



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

Project reference	25-011
Project title	Andean bears and people: coexistence through poverty reduction.
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Bolivia
Lead organisation	Chester Zoo
Partner(s)	WildCRU, PROMETA, CERDET, IICA, Alcides d'Orbigny Natural History Museum.
Project leader	Alexandra Zimmermann
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	28.10.2020HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.chesterzoo.org/conservation-and-science/where-we-work/latin-america/andean-bear-project

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).

According to the agreed timetable for this project, training and mentoring activities (Output 2) planned for this reporting period were significantly reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Workshops or any face-to-face activities with local communities were prohibited, as was travel to our study area. These strict measures, including a nationwide nightly curfew, lasted around five months. In August a special permit was granted by San Lorenzo municipality, allowing the project team to visit each community. We were able to examine the state of the apiaries and to harvest honey. Despite the national lockdown extending beyond the end of May, communities were able to harvest their honey and to benefit from the revenues of sales. In September, lockdown measures were eased and honey was harvest in four out of five communities. A total of 750kg were harvested, and 500 kg was put on the market with revenues reaching £2,900. It is important to mention that all families involved in this initiative kept some honey for their own consumption. Further to this, an additional 16 beehives were built and installed by members of the group during this time, demonstrating ability and great interest in developing sustainable livelihoods independently.

Output 3: Although travel restrictions have eased compared with the first five months of lockdown, workshops or meetings with community members are still forbidden. Thus, activities related to output 3 - practices to improve livestock protection - will resume this month, following strict COVID-19 protocols. Information and data related to livestock from community members has been collected via WhatsApp calls. Information about depredation during lockdown was reported by each community's parabiologist. Livestock losses resulting from depredation by bears were highest in Hoyadas-Cercado, our newest community, with three cows and two calves killed this year, followed by San Isidro, with two cows killed in the past month. No bears were killed in any of our communities. Meanwhile, losses caused by pumas were similar to previous years in all communities. Community members used fireworks to scare away bears, but this method was not

effective against pumas. Wildfires, which started in August, have been the most severe since 2010 (according to monitoring data from the FIRE-NASA detection centre), with community members predicting that this would result in wild animals (especially pumas) causing more damage. However, our camera traps have not registered any changes in puma, bear or any other large mammal frequency. Finally, our social marketing strategy, developed with Dr. Diogo Verissimo from the University of Oxford, had to be completely suspended. One of the primary audiences were teachers and schoolchildren, both of whom were considered key influencers that could help shape adults' behaviours, and change attitudes toward bears. Education specialists from Chester Zoo visited Tarija in March 2020 to work with the project team on the development of a school outreach programme for target communities. Unfortunately, this visit had to be cut short due to the Bolivian lockdown, and this work remains on hold, with all school activities suspended indefinitely. Children have been receiving home schooling and virtual lessons from teachers through a number of education platforms (Zoom, Google Meet, etc), and sending additional learning materials to their schools with visiting authorities. However, in poverty areas like the five communities where the project is working, access to smart devices is very limited, and internet costs are considerably high, leaving many children with no access to education. This was discussed with the Chester Zoo team, who have agreed to support us in developing short radio programmes as a means of supporting the teachers' need to maintain contact with schoolchildren in communities, whilst also delivering positive messages about Andean bears and the work of the project. This is an alternative strategy that is under development, in order to adapt our project goal to new circumstances under the global pandemic.

Output 4: Our monitoring program was not affected by COVID-19 restrictions. The capacity-building of parabiologists that we carried out in the first year of Darwin-funded activities has been a crucial asset during this period. In our five field sites, all of our parabiologists were able to carry out fieldwork independently. Batteries and memory cards were provided and collected through authorised transport to the communities. However, we were unable to share findings with stakeholders due to lockdown restrictions.

Finally, meetings with authorities (output 5) and workshops with stakeholders were completely suspended; in part due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, but mostly because the interim government - appointed pending the election of a permanent government - had limited decision-making capacity. Nonetheless, the Andean bear conservation action plan was published and approved by the Deputy Environment Minister. Finally, bear research initiatives in two national parks in the Boliviano-Tucumano region that had previously received technical support from this project reached their end due to lack of funding and wildfires. Once the new government has been established this coming 8th of November, and a cabinet formed, we aim to present the results of this project to the new CBD focal point.

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.

Unfortunately, workshops with government authorities (5.2) have been difficult to achieve again during this period. Ten months of interim government has disrupted formal meetings that had been scheduled to provide updates and discuss further activities. The CBD focal point was removed from her position with no replacement. Although a meeting with the Environment Minister was held in early March, with a positive outcome, further disruption was caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic reaching Bolivia. However, the Conservation Action Plan with ministerial resolution is published. These delays can be rectified within the scheduled project period, and this will not require a change in budget.

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.

On March 17th, following Bolivia's first two confirmed cases of COVID-19, the Bolivian government declared a public health emergency with a series of quarantine measures including: closure of all borders, suspension of international flights, and suspension of all interdepartmental and interprovincial land transport. In addition, all public events were cancelled, and schools were closed indefinitely.

For almost five months a nationwide nightly curfew was declared, with additional measures at the local level (municipalities), depending on their particular situations. In our region, travel was prohibited to communities where the majority of the population are in the >50 year age range. These restrictions, and those implemented by PROMETA to protect communities and their personnel caused considerable delays to our planned activities, particularly those relating to outputs 1, 2 and 3.

Output 1&2: Although a large part of the training and capacity-building was carried out in years 1&2, monitoring, assessment, and provision of further support to independent initiatives have suffered delays. During the lockdown period, the team used WhatsApp as the main way of communicating with the communities. Now that the measures have eased, the team is resuming field trips and meetings (in small groups) with the communities, and surveys and questionnaires can be applied following strict protocols.

Output 3 Activities related to improving livestock protection practices have resumed this month (October) following strict health and safety protocols. A livestock census was carried out primarily through one-to-one phone calls, but numbers will be confirmed during the workshops and meetings. Finally, our social marketing strategy developed with Dr. Diogo Verissimo from the University of Oxford, and activities developed with education specialists from Chester Zoo had to change considerably. Our initial work with the project team was to develop a school outreach programme for target communities, but due to the indefinite closure of schools, and limited reach of web-based platforms, the team is adapting this activity to the use of radio broadcasting. This activity is currently under development, in consultation with teachers. In terms of re-scheduling timetables and budgets, this activity, as well as the ones in output 1&2 will require an extension of approximately 3-4 months.

Output 5 With the new government elected two weeks ago, we expect to schedule a meeting with the new CBD representative to provide an update of project activities within the next month or two; this will not require a change in budget. Unfortunately, workshops with government authorities have been difficult to schedule during year 2 and the first semester of year 3, primarily due to the lack of authorities, and secondly due to wildfire emergencies.

Overall, we can report a strong interest from the communities in continuing with beekeeping training, with replication currently taking place in all communities. There have not been any reported retaliatory killings of bears in any of our target communities, and the project is finding that negative attitudes and behaviours toward bears are decreasing. Community members appear to be displaying increased tolerance for bears in the area, whilst sustainable livelihoods activities are achieving tangible positive results, despite the unforeseen global pandemic, which caught both the communities and project team unprepared. Capacity building in economic alternatives, and training in monitoring wildlife have been key to the successes that we have achieved so far. With health and safety measures adopted by communities and project personnel, it will be possible to reach our project goals if we can extend our timetable by 3-4 months, and re-budget some of the project's finances. The main area in our budget to be affected by the pandemic were underspends related to travel (international travel, fieldwork travel and

subsistence) and operating costs (fieldwork operating costs, social & ecological research, surveys and interviews), which with the extension of our activities will be used in full.

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:	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?

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**