



## Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2014)

**Project Ref No: 21-009**

**Project Title: Biodiversity conservation through poverty alleviation: enabling sustainable forestry in Belize**

**Country(ies): Belize**

**Lead Organisation: Oxford University**

**Collaborator(s): Belize Forest Department, University of Belize - Environmental Research Institute**

**Project Leader: Prof. Yadvinder Malhi**

**Report date and number (eg HYR3): HYR1**

**Project website: not yet available**

### **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).**

The "Biodiversity conservation through poverty alleviation: enabling sustainable forestry in Belize" Project, 'SusFor' for short, officially commenced on June 1, 2014. Despite the approved delay in the start of the project, all of the scheduled activities for the first two quarters (indicated by an \*) were undertaken to some degree. Because the project finances were also delayed, these activities were supported by in-kind funds indicated in the project application.

With regards to Mahogany (*S. macrophylla*), a draft growth and yield model\* was developed for the Forest Department and the accompanying spreadsheet tool\* was also provided. Training\* was done for Forest Department staff (the CITES Management Authority [MA] of Belize), the CITES Scientific Authority (SA), and for the logging concessionaires who will use the model and tool to propose sustainable harvesting limits for their operations. A draft national guideline\* for making non-detrimental findings with respect to Mahogany was prepared and presented to the CITES MA and SA, and field validation of the guidelines were carried out for all operations currently harvesting Mahogany. The guidelines dubbed Quota Setting and Tracking System (QSETS) for Mahogany in Belize, was used by the CITES MA and SA to assess and approve the national quota for Mahogany exports for Belize for the year 2014. A pilot field study of Mahogany lumber conversion efficiency and grading to support QSETS was carried out at one sawmill, and was successful at producing more accurate conversion and grading ratios. Training\* was provided for the logging company as well as the CITES SA and MA staff involved in the pilot study, with the intention that additional studies will be carried out at each sawmill producing Mahogany lumber for export.

Revised Mahogany stock survey methods were also drafted for the Forest Department and issued to logging companies to use during data collection in preparation for the 2015 harvest. The improved methods aim to assess the full regenerative capacity of the species under logging regimes, and preliminary analysis have indicated already that Mahogany does not recruit under an intact forest canopy, even with gaps created by logging disturbance.

With regards to Rosewood (*D. stevensonii*), a population survey\* was carried out and completed for all forested areas known or suspected to be habitat for the species, both inside and outside of Protected Areas. This included a total forest area of over 1,200 km<sup>2</sup> sampled using 248 plots each 0.5 hectare. This is the first population assessment of Rosewood anywhere in its natural range, and forms a complete population assessment of the species

within the territory of Belize. For the assessment, forest inventory training\* was imparted to 16 members of indigenous communities who otherwise did not have any previous training or any steady jobs, but who live in and around the forests which are habitat for Rosewood. These individuals developed the capacity to work unsupervised in the field carrying out measurements on trees in the sample plots and recording data with a high degree of accuracy. After completing the population assessment, they were offered jobs working with other entities doing similar types of surveys. As part of this assessment, three permanent sample plots (PSPs) were established by the same teams to support the collection of long-term growth data on both Rosewood and Mahogany. The results of the population assessment were used to craft recommendations to the Executive branch of the Belizean government with respect to the prospects for continued management and trade in Rosewood. One of the recommendations included the need for the development of a national CITES quota system for the species.

Regarding the development of capacity for sustainable forestry at the community level, a meeting\* was held with members of an indigenous community called Sundaywood who are desirous of building capacity for sustainable forestry and to embark upon community forest management of their Rosewood-rich forests. Training in survey techniques and forest management principles will commence shortly for this community group, as will technical advice for the development of a forest management plan and annual plan of operations. This community does not currently have a forest management plan and its members do not engage in forest management.

Three activities earmarked in the timetable for the first two quarters are to commence shortly. These activities are scheduled to occur throughout the life of the project so a delay in the start will not impact their success. Plans are being drafted up for the setting up of a committee\* consisting of individuals representing scientific, technical and regulatory forestry capacities with the objective of improving the sharing of knowledge and data toward the development of greater and sustained forestry research to support improved management of CITES-listed timber species.

The restoration\* of existing permanent sample plots are planned for the upcoming quarter as are intensive measurements\* on PSPs to support the collection of growth and mortality data to parameterize yield models.

**2a. 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 named project manager (Oxford Post-Doc) and Belizean national has not yet taken up appointment under the project due to a delay in the work visa process. However, the visa application has now been successfully submitted and is expected to be approved shortly, at which time the appointment can commence, in the last quarter of 2014. This has resulted in an underspend with respect to the salary of the individual.

Also, the position of Forest Biologist under the project has not yet been filled due to a delay in the administrative process of the partner organization doing the hiring. This is expected to proceed in the upcoming quarter.

Both delays in project personnel hirings will have budget impacts in the form of underspending on salaries. The scheduling of other activities can be made up once both individuals are in the paid service of the project in the upcoming quarter.

**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: No

Formal change request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes/No

**3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?**

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: £16,000

**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:

The underspend is simply due to the delays in the hiring of project personnel. These funds can be carried over to continue the work of the project beyond the conclusion of the last financial year. This can be worked out in the contracts issued to the individuals through advances on salaries, and so will not necessarily incur the need for budget change or actual carry-over requests.

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

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](mailto: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 eg Subject: 20-035 Darwin Half Year Report**