



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

|                                           |                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Project reference</b>                  | 27-003                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Project title</b>                      | Creating a sustainable landscape for the Tau-Buid and the Tamaraw                                                                                      |
| <b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>        | Philippines                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Lead organisation</b>                  | Re:wild                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Partner(s)</b>                         | D'Aboville Foundation and Demo Farm Inc.                                                                                                               |
| <b>Project leader</b>                     | <i>Mike Appleton</i>                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b> | <i>HYR2</i>                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Project website/blog/social media</b>  | <i><a href="https://www.rewild.org/wild-about/mounts-iglit-baco-natural-park">https://www.rewild.org/wild-about/mounts-iglit-baco-natural-park</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)**

Overall progress from April to September has been encouraging despite the major impacts of the COVID epidemic on Mindoro and the Philippines. The project team has, through hard work, innovative problem solving and patience, generally kept all components of the project on track, albeit with some delays and ongoing challenges. Progress on specific outputs and activities relevant to the reporting period is detailed below.

## **Inception and administration**

### **x.1 Prepare ToR and contracts for all contractors and staff.**

All key staff are formally engaged

### **x.2 Establish financial management system.**

A system is in place and operating to record and track all expenditure using the Darwin structure.

### **x.3 Establish documentation and monitoring systems.**

A Google Drive system has been established for documentation and recording.

### **x.4 Procure equipment.**

All anticipated office and project equipment has been procured.

### **x.5 Hold meetings with Tau-Buid and National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to finalise Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) requirements.**

Since D'Aboville Foundation (DAF) started working in the area eight years ago, it has consistently consulted the Tao Buid leaders within the protected area on its assistance to the implementation of the protected area (PA) management plan and the Darwin Initiative supported activities. DAF has a Memorandum of Agreement on working with the Tribal leaders and the Protected Area Management Office (PAMO) in Mts. Iglit Baco Natural Park (MIBNP); this has enabled the project to proceed with its work without hindrance.

The project team has been holding ongoing meetings with the National Council for Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), the Tau-Buid leaders and the PAMO to clarify Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) issues. There are no overall objections to the principal of FPIC, but the precise nature of the agreement has yet to be finalised. NCIP staff have suggested that the formal application for Certification Precondition (CP) as part of the FPIC process should be carried out between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the tribe with NCIP as witness. The DENR Mimaropa Office in a formal letter to its Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO) dated 27 August has instructed the MIBNP PAMO to "initiate and facilitate the securing of FPIC from NCIP for all MIBNP management plan activities, instead of securing FPIC per activity." We are now working to support this process.

### **x.6 Identify capacity needs for project staff and partners.**

We have developed a training programme for five local community 'para anthropologists' to conduct socio economic research in their own communities, with support from project staff. This initiative has been working very well; our two trainees have learned how to use computers, have completed two online training modules and are already collecting and writing up important information from the field.

We have identified the need to train local stakeholders in appropriate methods for permaculture. A training course will take place in November.

### **x.7 Hold project inception workshop.**

COVID restrictions have prevented holding of a formal workshop as originally conceived. However the project team has met with all the main project partners in multiple meetings and in various combinations both online, and where possible in person.

### **x.8 Conduct regular monitoring and reporting.**

Activity reports are prepared and filed for all main meetings and interactions. A financial monitoring and reporting system is in place. Quarterly reports are prepared for the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

## **Output 1 A sound understanding of the structure, culture and needs of Tau-Buid communities in and around the Tamaraw habitat and of the options and needs for sustainable land use and landscape rehabilitation.**

**1.1 Commission a study of Tau-Buid agriculture and resource use and food security from a national specialist.**

**1.2 Conduct socio economic and ethnographic studies of one Tau-Buid village in order to understand how new practices in agriculture and land use can best be assimilated.**

A 60-page draft of the “Initial Documentation of the Indigenous Political Structure, Land Use, Hunting, and Other Resource Use Practices of the Tau-Buid in MIBNP” has been completed. Data collection involved literature review and several informal discussions with Tau-Buid leaders, tamaraw rangers, and NGOs who worked with the Tau-buid in the past. The draft has been reviewed by an expert on Indigenous Peoples from the Cordilleras.

We have introduced a novel programme to train local Indigenous ‘para-anthropologists’ to conduct studies in their own community (see X.6). They are already gathering new and important information.

We are in discussion with the Institute of Agroforestry at the University of the Philippines at Los Banos and a French-Filipino social geographer over a contract to conduct an agroforestry assessment. This has been delayed due to COVID restrictions.

**1.3 Conduct exchanges, training events and study visits from the Tau-Buid to other Indigenous initiatives in the Philippines**

COVID restrictions have prevented any possible cross visits. However, we have identified some possible exchange partners, and Tau-Buid community members have shown interest in such exchanges.

**1.4 Establish an area inside MIBNP for trials and demonstrations of agriculture and agroforestry techniques.**

A joint field visit with representatives of the project, the Protected Area Management Office, the Tau-Buid and the Philippines Permaculture Association took place from 6-15 June. The resulting report contained an initial proposed design for a 2-hectare model garden area and a 6-hectare area divided into two sections: a) experimental restoration site, and b) food forest.

Following consultations and discussions with authorities, the initial design plus the implementation framework were approved by the Protected Area Management Office. A draft Memorandum of Agreement for delivery of the project has been prepared and endorsed for signing by the DENR regional office.

**Output 2 At least two Tau-Buid communities (approximately 200 men, women and children) are engaged in implementing agreed plans of activities to improve sustainability of resource and land use and rehabilitate damaged landscapes in and around Tamaraw habitat.**

**2.1 Hold participatory resource management planning events with the Tau-Buid**

**2.2 Support participatory identification of location and boundaries of Community Conservation Plan (CCP) areas inside MIBNP**

**2.3 Support participatory development of management and action plans for CCP areas.**

An orientation meeting on the ENIPAS Act of 2018 (RA 11038), the Wildlife Act (RA 9147), and the Indigenous People’s Rights Act took place on 21 July, attended by fifty-four persons: 17% female, 83% males; 17% non-Tau-Buid and 83% Tau-Buid. A report on the proceedings of the orientation was prepared. The workshop had four objectives: a) understand the salient features of ENIPAS Act of 2018, Wildlife Act, and the Indigenous People’s Rights Act, b) identify ambiguities in interpretation of the specific provisions of the law and determine how these could be handled/addressed, c) identify names of Tau-Buid, NCIP, and PAMO staff who will form the planning team for the formulation of the CCP, d) come up with an initial action plan in the formulation of a Community Conservation Plan (CCP)

The first two objectives were achieved. The last two objectives were not fully met because the more vocal participants came from outside the protected area. It was deemed better to

postpone the identification of the people who will be involved in the planning once it is clear that those within the protected area are the ones playing an active role in the process.

In response to food shortages during the so called 'hungry season' we are investigating establishment of a rice bank that would potentially help free community members from the need to borrow money to buy food. The idea was welcomed by both the Tau-Buid and the PAMO staff. A "dongdong" (traditional rice storage house) is under construction adjacent to the DAF hut in Station 2 (ranger station), with the approval of the PASu and the Tau-Buid leaders.

## **2.6 Develop and implement strategies and joint actions for fire management, erosion control and invasive species control.**

This scheduled activity will take place as part of the development of the community conservation plan.

### **Output 3 The Tamaraw population is well protected, stable or increasing and occupying an increased protected zone of at least 2,500ha.**

#### **3.1 Support and development of and implement refined census techniques for Tamaraw**

Two approaches have been developed to be conducted and tested in parallel with the 2021 census

- i. A multi-vantage point count combined with a double observer protocol in replication of the existing census method to test its accuracy.
- ii. Distance sampling for dung (using transects) combined with the double observer protocol.

Personnel have been trained to use these new methods.

#### **3.2 Conduct and analyse annual Tamaraw census.**

The third iteration of data collection for the distance sampling for dung was conducted from June 8 to 15, 2021 (The first iteration was done in February 2020, and the second iteration in December 2020). Only those rangers from both Tamaraw Conservation Program (TCP) and Protected Area Management Office (PAMO) who have been trained and have participated in previous distance sampling activities participated in the third iteration. The report on the results of the third iteration is available as a separate document.

The double-observer point count of the Tamaraw was conducted from May 4 to 9, just a few weeks after the annual tamaraw count that was conducted from April 11 to 16, 2021. This methodology proved to be more difficult to implement than previously thought, and due to the pandemic crisis, previous trials were impossible to carry out. Due to that, this survey should be considered as a pilot test. The results showed changes in distribution patterns from the traditional annual point count.

#### **3.3 Agree an enlarged no hunting area with the Tau-Buid (linked to 2.2)**

Discussions on the enlarged no hunting area is being done alongside the formulation of the Community Conservation plan as discussed in section 2.3 above.

#### **3.4 Train, equip and support rangers to improve protection and monitor and plan activities using SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) software.**

The SMART database version at TCP has been upgraded to 6.3 from 6.1. There is however a need to discuss with higher authorities to ensure that a SMART system suitable for protected areas is officially included in the work routine of the PAMO.

The use of SMART during the quarter has been limited due to equipment malfunctions; most of the Smartphones have now been repaired. On September 29, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Biodiversity Finance Initiative (Biofin) donated four Blackview 9100 phones to the TCP rangers.

Patrol activity has reduced in the past six months due to the COVID pandemic, equipment problems, and ongoing issues with the status and contracts of rangers.

**3.6 Conduct an awareness campaign on the management of MIBNP need for tamaraw conservation. Focal groups - Park edge communities - Local government units and official agencies with an interest in MIBNP.**

We have focused on meetings with key stakeholders explaining the project in the context of wider initiatives for managing MIBNP and the Tamaraw. To support this, we have prepared a simple leaflet explaining the overall approach being taken to manage the area (including recognition and acknowledgement of the Darwin Initiative).

We have also commissioned a video focusing on the Tamaraw census, to be used for training for future surveyors and to raise awareness among local people and the wider public.

**Output 4 A claim for the rights of the Tau-Buid in their Ancestral Domain is prepared and submitted by the end of the project.**

**4.1 Conduct a review of the current status of the Tau-Buid claim and the reasons for the rejection of the previous claim.**

Completed

**4.2 Clarify the processes required to obtain a CADT and complete the ADS DPP inside MIBNP**

Completed

**4.3 Formalise agreement with the Tau-Buid and NCIP for provision of support.**

NCIP has prepared a detailed plan and timetable for the CADT process. We are currently negotiating a programme of technical and financial support for them to be able to lead this.

**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.**

Aside from COVID related issues, the main challenges have related to:

**1. Personnel turnover among government partners**

Frequent leadership changes (and absences due to sickness) make project continuity a challenge at times. This causes inevitable delays as new personnel need to be familiarised with the project. However, the project team has very good relations with all the key personnel below the leadership level, who are able to help ensure continuity. In addition, the existence of the management plan for MIBNP and for the Tamaraw provide a framework of continuity, as the project's activities are based on these. Furthermore our team have been asked to help with preparation of the Annual Work and Financial Plan for MIBNP, which has helped ensure that project activities are formally embedded into operations even when leadership changes.

**2. Concerns about morale among government Tamaraw Conservation Project rangers (see activity 3.4)**

We are working on an action plan to ensure that patrolling and crime prevention are scaled up and that the rangers secure adequate contracts and working conditions from the authorities. This includes working with the MIBNP leadership and with the Regional Executive Director of the DENR. We have now been given indications that there may be an increase in central government funding for Tamaraw conservation in 2022, which may help address these issues and enable resumption of a full patrol schedule.

**3. Heterogenous nature and fragmented leadership of the Tau-Buid people; addressing the areas of the Tau-Buid territory that lie outside the protected area**

This is an ongoing and complex issue that is best addressed by a patient and diplomatic approach. The development of the Community Conservation Plan for the part of the Tau-Buid territory inside MIBNP provides a formal framework for planning and decision making by the Indigenous residents in the protected area.

**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.**

Overall, implementation has been made considerably more difficult by COVID, but has been possible and we are not excessively delayed so far. Although the situation has often been stressful and demanding, our team have been outstanding in how they have adapted to the challenges. The main impacts of the COVID pandemic and our responses have been as follows

**1. The project manager from Re:wild has not been able to visit the project since it started.**

To address this, Re:wild and DAF hold a weekly (up to 2 hour) project zoom meetings, a monthly wider meeting on Tamaraw conservation as well as ad hoc meetings and e-mail exchanges. Although not ideal, we have been able to plan and manage activities quite effectively in this way, but a personal visit is required. We are currently planning one for February 2022.

The project manager and Emmanuel Schutz from the D'Aboville Foundation were able to meet at the World Conservation Congress in Marseille France in September.

**2. Travel within Mindoro and within the Philippines has been difficult and unpredictable as COVID restrictions have frequently changed.**

This has hampered and delayed movements, meetings, field trips, travel (especially of officials) and prevented many large gatherings such as workshops and training courses, leading to an underspend on these items so far this year, as online interactions have offered cheaper, but less than ideal alternative. There will be a need for a number of participatory events in the next months.

Some additional expenses have been incurred for testing, quarantine, increased ticket costs and reduced options for local transportation, for which costs which have tripled in the past few months. The impact has been decreased to some extent by the reduced frequency of travel, but will become more of challenge.

Installing accommodation at the project office has enabled more flexibility (and reduced expense) for personnel based on and visiting Mindoro. Hiring staff locally on Mindoro and training local para-anthropologists has reduced the need for inter-island travel by researchers and technical staff. Project team members have been personally very flexible and patient about working times, compliance with restrictions on travel and quarantine requirements.

**3. Ensuring the safety of project staff and partners.** The team has been scrupulously following official guidance and observing restrictions and safety protocols and have so far remained free from COVID. Our Indigenous partners have been imposing their own restrictions and rules, at times not allowing access to their territory and only holding meetings outside.

**4. Processes for consultation and decision making have been slow and there has a squeeze on public spending.**

Flexibility, patience, and online interaction have reduced the impacts. The project timetable was designed in the knowledge that it is not possible to 'force the pace' when working with Indigenous peoples and in challenging economic conditions. Furthermore community-based consultations are not feasible online. The delays have been frustrating, but not excessively problematic to date.

**5. Challenges in recruiting and deploying specialist staff**

It has not been possible to secure the services of specialist consultants or project technical staff required by the project. We have offset this to some degree by recruiting and training local 'para' specialist staff and by providing online coaching for them by specialists. Project staff have also covered the shortfall by working extra time to meet the needs.

So far the project has been coping well with the restrictions imposed by the COVID pandemic, but we will need to make some adjustments to the budget allocations in order to ensure that we can catch up on delays and equally importantly so that the stress on the local project team can be reduced. We plan to make a budget adjustment request in the near future that will:

1. Shift some budget from short term consultants to increasing the proportion of time spent by DAF staff on the project.
2. Split some planned consultancies where one person is not available with all the required skills
3. Reallocate some budget from holding participatory events to hiring more individuals (short and medium term) to visit relevant stakeholders and hold smaller meetings and lead iterative interactions and write up results over longer periods (instead of one-off workshops).
4. Purchase a small vehicle to enable transportation within Mindoro. We had planned to rely on hired and public transportation for the project and this had been working well. However since COVID started, transportation availability has decreased greatly, periodic total closures of public transport take place, and hire costs have tripled. It may therefore become more practical and economical to buy a small used vehicle for moving 4-5 people.

**6. Additional costs incurred by our partner, the D’Aboville Foundation**

During the COVID pandemic, general costs and administrative demands and delays have become much higher for DAF, and the working environment for NGOs in general has become very challenging. We have received a request from the DAF to increase project overheads to a realistic total of 20%. Their current standard sum is 10% and this is no longer viable. We are working with DAF to adjust budgets elsewhere to allow for this change and to reflect the measures we need to take to manage the project under the conditions of COVID. This will be part of a request for budget changes to be submitted shortly.

7. The feedback from our last annual report asked about measures to assist with the COVID-19 recovery. At the moment it is too early to consider recovery, and the pandemic continues to have waves of impact on the Philippines. The ability of the government to restrict inter-island and inter-province travel has helped to limit the spread outside the Manila and Luzon. Some of the Tau-Buid are experiencing food shortages (linked to some extent to limitations on movement of labour and good imposed by COVID). Some have been asking to borrow rice. In response we are setting up and 'capitalising' a rice bank at Ranger Station 2. This will allow community members to 'borrow' rice at no cost and 'repay' it at harvest time, helping ensure their food security and just as importantly keeping them out of financial debt.

**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 | n/a |

**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?**

Not at present thank you

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**