



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

Project reference	28-020
Project title	Safeguarding globally important forests by improving livelihoods and strengthening governance
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Viet Nam
Lead organisation	Fauna & Flora International
Partner(s)	The Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD)
Project leader	Josh Kempinski
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	30th October 2021 - HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	N/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).

Output 1. Quality and sustainability of community-based patrolling, crime prevention and PA monitoring is improved.

Activity 1.1: Implement SMART patrols by rangers and CCT (20 members across both sites), providing support and training on snare removal, awareness raising, and SMART (including using SMART reports to inform adaptive PA management).

Due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions, these workshops had to be held via the internet/Zoom; two online workshops were held on improving gibbon monitoring capacity for Community Conservation Team (CCT) members and FPD rangers in both sites, by sharing experiences of on-going monitoring activities in Mu Cang Chai Species Habitat Conservation Area (MCC SHCA) and the Muong La Nature Reserve (MLNR). Workshops were co-funded by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Darwin Initiative and were delivered between the 25th and 29th September 2021. Sixteen participants from Mu Cang Chai CCT and five from the Mu Cang Chai Forest Department joined. An additional five Forest Department staff, from the Muong La Nature Reserve, and 10 persons from CCT joined.

The main activities included: (1) Holding an online experience sharing workshop on gibbon monitoring, between MCC SHCA and MLNR, with a focus on the in-forest / daily experiences of the Community Conservation Teams members of both sites, as well as rangers. (2) Providing training on using SMART Mobile for collecting patrol data to sync data to SMART Connect. These workshops will be used as the basis for a field review and boundary definition, currently planned for the next six months under the Darwin project.

Based on lessons learnt and the operation of the CCT model, the project will conduct follow-up activities for improving the sustainability and impact of CCT team to maintain forest protection and gibbon monitoring, slowly phasing out financial and technical support under the current Darwin project (exit strategy).

Preparations for an in-person kick-off workshop for the Darwin fund are currently underway and they will be held in November 2021.

Project Management structure, monitoring, evaluation and communication strategy

The Darwin Project Manager was successfully recruited and has been working from 4th October 2021. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been prepared and sent to all project partners, including MCC SHCA and the MLNR management boards. Moreover, a Communications Strategy and a Monitoring & Evaluation Plan will be developed by the end of 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 wider programme of work in MCC-ML, which this Darwin project is now the core and largest donor, has encountered a number of significant problems over the last six months. These have largely been due to the change of personnel (a new project manager), a gap in funding (i.e. limited funds before the Darwin project began), and Covid-19. Together there - but primarily the latter - have delayed the progress of several project activities and some will need to be moved to FY1 Q3.

For example, in the original timeline, annual market/wildlife trade surveys, Knowledge-Attitude-Behaviour (KAB) surveys and socio-economic and social impact assessments were all allocated to FY1 Q2 but have not been completed due to Covid restrictions on travel and gathering. This will be discussed with LTS and a change request will be submitted shortly. Moving these activities will not affect the project budget and it will have no major negative impact on the project because the delay (the amount of time lost) is quite small, and the following activities (the surveys will inform) will still be completed, as per the original project design.

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.

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Vietnamese government has imposed several travel restrictions on those entering the country and for movement within the country, including to and between project sites. In addition, a full lockdown in Ha Noi was imposed on the 9th September 2021. Meanwhile, travellers were required to monitor restrictions and to comply with advisories issued by the local and national authorities. As mentioned above, planned workshop, under Activity 1.1 of the project, adapted to the conditions by shifting to an on-line venue, thereby avoiding travel and meeting restrictions. The budget was also spent to purchase Wi-Fi transmitters, internet cable, webcams and speakers to prepare for online conferences.

The only activities so far delayed have been planning workshops/discussions (moved to outline events) under Outcome 1, above, and we foresee the KAB survey also being delayed (as aforementioned). Under these unprecedented circumstances, more workshops or training courses might need to be shifted to on-line forums whilst fieldwork activities would have to be flexible, with the possibility of an extended fieldwork season – although the rainy season (May-September) may present a challenge to this.

In these ways, the impact of the pandemic on the project can hopefully be minimised and project delivery, and quality, can be largely maintained. We also note that in recent weeks, Covid restrictions have been eased, and travel to field sites is again possible.

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 issues to raise at the moment.

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**