



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

Project reference	27-013
Project title	Conserving Myanmar's Wetland Biodiversity through Sustainable Rice Standards
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Myanmar (Burma)
Lead organisation	Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
Partner(s)	Department of Agriculture (DoA), Maubin University, Kyonekapyin Tapseik Community Conservation Group (KTCG)
Project leader	Robert Tizard
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	31 st October 2020 – HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	

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).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many states and regions of Myanmar have been locked down since the middle of March 2020 following the Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS) instructions. Following these instructions, project activities were delayed to September 2020 and the project requested a delay for five months. Unfortunately, the second Covid-19 wave began at the end of August, and the City of Yangon and the other regions and states, including the small towns in the Ayeyarwady Delta, have been under lock-down to limit the transmission of Covid-19. Despite these challenges, the project activities have begun, including the recruitment of a trained agronomist as our SRP manager proceeding with reviewing, updating and translating training materials under the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP). Our biodiversity monitoring team began surveying Sarus Cranes as they began their nesting season. 115 nests have been documented with 93 nests in Wakema Township and 19 nests in Maubin Township. Community members will monitor the nests until the young fledge and report these results back to our team. Despite the ongoing lockdown, we have also begun hosting zoom meetings with the district and township Department of Agriculture (DOA) to explain the project and share our workplan. We are also working with community leaders to learn about using zoom so we can expand online trainings. Our team are also building partnerships with Helvetas Network, on SRP and International Crane Foundation (ICF) on monitoring Sarus Cranes in the delta.

Output 1: By project end, Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) approaches are embedded in farming community, Government, CSOs and key rice industry bodies in the Delta.

1.1 Develop training materials for local farmers, including SRP standards, and farmer diaries.

WCS has recruited an SRP manager to lead on the review and translate existing SRP training materials and templates for farmer diaries. This has been discussed with the local DOA for the officials to learn more about SRP and prepare and participate in developing these necessary materials to be able to deliver back to local farmers in the coming months. Four WCS staff members participated in a SRP Training of Trainers training in September, led by certified SRP trainers from Helvetas and the DOA. The next ToT will be held in mid-November.

1.2 Identify key influencers, and deliver targeted training and outreach to government officials and CSO representatives

WCS has identified a targeted list of key stakeholders, including DOA and other government officials and local CBO members, in preparation to widely dispense the SRP training, as well as begin implementing the farmer's daily diary system. We have organized Zoom meetings with the partners to understand the project and its concepts, and to develop templates for using farmer diaries to monitor SRP standards and indicators.

Output 2: Habitats beneficial to biodiversity are maintained and enhanced, protecting aquatic ecosystems and populations of threatened species.

2.1 Identify potential habitat areas for Sarus cranes and other globally threatened wetland species, as well as threat monitoring, using remote sensed data.

We are discussing with our GIS team and survey team to document Sarus Crane nests and refine habitat maps. We are also documenting threats to the cranes and to rice farmers to develop refined maps as well.

2.2 Conduct participatory field surveys of Sarus cranes and other key wetland species.

WCS has been conducting Sarus Crane breeding monitoring in collaboration with Kyonekapyin-Tapseik Community Conservation Group in September and October, despite the Covid lock down. A total of 115 Sarus Crane nests were recorded during the survey period, 96 in Wakema Township and 19 in Maubin township, respectively. The survey has not covered all the known breeding areas due to the Covid situation. We will continue to track 115 Sarus Crane nests, as well as report on other wetland species with our local partners.

2.4 Together with University partners, monitor broader impacts of SRP on wetland ecology, including biodiversity and livelihood indicators (e.g. fish and invertebrates).

WCS held our first meeting with Maubin University in order to collaborate with monitoring on wetland ecology and document the broader impacts of SRP by conducting regular surveys on biodiversity and livelihood indicators. The University is eager to start their field work and we have agreed to an MoU between WCS and Maubin University to support the indicator surveys in the SRP project area. We hope to sign the MoU in November.

Output 3: Farmer livelihoods are equitably enhanced through adopting farming improvements.

3.3 Collect data from representative farmers on rice sales revenue, cost of inputs, reports of chemical use, and also therefore profitability.

WCS has developed a baseline data format and will test the format with local farmers before it is completed. We are also preparing to collect the necessary baseline data from the farmers in our pilot SRP project areas.

Output 4: Outcomes feed into growing regional and global agricultural biodiversity programs, and coordinate with existing national wetland conservation and agriculture initiatives and policy reforms.

All activities under Output 4 will be conducted in the middle and end of the project, once substantial field work has been piloted and ongoing.

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.

The unexpected Covid-19 Global Pandemic has delayed our project implementation. Following the first lockdown in Myanmar in March 2020, we revised our timetable to September in preparation for the 2020 wet season rice harvest. Unfortunately, the second wave of Covid-19 has resulted in our second lockdown during the project period. Despite these issues, we have begun implementing project activities. We are preparing training and monitoring materials and have prepared our partners and stakeholders to use zoom for online meetings and discussions. Our next step will be to raise SRP standards and indicators awareness training to strengthen our trainers and reach local farmers by the end of year 1, as well as identifying farmer leaders within our communities for additional SRP ToT training.

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.

Field activities have been delayed due to pandemic impacts. A change of implementation was submitted to LTS on August 12, 2020. We still aim to achieve our planned field preparations in the last quarter of year 1.

Our budget will be reduced by approximately 25% in our first year, this revision will be submitted before the end of 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
Formal change request submitted:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance	No – scheduled revision still needs to be aligned with budget revision

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, the system is very clear and sensible for project implementation.

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**