



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

Project reference	28-026
Project title	Himalayan plants for people: sustainable trade for biodiversity and development
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal
Lead organisation	TRAFFIC International
Partner(s)	ANSAB Nepal, Ministry of Forests and Environment, Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN), ProFound - Advisers in Development, University of Oxford, University of Copenhagen, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Nepal Herbs and Herbal Products Association (NEHHPA), FairWild Foundation, China Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine (CATCM)
Project leader	Anastasiya Timoshyna
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	28 October 2021 (HYR1)
Project website/blog/social media	www.traffic.org

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).

The project contract has been issued to TRAFFIC International, and subsequently sub-contract agreement has been finalized with ANSAB, with other partners' agreements in progress. All project activities are in the initial stage of project start-up.

Concerning the project team, ANSAB initiated the recruitment of field-based staff to deliver activities in the project districts. A Field Project Coordinator has been recruited, who will coordinate field-level project activities in five districts. Recruitment of two forest enterprise facilitators is in the final stage. Written examination and group interview has already been completed and final interviews are planned to be undertaken in October 2021.

Project preparatory activities were launched. This included the initiation of the procedure for the formal registration of the project in Social Welfare Council (SWC) of Nepal. ANSAB has compiled relevant documents, and has initiated communication with the local government bodies in the project districts for receiving their consent letters to this project, which are prerequisites for the registration of the project in SWC. This process is anticipated to be completed within October-November 2021.

The project team communicated with the key stakeholders and potential project partners in all five districts for the inception activities (Annex 1, Table 1) and developed a field visit plan (Annex 1, Table 2) for October 2021.

Communication about the project initiation has been established with government collaborator in Nepal, the Ministry of Forests and Environment (CBD and CITES focal point for Nepal), and with other project partners, such as FECOFUN and NEHHPA, as well as key national stakeholders in the essential oil industry.

The project team developed a draft list of municipalities based on review of data and information and communication with local stakeholders, where project will be implemented. The list of municipalities and CFUGs will be finalized through field visit followed by district level inception workshops in October 2021. The draft list is presented below (Annex 1, Table 3)

Project team developed draft ToRs for i) Baseline survey and ii) Development of a case study on opportunities and challenges in CITES Act and Regulations for the sustainable harvesting and trade of NTFPs.

Concerning the trade in NTFPs itself and linkages to the previous Darwin Initiative investment, following the successful FairWild audit finalized in 2021 (with conditions) for Jatamansi and Kutki, HBTL has received the order for 500kg Kutki from a French Customer and 30kg Jatamansi oil from Italian, French, Swiss and Belgian customers. There has been increasing interest in the FairWild certified Kutki (from Nepal) over Indian Gentian (*Picrorhiza kurroa*) with a few US-based companies, who are currently testing samples. A few EU and US based companies are also interested in buying FairWild Jatamansi oil as soon as the EU negative decision on Jatamansi has been lifted. These outcomes are credited as the direct results of the work of the previous phase of the project.

The project team noted the constructive feedback of the Darwin Expert Committee which focused on some areas in which the project application could have been stronger (listed in Annex 2). The recommendation was for the selection of updates to the project be included in half-year report, and some of those are reflected on in Annex 2. We propose for some of those details to be communicated to LTS separately or with the annual report for year 1. These areas will be all addressed as part of the project delivery.

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 original project activities were planned to start in July 2021, however with the delay in contract issuance, formal implementation started in September. Consequently, some of the activities will not be feasible to be carried out in Year 1 of the project, and an adaptive management proposal will be submitted to LTS, together with the budget and activities timeline change request.

A change request has been submitted for a change of staff in the field coordinator role at our partner ANSAB.

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.

Not applicable so far at this stage of project implementation, but the team is closely monitoring the implications and impacts of COVID-19. To date, two practical constraints are: the inability to undertake face-to-face project inception meetings in Nepal at the national level (the district-level activities are possible), and the clarifications on the feasibility of the FairWild audit delivery between October-November 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:	Yes (for a staff change)

Received confirmation of change acceptance 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: This is still being finalised and will be detailed in our financial change request to DEFRA before 31st December this year.

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?

None

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**