



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

<b>Project Ref No</b>	21-020
<b>Project Title</b>	Eels – A flagship species for freshwater conservation in the Philippines.
<b>Country(ies)</b>	Philippines
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Zoological Society of London
<b>Collaborator(s)</b>	TRAFFIC, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Biodiversity Monitoring Bureau (BMB)
<b>Project Leader</b>	Matthew Gollock
<b>Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)</b>	HYR2
<b>Project website/Twitter/Blog /Instagram etc</b>	<a href="http://www.zsl.org/conservation/regions/asia/freshwater-eel-conservation-in-the-philippines">http://www.zsl.org/conservation/regions/asia/freshwater-eel-conservation-in-the-philippines</a>
<b>Funder (DFID/Defra)</b>	DFID

### 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).

- **Output 1**

ZSL have quickly become a key go-to organisation for science and conservation relating to eels in the Philippines and have attended a number of policy-related meetings and workshops at the local and national level in the past 6 months (1.2 and 1.3 – these are on-going activities). For example, BFAR have recently begun the process of a Value Chain Analysis for anguillid eels in order to improve traceability in the chain of custody and attempt to reduce illegal export. A workshop was held in September during which ZSL and TRAFFIC staff showcased their work to date and advised on eel biology and trade. This work will link to BFAR's National Eel Roadmap that is being developed and ZSL staff are engaging regularly on this during its development. TRAFFIC provided an update on the eel trade situation involving the Philippines following the same methodology as used for the 'Slipping away' report, one year on. Enforcement priorities were identified and will be used to plan the proposed training. Further, TRAFFIC continues to liaise with authorities in source countries, such as Japan; for example, the situation in the Philippines was presented to the Japan Fisheries Agency at a meeting on 28th September, encouraging support/action.

Enforcement training (1.4) was scheduled to begin in Y2Q2, we are presently working to develop the schedule of training and this is likely to be implemented in Y2Q4. This training, led by TRAFFIC staff, will focus on Customs, coastguard, quarantine and BFAR staff engaged in monitoring and control of trade in eels, with a view to improve with capacity to reduce illegal eel exports via air and sea. Training of communities will focus on managing inland freshwater resources (see output 4), as under the current legislative framework they have no remit to enforce illegal fishing and trade.

**We are engaging with the BFAR CITES representative (1.5 – on-going activity) to keep him appraised of the project, but as of writing, none of the species of eels in the Philippines were being proposed for listing at CoP17 next year, and as such illegal shipments of the European eel to East Asia remain the primary CITES concern.**

- **Output 2**

There has been continued engagement with Local Government Units (LGUs) and BFAR at a regional and national level regarding the development of eel management options (2.1 – on-going activity). The eel fisheries and market surveys, in concert with information gathered as part of the socio-economic survey, are indicating that due to a shift in the composition of the eel catch away from *Anguilla bicolor*, the species preferred by the East Asian market, there is

significantly less eel fishing in Cagayan than there was three years ago. Communications with colleagues at BFAR indicate that fisheries in Mindanao are far more active. As such, we are proposing to adapt the management plan (2.2) to also include national guidelines on eel fisheries' management – a move that has been welcomed by BFAR. We expect this amended document to be produced in Y3Q1, not Y2Q3. As part of the habitat surveys carried out in Output 3, we have identified a number of key sites for general biodiversity monitoring, and one of the metrics will be fisheries independent eel monitoring (2.3). Training in biodiversity monitoring will be carried out with community-lead surveys being initiated in Y2Q4 – this was initially planned for Y1Q2 but delays in the project initiation were described in previous reports.

- **Output 3**

In the past six months, the socio-economic survey (3.1) was expanded beyond Aparri where the first stage had been focussed and upon completion of the survey, 12 municipalities consisting of 61 barangays and 2,575 fisherfolks have been engaged. This activity was completed according to the revised workplan. At present data is being analysed (including income 3.2 – on-going activity), follow-up barangay focus groups engaged and a report beginning to be drafted. We expect this to be completed by Y2Q4. Existing Fisherfolk Associations (FFAs) / People's Organisations (POs) have been engaged during the survey activities and seven key groups have been identified for further training and capacity building (3.3 and 3.4). This will begin in the next six weeks with capacity training from a local trainer, and continue to include fisheries management training in Y2Q4, and possibly the implementation of community banking schemes in Y3. Again, this was initially planned for Y1Q2 and Q3 respectively but delays in the project initiation meant these activities were postponed. We expect fisheries-dependent monitoring from the strengthened FFAs (3.5 and 3.6) to begin in Y3Q1, however, as previously stated, the eel fishery in this region is not large at present and we will be encouraging data from other species to be submitted to LGUs and BFAR. These activities have also been delayed from starting Y1Q4 / Y2Q1 respectively.

- **Output 4**

A habitat assessment training workshop was conducted and attended by 45 participants from various stakeholders including BFAR, DENR and LGUs in Cagayan. This led to habitat surveys and eel visual census being carried out at 22 sites consisting of 209 sampling stations in seven municipalities and three provinces in the Cagayan River basin (4.1). These sites were identified through engagement with LGUs as to where eels had historically been sighted and/or fished. The final survey of the Cagayan River main channel is being planned and report drafting begun – we expect it to be finalised in Y2Q4, slight behind schedule (Y2Q3). Element of this data will be submitted to BMB for inclusion in their Cagayan River Basin Management Plan. A threat analysis was carried out as part of the survey and this will guide stakeholder engagement and the mitigation plan (4.2 and 4.3) – we expect this to begin in Y2Q4, which is delayed from Y1Q3 / Y2Q1 respectively. Also part of the survey was identification of twelve key biodiversity monitoring sites – hereafter known as freshwater sanctuaries – and it is here that communities, once trained as river wardens, will carry out basic survey methods (4.4; including eel monitoring, 2.3) using a standardised methodology developed by BMB. This is expected to commence in Y2Q4, slightly behind schedule (Y2Q3).

- **Output 5**

We are continuing to work with local fishers to stock the farm (5.1 – on-going activity). The pilot farming project has experienced high mortality due to issues beyond our control such-as high temperatures and poor groundwater quality on-site – tilapia cultured by BFAR also died during this period. As such, our ability to optimise growth conditions have been limited (5.2 – on-going activity). We are exploring other sites - including a Cagayan State University - that might allow better control of these conditions, but as such, have not carried out any community visits due to these challenges (5.3). We have carried out a number of courtesy visits to eel farms in the Philippines and engage with the national trader's organisation (IGAT) regularly. This has highlighted that many of the commercial enterprises are experiencing similar problems. At present, we are concentrating on feed formulation from various local and sustainable sources.

**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.**

The late recruitment of the full project staff – and subsequent resignation our administrator in June who has now been replaced – has meant that many activities were delayed. However, these have been discussed with LTS and a change request, including a three month extension to the project, submitted and approved.

The socio-economic, habitat and fisheries surveys have taken longer than expected. The biological surveys have gone well, but we are following up with selected community visits to clarify some of the socio-economic data – this has been prioritised but we are conscious that this may have an effect on the timing of activities in Output 3.

As stated previously, it has become clear that ZSL has been identified as an expert organisation for eel-related activities in the Philippines. This is testament to the team's hard-work and engagement at all levels. However, it does mean that expectations are high amongst stakeholders and managing these expectations is challenging.

It has also become clear in the past year that there is often lack of coordination and communication amongst stakeholders e.g. LGU's, BFAR, DENR / BMB, Bureau of Customs and Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, all of whom play a part in eel management and trade. Our TWG meetings bring many of these stakeholders together, however we are encouraging these stakeholders to communicate outside of these as they are essential for species and habitat management to be successful. We are hopeful that our planned training (1.4) will help to nurture these communications.

**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?**

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: £0

**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.**

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

After a recent visit by the project leader to the Philippines we are reviewing the project expenditure, logframe and timetable, and expect to submit amendments as part of a change request before the end of the year.

**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 e.g., Subject: 20-035 Darwin Half Year Report**