



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

<b>Project reference</b>	<b>27-007</b>
<b>Project title</b>	<b>Increasing the resilience of biodiversity and livelihoods in Colombo's wetlands</b>
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Sri Lanka
<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>International Water Management Institute (IWMI)</b>
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Cobra Collective CIC (CC) Wetland Management Division, Sri Lanka Land Development Corporation (SLLDC), Ministry of Urban Development, Coast Conservation, Waste Disposal, and Community Cleanliness, Sri Lanka Department of Wildlife Conservation, Ministry of Wildlife and Forest Conservation Biodiversity Secretariat, Ministry of Environment Central Environment Authority (CEA), Ministry of Environment Urban Development Authority (UDA), Ministry of Urban Development, Coast Conservation, Waste Disposal, and Community Cleanliness, Sri Lanka Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka (FOGSL), University of Colombo, Sri Lanka
<b>Project leader</b>	<b><i>Dr. Matthew Simpson</i></b>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>31<sup>st</sup> October 2021 HYR2</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://cobracollective.org/portfolio/increasing-the-resilience-of-biodiversity-and-livelihoods-in-colombos-wetlands/">https://cobracollective.org/portfolio/increasing-the-resilience-of-biodiversity-and-livelihoods-in-colombos-wetlands/</a> <a href="https://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/what-we-do/projects/show-projects/?C=1125">https://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/what-we-do/projects/show-projects/?C=1125</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/project_cobra/status/1316718438505680896">https://twitter.com/project_cobra/status/1316718438505680896</a>

**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).**

**Progress against project outputs**

**Output 1**

**Activity 1.1 - Review of all data related to Metro Colombo Urban Wetlands**

In Yr 1 (Sep 2020 to Mar 2021) we held a series of online meetings and issued an e-mail questionnaire to all partners and stakeholders to help us understand the data and information they hold. This activity continued into Y2 as the task of collection and collation was delayed as partner and stakeholder staff were often in lockdown, due to COVID-19 restrictions, and unable to access data held at offices. The data collation and review has been finalised in this reporting period (Apr to Sep 2021).

**Activity 1.2 – Workshops to discuss and assess existing status of Colombo wetlands**

Following meetings in Yr1 an online questionnaire was developed, issued and analysed to understand partner and stakeholder individual perceptions of the current status of the Colombo wetlands (63 respondents). The Project Partner Workshop and Stakeholder Workshop in June 2021 (see attached meeting report Annex 1) finalised and agreed a set of criteria for how to select which wetland communities the project will work with. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions, meaningful interaction with the wetland communities themselves has not been possible but this will now be undertaken in December 2021 and continue in 2022, following the national protocols for covid-19 risk mitigation.

**Activity 1.3 – Production of Metro Colombo Urban Wetland Status report**

Data from Activity 1 and Activity 2, including information from the online perception questionnaire, were collated to produce the Metro Colombo Urban Wetland Status report. This is attached to this report (Annex 2).

**Activity 1.4 – Production of baseline indicators to assess project activities against**

The Project Partner Workshop and Stakeholder Workshops in Yr1 produced an initial list of project indicators which was finalised and agreed with the wider group in June 2021 (see attached meeting report in Annex 1).

**Activity 1.5 – Produce training materials**

Originally the plan was to produce training materials for delivery at face-to-face meetings. However, in response to the COVID-19 restrictions, the project developed all training as an online course. The English version of the online course is now complete on the Open University's OpenLearn Create [platform](#). The course is now available for partner and stakeholders to complete. The comprehensive online course covers different topics to help individuals engage with their community or another community they are working with (see annex 1 for the course structure). It is designed to help monitoring and management carried out by the community and to encourage engagement with policy makers. The Sinhala and Tamil versions will be available in December 2021. Although the online course has been designed for a range of abilities, knowledge and understanding, we recognise that not everyone, particularly from poor and marginalised groups, will be able to access the digital information. We therefore plan to run face-to-face community workshops once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

**Activity 1.6 and 1.7 Training workshops in the community best practice wetland management approach and training workshops in gender-sensitive community-led monitoring**

Originally, we had hoped to commence the training in March 2021, but due to the additional time required to transfer all training to online training, and COVID restrictions meaning many stakeholders could not access online content at home, this has only commenced in September 2021. Translations of the English version into Sinhala and Tamil are being carried out in consultation with stakeholders. When face-to-face meetings are possible we will follow up with in-person meetings and training activities in the field.

**Output 2**

**Activity 2.1 – Undertaking free, prior and informed consent process**

The project has been reviewed and approved by IWMLs Institutional Review Board (IRB) and given ethical clearance (number 2020\_29). This includes the procedures proposed for free, prior and informed consent. However, the process has been delayed as workshops with the

community have not been undertaken yet. The online course covers this aspect and at all future face-to-face meetings and workshops this will be undertaken.

#### **Activity 2.2 to 2.7 – Community best practice and monitoring engagement**

Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions direct engagement with communities has not been possible which has delayed the project by 6 months. From our understanding, COVID-19 restrictions allowing engagement with communities and the holding of workshops, will be lifted in October/November 2021. This will allow the community engagement programme to be delivered, although with 6 months delay.

#### **Output 4**

##### **Activity 4.1 – Assessment of project impacts using developed project impact indicators**

The project impact indicators were finalised and agreed in June 2021 and the impact of the project will be assessed against these. Annex 3 provides a list of the agreed indicators and how they will be measured. A baseline will be developed at the start of engagement with communities in December 2021 and 2022, through interviews and questionnaires. As project activities continue the impact of activities will be assessed using this methodology.

#### **Output 5**

##### **Activity 5.8 – Establish and regularly update project websites**

Project pages have been established: -

<https://cobracollective.org/portfolio/increasing-the-resilience-of-biodiversity-and-livelihoods-in-colombos-wetlands/>

<https://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/what-we-do/projects/show-projects/?C=1125>

#### **Other activities**

In addition, the project has actively engaged with the British High Commission in Sri Lanka, regularly updating them on project progress and developing a communication plan with High Commission staff. We have also supported a visit by Ambassador Ken O’Flaherty, Mr Andrew Price, Ms Ayuni Munasinghe (from Communication team) to the Colombo Wetlands and had the opportunity to showcase the project. We have also established close collaboration with the UNDP GEF Small Grants Program in Sri Lanka. Dr. Priyanie Amerasinghe (IWMI) has been asked to sit on their Advisory Board and provides an opportunity to coordinate our project activities with other organisations within the programme.

*Response to comments in the annual review – detailed in Annex 4.*

**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.**

Apart from COVID-19 problems there have not been any other notable problems or unexpected developments.

**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 project site is Colombo Wetlands, and it is in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. This province was most affected with high case loads and deaths. Government restrictions were strict, and no community gatherings were allowed during this reporting period.

COVID-19 restrictions in Sri Lanka and UK have led to the following issues:

- UK partner staff have not been able to travel to Sri Lanka to support partner and stakeholder meetings, in-person training or community engagement activities;
- Face-to-face meetings have not been possible with project partners and other stakeholders so in-person training has not been delivered as planned;
- Face-to-face meetings with wetland communities in Colombo have not been possible, due to lockdowns and other social distancing restrictions, so no community engagement activities to identify best practice management or co-develop a wetland monitoring programme have yet been undertaken.

As a result of the issues faced by the project, we have developed the following responses:

- UK staff have attended virtual partner and stakeholder meetings and have worked with IWMI to develop online training courses to replace the planned initial in-person training;
- Project partner and stakeholder in-person training has not been possible but online course material is now available. Once restrictions are lifted at the end of 2021 and early in 2022 we will supplement the online training with in-person follow up workshops;
- The lack of direct community engagement has been the biggest barrier to delivering the project outputs and has severely impacted the project achieving its impact and outcome. The community engagement is now 6 months behind so we will be requesting a 6 month no-cost extension for the project to be completed by January 31<sup>st</sup> 2024. We are extremely hopeful that COVID-19 restrictions will be lifted at the end of 2021 which will allow us to engage community groups fully in 2022.

**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:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance	No- it will be submitted soon after this report.

**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.

As a consequence of the COVID-19 delays described above, in particular the impossibility of interacting directly with communities we are requesting a no cost extension with the project end date on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024 (i.e. a 6 month extension). We will send a budget change request very shortly.

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

It would be useful to have the same reviewers of the application and the annual and half year reports to provide consistency in comment and to develop an on-going relationship with the project. This would help improve project evolution during the lifetime of the project.

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**