



## Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020)

<b>Project reference</b>	26-001
<b>Project title</b>	Community livelihood and capacity support for securing Zimbabwe's wetland biodiversity.
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Zimbabwe
<b>Lead organisation</b>	BirdLife Zimbabwe
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Chikukwa Ecological Land Use Community Trust (CELUCT), Zimbabwe AIDS Prevention Project- Regai Dzive Shiri (ZAPP-RDS) Trust, BirdLife International (BLI), Environmental Management Agency (EMA)
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Togarasei Fakarayi</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)</b>	<i>31 October 2020, HYR2</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<i><a href="http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org">http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org</a></i>

**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).**

Despite Covid-19 challenges, the project implementation continued between April and September 2020. The project partners meeting conducted on 16 June 2020 reviewed progress and discussed plans for the year 2020-21. Below are key project achievements during this reporting period;

**Output 1**

The target villages were engaged on fire suppression during the fire season. Meetings on firefighting conducted with key members of the communities at Shashe, Daviot, Chinyaure and Markdale Villages in June 2020 were successful. These meetings facilitated by BirdLife Zimbabwe (BLZ) and the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) were a follow-up to firefighting trainings conducted in the year 2019-2020. The main output of the meetings was resuscitation of the firefighting teams at the beginning of the fire season, a period where fire outbreaks are common. The teams were established to assist in leading fire prevention, control and community mobilisation when there is an outbreak of fire. BLZ in collaboration with EMA facilitated construction of fireguards around key wetland and grazing areas in May and June 2020. Fireguards constructed by local villagers had a combined total length of 33 km. The fireguards helped prevent veldt fires especially around key sensitive wetlands.

BLZ and EMA with assistance of village representatives identified sensitive wetland areas for protection in Daviot, Shashe, Chinyaure and Markdale in June 2020. Consultation meetings were conducted with Gutu District Development Coordinator (DDC), Gutu Rural District Council (RDC) and local communities influenced improved conservation of wetlands. Local communities have agreed to protect main sources of the wetlands (seeps) from damage by livestock and cultivation. A rapid wetland assessment conducted by EMA and BLZ on the identified wetland sites provided basic baseline data on the wetland status before improved management. Protection of identified sensitive wetlands and restoration of paddocks was initiated in July 2020 with local communities

taking a lead in protecting sensitive wetlands. A total of 9 sensitive wetland sites with a total area of 44 ha in Chinyaure, Daviot and Shashe were protected by September 2020.

At the end of August 2020, two of the protected wetland sources in Chinyaure were each recolonised by a breeding pair of Wattled Cranes, and also used as foraging sites by the Grey Crowned Cranes. Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) monitoring training facilitated by BLZ with assistance of EMA in August 2020 was attended by a total of 33 participants (12 females and 21 males) from the four target villages. Improved knowledge on the application of IBA framework and establishment of IBA monitoring teams form the main output of the training. Ground surveys of cranes conducted jointly with EMA and the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority from 13-18 July 2020 recorded a total of 89 Grey Crowned Cranes and 41 Wattled Cranes. Post surveys there was continuous monitoring of 10 pairs of Wattled Cranes and four floater flocks of Grey Crowned Cranes by the Field Officer with assistance of some local villagers.

### **Output 2**

Shashe and Markdale villages continue to run poultry activities. To date each village received a total of 1000 chicks and stock feeds from which they raised broilers. Heating equipment procured was handed over to the two villages during this reporting period. Two bee apiaries were successfully established at Chinyaure Village with a total of 320 bee hives. Additional 324 bee hives have been constructed and are being added to the bee apiaries. A practical training on site monitoring facilitated by CELUCT in September 2020 equipped villagers with hands on apiary monitoring skills.

Expansion of pigsties at Daviot Village is in progress with two new pigsties being close to completion. Development of a business plan for the Income Generating Activities (IGAs) was initiated jointly by BLZ and ZAPP RDS in September 2020. A total of 37 (20 females and 17 males) villagers from Shashe, Markdale and Daviot were trained in small scale business enterprise and marketing in September 2020. The training conducted jointly by ZAPP RDS and BLZ equipped villagers with skills and knowledge in managing IGAs as a small scale business enterprise.

### **Output 3**

BirdLife Zimbabwe and EMA (Gutu Office) participated in the Gutu RDC environmental sub-committee meeting held on 22 July 2020. The project updates presented to this committee put emphasis on how the project deliverables are contributing to the Implementation of the Driefontein Grasslands Environmental Management Plan (EMP). More awareness about this project and the Driefontein EMP was raised among local participants who include councillors from Gutu District, government departments working on environmental issues and other development partners.

### **Output 4**

A case study on this project developed in July 2020 was shared with BirdLife International and forms the initial steps for the lessons learnt document. More input to this document will be provided as the project progresses.

**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.**

There was misconception among locals (outsiders) who appreciated only the livelihood component of the project. Some villagers near the targeted villages felt they have been left out from livelihood support by BirdLife Zimbabwe. To address this issue and also to ensure cooperation of communities in wetland and biodiversity conservation, more awareness on the project was raised. Although there was limited outreach due to covid-19, increased awareness on the project was done at district level in Gutu, and there was emphasis on strengthening awareness raising by villagers whom the project team interacted with during this reporting period. No project budget changes takes place in response to this. Bias towards livelihood project activities by the beneficiary villages was noticed. The communities were reminded to have a balanced focus on both community livelihood and biodiversity conservation. Coexistence with biodiversity has been strengthened mainly through livelihood incentives provided to communities.

Lessons learnt include that community owned best practice solutions for social-ecological sustainability are compatible with the realities at a local scale. The local communities successfully implemented some of the key actions (including fireguard construction, protection of sensitive wetlands) they identified during the wetland management trainings. Including gender considerations in conservation and community livelihoods is crucial. There has been active participation of women in all project activities including bee keeping and fireguard construction.

A quick recovery of the protected wetlands that attracted breeding pairs in the shortest possible time (within two months) has been one of the important lessons learnt during this period. Without disturbance biodiversity can start to restore itself. This gave us pointer for an improved wetland status and potential for increasing breeding pairs of cranes in this IBA. Engagement of district officers who include RDC, DCC, has been instrumental in bringing new ideas and skills that added value to the project. Participation of these key stakeholders during project implementation is essential in building project sustainability.

**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.**

Depressed economic activities within this covid-19 era has impacted the sales of the poultry production, whilst they have managed to sell all the stock there turnover has not been as what was expected. Some of the targeted markets (in nearby towns and schools) were not able to absorb as much as before and there were no openings for new markets. In response to market challenges we encouraged groups to sell their chickens locally. Residual impact was the reduced demand hence less returns for the group. Most of the potential markets are currently recovering and will be targeted before end of year.

Most trainings are now carried out outdoors to ensure there is enough physical distancing, also reduced number per training. We also kept to the guidelines, no handshaking between participants. This meant that the targeted numbers could not be met- but the encouragement is for those who have attended trainings to share with those that did not attend the trainings.

At national level, the wetlands committee meeting could not take place during the reporting period due covid-19. Efforts to use virtual meeting platforms were fruitless as most stakeholders could not be reached online. Currently, plan is in place to hold a wetlands meeting before end of 2020.

During covid-19 most people in the project area lost their livelihoods as they could neither sell their produce nor receive remittances from relatives whose sources of income were negatively affected by covid-19 situation. As a result there is increased pressure especially from non-targeted villages within the project area who have become vulnerable as they lost their livelihood. Poverty gap has increased putting additional challenge in addressing wetland loss and biodiversity conservation through poverty eradication. Currently, the project remained focused on the target beneficiaries but knowledge and skills are also being extended to other non-beneficiaries including nearby non-targeted villages within the Driefontein Grasslands.

Response to the reviewers comments on restrictions

See Annex 1

**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: No

Formal change request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance 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?**

No