



**Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project
Half Year Report
(due 31st October 2018)**

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 HYR2 – 31 October 2018

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.

Steady progress has been made on the CCA process within the 5 villages of the BOUMFAT cluster, driven by our partners VFI.

Agreement development phase – The PRA survey has been fully analysed by the VFI technical team and summarised so that communities can understand and provide inputs regarding its contents. A community negotiation committee was established in each village and a training workshop was held to assist them in understanding threats, identification of underlying causes, developing ways of addressing concerns, and methods of persistence during negotiations.

Partnership meetings were held with VFI to provide clarity in terms of incentives and benefits the NEPL MU would be able to provide as their part of the CCA as well as to identify needs of the NEPL MU in terms of their desired conservation outcomes.

Community engagement phase – A meeting was held between NEPL MU and District officials to obtain support for the final design of the CCA and to agree on the process of the community engagements.

During this phase, the technical team for the CCA negotiation process made up from DAFO and other agencies was established and approved by the district authorities.

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

Through the process of the CCA engagement, baseline data has been collected on all current PLUP's existing within the 5 villages of the Boumfat cluster. Inputs from villages in terms of the shortfalls within current PLUP's have been recorded and will form part of the negotiation process.

During September, a team from The Agro-Biodiversity Project (TABI) reviewed all the land use plans (FALUPAM's) of the Boumfat cluster as part of their commitment to improving village land use management within the Houaphan province.

The corridor management plan for the area between the Boumfat and Zone clusters (The 2 targeted village clusters for this grant) was further developed during July when agreements were signed by communities to phase out illegal cattle farming within the corridor zone by June 2019.

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.

2.1 Conduct training in sustainable NTFP collection and processing.

During August, SAFFRON Coffee provided training to villages of the Boumfat cluster on organic farming, in particular, the use of organic products to control plant diseases.

The company "Phanvila UXO clearance" provided training to 36 households in the Boumfat cluster on how to work safely in areas with the potential of containing UXO's.

NTFP products identified by local villages as significantly important have been identified through the CCA baseline survey mentioned in section 1.2. Villages also produced a list of suggested support needed to improve the sustainability of these NTFP products and increase the income derived from them. These inputs will form part of the CCA negotiations and will be the foundation on which we develop the NTFP training and support program.

2.2 Establish demonstration plots.

Demonstration plots for the coffee enterprise were completed during 2017 and have now been expanded. Plots for selected NTFP products will follow on the process of the CCA as described in 2.1.

2.3 Establish women's associations.

TOR's have been developed for three village level organisations related to this project. These will be; Village Conservation Committee to manage the CCA's, Boumfat Village Cluster Coffee Association and the Village Coffee Group. These will be established as part of the CCA development and coffee enterprise development process and through these mechanisms the gender equality outcome will be achieved.

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.

Discussions are underway with Charoen Pokphand (CP) Group in terms of potential improvements in the maize production and marketing chain within areas around the NEPL NPA. We are currently collecting baseline data on the status of maize production within key areas of NEPL NPA and this will inform next stages of these discussions.

WCS applied for and received a small grant from the L'Agence Française de Développement (AFD) supported Reinforcement and Expansion of Coffee Sector in Laos (RECoSeL) program. The grant will compliment this DARWIN initiative grant through its primary activity which will be the building of a cluster level processing facility for the coffee enterprise in Boumfat cluster.

During September, preliminary village NTPF surveys were conducted in 5 villages of the Phati cluster to form a baseline for the CCA negotiation process which will start in these 5 villages towards the end of this year.

3.2 Conduct conservation enterprise development process.

Work continues to focus on the wildlife friendly organic shade grown coffee initiative within 5 villages of the Boumfat cluster. A brief summary of relevant activities are as follows;

Monthly field monitoring visits (On average 3 visits per month) were undertaken by the NEPL livelihoods development team where technical support was provided to 36 households in terms of nursery management, production plot preparations, planting and care of seedlings and general production plot management.

During May, the company “Phanvila UXO clearance” was contracted to undertake UXO clearance activities within the new coffee enterprise expansion plots areas. 1,5kg’s of UXO were discovered and destroyed by the team.

During June and July, an additional 35,156 coffee seedlings were planted out within 5 villages of the Boumfat cluster, bringing the total ha of coffee production to 14 ha. 31 new households became participants in the project with the total participating households now at 36. This represents 11% of the total number of households within the 5 villages of the Boumfat cluster.

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.

Land use monitoring is conducted through monthly law enforcement ranger patrols and data is recorded and analysed through the SMART enforcement data management program.

Monthly deforestation maps are produced by the WCS GIS technical staff and analysed to monitor land use changes with the NEPL NPA area, which includes the areas of the Boumfat cluster.

4.2 Conduct community monitoring related to CCA.

Activity to commence after the CCA’s have been signed.

4.3 Conduct outreach campaigns.

No deliverables at this time

4.4 Conduct law enforcement monitoring including community-led monitoring.

Law enforcement monitoring is integrated into the NEPL NPA law enforcement strategy and occurs through a process of monthly strategy meetings which determine patrol routes and methods based on SMART data, monthly deforestation reports and local intelligence. All data is entered into the SMART database for analysis.

4.5 Conduct biodiversity monitoring.

Biodiversity monitoring continues as a function of the ranger patrol teams. Data relating to biodiversity observations are collected and recorded in the SMART database.

Biodiversity information is also collected through observations and camera trap monitoring conducted within the eco-tourism incentive program.

A new gibbon monitoring initiative has been implemented to improve the level of information currently available with regards to gibbon populations on NEPL NPA. Selected staff have received training in gibbon monitoring and accompany ranger teams on patrol in order to collect relevant gibbon population information.

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 during this stage of the grant activities.

5.1. Develop guidelines.

No deliverables during this stage of the grant activities.

5.2 Conduct cross-village exchange and demonstration visits.

No deliverables during this stage of the grant activities.

5.3 Produce working papers.

No deliverables during this stage of the grant activities.

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 CCA process is complex and the rate of progress largely dependent on the pace set by the local villages. As communities are still heavily dependent on the natural resources of NEPL NPA, they are understandably cautious of any new restrictions imposed. While this can result in a slower rate of progress, it's crucial that this foundational stage gains the full support and understanding of the local communities to ensure sustained levels of positive engagement throughout and beyond the life of the project.

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:

We are currently revising and refining the activities and budgets for this next 6 months period in order to match these with the realities experienced in the field. If there are any significant changes needed to the budget or project timeline, then this will be communicated as per the procedures set out in this grant agreement.

Formal change request submitted: No – See above.

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No - NA

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: £ **(See comments in 2b)**

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 at this point.

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 R24 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**