



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

Project reference	26-022
Project title	Uprating Community Forest management in Nepal: Enhancing biodiversity and livelihoods
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal
Lead organisation	ForestAction Nepal
Partner(s)	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (BRGE) Kathmandu Forestry College (KAFCOL) Federation of Community Forest User Groups Nepal (FECOFUN) Jhapa Division Forest Office Jhapa
Project leader	Naya Sharma Paudel, PhD
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	<i>HYR 1</i>
Project website/blog/social media etc.	https://twitter.com/BiodiversityNep

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 was started on **01 June 2019**. Following are the progress made during the period of June-Sept 2019.

Activities

Output 1: Forests are sustainably managed with greater diversity, enhanced structural complexity and improved productivity, and institutional capacity for biodiversity conservation enhanced

1.1 Organize planning workshops cum interaction program with local stakeholders at project site; Inception workshop attended by project partners, CGUG members (3 from each CGUG) and representatives from local governments and other stakeholders

- **Inception meeting:** Project inception meeting cum interaction program was organised on June 9, 2019 at project site. The meeting was organized to share projects concepts, working approaches, project management and financial aspects, proposed interventions and expected outcomes to the wide range of stakeholders in the project site, and to seek comments from stakeholders on project implementation. The program was attended by over 100 participants who included chief of local governments, members of forest user groups, government forest officers among others. Detail information of the event is provided in Doc_1_jalthal Inception meeting.
- **Meeting with CFUG leaders and stakeholders:** Project team visited all 22 community forest user groups (CFUGs) offices and discussed program activities with CFUG leaders. Project Manager Lila Nath Sharma and project staffs met Member of Federal Parliament Mr Rajendra Lingden, who is from the project site. These meetings helped in gaining shareholders' ownership of project at local level and political level. For details see Doc_2_Meeting notes and activities.

1.2 Organize ‘Field education program’ for local people to demonstrate and identify key species, habitat and traditional ecological knowledge associated with bio resources, rarity and conservation status and ecological features of species and ecosystem also discussed and informed.

- A joint forest transect walk in Jalthal forest was organised between experts (RBG scientists, Project Manager and herpetologist) and local people in September 2019. A total of 20 local people (members of forest user group) participated the transect walk and we discussed about plants habitats and traditional uses of bio resources along the walk. For details see Doc_2_Meeting notes and activities. More visits will be organised in October-December.

1.5 Support CFUGs in plantation of bamboo culms and other fast growing native fodder species, organise interaction with locals to identify needs and consult experts for feasibility

- **Plantation:** In this year the project supported two CFUGs in plantation of trees in degraded and Mikania invaded forest. A total of 7000 seedlings were planted. For detail see Doc_3_Plantation report. More plantations will be done during monsoon of 2020.
- We have individually visited 22 CFUGs to explore local status and discuss potential intervention and supports for respective forest user groups. For details see Doc_2_Meeting notes and activities.

1.6 Work with CFUGs to revise and renew the forest operational plans considering key attributes of forest biodiversity (flora, fauna, birds, habitats, habitat trees, ecological complexity, ecological process, water points, wetlands, marshes, threatened and exploited taxa etc)

- **Currently three CFUGs are planning to revise their CFOPs** (Community Forest Operational Plans). Project team discussed the issue with forest technicians and organised meetings with CFUG leaders to discuss biodiversity integration in CFs. Forest inventory has been started and may take 2-3 months to complete the process.

1.7 Conduct participatory biodiversity assessment of Jalthal forest bringing experts and local people together and maintain database, support KAFCOL master students in thesis on Jalthal biodiversity, management options and human-nature interaction

- Forest transect walk was organised with RBG expert (see Doc_2_Meeting notes and activities). Project Manager (who is also a plant taxonomist) has made transect walk with local people and has listed more than 150 plant species. Data on use and values of those plants was also collected.
- An MSc student (Mr Yogendra Bikram Paudel) has been selected to undertake thesis in Jalthal. He will collect and identify plants of Jalthal. He already conducted a field work in July. Will visit field again in November for detail work.

Output 2: Mikania invasion including satellite populations substantially reduced and controlled, degraded forest areas and wetlands reclaimed and converted into productive systems through ‘integrated site management’

2.1 Carryout Mikania cover assessment using remote sensing and ground truthing tools (it serves as baseline data as well) and carryout end line data collection at the end.

- **Mikania cover assessment:** Kathmandu Forestry College (KAFCOL) assigned faculty Dr Himlal Shrestha and a BSc student Aayush Regmi to undertake the Mikania assessment. They in coordination with field staff have started Assessment from August 20, 2019.

2.2 Organize workshop with local stakeholders to prepare strategies and plans for Mikania control (prepare plan for ‘integrated site management’)

- A leaflet on Mikania has been published and widely distributed during the Mikania management workshop. It is printed with colour photographs in Nepali language and disseminated in project sites and beyond. For detail see Doc_4_Leaflet.

2.3 Organise campaign and conduct activities for Mikania clearance in forests in wider stakeholders participation including local government representative, provide incentives to CFUGs for users contribution

- Project supported two CFUGs for Mikania clearance. Slashing and uprooting of Mikania was done in almost 8 hectare of invaded forest. This is for plantation purpose. For detail see Doc_3_Plantation report. More area will be cleared during Mikania control clearing campaign in November/December this year.

2.7 Work with local farmers, CFUG members and municipalities to remove satellite population of Mikania

- Awareness and stakeholder consultation for Mikania control: Professor Bharat Babu Shrestha- an eminent invasion ecologist, visited the project site and organised discussion with DFO (divisional Forest Office- Government agency responsible for forest management) Jhapa and highlighted need for Mikania and other species control. Actual removal of Mikania will be conducted in November to December.
- During his visit to Jhapa he discovered a new invasive species in Jhapa. The invasive species *Mimosa diplotricha* has not been reported yet. This is important achievement of the project. For detail see see Doc_2_Meeting notes and activities.

Output 3 Biodiversity conservation and values are appreciated and integrated into community forestry policy and planning process; communication materials highlighting biodiversity conservation prepared and disseminated for diverse stakeholders

- **Community forest operation Plan (CFOP) review:** CFOP review has been in place. 22 CFOPs from Jalthal are acquired and reviewed. A review report has been drafted and more CFOPs will be reviewed. For detail see DoC 5_ CFOP review.

Other activities: Project team believes that we need to be accountable and transparent to local communities and other stakeholders especially in Jhapa. Therefore, a document describing project objectives, activities and outcomes has been published in Nepali language. It also describes the budget and funding agency. For details see Doc_6_Program Introduction_Nepali.

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.

During our assessment of forest we discovered that the forest has one additional invasive plant species called *Mimosa diplotricha*. This species has not been reported yet from Nepal so this is new to invasive flora of Nepal. Currently, the species is not a major problem in Jalthal but it is already a big problem in some localities around the forest. This indicates that Jalthal forest is at risk of being invaded by the species soon. Given the nature of problem it brings, we have also taken initiative for its early eradication. We are also working on raising awareness on it.

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/No: No, we have not reported it. But we will manage it.

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) 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

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**