

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

Project reference	28-018
Project title	Sanctuaries for threatened species and communities in Northeast Luzon, Philippines
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Philippines
Lead organisation	Mabuwaya Foundation
Partner(s)	
Project leader	Merlijn van Weerd
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 October 2021: HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	www.mabuwaya.org Facebook/Mabuwaya

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).

We were informed that our project was provisionally approved by email on 23 July 2021. Additional changes to the logframe were required at that stage, which we submitted in August. On 10 September 2021 we were informed by email that our project and logframe was now fully approved, followed by the official offer letter on 15 September. In consultation with LTS International (email 31 August 2021, Eilidh Young), we have retained the official starting date of 1 July 2021.

Progress Q 2 (July – September 2021) and Q3 (October – ongoing 2021) :

Activity 1.3 Community meetings in 8 target communities: Meetings were held in 4 focal communities (Mansarong, Malisi, Camunayan and Bluewater in the municipality of Baggao) from 15 – 27 September 2021 to introduce the project and to discuss how to develop agroforestry development plans (Activity 4.1). Community meetings in the remaining 4 focal communities are planned in San Mariano in Q3. Meetings were held with the municipal governments of Baggao and San Mariano (Mayor and Municipal Environment and Natural Resource Office MENRO) to discuss implementation of the project.

Activity 1.6: Town Fiestas. All Town Fiestas are currently not allowed as a result of the CV-19 situation in the Philippines (see section 2b).

Activity 1.7: Knowledge, awareness and attitude surveys. This activity would be conducted by students of Isabela State University (college of Development Communication) but students are not allowed to follow on-campus classes or to be engaged in field work in the Philippines as a result of the CV-19 situation (see section 2b). Alternatives to collect these baseline data are being studied.

Activity 4.1 Development of specific agroforestry development plans for 8 communities. Community meetings were held in four communities in Baggao to discuss the establishment of community nurseries. Meetings with individual farmers have started in Baggao (21 farmers in Camunayan, 24 farmers in Malisi) in Baggao. Students of Isabela State University (College of

Forestry) were supposed to be engaged in this activity but this is current not possible as a result of the CV-19 situation in the Philippines (see section 2 b).

Activity 4.6: Household surveys to establish baseline income and livelihood data, and conduct a community census and prepare community maps were held in August and September in 4 focal communities in Baggao. These surveys are planned for Q3 in San Mariano.

An interview was held with a Community Enterprise Specialist (staff to be hired for the project), a TOR was prepared, and an initial agreement reached that the Specialist will start 1 January 2022 (due to prior commitments until 31 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.

The project started later than the anticipated starting date of 1 July because we were informed of approval in September. Despite this, all activities planned for Q2 and Q3 have started, except those that are not allowed under current CV-19 restrictions (see 2b).

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 Philippines still has severe CV-19 restrictions on international travel (borders closed for foreigners except diplomats and representatives of international organizations), domestic travel from Manila to provinces (depending on local classifications: no travel possible or only under special permits), local travel (depending on local CV-19 infection rates, municipalities can be entirely closed for travellers from outside, or have permitting systems in place, or a need to show proof of vaccination or negative tests). Group meetings / workshops / trainings remain banned. Schools and universities are closed for classroom lessons, on-campus / on-school activities or field work. With a current national vaccination rate of 25% and a very slow increase of the vaccination rate in provinces, and high infection and hospital utilisation rates, this situation is not likely to change soon.

The restrictions impact our project in the following ways:

Larger trainings and workshops can not be conducted as trainers from Manila can not travel to northern Luzon and group meetings are not allowed (not an issue yet as no trainings were planned for Q2 and Q3, but they could impact activities 1.5 and 2.1 in Q4)

Community meetings are impacted by local travel restrictions (impacting Activity 1.3)

Fiestas are not allowed (impacting Activity 1.6)

Student and partner University staff involvement is restricted (impacting Activities 1.5, 1.7 and 4.1)

Mabuwaya staff are based in various towns in Isabela Province, while our office is located in the municipality of Cabagan in Isabela. The Darwin project focus municipalities are San Mariano (Isabela) and Baggao (Cagayan Province). Continuously changing local travel restrictions (municipality and province) make planning of field work activities daunting.

We try to adapt to local travel restrictions by closely monitoring the situation and by being in close contact with the municipal governments of the partner municipalities. Once a municipality or province closes for outsiders, we cannot implement activities there and have to retrieve staff. Once a municipality or province opens again, we move in as soon as we can to continue project implementation. At the moment we cannot work with universities (important for baseline data collection, activities 1.7 and 4.1) so we try to collect these data ourselves.

We will assess the CV-19 situation and outlook for the first quarter of 2022 early December 2021. We expect that some activities and budget will have to be moved to the next fiscal year. In that case we will submit a Change Request before 10 December 2021.	
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:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance	N.A

<p>3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Estimated underspend:</p>
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</p>
<p>See attached response to comments proposal</p>

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**