

**Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects  
Half Year Report  
(due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021)**

<b>Project reference</b>	26-003
<b>Project title</b>	Securing the long-term future of Kenya's largest freshwater wetland
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Kenya
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Nature Kenya (The East Africa Natural History Society – EANHS)
<b>Partner(s)</b>	The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), The Inter-ministerial Technical Committee for the sustainable management of Kenya Deltas (IMTC), County Government of Siaya, County Government of Busia, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), Yala Ecosystem Site Support Group (YESSG), Yala Planning Advisory Committee (YPAC), Lower Nyandera Water Resource Users Association (WRUA) and Muweri WRUA
<b>Project leader</b>	Dr Paul Matiku
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2021 HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="http://www.naturekenya.org">www.naturekenya.org</a>

- **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 8,404-ha Community Conservation Area (CCA) within the Yala Delta is protected effectively and in perpetuity through formal gazettement and development of a management plan and associated governance bodies and regulations (Indicators 1.1,1.2, 1.3, 1.4)**

The County Governments of Siaya and Busia, national government agencies and 62 villages have continued to fully support the establishment of an 8,404ha Indigenous and Community Conservation Area (ICCA). Community stakeholders have kick started implementation of the ICCA management plan. With support from the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), the process towards formal recognition of ICCA as a community conservancy and ICCA management committee as a wildlife Association is on course with initial stakeholders meetings held and application process initiated (Annex 1, 2). KWS has reiterated its commitment to support wildlife management in Yala swamp as demonstrated in a letter of no objection to the registration of the ICCA Committee as a Wildlife Association (Annex 3). Yala Ecosystem Site Support Group (YESSG), Yala Planning Advisory Committee (YPAC), Nature Kenya staff, Chiefs, County Ward & Village Administrators, held meetings in 28 villages to create awareness on Yala swamp ICCA and the land use plan (LUP) with 840 (336M, 504F) people reached (Annex 4). The ICCA model is steadily gaining community support with a total of 28 Village Natural Resource and Land Use Committees (VNRLUC) formed. The number exceeds the initially targeted 62 villages. VNRLUCs and YESSG are on course in implementing regulations on water and papyrus access as part of the local resource use guidelines for the ICCA (Annex 5). GIS maps for the ICCA were produced including maps of degraded areas to measure restoration efforts (Annex 6). Restoration of 33.3ha of degraded wetland is on-going through direct planting of papyrus (Annex 7); 43,380 indigenous tree seedlings were planted to restore the lower River Yala riparian zone (Annex 8) and 40,720 exotic tree seedlings were planted in own farm woodlots. Application of management guidelines towards achieving natural regeneration of papyrus in 100ha of degraded areas within Yala swamp and 100ha of riverine vegetation within the River Yala riparian zone is ongoing (Annex 9). Detailed monitoring of key bird species within the ICCA is ongoing led by YESSG. End-of-project biodiversity assessments on water quality, key bird and fish species within the ICCA were conducted as well. Preliminary findings indicate that the most pristine papyrus habitats registered the highest numbers of the papyrus endemic bird species, while sharp declines in the number of papyrus endemics were observed in areas experiencing papyrus burning and encroachment for farming. The three critically endangered fish species were recorded- *Oreochromis variabilis* in L. Namboyo, *Labeo victorianus* in L. Bob, *Oreochromis esculentus* in Lakes Kanyaboli and Namboyo. The fish survey findings indicate that satellite lakes located within the core of the ICCA are good refugia for the native and endangered species due to the presence of diverse habitats hence their conservation should be enhanced. Water turbidity decreased (increased transparency) downstream, a testament of a working swamp in filtration and retention of sediments (Annex 10). A stakeholder meeting was held with facilitation from KWS to sensitize stakeholders on process and benefits of registration/recognition of Yala ICCA as a community conservancy and a Ramsar site. During the meeting, a resolution was passed to register the ICCA as a community conservancy (Annexes 11, 12, 13, 14, 15). A road map and action plan were developed to kick start the listing of Yala Swamp as a Ramsar Site (Annex 16).

**Output 2: The key 'user groups' in the delta are enabled to jointly manage the CCA through the provision of training and on-going support (Indicators 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5,2.6, 2.7)**

With continued capacity-building, YESSG cluster groups are on course in safeguarding Yala swamp ecosystem services with notable results.

On 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021 YESSG submitted a Memorandum to the County Secretary of Siaya on

the Annual development Plan for the financial year 2022-2023 (Annex 17). On 14<sup>th</sup> October when the National Lands Commission (NLC) issued a notice of intention of the County government of Siaya to allocate 6763.74ha of land within Yala swamp to Lake Agro Limited for commercial farming, YESSG rallied communities to raise objections (Annex 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24) YESSG carried out monthly bird walks, common bird monitoring, waterfowl counts, detailed monitoring and submitted data to the National Museums of Kenya (Annexes 25, 26, 27). This data will be used to produce the Annual Key Biodiversity Areas Status and Trends report.

Capacity building is on-going 82 (51M, 31F) YESSG members were trained as trainers of trainers (ToT) in cooperative formation and management (Annex 28). The ToTs were assigned duties to build the capacity of Yala Swamp user groups on benefits of farmer groups/cooperatives, governance and ICCA management (see page 2 of Annex 28). Crop farmers, livestock keepers, fishermen, wildlife guides and other user groups who constitute YESSG form the ICCA governance structure in partnership with county and national government agencies. Using monitoring tools designed in Y2, ToTs have been systematically collecting data on beneficiaries harvest under livelihoods enterprises including beekeeping, climate smart agriculture, conservation agriculture and submitting weekly reports to Nature Kenya field staff for collation and onward reporting and tracking (Annexes 29 and 30).

Capacitated YESSG continue to supervise and coordinate community engagement in income generating activities including mobilization of producer groups for ToT trainings, monitoring and submission of records on production, implementation of the agreed benefit sharing strategy. A joint YESSG management committee administers monies remitted to the established conservation kitty to support simple but critical conservation actions including ICCA management, biodiversity monitoring, awareness and advocacy. Within the reporting period beneficiaries of livelihoods activities remitted Ksh. to the conservation kitty. For instance, YESSG contributed Ksh. from the conservation kitty towards supporting community awareness and advocacy activities (see budget in Annex 31).

A national stakeholders dialogue is planned aiming to rally stakeholders to discuss on how to achieve sustainable conservation and development within Yala swamp ecosystem (Annex 32). As part of the dialogue, stakeholders are expected to deliberate on a sustainable financing plan with income from community enterprises; county government's budget lines and support from the private sector. The ICCA business case developed in Y2 will be publicized among stakeholders to lobby for adoption of the best approaches to realise income (see the programme in Annex 32).

**Output 3: The Land Use Plan (LUP) for the entire delta is adopted as official policy by the governments of Busia and Siaya counties, and capacity is established within these governments to implement the plan effectively (Indicators 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5)**

On 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021, briefing meetings with the 12 County Executives and 37 Members of County Assembly (MCAs) from Siaya and Busia were held as a process towards having the LUP adopted as official policy (Annex 33, 34). During the meetings, both the Executives and MCAs committed support for adoption of Yala LUP and SEA. The IMTC team committed to support clerks of lands committees in Siaya and Busia to prepare motions on the adoption of the LUP for tabling in the respective assemblies. As a result, the Yala swamp LUP was tabled in the Busia County Assembly, pre-publication scrutiny done as part of the adoption process. Lobbying is ongoing by the Busia county Executives for the Yala swamp LUP to be

approved by the Busia County Assembly. The County Executive for Lands in Siaya presented the Yala swamp LUP to the cabinet for approval. Modalities of establishing a cross-county Yala Sustainable Development Board will form part of the agenda for discussion during subsequent planned joint meetings.

The GIS expert within the IMTC team shared shape files of maps and other GIS products in the Yala LUP and SEA with the County Planning Departments (CPDs) of Siaya and Busia. Meetings have been scheduled between the GIS Expert and County Planners for the GIS Expert to help with interpretation of the maps to guide decision making. These maps will provide a basis for CPDs to create a detailed and updated map of the delta.

A zero draft Siaya County Strategic Plan for water is in place (Annex 35). Subsequently, stakeholder meetings have been planned with a proposed framework for the development of a land and water register for the delta (Annex 36). Progressive consultations were held with Water Resources Authority (WRA) on the land and water register (see Annex 37). WRA is supportive. CPDs together with the ICCA management committee will be supported to generate a register of all land and water use activities in the delta.

**Output 4: The poorest and most vulnerable people living in and around the Yala Delta are empowered to further enhance their livelihoods in ways that support the long-term conservation of the delta's natural resources (Indicators 4.2a, 4.3a, 4.4a, 4.5a, 4.6a, 4.7a, 4.8)**

The revised feasibility studies report recommendations on establishment of a wholesale market hub will be presented to stakeholders as part of enhancing awareness during the upcoming stakeholders dialogue (see programme in Annex 32). The awareness seeks to rally stakeholders towards supporting /investing on establishment of the market hub, bulking centres, market outlets, branding, value addition, and governance of the market hub among other things.

The project supports continued operation of the established bulking centre/outlet for papyrus products within the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) offices compound in Siaya town. The centre doubles up as a display/ market outlet for other nature based products. Honey harvest from beekeepers is currently bulked, packaged and sold at the centre. (Annex 38) The project also supports continued operations of the established poultry unit at Rawalo village, Siaya county. For instance, the project catalyzed signing of Memorandum of Understanding between fish farmers and chicken farmers under which fish farmers will supply chicken farmers with chicken feeds from the feeds milling unit in Usenge town (Annex 39). The unit serves multipurpose functions as a community training center, bulking and marketing center for chicken farmers. Plans are underway to set up a similar poultry unit within another targeted cluster of trained chicken farmers replicating lessons learnt under AfriEvolve project with financial support from BMZ and NABU (Annex 40).

Through continued partnership with County Departments of Agriculture, County Agricultural Extension Officers trained on Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) from Siaya and Busia have sustained hands on training of beneficiary farmers on field practices in CSA/CA as Trainers of Trainers (ToT) (Annex 41). During the recent production cycles between April-July and September-October 2021, 60(23M, 37F)ToT farmers were supported to train 10 farmers each and as a result all the 250 project beneficiaries on CSA were trained (Annex 42).

200 (131M, 69F) crop farming households made up of 1,000 (470M, 530F) people produced

19,358.5kg of high value vegetables & cereals under conservation agriculture. A total of 4048kg of the produce worth Ksh. was consumed within households and 15310.5kg sold for Ksh. in market centres and local hotels and restaurants in Siaya and Busia. 32 (6M, 26F) households (part of the 200 households above) sold sorghum and soya beans to East African Breweries Limited and Farm Market Alliance. 50 (25M, 25F) crop farming households made up of 250 (118M, 132F) people produced a total of 11,823kg high value horticultural crops including kales, capsicum, coriander & indigenous vegetables using climate smart agriculture techniques. A total of 3,265kg of the produce-worth Ksh. was consumed within households and 8,558kg sold for Ksh. in market centres and local hotels and restaurants in Siaya and Busia (Annex 43).

150 (100M, 50F) households made up of 750 (353M, 397F) people were supported to restock 17 fish ponds. 15 ponds were stocked with tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) and 2 ponds stocked with catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*). 9 out of 17 ponds have already yielded 4054 kilos of fish. 344 kilos were eaten by beneficiary households while 3710 kilos were sold for Ksh. to local hotels and fish mongers at Usenge fish market (see Annex 44).

100 (53M, 47F) households made up of 500 people (235M, 265F) were supported to produce honey from three apiaries with a total of 100 beehives. Within the reporting period, 18 beehives yielded 71.2kg of honey, 8 kg were consumed by beneficiary households while the remaining 63.2kg was sold for Ksh at the product centre in Siaya town and households within Siaya and Busia counties.(See Annex 45).

Women from 50 households made up of 250 (118M, 132F) people, within the reporting period, bulked and sold 396 chicken (712.8kg) to community event caterers for Ksh. 1,405), while 63 chicken (113.4kg) worth Ksh. were consumed within households (see Annex 46).

55 households made up of 275 (130M, 145F) people were supported to produce high value papyrus and palm leaves products. Within the reporting period, benefiting households produced 1657 assorted products, sold 1381 assorted high value papyrus and palm frond products worth Ksh. at a market centre-Mubwayo, in Busia, and the product centre in Siaya Town (see Annex 47).

17 out of the 30 trained tour guides earned a combined income of Ksh. from guiding 102 tourists visiting the Yala Swamp and lower River Yala (Annex 48).

ToT monitors are on course in application of monitoring tools to track progress in production, consumption, sales, remittance to conservation kitty etc and share reports on weekly & monthly basis. The tools also capture information on challenges encountered for follow up and appropriate remedial actions (see Annex 29 and 30).

Meetings were held with a number of consumers identified to be engaged as potential buyers for community products. They include Farm Market Alliance, Pacho Fish Farm Limited, Western Honey Flows Limited, Chicken Basket Limited, Kisumu Innovation Centre (KICK), and Lake Victoria Tourism Association (LVTA). Discussions have advanced with the producers already engaged in business with the buyers through contract agreements and MOUs (Annex 49-54). Other meetings will be set up based on need to discuss further engagement.

Between August-September 2021, pre-cooperative sensitization trainings were conducted producer groups (crop farmers, fish farmers, beekeepers, chicken farmers, weavers). A total

of 82 (51M, 31F) producers were trained by County Cooperatives Officers on principles of formation of cooperatives and their role in production, bulking and marketing (see Annex 28). An economic appraisal was conducted to determine viability and sustainability of the producer/marketing cooperatives (Annex 55). A total of 3 out of 5 cooperatives have progressed in formation and have applied for registration with the Registrar of Societies (Annex 56-58). The cooperatives are expected to enhance production, bulking and marketing for community producers.

**Output 5: Application of lessons learned from the project at other large wetland sites in Kenya and beyond is encouraged through communication actions reaching all key stakeholders (Indicators 5.1,5.2, 5.4, 5.5)**

On 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021 the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) held its bi annual meeting (Annex 59). During the meeting, members discussed strategies for enhancing partnerships for project implementation and enhancing outcomes. Members provided input to the Year 3 project work plan and adopted the work plan (Annex 60).

The project outcome and outputs were presented to County executives and Members of County Assembly for Siaya and Busia County and PIC members (Annexes 61 and 62). Project briefs and updates were also disseminated through stakeholders consultative meetings and trainings (Annex 63) and Afrievolve project kick off meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> June .2021 (Annex 64). Presentation of project findings will be advanced in Y3 targeting the Delta's Development Board among other stakeholders through virtual meetings among other channels (see Annex 32).

KWS has reiterated its commitment to support wildlife management in Yala swamp as demonstrated in a letter of no objection to the registration of the ICCA Committee as a Wildlife Association (see Annex 3) and sensitization trainings towards registration of Yala Delta Community Conservancy and Ramsar Listing (Annex 64-68).

Dissemination activities are on-going through memos, newsletters, events, media and journal publications. 1 article about the project was published in the Darwin newsletter (Annex 69) and 1 article in the Kenya Birding Magazine, Issue 15 (Annex 70). 2 articles about the project were published in a National newspaper on September 21<sup>st</sup> 2021 on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021 respectively <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/western/article/2001424058/siaya-busia-counties-step-up-efforts-to-have-yala-swamp-recognised-globally> <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/western/article/2001427409/group-fights-plan-to-allocate-part-of-yala-swamp-land-to-developer>

On 25<sup>th</sup> October 2021, Nature Kenya initiated an online petition to stop allocation of land within Yala swamp to a private developer. Over 559 people had signed the petition at the time of reporting.

[https://secure.avaaz.org/community\\_petitions/en/national\\_land\\_commission\\_county\\_governme nt\\_of\\_siay\\_stop\\_yala\\_swamp\\_land\\_allocation/](https://secure.avaaz.org/community_petitions/en/national_land_commission_county_governme nt_of_siay_stop_yala_swamp_land_allocation/)

Nature Kenya also wrote to the National Lands Commission to the same effect (Annex 75).

On 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021, Nature Kenya submitted a memo to the County government of Siaya urging them to support the adoption of the Yala Swamp LUP as a county policy document and adopt the LUP recommendations to inform the Annual Development Plan (Annex 76).

On 31st May, 2021 Scientists from Kenya Forestry and Research Institute working in collaboration with Nature Kenya submitted a manuscript entitled "Utilization of natural

resources in tropical wetlands: livelihoods and sustainable use of Yala swamp, Kenya". The manuscript is under review for publication in the Journal of Environmental Challenges (Annex 77)

Development of a YESSG Website has been initiated to promote marketing of Yala delta community products and enhance online visibility of YESSG initiatives (Annex 71).

YESSG, County governments of Siaya and Busia, led awareness creation through: World Environment Day event on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at Kogelo Primary School where 188 people (121 M, 67F) and 53 (17boys, 36girls) school children participated (Annex 72). Birding in 4 villages (i.e. Ndhiha, Misori, Goye, Budala) to mark the World Migratory Bird Day event on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021 where 50 people (40M, 10F) participated. (Annex 73). Birding in 5 sites (i.e. Rawalo hills, L. Kanyaboli, Usalu village, Bunyala, Rukala) to mark the World Migratory Bird Day event on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2021 where 23 people (16M, 7F) participated. (Annex 74).

**1000 copies each of LUP and SEA were printed with 257 copies each of LUP and SEA distributed** to stakeholders from national government agencies, county governments of Siaya and Busia, research and academic institutions, civil society organizations and local communities within the reporting period (see meeting participants lists in Annexes 12, 33, 34, 59). The distribution is in addition to 162 copies done in Y2.

**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.**

Excessive floods including areas that have never experienced floods and the back flow of L. Victoria eroded gains made in livelihood investments especially in fish farming, crop farming & beekeeping (submerged ponds, crop farms & hives). However, These will not affect budget and timetable as a new project to be implemented within the project site will support some elements to address the challenges.

**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.**

Delivery of site actions that required meetings remained a major challenge. However, Nature Kenya developed a protocol to provide guidelines for holding meetings while protecting staff, beneficiaries and partners from COVID-19. The protocol includes use of meeting venues that allow social distancing, with hand washing facilities, sanitizing and fumigation of all contact services, provision of hand sanitizers, initially (July-August) limiting meetings to 15 people and limiting meeting time to 1 hour. Others are provision of masks which must be worn throughout the duration of the meeting and adherence to social distancing at all times (Annex78). During complete lockdown period (from 11<sup>th</sup> June 2021-24<sup>th</sup> July 2021) where Siaya and Busia Counties were among affected counties, Nature Kenya suspended in person activities.

Applying the protocol County Extension Officers trained 60 (23M, 37F) CSA/CA crop farmers and other producer groups. On 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021 Kenya government further relaxed restrictions associated with curbing the spread of COVID-19. It is now possible to hold larger and longer meetings BUT Nature Kenya continues to apply all the other measures on a precautionary basis.

The community conservation champions-YESSG maximized habitat restoration activities with support from Nature Kenya during the complete lock down period. This is because we deliver habitat restoration through a model where YESSG plant trees and papyrus at the village level. Between May and October 2021 alone, farmers established own farm woodlots with 40,720 exotic tree seedlings; planted over 43,380 indigenous tree seedlings within the River Yala riparian zone and rehabilitated 100ha of degraded areas within Yala Swamp through application of management guidelines to promote natural regeneration. This contributed to achievement of over 80% of planting targets for the year.

**2c. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement? NO**

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) under spend in your budget for this year? NO**

Yes No Estimated under spend: £

**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/work plan 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**