

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

<b>Project reference</b>	26-008
<b>Project title</b>	Market-led Approach to Sustainable Management of Agrobiodiversity for Livelihood Outcomes
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Nepal
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD)
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Annapurna Rural Municipality; Lekhnath Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Machhapuchhre Development Organization (MDO) Kaski; Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperative; Panchadham Agriculture Development Cooperative; Phewa Watershed Ecosystem Management Board; Pokhara Metropolitan City; Ramsar Management Authority; Rupa Rural Municipality; Seed Change (formerly known as USC Canada); The Bazaar
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Ram Bahadur Rana, PhD Principal Investigator</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>Half Year Report 3 (HYR3)</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="http://www.libird.org">www.libird.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).

During the reporting period (April – September 2021), the project team submitted the Year II Annual Report of the project '**Market-led Approach to Sustainable Management of Agrobiodiversity for Livelihood Outcomes**', which was reviewed and duly approved by DI/LTS International. Nepal experienced the devastating second wave of coronavirus infection, consequently the country went to partial lockdown from 14 April to 31 August 2021. Since the lockdown was partial, some of the field level activities were performed by the field-based staff though outside the district travel was restricted. The project team utilized the partial lockdown period to finalize the detail activities and budget for Year III, which was shared with the project partners and municipalities, i.e. Pokhara Metropolitan City (PMC), Rupa Rural Municipality (RRM) and Annapurna Rural Municipality (ARM), and MDO. We also developed knowledge management plan, and prepared detailed protocol for feasibility study on Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) mechanism in two watershed areas of Nepal in Year III. Fortnightly virtual meetings were organized to review and reflect on the progress of activities and to prepare implementation plan for coming weeks.

We conducted one Partners Meeting on 4 August 2021 and one Project Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting on 10 August 2021. Both these meetings were conducted virtually.

#### **Output 1: Increased income and employment opportunities to smallholder farmers through the production and sale of agricultural biodiversity-based products at local and regional markets.**

Year I and Year II of the project primarily focused on provision of technical backstopping support and material input support to farmers contributing to production and productivity of keystone crops/species. Though the establishment of packaging house was envisioned in Year II (April 2020 – March 2021), only a limited progress was achieved due to COVID-19 pandemic and

subsequent lockdown of the country (24 March – 21 July 2020). However, a significant progress in establishing and operationalizing the packaging house – Annapaat Agro Private Limited – was accomplished during the reporting period. The company has been established as social enterprise responsible for marketing local agro-products to local, regional and national markets. With the operationalization of Annapaat Agro, the major objective of the project to link local agro-biodiversity products to market thereby benefitting smallholder producers has been achieved. The Annapaat Agro came into operation on 2 October 2021, and we expect the full fledged operation will commence within the Year III reporting.

**Output 2: Increased consumers awareness and knowledge about the value of local biodiversity based food products.**

The outreach programme to hotel and restaurants, and schools/canteen could not be performed due to closure of these institutions during lockdown. However, we have produced the list of hotels and restaurants, and schools that will be approached in second half of the year as the lockdown has been completely lifted. Similarly, we have produced some awareness materials (introductory brochure and tips on recipes to be prepared from foxtail millet – nutritious but underutilized crop) for wider distribution. Preliminary discussion with hotel/restaurant owners/managers and school operators has taken place, and they are excited to explore our products.

**Output 3: Local stewardship and capacity for the conservation and management of biodiversity and lake ecosystem enhanced.**

The project has been continuously monitoring the performance of 14 cooperatives, which were supported by the project in strengthening the capacity of those cooperatives in specific areas (timely auditing, at least 33% women member in Board of Directors, development of policy documents, computer-based account keeping, hiring of manager/accountant, and implementation of business plan) in Year II.

A significant progress has been achieved in establishing Biodiversity Information Centre (BIC) at Bhadaure in Panchase area. The BIC highlights orchid diversity in Panchase forest along with display of local crop diversity, fish diversity, and local cultural diversity. The BIC also serves as Collection Centre for aggregating locally produced agro-products for marketing at Annapaat Agro in Pokhara market and beyond. The project partners (Machhapuchhre Development Organization and Panchadham Agriculture Development Cooperative) are working on publicity materials for the BIC, and we expect the Centre will be officially inaugurated by December 2021.

**Output 4: Policy framework developed for scaling up market-led approaches for agrobiodiversity management for improved livelihood outcomes**

We accomplished the major activity, i.e. conduct a feasibility study of ‘unified landscape branding’ in other two biodiversity rich ecosystem in Nepal’ mentioned in Output 4. The project team along with a consultant accomplished fieldwork at Indrasarovar reservoir (4 – 7 September 2021) and Jadishpur reservoir (13 – 15 September 2021) in Makwanpur and Kapilvastu districts respectively. We are analysing and interpreting the data generated from the field research, and a final report will be produced within March 2022.

**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 no such notable problems or unexpected developments over the last 6 months. So, there will be no change in the budget and timetable of the project activities.

**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.**

Nepal experienced the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic (29 April – 31 August 2021), which proved to be more devastating than the first one. However, unlike the first phase, the Government of Nepal did not order nationwide lockdown. Hence, local travel within the project area was less disrupted, which allowed our field staff to visit project sites and provide technical advice to farmers. Having said that, construction work on packaging house experienced considerable delay during first wave of COVID-19, which again encountered minor setback during second wave because of lack of oxygen supply for metal works. Nevertheless, the contractor was able to secure oxygen supply and resume construction work after a gap of about three weeks, and completed the project within August 2021. The operationalization of packaging house was delayed by about one year, directly impacted by COVID-19 lockdown.

During partial lockdown, the project team connected virtually once every fortnight and updated their progress, and planned for subsequent weeks. This process ensured that project staff, scattered in different places, have a common understanding of project activities, and expedite field activities when travel restrictions relaxed.

We expect a negative impact of COVID-19 in one of the project Output targets/indicators, which we have communicated to Darwin Initiative/LTS International through **change request form**. The pandemic situation affected the timetable of the project activities but we have recovered fully, except for packaging house establishment (delayed by one year), with no effect on the overall budget of the project activities, targets/indicators, and outcomes.

**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
Formal change request submitted:	Yes
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

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**