



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31st October 2020)

Project reference	24-016
Project title	Sustainable community-based stewardship of freshwater resources in the Northern Philippines
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	
Lead organisation	Zoological Society of London (ZSL)
Partner(s)	Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR); Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)
Project leader	Dr Matthew Gollock
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	30/10/2020 HYR4
Project website/blog/social media	https://twitter.com/ZSLMarine https://www.facebook.com/freshwaterconservationproject/

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

The previously installed acoustic tag receivers have been retrieved and the recorded data been forwarded to the tagging consultant for further analysis and report preparation.

The gathering of GPS coordinates of the 12 Freshwater Sanctuaries (FS) for the demarcation of 20-40 meters riparian easement area and/or expansion of both buffer and strict protected area coverage are now complete. The area of the twelve FS at the beginning of the project was 43.5 ha (no-take zones = 34.8 ha; buffer zones = 8.7 ha); the new area is 84.8 ha (43.2 ha =no-take zones; buffer zone = 41.6 ha).

Ten out of 12 FS have updated maps and seven FS have signed barangay resolutions to update their existing barangay ordinances. With the assistance of the ZSL project team, FSMB of Maddela, Quirino updated their joint ordinance between Barangay Divisoria Sur and Barangay Villa Ylanan. After a series of meetings with the Fish Sanctuary Management Board (FSMB) and members of the Local Government Units (LGUs), an ordinance is now enacted in San Mariano, Isabela to expand riparian protection of their three FS. The newly expanded zones mean there is now a total of 76 hectares of riparian protection across all 12 sites.

River wardens from eight key sites are now provided with monthly incentives from their LGUs and at one other key site they receive their incentive using barangay funds. These benefits have a positive impact on our monthly monitoring as most of the sites are now gathering their own data and lessening the work and movement of our staff and enumerators, particularly during the pandemic.

In addition to this, the LGU of Baggao approved a budget of Php. 200,000 for the implementation of the FS Management Plan (FSMP), this will cover meeting costs, training, workshops and other relevant activities.

Output 2

The national data framework for all commodities including the anguillids have been drafted by the BFAR Central Office. This should have been finalised this year but due to the pandemic lockdowns in Metro Manila the staff in charge of finalising the framework have not yet been allowed to access the office to complete this work. This is also the problem with the finalisation of the National Eel Management Plan and

updating of the Eel Management Plan for Cagayan River Basin. Meetings, workshops and training are not yet allowed by the government.

All CITES meetings have been postponed in 2020, with no clear indication of whether they will be rescheduled in 2021.

Output 3

For this period, four savers groups shared out with a total savings of Php and an environmental fund of Php . Nine savers group were active, most of which are already in their second cycle.

Using the environmental fund, Aggugaddan Savers Group purchased bamboo seedlings from Asinga Elementary School Bamboo Nursery, also managed by a CoMSCA group. These were planted in Callao FS in response to the identified rehabilitation areas from last year's Participatory Land Use Planning.

Output 4

A total of 16,093 seeds of native fruit and forest trees have been planted in three community nurseries - Tanglagan, Penablanca and Nagtipunan - of which 5,392 (33%) have germinated to date, with more occurring each week. Eighty upland farms located near rivers have been surveyed as potential low-impact agriculture sites with a total land area of 57.73 hectares. These identified areas will be planted with native fruit-bearing and forest trees. To date, some 286 fruit trees have been planted. A mushroom production training session using agricultural by-products/waste has recently been conducted, with 25M/14F participants. Disaster Risk Reduction Management mapping and field validation for flooding and landslide is currently being conducted with three out of 12 sites remaining.

Output 5

A Special Tree Cutting Permit to remove undesirable and invasive tree species along no-take zones of the FS was approved by the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources. A total of 11 Gmelina arborea trees were cleared from riverbanks and were replaced with a total of 548 seedlings of fruit and native trees – 50 native seedlings per invasive species, as per DENR guidelines.

Three species of invasive freshwater fish have been identified, these are Janitor fish, Tilapia and Mosquito fish. The invasive survey report was submitted to BFAR for reference on the development of a mitigation plan to eliminate and/or control the population of these species. Mitigation actions for both invasive trees and freshwater fishes are being included in the on-going updating of FSMPs.

The pilot culture hatchery of native fish species in Aparri, Cagayan, in collaboration with BFAR was initially stocked with 163 breeders of Silver Perch “Ayungin”. This has produced 7000 fry/fingerlings, significantly more successful than the Mullet pilot in 2019. BFAR is now allocating budget for its continuation.

In line with the enacted LGU ordinance of San Mariano, Isabel, the mitigation measures of invasive fish and tree species are also included in their updated FS management plan. Signed barangay resolutions from seven key sites also recommends the adoption of mitigation measures for invasive fish and tree species.

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.

Fisherfolk Associations and the barangays Aggugaddan and Callao of Penablanca, Cagayan lobbied the LGU to reduce the size of Callao Cave FS due to a range of issues – some, but not all, related to Covid-19. One justification was that their fishing ground was reduced due to quarrying activities and the FS buffer zone was not enough to accommodate all fishermen in the area causing rampant illegal activity inside the no-take zone. Further, the barangay officials were unable to impose the existing ordinance due to a lack of funds and capacity in the present climate. The effect of Covid-19 on the livelihoods of boat operators/boatmen also led them to fish inside the FS as no other income is presently available to them.

The decision to reduce the size of FS was made during a meeting with ZSL, the FSMB Chair, Fisherfolk Association members, barangay officials, boat operators, and the LGU of Penablanca. The FS area was reduced from 8.8 hectares to 3.7 hectares, the ordinance amended, and the name of the sanctuary changed to Aggugaddan FS.

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered because 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.

Most of our key LGUs require the production of a 'secure travel pass' and health certificate as proof that you are Covid-19 free – these are prohibitively expensive for many people. Movement is limited with little public transport available which affects livelihoods of those that are required to travel for work, but also for those who provide these services. These limitations have had impact on the project activities, and inter-border travel across provincial sites and community quarantines have created additional problems.

Mass gatherings are not yet allowed under "Bayanihan Act of 2019", this has impacted the FS-relevant community meetings which have not been allowed. Further CoMSCA meetings have been disrupted with some having to pause meetings until gatherings were allowed again, and others ceasing savings due to a lack of income. The 2020 FS evaluation workshop is also postponed. These activities have been moved to Q4 (January-March 2021) as a contingency.

A change request was submitted earlier in the year, and a three-month extension to the project has been approved. The new end date is 31/3/21, however, the continued impact of Covid-19 may require a further change request to adjust timings and spend. This is being reviewed on an on-going basis.

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: **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. 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. 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**