



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31st October 2020)

Project reference	27-005
Project title	<i>Organic livelihoods conserving Cambodia's big five</i>
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	<i>Cambodia/Siem Pang District, Stung Treng Province</i>
Lead organisation	<i>Birdlife International-Cambodia Programme</i>
Partner(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Department of Environment Stung Treng and Ratanakiri provinces, Ministry of Environment</i> 2) <i>Sansom Mlup Prey Organization</i> 3) <i>Ibis Rice Conservation Co., Ltd</i> 4) <i>Department of Land Management (DoL), Stung Treng and Ratanakiri provinces</i> 5) <i>O Rey Community Protected Area, and Veal Kambor Community Protected Area at Lomphat Wildlife Sanctuary</i>
Project leader	<i>Mak Sopheap</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	<i>31 October 2020, HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i>N/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).

The project started on 1 April 2020, although the Darwin Initiative only approved the project for funding in May 2020. The project start date was not delayed because BirdLife used co-financing to implement project activities. The budget, and logical framework remained unchanged despite the recent COVID-19 outbreak. In Cambodia lockdown restrictions were short and only restricted holding district and village meetings for a period. This report therefore covers the period from 1 April to 30 September 2020.

Recruitment of staff

Most project staff were already on board by 1 April 2020. The GIS Data Management Officer, Chea Sophea, resigned in September 2020 and he was replaced by Hai Bunleng, who has an MSc in Enterprise Management from Beijing Forestry University in China. At Lomphat Wildlife Sanctuary (LWS), the terms of reference (ToR) for project staff were revised to enable them to begin Ibis Rice activities in two villages.

Project partners meetings

A meeting was held with Sansom Mlup Prey (SMP) in April 2020 at the BirdLife International office in Phnom Penh. It was agreed to develop a work plan and timetable for implementing the Ibis Rice scheme at the seven villages surrounding Siem Pang Wildlife Sanctuary (SPWS) and two villages at Lomphat Wildlife Sanctuary. The Ibis Rice sub-grants with SMP for seven villages in SPWS were signed in April 2020. A meeting was held with SMP to finalize the ToR and budget to replicate Ibis Rice at LWS, and a sub-grant contract will be signed in October. Two meetings were held with the Department of Land Management (DoL) of Stung Treng

Province in April and July 2020 to discuss and report on the progress with rice field land mapping.

Meetings with village chiefs at SPWS were conducted separately in April to introduce the project and recruit new members to join the Ibis Rice scheme.

Two quarterly Stakeholder Forum meetings were conducted in June and September at Siem Pang District hall to introduce the project, review the progress with the Ibis Rice scheme, and to raise and seek solutions to issues.

LWS team study visit to SPWS

The BirdLife LWS project team visited SPWS in September to learn about implementation of the Ibis Rice scheme, how to implement the scheme and how compliance functions.

Project monitoring, review and reporting

Monthly progress reports were prepared and are available upon request.

Outputs 1: The Ibis Rice scheme will be expanded to an additional 2,250 rural people.

Sales of Ibis Rice are made at a minimum 10% premium price at SPWS and LWS

The Ibis Rice Scheme has been expanded to seven villages around at SPWS. As of 30th September there are 640 households from Khes Svay, Khes Kroam, Pong Kriel, Kham Phouk, Pha Bang, Lakay and Nhang Sum villages registered with the scheme and who have signed the conservation agreement contracts which commit to halting illegal activities (no encroachment, no logging and no hunting). A total of 11,600 Kg of rice seed was distributed and planted. Agricultural technical trainings have been conducted in each village. An Internal Control System audit of Ibis Rice was completed September in all seven villages. The audit for organic certification by ECOCERT began in October.

Village name	Farmers registered (household)	Final Ibis Rice members (household)
Khes Svay	113	103
Khes Kroam	178	136
Pong Kriel	143	108
Nhang Sum	125	104
Phabang	30	30
Lakay	14	14
Kham Phouk	37	36
Total:	640	531

Table 1: SPWS Ibis Rice scheme members in 2020

In March at LWS we conducted an Ibis Rice feasibility assessment at three villages (Srepok thom village, Thmey village and Sre Chrey village). The assessment report was produced and is available upon request. Following the assessment, we have selected two villages for piloting Ibis Rice at Srepok Thom and Sre Chrey. The sub-grant agreement with SMP has been signed and began the project activities in October 2020.

Rice field mapping and registration for 260 families with the Department of Land Management (SPWS & LWS)

To control the expansion of cultivated land, we collaborated with Stung Treng Department of Land Management (DoL) to map village rice field lands. A sub-grant to map 200 land parcels was signed with DoL in April. The mapping activities are now completed and 164 land parcels belong to 146 families have been mapped. The land certificates will be provided to farmers in November.

At LWS, the land mapping activity will start following signing of the sub-grant agreement of with SMP. We will report on this activity in the first annual report.

Select two villages in LWS and pilot Ibis Rice scheme at LWS

Three new villages at LWS were assessed by SMP in March 2020. After assessment, we selected the two villages of Srepok Thom and Sre Chrey to pilot the Ibis Rice scheme. The sub-grant agreement with SMP will be signed in Oct 2020 and we will report on this activity in the first annual report.

Output 2: Two Community Protected Areas (CPAs) are established (one at SPWS and one at LWS).

In July the government started a nationwide process to review land claims in all protected areas. BirdLife has joined the Siem Pang district working group. The process appears open-ended and no guidelines have been issued by the Ministry of Environment. The outcome at SPWS and LWS is therefore far from clear. We therefore are deferring any implementation of the CPA process until this process is completed and the outcomes and potential impact on the protected areas clear.

At LWS, instead of establishing a new CPA, BirdLife has identified and selected an existing CPA at O'Koki to strengthen its management capacity and. This CPA extends over 1,908 hectares of forest and due to budget constraints, poor governance, and weak management structure was not functioning well. To strengthen this CPA, we supported the election of a new CPA management committee in accordance with CPA establishment guidelines. The provincial decree to recognize the new management structure is currently being finalized. We have provided trainings on effective patrolling, GPS use, and recording biodiversity data.

Output 3: Village Forums, with local authority support Ibis Rice and CPA initiatives and commit to SPWS and LWS protection.

Establish M & E framework and baseline surveys for numbers of village forums established and effective, awareness raising amongst village beneficiaries, compliance and forest cover within SPWS and LSW

Seven Village Forums with 33 members (18 female) have been established at target villages surrounding SPWS and the governance structure and byelaws established. The Forum members gathered and met quarterly to raise the villagers' concerns and problems for discussion and to find solutions regularly. Minutes are available upon request.

Village Forum Conservation Agreements Signed

By 30 September, 640 households in the seven target villages at SPWS had registered under the Ibis Rice scheme and 531 households had signed conservation agreements to produce Ibis Rice and commit to abiding by the protected area regulations.

Quarterly Village Forum meetings at commune level

Seven Village Forum meetings in Preak Meas and Thmor Keo communes on 19-20 May and 12-31 August 2020 in SPWS. All village chiefs and commune chiefs gathered to discuss issues and challenges across livelihoods, conservation, and illegal activities in the wildlife sanctuary. The results of the meetings were shared in the district stakeholder forums. The minutes of the Village Forum meetings have been produced and are available.

Two District Stakeholder Forum meetings chaired by the Provincial Deputy Governor were conducted on 18 June and 21 September at Siem Pang District Hall. There were 29 participants representing each of the seven villages, including all village chiefs, two commune chiefs, the district governor, Department of Environment officers, local police and military. The purposes of the meetings were to strengthen relationships between key Siem Pang stakeholders (government and local communities) by inviting them to attend regular quarterly meetings and exchange information about common issues and threats to SPWS. The meeting minutes have been produced and are available upon request.

At LWS BirdLife organized a district forum on 27 May 2020 at Lomphat district hall to inform villagers and local government about protected area law. This was attended by 53 people and chaired by the Lomphat district governor, the forum actively discussed land encroachment issues east of the Srepok River and to develop a plan for awareness raising. The LWS provincial stakeholder forum will held twice annually to discuss and find solution related to site management. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions we were unable to hold such a meeting during the reporting period.

Awareness raising on the importance of SPWS and LWS and the illegality of hunting/snaring conducted in nine villages by Village Forum committees

BirdLife raised awareness on the importance of SPWS and LWS and the illegality of hunting/snaring through the seven village forums meetings and the district stakeholder forum meetings at the two project sites. We are strengthening capacity to the Village Forum Committees members so that they can conduct the awareness raising on the importance of Protected Areas and the illegal activities to their villagers in the nine villages by their own in the future.

Output 4: Stable populations of five Critically Endangered bird species and one mammal species (Eld’s deer) within SPWS and LWS

The five Critically Endangered bird species occurring at SPWS were monitored monthly. Monthly biodiversity reports have been produced for each of the six months from April to September in both wildlife sanctuaries, SPWS and LWS and are available upon request.

Searching and monitoring nests of White shouldered Ibis in LWS and SPWS (monthly census during the breeding period)

At SPWS, we conducted nest searching throughout April and May. At SPWS we found 24 nests and 21 successfully fledged 41 chicks. At LWS we found ten nests and six successfully fledged 12 chicks. Four nests failed.

Searching and monitoring nests of Giant Ibis in LWS and SPWS (monthly census during the breeding period)

At SPWS we began nest searching in June 2020 and it is ongoing. By 30 September we had found 11 nests of which four nests have fledged six chicks. Three nests are still actively feeding three chicks and two nests have failed. At LWS we have found eight nests and four nests have fledged five chicks. Three nests have failed, on one nest is being incubated.

Searching and monitoring vulture nests at SPWS (monthly census during the breeding period)

By September 2020, we had found 11 nests and seven nests fledged seven chicks in SPWS. Two nests are failed and other two nests were located in Laos that presented a monitoring challenge. Vultures are now extinct at LWS.

Conducting monitoring of three vulture species at vulture restaurants at SPWS

We conduct vulture restaurants monthly. From August 2020, we began weekly vulture restaurants (Table 2)

Date	RHV	SBV	WRV	Total
April	4	25	27	56
May	5	28	40	73
June	7	31	50	88
July	8	26	40	74
August	7	27	38	72
September	6	34	57	97

Table 2: Monthly vulture counts at SPWS

Conducting White-shouldered Ibis (WSI) roost census in LWS and SPWS (monthly and annual census)

At SPWS, we monitored 15 roost sites but we only found evidence of seven in use. We conducted a census on the evening of 15 and on the morning of 16 September. We counted 385 birds on 15th September, and 222 on 16th September 2020. The morning was significantly different from the evening due human disturbance causing some birds left the roost in during the dark. We considered the evening count is more accurate.

Location	X	Y	15 th (evening)	16 th (Morning)
Toul Bosphnhiev	641306	1554383	371	208
Srae Svay	634822	1559633	0	0
Srae Krohorm	631231	1554483	8	8
Srae Hong Mex	646485	1564612	6	6
Lumpoun	636256	1568565	0	0
Lumtea	638116	1565553	0	0
Along Chrey	644153	1556305	0	0
Total			385	222

Table 3: WSI roost counts in September at SPWS

In LWS, we counted on the same day and date. We checked 13 roosting sites which are in current use. We counted 11 birds on 15 September , and 11 on 16 September 2020.

Location	X	Y	15 th (Evening)	16 th (Morning)
Toul Tr. Chhouk Sor	670256	1490280	0	0
Chamkar Ta Heng	670631	1492621	0	0
Sre Prich	681950	1489691	0	0
O'Andoung	682529	1488072	0	0
Sre Ta Hun	725110	1464982	4	4
Bak Kham	727013	1462413	0	0
O'Samoy	722484	1496579	0	0
O'Katul	720515	1495466	0	0
Sre Bong Toch	722613	1496557	2	2
Donha Pong	743801	1478554	0	0
Sre Poup	746534	1477593	0	0
Chamkar Ta Plork	747647	1474141	5	5
Toul Kmoch Sre Chrey			0	0
Total:			11	11

Table 4: WSI roost counts in September at LWS

Searching and monitoring Eld's deer in SPWS (monthly census)

The Eld's Deer rapid survey was undertaken in April 2020. The survey counted a minimum of 32 individuals compared with ten in 2019 and 32 in 2018. The rapid survey report was produced in April 2020 and is available upon request.

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.

Allocation of land in protected areas

On July 3, 2020, the Prime Minister instructed three ministries of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction; Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and Environment to allocate some land in protected areas, including wildlife sanctuaries, to issue land ownership titles to citizens. Possible recipients can receive land if they can show they are truly dependent and lived there for many years. He said besides people receiving land they live on; the state will provide an additional 10% of extra land to find wood or for cows to grazing. BirdLife is part of the Siem Pang district working group, since only we hold digitized records of land holdings. The scope and timetable for undertaking completing remains unclear. This new directive will affect SPWS and LWS, especially in Output 4 of creating CPAS and we have reported on this above.

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.

Project start late in LWS due to COVID-19

Due to COVID-19, meetings and gathering were not allowed from March until July 2020. This situation has led to delay in implementing of project activities at LWS. Then the sub-grant agreement with SMP to pilot the Ibis Rice scheme in two villages in LWS will now begin in October 2020.

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/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) 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. 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**