



**Darwin Initiative/Darwin plus Projects**  
**Half Year Report**  
**(Due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020)**

<b>Project reference</b>	25-030
<b>Project title</b>	Biodiversity Conservation and Community Development in Al-Makhrour Valley in Bethlehem, Palestine
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Palestine
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Bethlehem University - Palestine Institute of Biodiversity and Sustainability/Palestine Museum of Natural History (BU-PIBS/PMNH).
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Institute for Community Partnership (ICP); Byspokes Sustainable Community Development.
<b>Project leader</b>	Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)</b>	October, 2020: HYR 3
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://almakhrour.palestinenature.org">https://almakhrour.palestinenature.org</a>

**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).**

Ongoing work by the project team and the partners is on track to achieve the required results even through new and various challenges are arising. Project activities will even likely go beyond the proposed targeted outputs and impacts stated in our proposal. This six months report briefly demonstrates the progress towards results of the project, through highlighting work done on the scheduled activities as per timeframe and log frame sequence of activities planned.

**Activities for the accomplishment of Output 1. Inventory and assessment for biodiversity at both habitat and species level are conducted in order to consolidate the scientific data required to propose various forms of conservation management and protection within the project area.**

**Activity 1.1 Analyse literature for national and global relevant research documents.**

Activity implemented, progress and work implemented for this activity had been reported in the previous reports.

**Activity 1.2 Initial town-hall style meetings for community members in each targeted locality.**

Activity implemented, progress and work implemented for this activity had been reported in the previous reports.

**Activity 1.3 Conduct biodiversity inventory for Al-Makhrour valley; including comprehensive surveys for ecosystem, habitats and species**

The biodiversity inventory of fauna & flora in addition to the habitats represent key components for the accomplishment of the impacts targeted by our project. That is why the PMNH team has set plans to research, report and monitor those components, a systematic process for surveying biodiversity components is done through making initial baseline studies that are reported clearly in all previous reports.

**Activity 1.4 Prepare baseline evaluation report for ecosystem/biodiversity status at Al-Makhrour Valley (conducted during Spring year 2019)**

For the purpose of exploring and establishing a status analysis about the biodiversity of Almakhrour valley describing fauna, flora & habitats. This activity had been implemented and reported in previous reports.

**Activities 1.5 & 1.6 Establish ecology, biodiversity, monitoring databases linked to project webpage (the indicators will be linked to specified area blocks along the valley and specified species population).**

The monitoring indicators database was built to measure changes in Fauna, Flora, Fungi, Birds, & Threats. The project team set a plan to implement field visits for the purpose of researching the indicators, monitoring them and comparing them with previous data studied, two field visits have already been implemented and samples are gathered. Initial report of the monitoring indicators database and its components is found in *Annex 1*.

**Activity 1.7 Prepare biodiversity management plan for the Valley**

Biodiversity Management plan had been designed and reported in earlier reports.

#### Activity 1.8 Identify key sensitive habitats along the valley and set their conservation frameworks and restoration schemes

PCC had been contracted for implementing the restoration activities, the selection of the habitats had been implemented according to criteria, a restoration committee had been established and the sensitive habitats had been selected and restored. Detailed description of the process and the evidence can be found on the website on <https://almakhrour.palestinenature.org/about-us/>, and *Annex 2* of this report.

#### Activity 1.9 Hand the Management Plan & Conservation Frameworks to EQA & MoA

The Project leader and project team will implement this even during the coming months of operation, however EQA & MoA had been a partnering member in constructing the management plan and the restoration frameworks implemented.

#### Activity 1.10 Formulation of One committee for restoration actions

A call for a meeting with key stakeholders mainly MoA, Environment Quality Authority (EQA), Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), Battir and Beit Jala municipalities and nominate them as Restoration Works Committee. To follow and implement restoration at the three selected habitats for restoration details can be found at <https://almakhrour.palestinenature.org/about-us/>.

#### Activity 1.11 Restore up to Max 3 dunums of key habitats

This activity was challenging because it was implemented during the peak of the pandemic quarantine in Palestine. It is an important step in the conservation efforts in the valley. The restoration action focused on improving ecological functionality and preventing soil erosion and enhancing carbon dioxide absorption on site. It is expected that this action will increase the resilience of the existing stands and limit the invasion of alien plant species, and enhance the conservation of the Mediterranean habitat for animal and bird species kindly see restoration report at <https://almakhrour.palestinenature.org/about-us/>, and view the Follow up report at the same page.

#### Activity 1.12 Prepare End line evaluation report for updating ecology/Biodiversity status at Almakhrour Valley

This activity is going to be implemented in the coming months to the end of the project, and it will be implemented through cumulative effort of the team and consultants, to insure credibility of methodology and results.

#### Activity 1.13 Publish 3 to 5 scientific papers

Previously we reported that 7 papers were published related to this project from team members (previous annual report). In the last six months, another publication was made

- McHugh et al. In press Agriculture connected to ecosystems and sustainability: A Palestine World Heritage Site as a case study <https://www.palestinenature.org/research/Agriculture-Wadi-Makhrour.pdf>

we completed two more research papers which were submitted for publication:

- Qumsiyeh, Mazin and M. Abusarhan. COVID-19 Impact on Biodiversity in Palestine. J. Asia-Pacific Biodiversity. In press
- Pahl, Julius and Mazin Qumsiyeh. Orchids from the West Bank (occupied Palestinian Territory). Mediterranean Botany. In press

#### Activity 1.14 Follow up report on the project

Reporting activities are ongoing as furnished dates.

### **Activities for the accomplishment of Output 2. Economic benefits to the local communities; including women and youth, in proximity to Al-Makhrou Valley are secured through sustainable agriculture and eco-tourism enhancement.**

Activities from 2.1 to 2.4: Activities implemented and reported in the earlier reporting periods.

#### Activity 2.5 Purchase agricultural inputs:

This activity occurs each season, as purchases of agricultural inputs “seeds & transplants” will be procured for each season. Purchases done in the preceding seasons had been reported, and new purchases are under way for this winter season. Kinds of seeds and inputs and quantities are decided in participation with our partner beneficiaries whom are the 81 farmers of the project, trying to take into consideration listens learnt from the previous farming seasons. Please see *Annex 2* for details of the summer crops procured.

**Activity 2.5.1:** Irrigation networks are functional as installed and reported before.

**Activity 2.5.2:** Water tanks are on the ground in the fields and operational as reported.

**Activity 2.5.3:** Approximately 232 Kg of seeds & 52250 seedlings had been requested for procurement and on the under processing to be handled to the farmers for planting during this winter season 2020/2021.

**Activity 2.5.4:** More than 27450 bags of compost had been handed to farmers cumulatively and the project team had been overseeing the deployment on land, while promoting better agricultural practices.

#### Activity 2.6. Land Preparation, Weed Removal

Project team had supported the farmers to prepare, remove plant debris, plow and weed their fields between October and November to get ready to the next season. See the pictures below

*The preparations*



#### Activity 2.7 Distribute agricultural inputs

After PMNH staff got a permission from MoA to facilitate movement during COVID-19 times and when movement was restricted and not allowed, the supplier, MoA representative, and PMNH agricultural specialist visited the nursery that was germinating the requested amounts of seedlings. The inspection process took a place on 21<sup>st</sup> of April, 2020 where the inspection committee decided that some crops are mostly ready (after one week of the inspection process) to be distributed, which means that there will be first stage of distribution. While the rest needed much more time until being distributed, 87000 seedlings had been distributed.



**Activity 2.8 Conduct 4 follow up field visits per farmer per season**

At least 81 field visits were implemented, to follow up the land agricultural status and the farmers guidance during the visit represents of: pest control, record crops production (distributed production sheet), and cover the soil either with sheet mulching or straw. The visits also aimed at observing problems that mostly farmers face and suggest solutions that are consistent with traditional farming and Eco farming practices.



A critical stage of wilting, that can lead to permanent wilting point phenomenon.



Birds Problem (eating the sowed seeds).



Severe nutrient deficiency



Dogs' problem (left). And dodder severe infection (right)



### Activity 2.9 Conduct two cross village exchange and demonstration visits (during first three cultivation seasons)

Two exchange field visits were implemented and reported in the last report, this year due to the covid19 pandemic, the ability to gather the farmers and make the visits had been of great challenge. The project team organized an exchange field visit for the farmers of Battir town to the farmers of Al Walaja village on 25 August 2020, in order to exchange the experiences and the knowledge between the farmers in the field of ecological agriculture. The number of farmers participated in the exchange visit reached 30 farmers of whom 11 were female farmers (37% of the participants).

At the beginning of the visit the farmers were met and acquainted between them in the house of one of the female farmers, then a number of farmers' fields were visited. After the visit ended, a questionnaire was distributed to them to evaluate the visit. Table 1, shows the analysis results of the questionnaire.

<b>Table 1: Analysis results of the exchange visit questionnaire</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>% of farmers</b>
<b>What did you acquired from the visit?</b>	
- Shared the experiences and the knowledge	93
- Get an idea of the benefits of beekeeping and the medicinal benefits of the honey	93
- Acquaintance between farmers	79
- The importance of land reclamation and cultivation	57
- Learn about the ability of women in wood recycling	50
- Visit the oldest olive tree in Palestine	29
- Meet active farmers	21
- Get an idea of using a device to adjust the irrigation period	14
- Visit the water springs in Al Walaja	14
- Visiting Al Walaja village for the first time	7
<b>Did the visit achieved what you expected?</b>	100
<b>What do you expect from the visit?</b>	
- Seeing a good crops production	57
- Exchange the experience and the knowledge between the farmers.	85
<b>What are your recommendations for similar visits in the future?</b>	
- Provide the seeds and seedlings at an appropriate time	43
- The visit must be during the production period	43
- The local authority must connect the agricultural lands to the public water network and with a reduce prices.	29
- Organizing other visits to other agricultural localities	21
- Increase the number of beneficiaries in future projects	14
- Supporting the construction of cisterns to collect rainwater	14



### Activity 2.10 Evaluation report for summer /winter vegetables production

The 81 households (22 in Hussan, 19 in Battir, 13 in Al Walaja and 27 in Beit Jala) benefited from seeds and seedlings distributed for the summer cultivation in 2020 produced approximately 11.4 tons of vegetables. Up to 68.6% of the produced quantity of vegetables were consumed by the beneficiaries' families. In spite of the significant high temperatures that prevailed in the region during the growth of the plants and the production, 19.2% of the total quantity of the production was sold in the targeted localities, with selling value of around NIS 17415, in addition to the distribution of 12.2% of the production as gifts to farmers' relatives (See table 2).

**Table 1:** Total quantity of vegetable production, in Kg, total production value, in (NIS) and Distribution of the consumption of the production by crop (kg) in summer cultivation in 2020

Crop type	Total of the Production	consumption by households	Gifts	Selling	Selling value
<b>Battiri Eggplants</b>	2698	1277	421	1000	7440
<b>Ajami Eggplants</b>	162	147	15	0	0
<b>Tomatoes</b>	1266	1141	100	25	125
<b>Squash</b>	2062	1410	356	296	2300
<b>Beans</b>	1573	731	187	655	6040
<b>Cowpeas</b>	143	118	10	15	120
<b>Cucumber</b>	688	636	52	0	0
<b>Snake cucumber</b>	941	759	82	100	700
<b>Hot pepper</b>	238	213	5	20	180
<b>Sweet pepper</b>	184	180	4	0	0
<b>Pumpkin</b>	839	644	125	70	510
<b>Sweet corn</b>	562	532	30	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11356</b>	<b>7788</b>	<b>1387</b>	<b>2181</b>	<b>17415</b>
<b>% of the production</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>68.6</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>19.2</b>	

Table 3, shows the total crops production of the summer cultivation in 2020 and its distribution per locality.

**Table 3:** Total quantity of vegetable production, in Kg, and Distribution of the consumption of the production by crop (kg) per village in summer cultivation in 2020

Locality	Total of the Production)	consumption by households)	Gifts	Selling	Selling value(NIS)
<b>Husan</b>	6516	3842.0	839.0	1835.0	14255
<b>Battir</b>	2722	2002.0	400.0	320.0	2900
<b>Al Walaja</b>	1081	1011.0	70.0	0.0	0
<b>Beit Jala</b>	1037	933.0	78.0	26.0	260
<b>Total</b>	<b>11356</b>	<b>7788.0</b>	<b>1387.0</b>	<b>2181.0</b>	<b>17415</b>
<b>% of total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>68.6</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>19.2</b>	

Table 4, shows the total quantity of vegetables production by crop type and by locality in summer cultivation in 2020. Approximately 57% of the total quantity of the production was in Husan, 24% was in Battir, 10% was in Al Walaja, and 9% was in Beit Jala. The variation in the quantities of the production in the targeted areas depending mainly on the availability of irrigation water in

each locality. For example, although the number of farmers in Husan was 22 farmers and in Beit Jala was 26 farmers, the quantity of the production in Hasan formed 57% of the total quantity of the production, while the quantity of the production in Beit Jala formed 9%. Also in spite of the number of farmers in Al Walaja was 13 farmers (half of the number of the farmers of Beit Jala), the quantity of the production in Al Walaja formed 10% of the total production in the targeted area, which almost the same production in Beit Jala. This is due to availability of irrigation water from the springs in Hussan and Al Walaja.

**Table 4:** Total quantity of vegetables production, in Kg, by crop type and by locality in summer cultivation in 2020

Crop type	Husana	Battir	Al Walaja	Beit Jala	Total	% of total
Battiri Eggplants	1785	782	65	66	2698	24
Ajami Eggplants	100	8	35	19	162	1
Tomatoes	517	322	271	156	1266	11
Squash	1325	386	196	155	2062	18
Beans	1360	117	59	37	1573	14
Cowpeas	40	65	22	16	143	1
Cucumber	169	273	114	132	688	6
Snake cucumber	165	344	195	237	941	8
Hot pepper	165	47	15	11	238	2
Sweet pepper	118	39	14	13	184	2
Pumpkin	465	168	75	145	853	8
Sweet corn	307	171	20	50	548	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>6516</b>	<b>2722</b>	<b>1081</b>	<b>1037</b>	<b>11356</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>% of total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100</b>	

**Activity 2.11 – Conduct first/second festival during harvesting period of summer/winter cultivation seasons.**

Due to COVID19 Pandemic the festival of this year will be dealt with to be in the form of other activities that will be redesigned and were sent to Darwin Initiative for their approval.

**Activity 2.12. Prepare the follow up report for the success and lessons learnt from the festival**

Due to COVID19 Pandemic the festival of this year will be dealt with to be in the form of other activities that will be redesigned and were sent to Darwin Initiative for their approval.

**Activity 2.13. Conduct 2 day workshop for cooperatives' partnerships and business enhancement**

All activities relating to indoor workshops had been delayed and rescheduled in order to face the COVID19 Pandemic the activity will be implemented in the coming quarter of this year.

**Activity 2.14. Prepare the follow up report for marketing progress of the selected women groups**

The report will be included in the final report.

**Activity 2.15. Formulation of one committee for eco-tourism program from key stakeholders from local communities**

The committee had been established and this had been reported in earlier reports. A meeting had been held online to discuss the ecotourism business plan already designed on the scope of the project, and there had been a debate on how to impose measures to create tourism activity and renovate a model of tourism given the current challenges of the pandemic, given the fact that the tourism status had been diminished and all tourism activities had been halted on the local and international levels. Recording of the meeting can be found at <https://bit.ly/3hsObPv> .

**Activity 2.16. Study the Valley's path and identify the best places to mark the visitors' path**

Activity implemented, and reported in earlier reports.



**Activity 2.17. Conduct cleaning works and install 2 arrow signs, 2 plant-info signs and 2 maps with some volunteer works along the Valley's visitors' path**

A cleaning voluntary campaign was carried out and documented in earlier reports. Information signs installation has been a challenge, since the Israeli occupation forces forbid and installation activity in the valley, the signs had been procured, and awaiting for action to be taken by the team to install them in the valley. See *Annex 3* for details of the signs.

**Activity 2.18. Prepare follow up report for the level of enhancement in tourism sector in targeted area**

Will be implemented in the coming reporting periods. Especially after the pandemic halted the tourism activities.

**Activity 2.19. Provide four sub-grants for four existing/initiated women business enterprises**

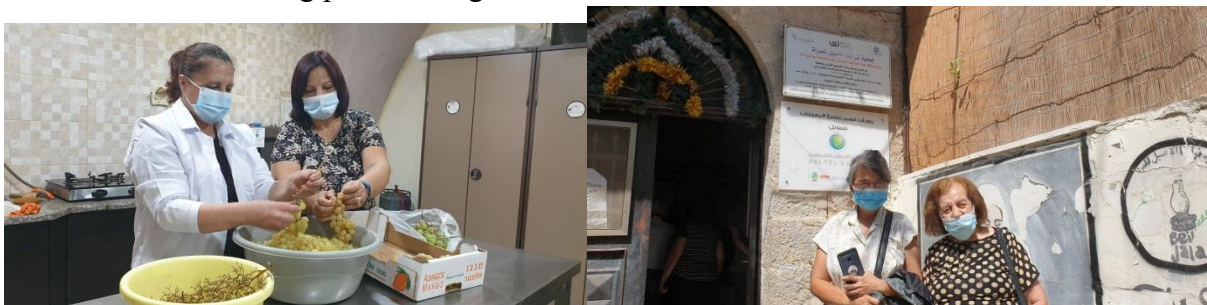
Done and the selected women groups from the four targeted areas became more motivated after the pandemic hit. Yet, implementation of income generating activities became more challenging. Even with the turbulence of the situation and the continuous closures the project team managed to supply all needed equipment to women groups even though suppliers were officially closed. A meeting was done specifying plans for implementing the launches of the women grants, participants decided the dates on which the launch will occur and decided to limit number of participants in order not to break the hygiene protocols (under precautions and social distancing measures in order not to expose participants to any infection).



The women projects were launched during September and women initiated their activities immediately including offering services and sales of products. Below is a briefing on different groups.

**Beit Jala women society:**

Alaseel for Woman Association - Beit Jala is one of the four women business enterprises that was selected as a selling point to be granted



An Agreement between Bethlehem University and Alaseel for Woman Association - Beit Jala was signed in February 2020 in order to provide them with the following items in the total amount of 15,750 NIS, See table 5.

Table 5: shows the equipment handed to Beit Jala Women

Items	Amount NIS
Stainless Steel Sink	
4 Stainless Steel stands	
Freezer for storing processed foodstuffs	
Product Identification Cards- Labels	
<b>Total</b>	<b>15750</b>

The above-mentioned items were delivered to Alaseel for Women / Beit Jala during August 2020. The project team from Bethlehem University visited them on September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at and were welcomed by the director and the members of the association. The group was briefed on the items and equipment that were provided to the association. And its importance in developing the association's business and employing women in the future. In order to develop and increase the products and the market work, the association contributed through renovating a room opposite of the association, and a new kitchen has been prepared, in order to put the items and the equipment provided by the project. During the discussion, the women explained the importance of the grant and the support provided to such women associations, especially during the Covid - 19 pandemic, which they hoped continue especially in the field of assistance for the purchase of raw materials and food, in addition to conducting embroidery and environment awareness training workshops especially in the Al-Makhrour region. They added that all raw materials that they get are from local farmers, especially Al-Makhrour farmers, to support them in steadfastness

#### **Alwalaja Women Group (Rural Kitchen):**

Al-Walajeh women group is one of the four women business enterprises that was selected on the scope of the project, a business plan was developed in December 2019 for establishing Al-Walajeh traditional kitchen. Then an Agreement between Bethlehem University the group was signed in February 2020 in order to provide them with the following items for production in the total amount of 15,750 NIS for each associations. Items were delivered from March till August 2020.

Al-Walajeh Association was provided with the following items:

Items	Amount NIS
Kitchen Stan steel table	2000
Patisserie 7 Liters	720
Gas cooker	140
Fridge and freezer	2600
Gas stove 2 layers	250
Gas jars	720
Electric stove	2000
Food processor	580
Electronic food scale – 30 kilos	150
Plastic bag welding machine	150
Water kettle	35
Electronic Egg whisk	75
Meat mincer	250
Toaster	140
Gas heater	250
Frazer	1250
Big Plastic Tables # 6	150
Plastic Chairs # 12	390
Kitchen Items & Plastic and glass bottles	1802
Kitchen raw materials	2098
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,750 NIS</b>

On the 3ed of September, 2020. A motivated group of women in Al Walaja village launched their income generating project “The Rural Kitchen”, on the scope of the project “Biodiversity conservation & community development project in Almakhroul Valley”, funded by Darwin

Initiative, the women are producing grapes jam, thyme, Zaatar, pastries, in addition to different traditional meals, the women received a complete set of kitchen tools, like an oven, freezer, and many other tools, the women are yearning to market their products on many selling points. In addition to what they have now. After they endured a group of trainings on the scope of this project. And they are working on developing their own packages & labels.



#### **Hussan Women Group (Rural Kitchen):**

Hussan women group is one of the four women business enterprises that was selected on the scope of the project, a business plan was developed in December 2019 for establishing Hussan's women group. Then an Agreement between Bethlehem University the group was signed in February 2020 in order to provide them with the following items for production in the total amount of 15,750 NIS for each associations. Items were delivered from March till August 2020.

Hussan women Group was provided with the following items:

Items	Amount NIS
Kitchen Stan steel table	2000
Microwave	500
Squeezer Carrots	260
Electric lemon squeezer	50
Food processor	580
Electronic food scale – 30 kilos	150
Patisserie 7 Liters	720
Refrigerator	2500
Electronic Egg whisk	75
Wood and glass cabinet	2100
Gas jar	480
Kitchen Items	1675
Kitchen raw materials	1660
Gas stove	3000
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,750 NIS</b>

On the 9th of September, 2020. A motivated group of women in Hussan village launched their income generating project “The producing Kitchen”, on the scope of the project “Biodiversity conservation & community development project in Almakhroul Valley”, funded by Darwin Initiative, the women are producing Maftool, grapes products, Maamool, and pastries, in addition to different traditional meals, the women received a complete set of kitchen tools, like an oven, freezer, and many other tools, the women are yearning to market their products on many selling points. In addition to what they have now. After they endured a group of trainings on the scope of this project. And they are working on developing their own packages & labels.



### **Battir Women Group (Rural Kitchen):**

Battir Women Productivity Cooperative “The Traditional Restaurant” Project is one of the four women business enterprises that was selected under the Darwin Initiative – UK project as an income generating project “Conservation and Community Development in Al-Makhrou Valley in Bethlehem, Palestine Project”, a business plan for Battir women cooperative was developed in December 2019 for developing the heritage kitchen / restaurant. This restaurant will serve Traditional Palestinian food and serve hot drinks, cold drinks, and natural juices in addition to Arabic sweets. The women cooperative will also process pickled cucumber, makdous and labneh. An Agreement between Bethlehem University and Battir Women Cooperative was signed in February 2020 in order to provide them with the following items for production in the total amount of 15,750 NIS

Items	Amount NIS
Big Plastic Tables # 6	900
Small Plastic Tables # 6	1080
Plastic Chairs # 60	2100
Wood desk	400
Office chair	350
Wood cabinet	2100
Refrigerator	1600
Gas heater	880
Rubbish barrel	75
Water Cooler	500
Litter basket and toilet brush	50
Gas jar	480
Plastic bottles	601
Traditional tablecloths	700
Kitchen Items	2941
Kitchen raw materials	993
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,750 NIS</b>

The above-mentioned items were delivered to Battir Women Productivity Cooperative from April till August 2020. During COVID – 19 and closure period, the items were purchased according to the needs of Battir women cooperative. Monitoring and follow up support was also provided to the Battir Women Productivity Cooperative, to ensure the proper items specifications, orders and dates of receiving items and equipment’s. The project team from Bethlehem University has visited them on Wednesday September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. and were welcomed by the five women of Battir Women Productivity Cooperative and the member of the Battir Municipality. The group was briefed on the items and equipment that were provided to the Cooperative. And its importance in developing the cooperative’s business and employing women in the future.

Although the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure, Battir Women have been creative. They used equipment's received from the project and produced and sold the following products:

#	Item	Price	Production	Sold	Total price
1	Maamoul Eid Al-Adha	30 NIS per kg	120 kg	120 kg	3600 NIS
2	Makdous	35 NIS per Jar	20 Jars	20 Jars	700 NIS
3	Zatar- thyme	40 NIS per kg	10 kg	4 kg	160 NIS
Total					4460 NIS

Roya TV interviewed Battir Women mid of September 2020, to promote the cooperative and talk about their productive and talking about their planning, which is to have a special menu for Battir visitors (local tourist), and promote the traditional food they did.



On the 16th of September, 2020. A motivated group of women in Battir village launched their income generating project, on the scope of the project “Biodiversity conservation & community development project in Almkhourr Valley”, funded by Darwin Initiative, the women are producing several traditional meals and products that are demanded on regular basis by restaurants & visitors, in addition to pastries, the women received a complete set of kitchen tools, like an oven, freezer, and many other tools, the women are yearning to market their products on many selling points. In addition to what they have now. After they endured a group of trainings on the scope of this project. And they are working on developing their own packages & labels.



#### Activity 2.20 Prepare follow up report for the progress of initiated SME's

As the launches had been implemented in September then this will be included in the coming reporting period.

#### Activity 2.21 Follow up report on the project

Reporting activities are ongoing as furnished dates.

### **Activities for the accomplishment of Output 3. Raise awareness of and build capacities of local communities and stakeholders to better manage their natural resources, support conservation measures and benefit from sustainable agricultural and eco-tourism interventions while impacting the national legislation and involving both females and youth.**

#### Activity 3.1 Conduct one-day workshop for key stakeholders to present the Valley's biodiversity management plan

Implemented and reported in the second year report.

#### Activity 3.2 Conduct four one-day workshop to enhance marketing networks

Implemented and reported in the second year report, however another intended workshop will be implemented with the women in the coming quarter of this last year of the project.

#### Activity 3.3 Conduct two-days' workshop for alternative tourism operators

Activity implemented, and reported in the earlier reporting period, however another intended workshop will be implemented with the women in the coming quarter of this final year of the project.

#### Activity 3.4 Conduct four two-days training sessions for best sustainable farming practices, permaculture, organic farming

This activity had been implemented in the second year, and another round of training should have been implemented this year, however due to the closure and ban of travel between the UK and Palestine in the last months, Byspokes were unable to make this training for this year, however we will be trying to implement it in the coming months if the flights are resumed, however if this is not possible, we have reached an agreement with our partners Byspokes to contract a local consultant to do it this final year of the project.

### Activity 3.5 Conduct four two-days training sessions for best practices in conserving biodiversity

Last Four groups of farmers from the targeted villages attended two days workshops (2 targeted areas per day) the workshops conducted aimed at raising awareness of biodiversity conservation practices and how to include them in agricultural practices. This had been reported in earlier reports, and it was delayed for this year because of the pandemic situation however, a training will be taking place for the farmers in the coming months.

### Activity 3.6 Conduct one-day training session for women entrepreneurs

Will be implemented during November 2020.

### Activity 3.7 Conduct two two-days food processing training sessions

One session of this training had been implemented and reported during the second year, and another food processing training will be implemented during this quarter.

### Activity 3.8 Ten meetings for 5 schools located in Bethlehem District to present the project, the valley

Meetings had been implemented for the last year, however for this year our team had decided to activate remotely the environmental clubs in schools, since the ministry of education will allow limited access by anyone to schools because of the pandemic, the team will activate the environmental clubs in schools by distributing T shirts, sweaters, & hats to form a kind of group identity, and encourage them to make ideas for activities, like environmental cleaning campaign in their villages, awareness of biodiversity importance to schools children, recycling ideas to save the environment.

### Activity 3.9 Finalized 10 modules that are based on project studies

Work on process and will be finalized in the coming reporting period.

### Activity 3.10 Follow up report for the school environmental clubs at the selected school

Will be written and reported when the meetings are concluded for this final year.

### Activity 3.11 Disseminate up to 106 social media announcements, 15 newspaper news

During this reporting period more than 20 posts on social media were published by PMNH and stakeholders, so far, including social media platforms from the four communities, see *Annex 4* for links to posts.

### Activity 3.12 Conduct 4 TV sessions to discuss on air the different subjects the project is dealing with and supporting.

One TV session was done and reported on in the second year report. The other sessions were supposed to be implemented during the last six months, however because of the closure of the quarantine and the closure of the university, media production is being procured for and will be implemented in the coming quarter. However the project manager (Abdelsalam Aljanazreh) did one educational session on executing projects under crisis. The video link for that can be found here: <https://youtu.be/rf5w3Dd0X8s>

### Activity 3.13 Prepare a webpage for the project under the PIBS- BU website to present all project accomplishments

The website is operational and is being updated periodically, the website is going to be restricted and renewed for the coming month. The link <https://almakhrour.palestinenature.org>

Activity 3.14 Prepare and Print brochure for the project area  
Will be implemented during the coming two months of this final year of the project.

Activity 3.15 Conduct follow up surveys for sample of local households (20%of total beneficiaries (of which 50% females)

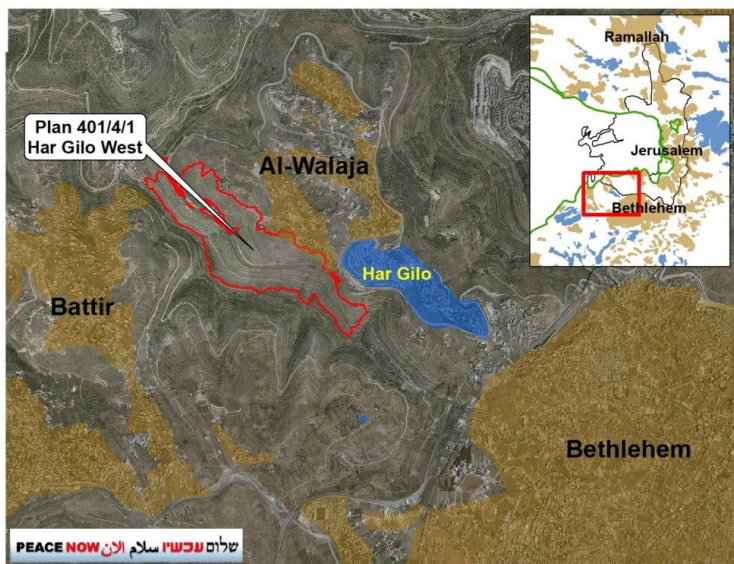
Implemented and reported in the last reporting period, and will be implemented again for a final sample in the last final report.

[Activity 3.16 & Activity 3.17 Progress reports and Final technical and financial audit reports](#)

Reporting is operational and according to plan.

**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.**

Most problems encountered were related to COVID-19 and are listed in 2b. Problems and challenges of other issues include occupation restrictions and plans for colonial settlement expansion in the area of the buffer zone for Wadi Almakhrour. In the issue of the occupation include settlement activities (we reported on our letter to UNESCO about this in earlier annual report). The new plans to expand settlement activities between two of the project's villages (Battir and Walaja) is especially troublesome (See <https://mondoweiss.net/2020/10/israel-approves-nearly-5000-new-settlement-units-in-occupied-west-bank/> and map below which shows projected Har Gilo settlement expansion. We hope to challenge this.



Another unexpected event was a very high degrees of temperature this summer (for some days on end, the temperature was 5-6 C above its annual average. This required some extra work on behalf of farmers and also impacted our biodiversity team work.



**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.**

Problems encountered related to Covid 19 and their impact

1. *Quarantine and lockdowns:* Closure and restriction of movement on the national level, halted normal movement of project team, beneficiaries and suppliers, which caused Major problems but project team did adapt. Delay in many operations were evident because of the lockdown on a national level. For example, suppliers were unable to operate and the university finance office was unable to procure many services and equipment relevant to the achievement of the project impact and the festivals and TV sessions were not done. The women grants launch, in addition to many as mentioned in details in the above progress of activities. Measures taken by the project team to mitigate this included online work and flexibility in operations and movements (facilitated by special permits from appropriate authorities). In addition to the fact that tourism activities had been altered. This caused delay in some activities while cancelling and replacing other (e.g. convert festivals into other marketing and selling points activities). The point was to keep the intended outcomes such as marketing and open channels of communication, capacity building and awareness. Also, the quarantine closure halted all activities In the university which made the project team operate from homes, as the university offices were closed. To mitigate the closure, the project team acquired some permits from the ministry of agriculture to distribute the seeds and transplants to farmers, so it should be stated that the project team has been functional despite the closure on two levels. That enabled the project team to perform, farming, and conservation activities during the closure, that is in addition to what was accomplished with the farmers other outputs were approached, three dunums as key habitats in the valley had been restored. Online communication with farmers, in addition to acquiring legal permissions to move The project team had made social media groups for the farmers who had access to internet and were able to use the smart media, and there was continuous communication and work with farmers, regarding advising and counselling with regard to farming activities. For the farmers, most of them were able to tend to their lands. The only exception was some farmers from Beit Jala because Al-Makhroul valley falls under area C sand Beit Jala main town is in Area A (Palestinian authority jurisdiction) so there was some restriction of movement. But via flexibility they were able to manage.
2. *Economic impact:* Many households lost their income sources, others had a big decline of income due to limited commercial activity, this created national income loss, and on the level of our beneficiaries, many who were dependent on labour income, lost their income, which focused poverty in many cases. As households and families incomes deteriorated, people have become more focused to search for any food security source to their families, and here project team contributed in trying to highlight the importance of agriculture on food security, but still the ability is limited to decide the direction of the specific impact on the project. Because many of the public activities were meant to enhance income generating activities for farmers and women, and this all had been delayed.
3. *Uncertainty and social fear,* the new unexpected nature of the disease was not planned for, nor dealt with in a similar case before, this created multiple disturbances in behaviours on the individual & group levels, like adopting social distancing, fear of the national health collapse. The disturbance of behaviours and relationships on the social individual and group levels had impacted awareness raising impact towards crisis thinking rather than environmentally responsible thinking, this needed a lot of networking through social media by the project team with the project beneficiaries to keep the direction towards the targeted impacts of the project

Covid-19 had some positive impact of encouraging people to return back to traditional agriculture as a new practice in this pandemic time.



**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	<b>YES</b>
Formal change request submitted:	Yes/No	<b>YES</b>
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes/No	<b>YES</b>

**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?**

*NONE*

**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](mailto: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**

Darwin Half Year Report Template 2020