

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

Project Ref No	22-009 /2580
Project Title	Securing Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve's grasslands and wellbeing of local communities
Country(ies)	Nepal
Lead Organisation	Zoological Society of London
Collaborator(s)	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation National Trust for Nature Conservation Himalayan Nature
Project Leader	Hem Sagar Baral
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	HYR1 (1 April - 30 September 2015)
Project website/Twitter/Blog /Instagram etc	
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).

Meetings were held at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) to share the project activities, intended outputs, roles and responsibility of partners involved, timeframe for each activities and approved budget. Permission for the implementation of the project activities in Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve (SWR) has been approved by the DNPWC. A Project Coordination Committee (PCC) was formed under the lead of Deputy Director General of DNPWC with members from NTNC, HN and ZSL. Similarly, at the site, Project Management Unit (PMU) has been formed under the lead of Chief Conservation Officer of SWR. Chairman of Buffer Zone Management Committee, Site manager of NTNC and ZSL's field Officer are member of the PMU. PMU will make decision regarding the implementation of the project activities. Any changes to the project activities identified by the PMU will be submitted to PCC before implementation. PCC will then seek approval from the Darwin Initiative for such changes in the project activities. Project office has been setup within the premise of SWR and project staff hired. Vacancy was advertised in the national daily for the post of Field Officer and Finance and Admin Assistant. Mr Suraj Baral and Mr Sandip Maharjan has been hired as Field Officer and Finance and Admin Assistant respectively. Similarly, Dr Rebat Man Shrestha has been hired as livestock specialist for the project.

Progress against agreed milestones for the 1st half year:

- 1) Hold community meetings to discuss clinic set up, benefits and needs:**

Community meetings were held in lead of SWR to discuss the veterinary clinic setup. The meeting agreed to refurbish the existing veterinary clinics in (2 sites proposed—1 Jhalari and Pipaldi (combined) another at Badaipur with new building and equipment to improve the service. A team consisting of Chief Conservation Officer-SWR, Site manager-NTNC, Buffer Zone Management chair, project's livestock Consultant, ZSL's staff and field coordinator visited the site and held a local level consultation regarding the need to expand the existing vet centre at the

proposed site.

2) Conduct survey on current levels and use of veterinary services and assessment of current livestock holdings in the 4 VDCs adjacent to SWR and identify potential farmers interested in adopting an improved cow(s), using FPIC:

Household surveys have been completed to assess the level and use of veterinary services, livestock holdings and means of livelihood and the economic status of the households in eastern Jhalari-Pipladi metropolis of the SWR. The surveys were delayed following the major earthquake that struck Nepal at the end of April. Data gathered from the surveys is currently being analysed by project staff. The results from these surveys will be used in selection of the households for livelihood support from the project.

3) Choose and agree the location to ensure maximum benefit with DNPWC and VDCs:

A preliminary visit to proposed site for vet clinic setup was conducted. A team consisting of representative from DNPWC, Chief Conservation Officer-SWR, Site manager (or Project Partner's Focal Person from NTNC, Buffer Zone Management Committee chair, project's livestock Consultant, ZSL's staff and Field Officer visited the site and also held a local level consultation at District Livestock Service Office, Kanchanpur regarding the need to expand the existing vet centre at the proposed site as well as familiarizing the projects activities. Baseline number of cases registered at the proposed centre are :

Vet. Centre	Cow	Buffalo	Goat	Total
Badaipur-13, Bhimdutta Municipality	10552	6318	7844	24714
Pipladi-4, Jhalari-Pipladi Municipality	9531	2901	4653	17085
Jhalari-10, Jhalari-Pipladi Municipality	6313	2398	12015	20726
	26396	11617	24512	62525

4) Identify areas for nurseries and/or existing nurseries to strengthen and plant fodder species

A few nurseries have been identified in the proposed sites. These nurseries are managed by communities with sufficient support from the District Forest Office. In meetings with the SWR, Buffer Zone Management Unit and NTNC, it was agreed to support larger nursery maintained by NTNC. NTNC has been providing seedlings to buffer zone community through various programmes. In this manner, the project leverages existing mechanisms to get better value for our investment in improving the existing nursery and supporting an increased number of households than anticipated in our proposal. To promote fodder plantations on private land 1,778 fodder seedlings of Tanki (*Bauhinia purpurea*), Badahar (*Artocarpus lakoocha*), Bakaino (*Melia azedarach*) Gliricidia (*Gliricidia sepium*) Epil (*Leucaena leucocephala*) were grown and supplied to 90 households of buffer zone area.

Activities conducted but not proposed in the project

Milestones not yet achieved

1) Familiarisation visit for interested farmers to area where improved cattle farming is in place:

Because of the massive earthquake and regular aftershocks followed by political turmoil as a result of region wide strikes and riots, this activity has been postponed. Several incidents of local rioting and curfews have meant that ZSL's Health and

Safety Guidelines dictated that travelling in such condition was deemed too risky for project staff and the participants. The activity will be completed as soon as the situation stabilises in the region and we anticipate that this activity will be completed during the course of the first year of the project.

5) Meeting with DNPWC with relevant stakeholders to discuss grassland management plan as per the SWR management plan. Set up core committee to draft management guidelines and lead activities and discussion on data sharing protocol and Implement grassland management awareness and teaching programme in the 4 VDCs.

A preliminary meeting was held in April to discuss on preparing grassland management guideline, species monitoring and data sharing protocols among the stakeholders. Follow-up meetings could not be held due to the earthquake and repeated aftershocks. Awareness programmes could not be carried out due to continued strikes and protests in the project area. There are plans to complete this activity within the first year of the project.

In summary, this project has made significant progress despite the initial setback on account of the devastating earthquake and continuing backdrop of political uncertainties at the beginning of the project. Project staff, equipment and vehicles are in place and a good working relationship has already been established between ZSL and its partners.

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.

An earthquake of 7.9 magnitude hit Nepal on April 25, 2015. This was followed by hundreds of aftershock which are still occurring. This had a significant impact on the timetable of the project. There was a delay in national level engagement with government institutions in the first month of the project impacting our project implementation workplan as most of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Reserve (DNPWC) staff were engaged in the assessment of damage, rescue and relief work in earthquake affected protected areas.

Nepal has been in the process of adopting a new constitution as well as a federal form of government . The release of the draft constitution resulted in a series of strikes and riots all across the lowlands which affected the implementation of the project activities.

Due to above reasons the project suffered delays in the implementation of most activities for this reporting period. However, the project team has made commendable efforts in collaboration with our partners to ensure that most activities are on schedule and that the project will achieve the outputs for the first year as planned.

The project has come at a critical time for SWR in the wake of the natural disasters and political turmoil. People in the buffer zone are sending more livestock inside the park for grazing and often disowning the livestock. These stray livestock are mostly diseased. The veterinary services provided through this project will be critical to the livestock of the buffer zone inhabitants some of which have no second means of living. This project also aims to check livestock disease transmission to wild stock at SWR.

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: £

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:

Not applicable

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

None

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/work plan 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**