



**Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects  
Half Year Report  
(due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021)**

<b>Project reference</b>	24-001
<b>Project title</b>	Improving Forest Governance for Cross River Gorillas and Nigerian Farmers
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Nigeria
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Wildlife Conservation Society
<b>Partner(s)</b>	1) Conservation Association of Mbe Mountains; 2) Cross River State Ministry of Climate Change and Forestry; 3) Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN); 4) Boki Local Government Area
<b>Project leader</b>	Inaoyom Imong
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR4
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	Website: <a href="https://nigeria.wcs.org/">https://nigeria.wcs.org/</a> Facebook: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/CRgorilla/">https://www.facebook.com/CRgorilla/</a> Twitter: <a href="https://twitter.com/WCS_Nigeria">https://twitter.com/WCS_Nigeria</a>

**1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).**

### **Output 1. Local farmers have been trained to increase efficiency of existing cocoa farms**

To ensure that farmers who have been trained by the project are applying best cocoa farming practices, WCS staff made regular monitoring visits to their farms to observe progress and interact directly with the farmers. A total of 184 farms were visited during this reporting period. Based on the observations made during these monitoring visits and feedback received from the farmers, WCS successfully provided targeted refresher training for those farmers requiring further training in areas such as spacing and pruning to reduce pest and disease incidence and reduce the need for harmful chemical pesticides, shade management, soil fertility management, and phased replacement of old cocoa trees with the improved seedlings provided. In addition to training, 25,950 improved cocoa seedlings were distributed to 179 farmers. Farm supplies including 108 wheelbarrows, 108 tarpaulins and 180 rain boots were distributed to farmers who had not previously received them to assist with farm and cocoa beans processing operations.

### **Output 2. Local women's groups and young men trained in improved bush mango collection, processing, storage and marketing**

WCS continued to mentor and build the capacity of bush mango women's groups (cooperatives) in the local communities, providing refresher training in sustainable harvesting, processing, storage, marketing, record keeping and financial management as needed, based on feedback from the groups. During this reporting period, WCS assisted the cooperatives to monitor bush mango prices at major markets to determine the best time to sell to maximize profit. The groups were also supported with wheelbarrows and tarpaulins to transport and dry their produce.

### **Output 3. Protection of the Mbe Mountains is enhanced and community land tenure secured through legal recognition of 127km<sup>2</sup> as a "Community Managed Wildlife Sanctuary"**

This reporting period we completed the survey of the Mbe Mountains conservation area, establishing a readily discernable and recoverable boundary with government approved boundary beacons and identification numbers placed along the boundary. The survey was conducted by Areamaps Survey Coy, a registered survey service provider, who have also produced a registrable map for CAMM in accordance with the current survey regulations in Nigeria. The process to register the map with the Cross River State government is ongoing. With the registration of the map, CAMM will be issued lodgment and chatting certificates which are prerequisites for obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy that will grant CAMM the legal title to the land within the conservation area. While the process to legally gazette the Mbe Mountains as a community wildlife sanctuary has suffered many delays caused by government bureaucracy and Covid-19, some key steps have been achieved including securing the Mbe communities' full support for the gazettelement and management of the Mbe forest for conservation, carrying out physical demarcation and mapping of the conservation area, and producing a registrable map. We have engaged Areamaps Survey Coy to register the map with the Cross River State government and obtain a chatting certificate and a certificate of lodgment for CAMM while we continue to work with CAMM and the Cross River State Forestry Commission towards the announcement of official endorsement of the Mbe Mountains as a community wildlife sanctuary. The project also supported quarterly meetings of CAMM to discuss issues affecting the conservation of the Mbe Mountains including the gazettelement process. Reported cases of illegal activities were discussed at these meetings and offenders sanctioned.

### **Output 4. The effectiveness of law enforcement interventions of WCS and local communities is improved for Mbe Mountains ecosystem**

Using SMART, we continued to monitor patrol effort (measured as kilometers walked and number of patrol days completed), as well as hunting pressure (measured as encounter rate of signs such as wire snares, hunting camps, and empty shotgun shells discarded by hunters). During this reporting period, WCS supported 41 long distance foot patrols of the Mbe

Mountains by 16 Mbe eco-guards covering a total distance of 1,887 km. New patrols were planned using information from previous patrols and intelligence gathered from surrounding communities, adapting patrol strategy as necessary to improve effectiveness. Two offenders were apprehended and reported to CAMM for sanctions. They were fined by CAMM. The eco-guards also discovered and removed 289 wire snares and dismantled one hunting camp (Table 1). WCS provided refresher training for the Mbe eco-guards in the field each month during patrols, including training in the use of SMART for law enforcement data collection.

**Table 1. Hunting signs recorded for the period 1 April to 30 September 2020.**

Sign	# of Observations	Encounter Rate/km
Gunshots heard	22	0.012
Wire snares	289	0.153
Empty cartridges	168	0.089
Hunting camps	1	0.001

**2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for COVID-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

While CAMM remains a critical partner on this project, facilitating engagement with the nine Mbe communities and ensuring their buy-in and support, occasional internal conflict (e.g., over the benefit sharing formula) within the association sometimes presents a challenge to implementation of project activities. Such disagreement during this reporting period delayed the survey and mapping of the Mbe Mountains conservation area, as the survey team was denied access to a short section of the boundary by two aggrieved communities. However, working with CAMM, we were able to resolve the conflict, ensuring that the survey was successfully completed and a survey map produced which will be registered with the Cross River State Government as part of the gazettelement process. Maintaining a close working relationship with the Mbe communities through CAMM over many years and building trust with the communities has been critical to the success of conservation efforts at the site.

**2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of COVID-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

The Covid-19 global pandemic affected our ability to implement some project activities especially those involving group meetings, consequently delaying progress towards the respective outputs. In particular, Covid-19 reduced our ability to work with farmers and women's groups on improving cocoa and bush mango productivity and marketing, as well as with CAMM and the Cross River State Government on the gazettement process. We followed strict COVID-19 protocols in the implementation of all project activities to ensure the safety of project staff and beneficiaries throughout this period.

**2c. 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 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. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.**

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

N/A

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 DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report** by email to [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: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**