wetland Education Centre is promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands***

15<sup>th</sup> December 2018 – Fauna & Flora International in collaboration with the Myanmar Forest Department and local stakeholders inaugurated a new visitor and learning centre at Indawgyi Lake Biosphere Reserve joining a global network of wetland education centres at ‘Ramsar sites’ under the UN wetland convention.

The centre was officially opened by Mrs. Katarina Spiess, Head of Development Cooperation, German Embassy, U H La Aung, Kachin State Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, and Dr U Nyi Nyi Kyaw, Director General of the Myanmar Forest Department in the presence of more than one 100 participants, including members of the Kachin state parliament, local government agencies, village leaders, and local civil society organisations.

According to Dr. U Nyi Nyi Kyaw, the Director General of the Forest Department, “the wetland education centre welcomes everybody, local communities as well as visitors, to learn about wetland conservation and sustainable development, promoting ecotourism and the wise use of wetlands in the Indawgyi Biosphere Region”.

Indawgyi Lake is a wetland surrounded by rice fields and a forested watershed. Unless agriculture and forests are managed sustainably, the lake ecosystem will suffer from run-off caused by erosion triggered by agricultural encroachment or unsustainable logging in the watershed. If farmers use excessive amounts of fertilizers and pesticides the lake becomes polluted and collapses.

According to Ngwe Lwin, FFI’s Indawgyi project manager, the education centre’s exhibition does not only show Indawgyi’s biodiversity and cultural values, but also addresses the threats, demonstrating solutions for local stakeholders to embrace sustainable development, such as organic rice farming, community forestry and agroforestry, community-based waste management and sanitation.

Frank Momberg, Fauna & Flora International, who has overseen the development of the Indawgyi wetland education centre, hopes that “the centre will provide a great learning environment for local people and visitors to get close to wetlands. It is our aspiration to give

people the information and knowledge necessary to make informed decisions about their local environments and help deliver wetland conservation and wise use”.

The centre features environmental architecture by U Aung Soe Myint, including a passive cooling system, furniture from recycled and rubber wood, and waste water treatment system designed by ‘Wetlands Work’.

The education centre adds a new attraction for tourists visiting Indawgyi Lake, featuring a beautiful exhibition and café veranda overlooking the lake, providing practical information to visitors to explore the Indawgyi biosphere reserve.

Inn Chit Thu, a local non-for-profit eco-tourism association, is offering kayaking, trekking and boat tours, as well as handicrafts and souvenirs made by local artisans.

Environmental education staff from FFI, the Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary and Inn Chit Thu will offer regular, interactive education programs at the centre for schools, university students, local stakeholder groups and visitors with a focus on wetland conservation and sustainable development. The centre welcomes visitors from Monday to Sunday from 8.00 – 18:00 throughout the year.

Fauna & Flora International is very grateful for the financial support by international partners for the development of Indawgyi Wetland Education Centre: the German Ministry for Development Cooperation (BMZ/ BENG0), Manfred Hermsen Foundation, Helmsley Charitable Trust, Bingo Environment Foundation of Lower Saxony and Chances for Nature Foundation.

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Deutsche Welle published a short film about development challenges and conservation at Indawgyi Lake: <http://dw.com/p/1HRWF> (6:52min). The film is funded through the International Climate Initiative of the German Environment Ministry. A Summary of the Indawgyi Biosphere Reserve is attached.