

Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects
Half Year Report
 (due 31st October 2021)

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 (DoE) 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</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. HYR1)	<i>31st October 2021, HYR2</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).

Project partners meetings

The project work plan and timetable was updated with Samsum Mlup Prey (SMP) and a sub-grant signed in April. Meetings with village chiefs and villagers from three new villages at SPWS were conducted in April. Two quarterly Stakeholder Forum meetings were conducted in June and September 2021. Regular meetings were held with all other project partners.

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 (50% women).

An additional 264 households or 1,320 rural people joined the scheme from the seven existing villages. In the three new villages 110 new households comprising 550 rural people joined the scheme. So, at total of 1,870 rural people at SPWS and at LWS 72 households or 288 rural people joined the scheme. The grand total of rural people joining the scheme in the reporting period was 2,158. Therefore, we are within 4% of reaching the end of project target by Year 2.

1.1 M & E framework establishment

The M&E framework was finalized and the monitoring workflow tracker was created (Annex 1).

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

At the end of 2020 and following official certification participating households at SPWS sold their rice at an average premium of 51%. For the 2021 harvest, the IBIS Rice Conservation Company has committed to buy rice at the same price.

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

We mapped 217 land parcels (625 hectares) belonging to 200 households at SPWS and 168 parcels (104 hectares) for 72 households at LWS. A total of 289 households in 2021. In 2020 we mapped 164 land parcels belonging to 146 households. Overall we have mapped rice fields for 418 households, thus exceeding the project target. In 2021 we did not register land parcels after consultation with SMP but the option for registering these parcels remains open.

1.4 Quarterly Village Forum meetings

At SPWS two Village Forum meetings were conducted in June and September at Preak Meas and Thmar Keo communes with 30 participants. The local community expressed their concern about land expansion in their communities, especially along the Sekong River within SPWS, where villagers are grabbing land principally for rice and cashew nut production.

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

Seventy two households from Sre Chrey and Srepok Thom villages joined the IBIS Rice scheme and signed the conservation agreement .

1.8 Monitoring, evaluation of Ibis Rice related and compliance activities and results at SPWS & LWS

At SPWS we conducted ground truth checking and the bi-annual non-compliance village meetings from June to September with 60 villagers suspected of violations. Thirty of 682 households had violated the agreement in 2021. Most violations were rice field expansion into the protected area around Khes Svay, Pong Kriel and Khes Kraom villages.

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

2.1 Establish a M&E and baseline for CPA establishment

This activity has been added to the M&E framework.

2.2 Establishment of protected area working groups at SPWS and LWS

At SPWS we worked with the Village Forum in Kam Phouk village to establish a Fisheries Conservation Zone (FCZ) on the O'Khampa River and provided one big pond and three solar powered wells for community people in the village. At LWS we decided to revive and strengthen the capacity of the pre-existing but otherwise moribund Okoki CPA. This CPA already has a committee and bylaws.

2.3 Participatory assessment and consultation with communities at SPWS and LWS

At SPWS one meeting was held at Kam Phouk village on March 18 and chaired by the village chief and three members of the Village Forum committee together with project staff. Covid restrictions prevented this being a larger meeting. The O'Koki CPA management committee met regularly.

Output 3: By March 2023, seven Village Forums in SPWS are strengthened and two Village Forums in LWS are established.

3.1 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 LWS

An M & E framework was established and indicators added (Annex 1).

3.2 Village Forum Establishment and Declaration at SPWS

At SPWS two Village Forum Committees were established and by-laws were agreed in Sre Russei and Peam Khes villages and were endorsed by Sre Sambo Commune Chief on 27 September. Nine people became the new Village Forum committee members. The new third Village Forum committee in Sekong commune will be established and endorsed in October.

3.3 Village Forum Conservation Agreements Signed at SPWS

The Village Forums at Sre Russei and Phean Khes have signed the conservation agreement.

3.4 Quarterly Village Forum and Stakeholder Forum meetings at commune level

Seven Village Forums met in Preak Meas and Thmor Keo communes on 17 June and 10 September 2021 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. Two District Stakeholder Forum meetings were conducted on 22 June and 13 September at the Siem Pang District Hall where 40 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 met. The purposes of the meetings were to strengthen relationships between key Siem Pang stakeholders and exchange information about issues and threats to SPWS.

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

Village Forum Committees conducted awareness raising on the importance of protected areas and illegal activities to more than 126 people in their villages.

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

4.1 Compile all baseline data for the 5 CR bird species and establish baseline data for Eld's deer and establish M & E framework for the same

Baseline data for these species extends back for ten years and indicators are incorporated into the M&E framework.

4.2 Searching and monitoring nests of White shouldered Ibis in LWS and SPWS

Nest searching was conducted throughout April and May. At SPWS we found 31 nests and 26 successfully fledged 53 chicks making 2021 the best year on record. At LWS, we found ten nests which six successfully fledged nine chicks. A similar result to 2020.

4.3 Searching and monitoring nests of Giant Ibis in LWS and SPWS

At SPWS we had found 14 nests of which two nests had fledged four chicks. Indications are that 2021 will be an above average year. At LWS we found ten nests and four nests fledged ten chicks. The 2021 data is similar to 2020.

4.4 Searching and monitoring vulture nests at SPWS

At SPWS we had found ten nests and seven nests fledged seven chicks. The figure for 2021 is average but fledging rate is a little below average.

4.5 Conducting monitoring of three vulture species at vulture restaurants at SPWS

We conducted vulture restaurants weekly. The long-term trend shows a decline in attendance but during the reporting period there was no significant change.

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

At SPWS we monitored 16 roost sites but we found only 13 in use. The maximum count was 373 birds compared with 385 birds in 2020. The trend shows a decline. At LWS, we found seven roosts in use. We counted five birds on 15 and 16 September. The trend at LWS has been a decline since 2013.

4.7 Survey to establish baseline and monitoring White-shouldered Ibis and Giant Ibis at two new CPAs

Since the FCZ and CPA are within the protected areas they are already subject to the same monitoring protocols as the rest of the protected areas and a baseline already exists.

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

A vehicle base survey was undertaken on 15, 16 and 17th April. The minimum number of unique individuals recorded was 14. The maximum number counted was 23. This was the second lowest minimum count and the lowest number of total sightings recorded.

Awareness raised via BirdLife website, e-newsletters, journal publications and events held throughout the project's lifetime

BBC News and BBC world broadcast a three minute feature on vultures at SPWS in August.

Giant Ibis populations in SPWS paper has been accepted by the Cambodian Journal of Natural History 2021 (CJNH) and will be published in December 2021.

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 were no notable problems during the reporting period.

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.

The government placed restrictions on attendance of meetings by government staff and the size of meetings from March until July 2020. We experienced delays and postponements of meetings in relation to expansion of IBIS Rice into the three new villages and also on awareness raising meetings to be conducted by the Village Forum committees. However, despite these restrictions significant project progress was made.

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 re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget 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**