



Darwin Initiative/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31st October 2019)

Project reference	24-006
Project title	Enhancing forest biodiversity and community resilience to Tajikistan's changing climate
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Tajikistan
Lead organisation	Fauna & Flora International
Partner(s)	Kulob Botanical Garden, Zam Zam, Muminabad Forestry Management Unit, Dashtijum Forestry Management Unit
Project leader	David Gill
Report date and number	HYR3
Project website/blog/social media etc.	https://www.fauna-flora.org/projects/conserving-threatened-fruit-nut-forests-tajikistan

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: Increased knowledge and understanding of forest habitats

Baselines for forest habitat: In **Y1-Y2**, we helped Childukhtaron (CH) and Dashtijum (DJ) reserves to establish baselines of forest quality (through remote sensing and habitat surveys). At DJ only, we supported communities and the Forest Service to develop a draft Participatory Management Plan (PMP), defining targets for improving forest habitat quality.

In **Y3**, we have focussed on integrating this knowledge into daily management. In DJ, priority areas for protection and restoration (identified by communities in Y2) were mapped and the resultant maps and final drafts of the PMPs were presented to communities for consultation in August 2019. The final PMP is complete and will act as a guiding document for joint forest management in the coming years. The process will be repeated for CH in 2020. FFI is working with the reserve directors to improve protocols for joint monitoring of forest plots under the lease of local people. We will provide training in 2020 to (i) support implementation of updated protocols and (ii) encourage increased adoption of joint monitoring by more families.

Baselines for threatened trees: Threatened tree surveys were completed in **Y1**, although, due to the sparse distribution of the trees, and the large size of the reserves, more work is needed to complete these. Preliminary species status reports and action plans were completed in **Y2**.

Activities completed in **Y3** have focussed on implementing the species action and on surveying areas not covered in the Y1 surveys (achieved with funding from the Global Trees Campaign (GTC)). As new data are collected, we will update species status reports and action plans, to provide a reliable baseline for species conservation going forward.

Understanding incentives for forest conservation: In **Y1-2**, we completed surveys with 202 households, providing a baseline for well-being, forest use and threats. We also analysed climate risks and identified climate change adaptation options for each site.

In **Y3**, we completed a draft report summarising the conclusions from the socioeconomic surveys and will disseminate copies in Tajik by end of Y3 (thus sharing recommendations for strengthening local participation in conservation with other organisations in Tajikistan). Results

from the climate change adaptation workshops in Y2 are being adopted into awareness raising workshops to be carried out in Y3, thus consolidating knowledge gained earlier in the project.

Output 2: Improving income from fruit and nuts

Developing strong producer groups: In Y1, we supported community members at each reserve to complete the initial steps of the Participatory Market System Development (PMSD) method, complete PMSD action plans and establish a producer group at each site. Each group was provided with training and equipment for implementation of their PMSD action plans (e.g. fruit dryers and canning equipment). In Y2, producer groups increased revenue from fruit products by 61% in CH and 88% in DJ.

In Y3 we have focussed on facilitating opportunities for the groups to reach new markets. Eight group members participated in three training sessions, each hosted by a different enterprise: one herbal tea and one dried fruit processor (based in the local region: Khatlon) and a larger dried fruit processor in Sughd (a commercial centre in Tajikistan). The sessions were useful at clarifying the standards of dried fruit expected by larger-scale intermediaries. As a result, groups established three new agreements to sell dried products from the project sites. Over the second half of Y3, the groups will trial new labelling and marketing techniques to help market their products to a wider variety of buyers in Tajikistan. Initial indications suggest that volume sold in Y3 will be lower than Y2, due to a poor apple harvest, affected by heavy spring rains. Decreased volume may be offset by higher prices, as groups are selling a higher quality of products to a larger range of buyers.

Establishing saving groups: In Y1-Y2, we established four savings groups in each site. These proved highly popular with the villages; 195 people signed up and more than 50,000 somoni (~£4,300) was saved. Members borrowed money to invest in local enterprises and to help them overcome shocks (e.g. a bad harvest or a family member becoming unable to work).

In Y3, the groups continue to act as a vital part of the project: total savings increased to 57,000 somoni and new loans taken out in 2019 were used to purchase equipment and fruit tree seedlings. We also noted some challenges this year; poorer members have struggled to keep up with monthly repayment schedules, which has limited the amount of funding coming back into the groups and available for new loans for other members. We are currently working with Zam Zam and the group representatives to review the governance of each group, to ensure repayment schedules are fair, feasible but still ensure sufficient cash flow to allow each group to properly function. Zam Zam has provided training on accounting to the groups; this was designed to promote fair and transparent management of the accounts by the group leaders and to improve understanding of the processes for borrowing and repayment.

Output 3: Forest management and promoting resilience

Promoting awareness on forest management: In Y1-Y2, the project carried out a total of eight events (four per community) celebrating the cultural values of forests and biodiversity raising awareness of to the causes and impacts of forest and soil degradation.

In Y3, we organised two harvest festivals (one at each reserve) in October 2019. These brought together children and adults from the communities to celebrate this year's harvest and the importance of the forest to local livelihoods. More than 900 people (600 at DJ; 300 at CH) took part in activities including agro-theatre, folk music, dancing and quizzes. The producer groups showcased a variety fruit products (helping to raise interest among other community members in the project). A national TV company was present and we hope that airing of the event will increase the national profile of the producer groups (who are seeking new buyers) and the Darwin Initiative project. Two further events, focussed on climate change (and the adaptation options agreed during workshops in Y2) will be carried out in November 2019.

Supporting forest restoration: In Y1-Y2 the project established four nurseries and supported planting of more than 135,000 native trees from 14 species. We established a stakeholder fora for each reserve (to better communication on management between forest reserve staff and local plot holders) and supported 19 plot-holders to fence plots to protect their land from grazing and enable greater regeneration.

In Y3, each reserve will plant out at least 80,000 more trees by the end of 2019 (and this number will be boosted further by large quantities of seed sown and seedlings regenerating in

fenced areas). We are developing restoration guidelines which will be annexed to the PMPs developed under Output 1. As the PMPs already identify key areas for restoration, we have decided not to make an additional, separate restoration plan (as multiple plans cause confusion on the ground). During two upcoming stakeholder forum meetings we will gather local elders with expertise in tree planting and collate traditional knowledge on which species do best under which conditions in this reserve. These guidelines will be appended to the PMP and will form a locally developed knowledge base to guide future planting from the next generation.

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 significant problems.

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 impact on delivery/budget

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?

No issues to raise.

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 R25 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 DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to 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: 25-035 Darwin Half Year Report**