

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2007)

Project Ref. No.	17-001
Project Title	Conserving Eden: participatory forest management in the Tian-Shan region, Kyrgyzstan.
Country(ies)	Kyrgyz Republic
UK Organisation	Bournemouth University
Collaborator(s)	Fauna and Flora International Botanic Gardens Conservation International BioResources
Project Leader	Prof. Adrian Newton
Report date	October 31 st 2009
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR1
Project website	http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/cceec/conserving-eden/index.html

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

Progress is summarized below in relation to the relevant Milestones listed on the original proposal (which are italicised):

Project inception workshop with key partners and stakeholders. This was successfully held in July, 2009, at which all key partners were represented, including six Kyrgyz institutions and representatives of all the UK partners. A report of the workshop was produced, with an action plan for implementing the first phase of the project. In addition, formal MoUs have been developed between Bournemouth University (BU) and other partners involved in the project, which were ratified by the legal department of the University, and subsequently signed by each partner. The MoUs specify roles and responsibilities of all partners during the project.

Project website established. This has been completed on schedule. The URL is given above.

First exchange visit of Kyrgyz staff and students to UK partners. Although originally scheduled for the first six months of the project, this has been rescheduled to February – March 2010, in response to requests from the Kyrgyz partners (see next section, below).

Project management system and Steering Committee established. This was initiated at the project inception workshop in July 2009. Members of the Steering Committee were identified and formally invited, and initial discussions held. The project management structure has been developed and implemented, supported by regular telephone and email correspondence between partners.

Collaborative network established of stakeholders with an interest in fruit and nut forests. This was also achieved during the project inception workshop in July 2009, supported by additional visits by UK staff to Kyrgyzstan in June and September 2009. Twelve organisations have been identified for inclusion in the network.

First project Steering Committee meeting. The nature and function of the Steering Committee has diverged slightly from that envisaged in the original proposal. The project proposal indicates that meetings with the Steering Committee will be held regularly. Based on discussions held with project staff, it is clear that convening such meetings would be very challenging, as members of the Committee hold very senior positions and identifying suitable dates on which all members are available is likely to be very difficult. Therefore, it has been agreed that the Steering Committee be involved through electronic communication, supported by meetings with individual Committee members as appropriate.

Study sites identified and research programme initiated. This has been completed as planned. A detailed research plan has been developed, and implementation has begun. Following discussions held during July 2009, it is suggested that the research will comprise three components:

- A survey of the distribution and status of threatened fruit and nut tree species, throughout area of walnut-fruit forests in Kyrgyzstan.
- A socio-economic survey, focusing on how local people use the forest, the values derived from it, what impacts such activities have on it, and how these are monitored
- An assessment of forest structure and dynamics in selected study areas, including modelling of landscape ecology of forests, and impact of human activities on forest dynamics.

It is proposed that the socio-economic surveys will be undertaken in three study areas, where management plans are to be developed: Karalma, Kyzyl – Unkur and Sary Chelek. It is proposed that the assessment of forest structure and dynamics will be conducted only in Sary Chelek.

Training visit by UK staff to Kyrgyzstan, and in-country training course held. In response to a request made by Kyrgyz staff during the project planning meetings in July 2009, BU provided training on field methods during the fieldwork campaign undertaken in Sept / Oct 2009. Dr Niels Brouwers visited for three weeks at this time, for this purpose.

First season of field research completed Initial surveys undertaken with *Malus niedzwetzkyana* were completed in early 2009, and a second field campaign was successfully undertaken in September and October 2009.

Development of participatory approaches to forest management initiated involving partnership with local communities and other relevant partners. This has been completed; activities focused on the identification of the roles and contributions to be made by different partner organisations in the Kyrgyz Republic. This was supported by a visit by FFI staff (Birchenough) during June 2009, during which a programme of activities was developed. The programme is currently being implemented.

Development of sustainable management plans incorporating participatory approaches initiated Again, this was supported by a visit by FFI staff during June 2009, during which a programme of activities was developed. The programme is currently being implemented.

Development of interpretation facilities and educational materials initiated. This was assisted by a visit made by BGCI staff (Gratzfeld) during July 2009, during which a plan of action was developed. Development of educational materials has since been initiated.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

- The process of developing formal MoUs between partners took longer than anticipated, because of the problem of developing a legally robust accord to the satisfaction of all partners. This has now been completed, but was a necessary prelude to transferring money overseas. The first tranche of funding to the Kyrgyz partner has now successfully been made, although again, there were significant delays caused by the international banking system. This threatened to delay project activities in-country, but in the event, the impact on the project timetable has been minimal.
- An additional issue was the identification of an appropriate project partner, since one of the key counterpart staff changed his employer at the start of the year. The main official partner of the project is now BioResources (an NGO), although all Kyrgyz partners listed on the original proposal remain involved.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

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Yes, as detailed below.

On the 13th May, the following points were raised with LTSI, and subsequently agreed.

- It was pointed out that the main overseas contact, Dr Almaz Orozumbekov, who helped draft the project proposal, has changed his job since the project was awarded. He has moved from one organisation (Osh University, listed as the main partner on the proposal) to another (Innovation Technology Centre of Phytotechnology at National Academy of Science).
- We discussed with one of our UK partners (FFI) the best way of sending the money out to Kyrgyzstan. What they have recommended, based on previous experience, is that we send the money to a legally constituted NGO, called BioResources (who are also named as a partner on the project). This is actually hosted at the Innovation Technology Centre of Phytotechnology at National Academy of Science (NAS), and is led by the main individual named on the project proposal, Dr Almaz Orozumbekov.
- It was proposed, and accepted, that while the partner organisations will remain the same as on the original proposal, the lead partner will be BioResources, with whom BU subsequently signed a formal MoU, and to whom funds were transferred.

All of the following points were raised on 27/7/09, and were subsequently agreed by the Secretariat.

1. The project proposal indicates that meetings with the Steering Committee will be held regularly. Based on discussions held with project staff, it is clear that convening such meetings would be very challenging, as members of the Committee hold very senior positions and identifying suitable dates on which all members are available is likely to be very difficult. Therefore, it is suggested that the Steering Committee be involved through electronic communication, supported by meetings with individual Committee members as appropriate.

2. The project proposal states that two visitors will come to the UK during the first year of the project. Following discussion, it is proposed that Drs Almaz Orozumbekov (AO) and Kayirkul Shalbukov (KS) (of BioResources) will visit the UK during February / March 2010. This is some months later than was planned on the proposal; the shift in timing was requested by the partners so that they can accommodate their other commitments. Also, it is proposed that the duration of the visit will be two weeks rather than three; it is proposed to lengthen the duration of the training to be offered in-country this year in order to compensate.

3. Kyrgyz staff have requested that some field equipment be purchased and sent to Kyrgyzstan later in 2009. This was not explicitly itemised in the original budget. The items would not be classified as capital items according to Bournemouth University procurement policy, as they are all small-value items (ie each < £1000 in value). The items are standard field equipment (tape measures, compasses, tree measuring equipment), with the total value of these items being less than £2000. It is proposed that some of the budget assigned to 'fieldwork travel and subsistence' on the original proposal be transferred to cover this expenditure. The items will be purchased in the UK, then shipped to Kyrgyzstan.

4. We would like to expand the team working on the project in Bournemouth University, to include Dr Niels Brouwers, Dr Ross Hill and Dr Sarah North. These individuals were not listed on the original proposal, but have skills that are very much relevant to the project activities.

5. The proposal refers to the identification of training needs by conducting a needs survey. We have initiated this process, but we have learned already that some of this can be achieved most effectively through face-to-face meetings with individuals, rather than necessarily through a formal questionnaire process as indicated on the proposal. We therefore requested that we implement this activity somewhat more flexibly, and perhaps less formally, than originally envisaged.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat:	Yes, in May and July 2009
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Changes to the project schedule/workplan:	No major amendments required; minor amendments as detailed above.
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2. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

No.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form email** to Eilidh Young, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme at Darwin-Projects@ectf-ed.org.uk. The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 14-075 Darwin Half Year Report**