

Darwin Initiative/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31st October 2019)

Project reference	26-010
Project title	Know your onions: sustainable plant use in Tajikistan
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Tajikistan
Lead organisation	Centre for Middle Eastern Plants Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
Partner(s)	Kulob Botanic Garden Ganji Tabiat ZamZam Fauna & Flora International
Project leader	Dr Sophie Neale
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media etc.	Not yet applicable

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

The project start date was delayed until 1 July 2019, and as such this progress report covers three months (1 July – 30 September 2019).

For the biodiversity component, species distribution data has been gathered from global resources and local resources will be added early in 2019 when the first stages of distribution modelling will be undertaken. Team members have collected a range of seeds of different species of *Allium* (onions) and these have been processed, stored and are being distributed to communities for planting.

A formal work plan has been established and information is actively being gathered from communities about wild harvesting. Monitoring plots will be established based upon this information.

Formal horticulture training has been delayed until spring 2020, due to the late start of the project and to ensure it is undertaken at a suitable time of year. This will not impact upon other project outcomes and activities, as the first species to be targeted and grown are onions and some expertise already exists locally. For non-onion species, more details about cultivation will be shared through training in 2020. Training in other disciplines will also be undertaken at that time: formal planning and discussion of how this will proceed has taken place and all partners are working towards this.

Planning for market appraisal workshops is under way, and PIA and PMSD work is being planned and scheduled through discussion with all partners. A range of households in at least two communities have been engaged and locations for new agrobiodiversity plots established. Further communities and households will be added in 2020.

Extensive online research into plant uses across Tajikistan and nearby territories is well under way. Systematic analysis of this will lead into planning for local workshops, to be hosted at a Tajikistan Biodiversity Congress that will take place in Kulob in autumn 2021, leading directly to

the production of the National Report on Native Plants for Livelihoods with engagement with Tajik, regional and global partners.

All partners have met and discussed activities and plans online and via email, and a governance structure is in place detailing partner responsibility and supporting roles for each output and activity. Project Partnership Agreements are also in place (albeit awaiting final signatures – PPAs will be shared once signed and completed). Tajik partners will visit Edinburgh in October 2019, albeit under a different funding scheme, and further discussions will take place at that time with staff from RBGE and FFI.

A staff member has been appointed at RBGE with responsibility for aspects of this project. She has extensive experience in related work, on sustainable use and with local communities especially in terms of training and engagement, and experience working in a botanic gardens context with skills in species distribution modelling highly relevant to the tasks of this project. Overall direction and management of the programme remains with Project Lead Dr Sophie Neale and Project Manager Dr Alan Forrest.

Given the delayed start to the project, we believe the time spent in detailed planning, and the start of timely works such as seed collection and community engagement, mean the project is on track at this stage.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

A delay to the start of the project and some minor modifications to the budget were agreed through a change request dated 10 May 2019.

No other issues have been encountered.

2b. 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
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Formal change request submitted:	Yes/
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Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes
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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.

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

No issues to raise.

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. Additionally, if you were funded under R25 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 25-035 Darwin Half Year Report**