



Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31 October 2016)

Project Ref No: 23-031

Project: Science-based interventions reversing negative impacts of invasive plants in Nepal

Country(ies)/Territory(ies): Nepal

Lead Organisation: Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, 20a Inverleith Row, EH3 5LR

Partner(s): Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST); Department of Plant Resources, MoFSC; Central Dept. of Botany, Tribhuvan University (CDB-TU), HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, Nepal.

Project Leader: Dr Mark F Watson

Report date and number (e.g., HYR3): 28 Oct 2016

Project website/ Twitter/ Blog/ Instagram etc: https://twitter.com/Darwin_Nepal/
<https://www.facebook.com/Darwin.Nepal/>

Funder (DFID/Defra): DEFRA

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).

Project start date: 1 June 2016

Output 1: Invasive plants controlled and degraded lands restored

1.1: Hold planning and stakeholder workshops, taking a participatory approach to providing training, enhancing the knowledge of local communities and raising awareness on the identification, impact, control and management of invasive plants.

The planning meeting was held on 22 June 2016 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The meeting was attended by 19 key persons from partner institutions. The main agenda was to: finalize the target districts, recruit the project officers, project management, coordination and communication. The three districts were finalized as Kailali (Far West), Nawalparasi (West), and Makwanpur (Central). The group decided to use BaseCamp software to manage, communicate and store documents.

Output 2: Weed species evaluated and communicated

2.1: Research, evaluate and publish inventories of the district-level weed flora in the study areas with fieldwork, sample collection and identification, enhancing reference collections, and training and capacity building of MSc students.

Three M.Sc students from CDB-TU, Rashmi Pandey (female), Bhawani Neupane (female) and Ganesh D Joshi (male) have been selected among 11 applicants for the Darwin Initiative funded MSc thesis on weed flora in three target districts. They started their first field work at the beginning of October.

Project based monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M& E) workshop was organised in Kathmandu in September (based on DI workshop for new projects held in April 2016) to develop M & E plan for the project. The key project personnel from partner organization NAST, TU, and ForestAction (implementing partner) were involved on developing M & E plan.

A project management committee (PMC) has been formed at CDB-TU as per the university rules to monitor the activities assigned to CDB-TU. The committee members are: Prof. Mohan Siwakoti, Chairman; Prof. Mohan Panthi, member; Prof. Sangeeta Rajbhandary, member; Prof. Ram K Yadav, member; Dr. Bharat B Shrestha, member secretary.

Similar PMC has been formed at NAST to oversee overall activities of the project. The members are: Prof Jiba Raj Pokheral (Vice Chancellor NAST), Dr. Buddhi R Khadgi, Ms Jaishree Sijapati, Dr. Suresh K Dhungel, Ms Nisha Rana, Dr. Ravindra Dhakal and Dr. Shandesh Bhattarai.

Head of Department at CDB-TU, Prof Pramod Kumar Jha, and Chief of Faculty of Science at NAST Dr Kanti Shrestha are retired from their positions. The new heads, Prof. Mohan Siwakoti at CDB-TU and Jaishree Sijapati at NAST, replace them as PIs for the project.

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 recruitment of project officer is taking longer than expected because of Partners institution's rules, festival time, and unexpected delays with fund transfer from the UK to Nepal. This is not expected to make major changes to activities within this financial year.

The fall in the pound after the Brexit vote is having big impact on the budget. We are still working out the full impact of this on the project but the effects will not having fully known until after the project officers are recruited.

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. 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 please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

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 . 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: 22-035 Darwin Half Year Report**