



Darwin Initiative Main Project Half Year Report (due 31 October 2015)

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| Project Ref No | 20-022 |
| Project Title | Enhancing habitat connectivity through sustainable development around the Gola Rainforest |
| Country(ies) | Sierra Leone |
| Lead Organisation | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) |
| Collaborator(s) | Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP), Welt Hunger Hilfe (WHH), Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), Forestry Division, Cambridge University Department of Land Economy and Rainforest Alliance. |
| Project Leader | <i>Nicolas Tubbs</i> |
| Report date and number (e.g., HYR3) | <i>October 2015, HYR3</i> |
| Project website/Twitter/Blog/Instagram etc | www.golarainforest.org |
| Funder (DFID/Defra) | <i>DFID</i> |

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) 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 to end September).

Due to the pause in funding with the no-cost extension granted related to Ebola data analysis has only recently been returned to..

For the 2015 field season, during the cocoa harvest, work is underway to assess cocoa losses to mammal species in a selection of previously mapped active cocoa patches in the leakage belt in Nomo and Malema Chiefdoms varying in size and distance to GRNP. This involves quadrats on a 50m grid system within plantations where cocoa trees are marked, cocoa pods counted alongside any damage by animals, identified if possible from signs, and whether pods are rotten, as an indicator of disease impact. These trees will be visited at regular intervals and an estimate of proportion lost through wildlife damage and disease will be obtained related to plantation size, distance to forest and type of adjacent habitat. This will show the extent of the problem and indicate where mitigation efforts should be concentrated most effectively. In addition signs of pod damage and animal activity on the ground are noted and further camera traps deployed to obtain evidence of the use of plantation by potential crop raiding species.

An activity survey was developed to monitor the impact of GRNP's livelihood activities which includes dedicated sections on cocoa and crop raiding. A random selection of FEC farmers will be interviewed shortly. This survey can be provided upon request.

An extensive review of all available publications relating to crop raiding worldwide, especially in the context of cocoa, is in progress. This not only focuses on peer-reviewed publications but also on grey literature. Over 190 documents were identified, though only 10 specifically focused on cocoa and none of these had the combination desired of detailed estimates of proportionate yield loss due to specific crop-raiding species and associated assessments of mitigation method efficacy. We therefore decided to contact a selected number of experts to seek their advice and input to ensure our review was thorough and ensures we eventually pilot the most relevant and effective mitigation measures. The review has identified over 60 mitigation

methods across different crops either in use or suggested as potentially effective and this provides a wealth of material in order to learn from experience of best practice in other farming systems across the world.

The Gola Rainforest National Park has managed to complete its legal registration as a non-profit company limited by guarantee, the Gola Rainforest Conservation LG. This entity will therefore be the one responsible for the ownership, marketing and sale of carbon credits for the Gola REDD Project, which is so intrinsically linked to this project.

A poster on the ongoing bird indices work was presented at the ICCB 2015 conference in Montpellier, France, in August 2015 resulting in good levels of interest in the work from fellow plantation researchers, raising the profile of the project and of the Darwin Initiative. The opportunity was taken to meet with several international researchers in similar fields, particularly regarding crop raiding.

Analyses of the power of bird community indices to detect differences between habitats and to detect changes in bird communities, particularly in active cocoa, over time, are ongoing. Preliminary work suggests little difference currently in bird communities between non-forest habitats outside GRNP. Simple indices of change such as Buckland's geometric index of occurrence, or weighting species by their dependence on forest and susceptibility to climate change, are able to detect simulated changes in bird communities in active cocoa of an overall decline in forest species and concurrent increase in non-forest species with 95% confidence in <10 years. Work to refine these indices so that changes can be detected earlier, and to assess their power to detect other changes of conservation concern, is ongoing.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt 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.

Please note that the cocoa harvesting season begins in late September and hence field activities have only just now resumed in full since the Ebola outbreak. Also, Sierra Leone is currently half way through the required period to then be declared Ebola free.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: Yes/No

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g., more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year? No

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully as it is unlikely that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year. Please remember

that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project and would like to talk to someone about the options available this year, please indicate below when you think you might be in a position to do this and what the reasons might be:

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

The RSPB, in partnership with TWIN, the Gola Rainforest Conservation LG and the Rainforest Alliance have been awarded a grant from Comic Relief to develop the value chain for a Gola Cocoa brand, from the farm gates to export. This project will start in the next coming weeks and would not have been awarded had it not been for the outputs delivered by this specific project.

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 can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g., Subject: 20-035 Darwin Half Year Report**