

Darwin Initiative
24-003 Conservation and poverty alleviation through scalable agro-biodiversity practice in Laos
Half Year Report
(1 April – 3 September 2017)

Project reference:

24-003

Project title:

Conservation and poverty alleviation through scalable agro-biodiversity practice in Laos

Country(ies)/territory(ies):

Lao PDR

Lead organisation

Wildlife Conservation Society

Partner(s)

Village Focus International (VFI)

Nam Et Phou Louey Management Unit, Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO)

Project leader:

Ben Swanepoel

Report date and number HYR1 – 31 October 2017

Project website/blog/social media etc.

<http://www.wcs.org/>

<https://laos.wcs.org/>

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: Model community conservation agreements (CCAs) are developed and implemented in forest-dependent communities.

1.1 Conduct CCA development process.

30 June - A partnership agreement was signed between WCS and **Village Focus International (VFI)** for the provision of technical support to the WCS / NEPL team for the development and implementation of Community Conservation Agreements (CCA) in the 10 Darwin target villages.

22 – 27 July - Introductory workshops and meetings were held at the NPA management level (22 July) and District level (27 July). The focus of these meetings was to clarify the role of VFI, set out the objectives of the CCA activity and develop a joint approach to the CCA development process.

29 July – 03 August - Introductory meeting and baseline data collections were conducted at 5 villages. The meetings followed the principles of a “Free Prior Informed Consent” (FPIC) process after which household interviews were conducted to collect relevant socio-economic data using the VFI Participatory Rural Appraisal (PSA) tools.

August – September - The VFI team conducted analysis of the data to better understand the socio-economic profile of these target villages as well as to identify gaps in the information collected.

1.2 Carry out participatory mapping, zonation for appropriate use and establish management regulations for all forest lands within village boundaries.

Relevant information pertaining to the current status of PLUP in each of the of each of the 5 target villages was collected and discussed during the introductory villages meetings and data collections.

1.3 Provide direct support and management for priority agro-biodiversity village forest lands.

See activities under section 1.2 above.

Output 2: Forest-dependent communities bordering NEPL have improved livelihoods through sustainable use of non-timber agro-biodiversity resources in managed village forests and diversified agro-biodiversity production systems in agricultural land.

WCS is investigating possible collaboration with the Tropical Agrobiodiversity Initiative (TABI) in terms of technical support for the promotion of the sustainable use of NTFP products.

2.1 Conduct training in sustainable NTFP collection and processing.

Trainings related to coffee production are reported under output 3 below.

2.2 Establish demonstration plots.

Activities related to coffee production are reported under output 3 below.

2.3 Establish women's associations.

This activity will form part of the CCA development process.

Output 3: Local income-generating activities that are climate smart and innovative, including environment-friendly sustainable agriculture through the Conservation Enterprise Development Program (CEDP) are set up and expanded in the forest-dependent communities bordering NEPL.

3.1 Investigate feasibility of NTFP and agro-biodiversity products for conservation enterprise development.

3.1.1 Coffee

24 – 26 April -To compliment the coffee enterprise feasibility study commissioned by WCS and conducted by Saffron during 2015, the WCS consultant for conservation enterprise, Mr. Nickolas Spencer, conducted a feasibility study and provided recommendations regarding potential conservation enterprises including coffee, cardamom, eco tourism and other NTFP's within the NEPL NPA area.

3.1.2 Cardamom and red mushroom

During February 2017, WCS conducted feasibility studies in three villages during which time they interviewed 170 households regarding the viability of commercial production of Cardamom and red mushroom in selected villages within NEPL.

3.2 Conduct conservation enterprise development process.

Significant work around the development of a coffee enterprise took place during this report period, with demonstration plots now established in all 5 target villages and monitored on a regular basis. A partnership has been developed with Saffron Coffee Company and their staff have assisted us with the technical inputs, training, quality control and feasibility studies of this product.

A summary of the activities conducted during this report period are as follows:

May 29 – June 02 - Introductory meetings were held in the 5 target villages during which an FPIC process was followed and 7 families selected to manage the demonstration plots.

June 23 - Saffron staff delivered a training workshop to the WCS / NEPL implementation team. This team then provided technical support to the 7 growers during the preparation and planting stage of the demonstration plots.

July 11 – 14 – At the request of WCS, and prior to planting, a team of 7 UXO personal scanned the proposed planting plots. They uncovered, removed and destroyed a total of 9 unexploded shells.

July 19 - 20 – Planting of demonstration plots were supported by WCS, NEPL MU and DAFO staff.

August – September – Technical support and monitoring of demonstration plots by WCS and NEPL staff.
 September 20 – Development of an implementation plan for the 2017/2018 coffee planting season in conjunction with Saffron technical staff.
 September 23 – Evaluation of demonstration plots conducted by WCS and NEPL MU staff.

Output 4: Species and forest habitat protection is significantly increased in the total protection and controlled use forests of NEPL adjacent to target communities.

4.1 Conduct land-use monitoring.

Activities focused on the review of current PLUPs within the 5 target villages. In addition, as part of our ongoing land-use monitoring on NEPL, deforestation reports using satellite imagery were generated on a monthly basis.

4.2 Conduct community monitoring related to CCA.

Activities focused on the collection of baseline socio-economic data through the CCA process.

4.3 Conduct outreach campaigns.

No deliverables due for this report period.

4.4 Conduct law enforcement monitoring including community-led monitoring.

Law enforcement activities funded through WCS donors (Non-DARWIN funds) focusing on key areas of biodiversity aimed at reducing threats in the landscape.

4.5 Conduct biodiversity monitoring.

Biodiversity monitoring during this report took the form of enforcement ranger biodiversity observations collected during regular patrols and entered into the SMART data management program.

Output 5: A scalable model of sustainable, climate-smart agro-biodiversity is established and incorporated into forest resource use practices by forest-dependent communities.

No deliverables are due for this report period.

5.1. Develop guidelines.

No deliverables due for this report period

5.2 Conduct cross-village exchange and demonstration visits.

No deliverables due for this report period

5.3 Produce working papers.

No deliverables due for this report period

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.

No major issues to address, good cooperation from our technical and Government partners.

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?

Nothing additional to report.

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. Additionally, if you were funded under R23 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate 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**