

Darwin Initiative Main Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the “Project Reporting Information Note”:
(<https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources-for-projects/information-notes-learning-notes-briefing-papers-and-reviews/>).

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum** of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes)

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Darwin Initiative Project Information

Project reference	28-021
Project title	Strengthened livelihoods and conservation management in Virachey National Park
Country/ies	Cambodia
Lead partner	FFI
Project partner(s)	Cambodia’s Ministry of Environment; NFTA
Darwin grant value	497,244.00
Start/end dates of project	01/12/2021 to 30/06/2024
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2021 – Mar 2022) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	Dec 2021-Mar 2022
Project Leader name	Pablo Sinovas
Project website/blog/social media	
Report author(s) and date	Garry Shea, Pablo Sinovas, April 2022

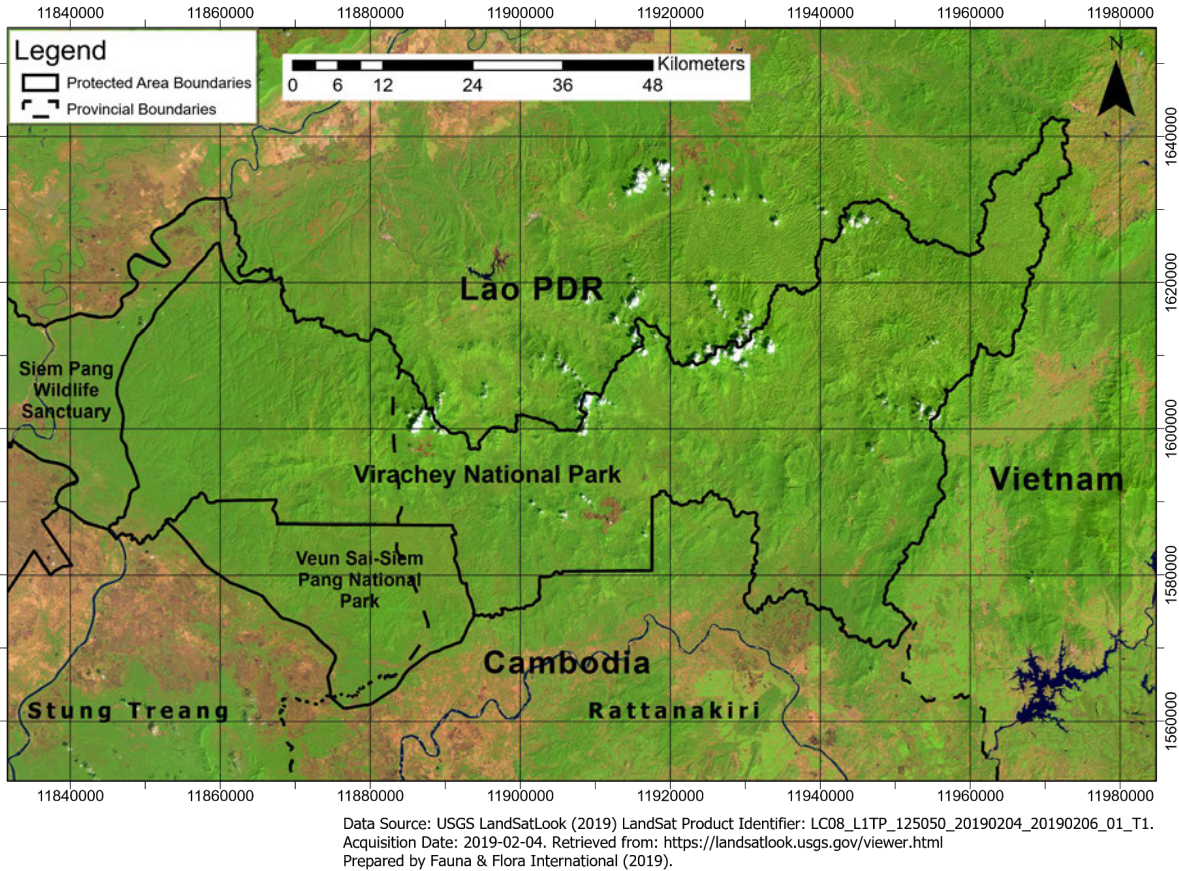
1. Project summary

Virachey National Park (VNP) is one of Cambodia’s largest protected areas at 3,325 sq. km, and one of only two ASEAN Heritage Parks in the country. Part of the Annamite range, it forms the core of a vast Cambodia-Lao/PDR-Vietnam forest landscape (see Map 1), one of the most biologically-important and endangered tropical forests in the world. It supports northern yellow-cheeked crested gibbon, clouded leopard, Asian elephant, dhole and Sunda pangolin, amongst other threatened wildlife, and is deeply connected with Indigenous Peoples' cultures and livelihoods.

Despite its biodiversity value, transboundary importance and carbon sink function, Virachey has received little conservation attention to date and is far from secure, with licensed rubber plantations operating within its boundaries, and accelerating development activities leading to land encroachment and deforestation, accelerating on its periphery. This is exacerbated by inadequate management and growing pressure from external actors. These pressures are leading to irreparable habitat loss, pushing local people towards unsustainable practices, and possibly increasing the risk of zoonotic disease transfer due to increasing nature/human interaction.

The lack of zoning or management planning means that land use decisions disregard natural capital and those engaging in unsustainable/illegal activities do so with relative impunity. Whilst there are five Community Protected Areas (CPAs), designated to support sustainable resource management by local communities along the southern boundary of VNP, they require strengthened management and capacity to optimise their contribution to conservation and livelihoods.

Working with local people, the project will develop conservation zonation and management plans, strengthen the capacity of indigenous communities, and support sustainable livelihoods.



Map 1. Virachey National Park and adjacent PAs in Cambodia. Satellite image shows the large extent of forest that constitutes this transboundary landscape.

2. Project stakeholders/ partners

Cambodia’s Ministry of Environment (MoE) is a key project partner. The project idea was forged in close collaboration with MoE, who sought FFI’s technical support to strengthen the management of Virachey National Park. To deliver the project, FFI is working in close partnership with MoE’s central office in Phnom Penh as well as with its **Provincial Department of Environment (PDoE)** in Ratanakiri Province.

PDoE is responsible for all activities that occur within Virachey National Park (VNP), and activities are thus implemented in partnership with the provincial department. PDoE committed to supporting all activities and following the joint drafting of a Letter of Agreement (LoA) between FFI and PDoE between January and March 2022; PDoE agreed to the signing of this LoE, scheduled to be signed in April 2022.

The second proposed implementing partner (IP) in the proposal was **Save Cambodia Wildlife (SCW)**. At the start of the project, meetings were held with SCW to develop the final TOR and draft a subcontract agreement. During this process, it came to FFI’s attention that SCW had been dropped as a project partner by other international NGOs because of integrity and potential corruption issues. After consultations with these NGOs and FFI’s legal team, it was decided that it would be a serious risk to the project to go ahead with the subcontracting of

SCW. Moving forward with SCW would have posed a serious reputational risk to FFI and the Darwin Initiative. SCW was made aware of FFI's decision, and FFI began a search for a replacement local implementing partner. After due diligence and much deliberation, FFI has chosen **Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) Organization** as the proposed replacement. This local NGO has been working with indigenous peoples in Ratanakiri Province for many years, establishing good relationships with the indigenous communities and the provincial government departments and agencies.

This process of changing the project's IP has inevitably delayed the implementation of many of the project activities assigned to the IP in the proposal and workplan. Planned livelihood and CPA work has been postponed until Y2 (2022-2023) of the project, when it is expected that the replacement IP will be contracted and active with project implementation. A change request to account for this unexpected development has been submitted to the Darwin Initiative.

The work of the IP has been delayed by about 4 months, however, it is anticipated that the project can catch up in Y2 with additional support from FFI's ICLT. FFI's ICLT has been carrying out preliminary work which was originally conceived as the role of the IP.

In addition to MoE, PDoE and NTFP, there are a number of other government departments that are stakeholders in the project. FFI visited Ratanakiri Province (January 25, to February 1, 2022). Meetings were held with key government departments to introduce the project and also to identify potential synergies with their existing and planned programmes and projects. Meetings were held with the PDoE and also with the **Provincial Department of Tourism (PDoT)**, the **Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (PDoAFF)**, and the **Department of Women's Affairs (PDoWA)**.

PDoAFF is responsible for all agriculture, forestry and fisheries activities outside of the official protected areas. The indigenous communities and their traditional agricultural lands lie outside the boundaries of protected areas, with most villages being located near the Sesan River, where the indigenous peoples are engaged in local fisheries, mostly for subsistence use. Thus, the PDoAFF will be the project's key government partner for facilitating improvements in agricultural livelihoods and value chain development for agricultural commodities. PDoAFF agreed to provide their full support to the project for all agriculture, forestry and fisheries activities implemented in the target communities that lay outside the protected areas. This includes market system assessments for key agricultural commodities and selected Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) from CPAs (mainly Malva nut – *Scaphium affine* and Cobra mushrooms, which are used in Chinese medicine).

PDoT is responsible for supporting tourism development in Ratanakiri Province. This includes ecotourism associated with protected areas, including VNP and associated CPAs. All four CPAs have potential for ecotourism, and there are already local tour operators who provide tours along the Sesan River and to the CPAs. PDoT committed to providing technical support for any ecotourism development activities facilitated by the project. This includes a market system assessment for ecotourism.

PDoWA is responsible for developing and leading programmes in Ratanakiri provinces for gender equality and women's empowerment. PDoWA is also tasked with the elimination of child labour (boys and girls) and human trafficking, especially girls being sold into the sex trade. They have experience supporting many donor-funded projects with technical and training support, including programmes targeting indigenous communities. With the shift from traditional agriculture with seasonal shifting cultivation to more permanent cash crop agriculture, gender roles have changed leaving indigenous women with more productive and reproductive roles and responsibilities and marginalized from community decision-making. Schools have only recently opened in these communities and most adult women and adolescent girls are illiterate, and they lack the knowledge, skills and information required for modern cash crop agriculture and marketing of key commodities. PDoWA committed to supporting the project's activities targeting gender equality promotion, elimination of child labour and human trafficking in selected value chains, and women's economic empowerment.

Following meetings with key provincial government departments, FFI travelled up to Sesan River to visit **Communes and communities** which are responsible for the management of **CPAs**. The team observed the land use and livelihood patterns of the communities, observed

and documented farming systems, had informal discussions with farmers (men and women), and met with CPA Chiefs, member CPA Committees, and Village Chiefs. Community stakeholders were made aware of the project and associated activities, especially those related to improved management of CPA, production and marketing of NTFP from the CPA, and proposed livelihood and value chain work in their communities. They welcomed the project and committed to working with the project for all CPA and livelihood/value chain work. They also advocated for project support to develop the ecotourism potential of their communities (indigenous culture) and CPAs. Their main concern is lack of official land rights for their traditional lands which lie outside the protected areas. For example, the Kroeng indigenous communities which manage the O'tabuk CPA has received official recognition by the Ministry of Interior and is in the process of applying for communal land titling. According to community leaders, they are in the final stage of the communal land titling process. The project will continue to follow this process and adapt to any future changes in land rights and titling.

3. Project progress

Due to delays in the preparation of a Letter of Agreement with the PDoE and the dropping of the proposed IP from the project, all activities have been delayed, with only some preliminary meetings and initial activities being carried out during the reporting period (Y1). Most planned activities for Y1 will now be carried out during Y2 (catch-up year).

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

Output 1: Zonation and management plan developed and being implemented for Virachey National Park.

Activity 1.1 Conduct targeted biodiversity surveys, with participation from IPs, of wildlife and key habitats to provide the knowledge for an evidence-based zonation and management plan. (Y1)

Activity 1.1 was postponed from Y1 to Y2.

No reportable progress in the implementation of Activity 1.1 during reporting period

Activity 1.2 Disseminate results of biodiversity surveys to raise awareness and galvanise a sense of pride nationally, and to augment political will (Y1-Y2)

Activity 1.2 was postponed from Y1-Y2 to Y2.

No reportable progress in the implementation of Activity 1.2 during reporting period.

Activity 1.3 Conduct participatory zonation consultations with MoE, IPs and other stakeholders, to inform a zoning of VNP that fulfils conservation needs and IPs' sustainable resource use rights (Y1-Y2)

Consultation meetings were held with MoE staff to design a plan for the zonation of VNP, resulting in a preliminary agreed work plan. Further zonation consultations are expected to take place during Y2.

Activity 1.4 Develop an evidence-based management plan in partnership with MoE, following best practice guidance and with input from indigenous communities (Y2-Y3)

No reportable progress in the implementation of Activity 1.3 during reporting period

Output 2: Revised CPA management plans established and implemented by indigenous communities.

Activity 2.1 Assess current CPA management practices, customary institutions, land tenure and resource use needs within four CPAs in Ratanakiri Province (Y1)

Activity 2.1 has been postponed from Y1 to Y2.

Existing CPA management plans for 4 CPAs (Khmer language documents) were reviewed by FFI staff, who prepared an English summary for each of the CPA management plans. FFI visited the indigenous communities with CPAs and met with CPA Chief and some CPA members. Commitments were given to work with project to improve CPA management practices and the capacity of CPA Committee Members.

Activity 2.2 Strengthen technical and organisational capacities of existing CPA Committees to update, implement and monitor existing management plans, and to engage in relevant decision-making (Y1-Y2)

No reportable progress in the implementation of Activity 2.2 during the reporting period.

Activity 2.3 Support the revision and monitoring of CPA Management plans to ensure effectiveness and equitable distribution of risks/costs/benefits (Y2)

No reportable progress in the implementation of Activity 2.3 during reporting period.

Activity 2.4 Train and support CPA members to conduct monthly forest community patrols to record, remove and discourage threats to wildlife, in line with CPA management plans (Y2-Y3)

No reportable progress in the implementation of Activity 2.4 during reporting period.

Activity 2.5 Deliver two gender-inclusive workshops per year per target community with CPAs on regulations in protected areas including cultural and scientific contextual components (Y1-Y2)

No reportable progress in the implementation of Activity 2.5 during reporting period.

Activity 2.6 Support 4 youth eco-clubs to take an active role in conservation stewardship within their communities through capacity building and local awareness events (Y1-Y3)

No reportable progress in the implementation of Activity 2.6 during reporting period.

Output 3: Resilient and sustainable livelihoods strategies adopted by women and men in target households in indigenous communities.

Activity 3.1 Analyse and monitor gendered aspects of natural resources use, disaggregating roles in livelihoods and community decision-making processes to ensure gender-responsive project delivery (Y1)

Activity 3.1 has been postponed from Y1 to Y2.

Desk review has been carried out for indigenous communities in Ratanakiri, including gender issues. FFI met with the PDoWA to discuss gender issues facing indigenous women in Ratanakiri Province, and the government's policy and strategy for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and eliminating child labour and human trafficking. This provides the background information for the gender analysis which will be carried out during Y2.

Activity 3.2 Analyse community socio-economic status and assess traditional and current agricultural and NTFP/wildmeat harvesting practices, and cultural values (Y1)

Activity 3.2 has been postponed from Y1 to Y2.

FFI carried out a desk review on indigenous community socio-economic status, traditional and current agricultural practices, NTFP/wild meat harvesting practices, and evolving cultural values. FFI visited indigenous communities with CPAs and gathered preliminary information on current agricultural practices and NTFP/wild meat harvesting practices. Information gathered was consistent with results of the desk review. There has been a shift from traditional agriculture using shifting cultivation to cash crop (mainly tree crop) agriculture.

Activity 3.3 With IPs, identify and evaluate strategies based on conservation goals, agro-ecological conditions, traditional practices, existing skills/interests, and market demand based on market system analysis (Y1)

Activity 3.3 has been postponed from Y1 to Y2.

Market assessments are being planned, using M4P (Making Markets Work for the Poor) methodology for key agricultural commodities and NTFP (Malva Nut and Cobra Mushrooms).

Activity 3.4 Deliver technical training and develop capacity building for indigenous producers for climate-smart agriculture, poultry, and revitalisation of sustainable traditional NTFP harvesting (Y1-Y3)

No reportable progress in the implementation of Activity 3.4 during reporting period.

Activity 3.5 Improve market access for selected agricultural and NTFP goods through better linkage between target communities and private sector and development of processing units if feasible (Y1-Y3)

No reportable progress in the implementation of Activity 3.5 during reporting period.

3.2 Progress towards project Outputs

Output 1: Zonation and management plan developed and being implemented for Virachey National Park.

The process leading to zonation and the management plan is a cooperative effort between the MoE and partner organizations, including FFI. The plan is to have the zonation and management plan completed by the end of the project. Therefore, it is **likely that Output 1 will be achieved** within the project period.

There are three indicators for this Output. Likely challenges in meeting indicators are outlined below for each target.

Indicator 1.1

1.1. By end of Y1, generation and dissemination of data and knowledge to inform evidence-based zonation of the national park.

Because of the delay in the start of the project and delays in the signing of the Letter of Agreement with PDoE, work could not start on biodiversity surveys in Y1. This work will be done in Y2. Therefore, indicator should read: *By the end of Y1, generation and dissemination of data and knowledge to inform evidence-based zonation of the national park.* It is **likely that this indicator will be achieved in Y2.**

Indicator 1.2

1.2. Indigenous community representatives (at least 30% women) actively participate in zonation workshops in Y1.

Because of the delay in the start of the project and delays in the signing of the Letter of Agreement with PDoE, zonation workshops were not facilitated during Y1. These workshops will take place in Y2. Therefore, indicator should read: *Indigenous community representatives (at least 30% women) actively participate in zonation workshops in Y2.* It is **highly likely that this indicator will be achieved in Y2.**

Indicator 1.3

1.3. Zonation map finalised by end Y2, taking into account needs and rights of IPs.

This is still the indicator. It is **highly likely that this indicator will be achieved** by end of Y2.

Output 2: Revised CPA management plans established and implemented by indigenous communities.

It is anticipated that the CPA management plans will be revised, established and in the process of implementation by indigenous communities. The CPA Committees will be provided with training and capacity building. Therefore, it is **highly likely that Output 2 will be achieved** within the project period.

There are three indicators for this Output. Likely challenges in meeting indicators are outlined below for each indicator.

Indicator 2.1

2.1. Management plans for the four CPAs in Ratanakiri Province revised by end Y2.

This is still the indicator. It is **highly likely that Indicator 2.1 will be achieved by end of Y2.**

Indicator 2.2

2.2. 50% of CPA Committee members upskilled in CPA management by end Y3.

This this still the indicator. It is **highly likely that Indicator 2.2 will be achieved by end of Y3.**

The CPA committees are elected every five years, and it may be necessary to provide training and capacity building for the new members of the CPA committee. This will overlap with the end of the project. FFI and PDoE are committed to providing on-going support for the CPAs, so follow-up training and capacity building for new CPA Committee members should not be a concern.

Indicator 2.3

2.3. CPA members take part in community patrols.

CPA members are already carrying out community patrols, working with PDoE rangers. This will continue throughout the project period. **Therefore, it is highly likely that Indicator 2.3 will be achieved.**

Output 3: Resilient and sustainable livelihoods strategies adopted by women and men in target households in indigenous communities.

It is anticipated that resilient and sustainable livelihood strategies will be adopted by women and men in target households in indigenous communities by the end of the project. Therefore, it is **highly likely that Output 3 will be achieved** within the project period.

There are three indicators for this Output. Likely challenges in meeting indicators are outlined below for each target.

Indicator 3.1

3.1 At least 400 producers and community-based extension workers (at least 50% women) trained in climate-smart agriculture, poultry production, and sustainable NTFP collection by project mid-term.

In spite of delays, it is **highly likely that this indicator will be achieved** by the end of the project.

Indicator 3.2

3.2 At least two climate-smart agriculture techniques are applied by 200 households (mid-term) and 400 households (end of project).

It is still **highly likely that this indicator will be achieved** by the end of the project.

Indicator 3.3

3.3 400 households (50% female members) have increased annual income from existing land holdings and sustainable NTFP use and sale, by 10% (mid-term) and 20% (end of project).

This remains the indicator for the project. It is challenging to achieve since many climate-smart agriculture techniques involve tree crops in agroforestry systems and take time to bring economic benefit. The project will introduce intercropping and under-planting techniques with season crops which will generate annual household income, while households wait for increased income from their tree crops. Therefore, it is still **high likely that this indicator will be achieved** by the end of the project. It is expected by there will be much higher increases in income once the improvements in tree crops provides more economic benefits.

3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

There have been no reportable progress towards the Outcome and the Outcome Indicators during the reporting period.

The indicators remain valid and are adequate to measure the intended Outcome.

It is still **highly likely that the project will achieve the Outcome** by the end of funding.

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Outcome-level Assumption 1: Political will to sustainably manage Virachey National Park does not wane.

Comments: The Government of Cambodia and its Ministries (MoE) and Departments (PDoE) continue to support the sustainable management of VNP. This outcome assumption still holds true.

Outcome-level Assumption 2: The existing environmental legislative framework is maintained or improved and is upheld by government and industry actors.

Comments: This outcome assumption still holds true. However, there are industry actors who would like to alienate land from protected areas, if allowed by government. There is a need to remain vigilant.

Output 1 Assumptions 1: Government remains committed to the development of a zonation and management plan for Virachey National Park.

Comments: The government remains committed to the development of zonation and management plan for Virachey National Park. The government has mobilised additional funding for zonation and management plan development. This Output 1 Assumption 1 still holds true.

Output 1 Assumptions 2: Government processes move at sufficient pace to approve zonation and management plans within the life of the project.

Comments: The government has mobilised additional funding for zonation and management plan development. This Output 1 Assumption 2 still holds true.

Output 1 Assumptions 3: Indigenous community members see value in, and positive incentives associated with developing and complying with zonation.

Comments: Indigenous peoples will be involved in the zonation process and will participate in the development of the management plan. Indigenous communities already have officially recognized CPAs within VNP and this will strengthen their rights to manage the CPAs. This Output 1 Assumption 3 still holds true

Output 2 Assumptions 1: CPA legal status is upheld.

Comments: CPAs have formal recognition from the MoE. This Output 2 Assumption 1 still holds true.

Output 2 Assumptions 2: CPA members are able to meet.

Comments: CPA members routinely meet. This will be re-enforced by project activities, training and capacity building. This Output 2 Assumption 2 still holds true.

Output 2 Assumptions 3: CPA Committees are willing to equitably and transparently represent their local constituency.

Comments: CPA Committee members are elected by popular vote by CPA members every 5 years. New CPA Committee members will be elected in another 2-years. CPA Committee members need to be seen as fair, equitable and transparent in order to be re-elected. The presence of project and government staff will encourage a more equitable and transparent approach. This Output 2 Assumption 3 still holds true.

Output 3 Assumption 1: Innovative practices introduced through the project are appropriate to the cultural, socio-economic and agro-ecological context and hence readily adopted by indigenous women and men.

Comments: The project will work with indigenous men and women to develop economic and sustainable farming systems which combine traditional knowledge with agroforestry/agroecology best practices. This will ensure that the systems are economically, environmentally, and culturally appropriate. This Output 3 Assumption 1 still holds true.

3.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and poverty alleviation

The stated impact in the proposal is: *The biodiversity and cultural values of Virachey National Park are secured, allowing for the recovery of depleted wildlife populations and long-term well-being improvements amongst indigenous communities.*

FFI has shared the results of a previous, preliminary biodiversity survey with MoE and PDoE. Biodiversity surveys planned under the project will be carried out in partnership with the PDoE and their Rangers. This will contribute to capacity building of staff and rangers through learning-by-doing or on-the-job learning. Since biodiversity conservation activities funded by the project have been delayed while waiting for the signing of the Letter of Agreement between FFI and PDoE, there has been no contribution to higher-level impact on biodiversity conservation.

Activities for Output 3 have been delayed due to the dropping of the original IP for integrity and possible corruption concerns. Therefore, there have been no contribution to a higher-level impact on human development and wellbeing (poverty alleviation).

4. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements

The Project is a post-2020 project and is designed to contribute to the draft Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Diversity Framework, which places a strong emphasis on inclusion and involving marginalised groups like women and indigenous peoples in conservation. It also stresses an integrated approach which contributes to Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals. Inclusive and participatory processes are used to achieve the three Outputs and to contribute to the Outcome and Impact.

The livelihood and value chain work implemented under Output 3 combines traditional knowledge with agroforestry/agroecology best practices. This includes integrating local varieties into agroforestry systems, where this provides economic and environmental benefits. This work will be carried out during Y2-Y3.

The project targets two NTFP (Malva Nuts and Cobra Mushrooms) which grow naturally in the CPAs. These are traditional medicinal plants now being collected and marketed to China, and

are both high value products. The project will promote the sustainable production and marketing of these two products. Indigenous people will gain economic benefit from local biodiversity.

5. Project support to poverty reduction

Cambodia achieved lower-middle income status in 2015 (WB classification) and remains a lower-middle income country. According to Darwin Initiative, Cambodia is a Least Developed Country. Covid-19 has had a negative impact on poverty and has increased the impact of poverty on the poor, driving more households into poverty. This includes indigenous households in Ratanakiri Province.

North-eastern Cambodia, including Ratanakiri Province, has the highest level of monetary and multi-dimensional poverty in Cambodia. Within this region, indigenous peoples and their communities are the poorest and most marginalized. They are also under threat for in-migration and large-scale economic development (plantations). As a result, they are losing rights and access to their traditional lands. Many indigenous peoples who have lost their lands are now working as labourers of migrants from other parts of Cambodia and for companies. Women and girls are most impacted by these changes as social norms shift from the traditional to the norms of the migrants and are in many cases becoming poorer and more marginalized from decision-making. Most women and adolescent girls are also illiterate and lack the education, knowledge, skills and information to adapt to the changing socio-economic conditions (see below).

The project will help indigenous men and women to increase their income from their existing resources. This includes income from agricultural commodities and from NTFP from CPAs. There is a strong focus on developing high-value agroforestry/agroecology systems which integrate indigenous knowledge with best agroecology practices. This requires capacity building for men and women, so that they can gain the knowledge, skills and information required for their own economic development.

Not all indigenous households are poor, so the project will target poor and near-poor households, taking measures to avoid elite capture of the project benefits.

Tools and methods from Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) will be used for gender-sensitive and child-sensitive market system assessments for selected agricultural commodities and NTFP. The assessments will identify the root causes of under-performance in market systems for poor, indigenous peoples, and identify interventions which will bring about positive systemic changes to the market system, for the benefit of indigenous people. At the farm level, the project will work with men and women farmers to improve the quantity, quality and sustainability of products which can then be marketed as green products. These will eventually be branded and certified and marketed as environmentally-friendly (wildlife friendly) products, using a recognisable traceability system that ensures the integrity of the products being marketed. It is anticipated that this will have a significant impact on the incomes, livelihoods and wellbeing of indigenous peoples.

6. Consideration of gender equality issues

A desk review has been carried out to get a clearer understanding of gender issues in Cambodia, and the Royal Government of Cambodia's policies and strategies for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. This was followed by a review of available studies and information on gender issues specifically focused on indigenous peoples in Ratanakiri Province. Although many of the prevailing issues are common for all Cambodian women, indigenous women tend to be even more marginalized because of the rapid socio-economic changes taking place in Ratanakiri Province; including an influx of migrants and associated changes in land-use, social norms, and livelihood practices. The gender roles of men and women have changed, leaving indigenous women even more over-worked and marginalized. The project had planned to carry out gender assessments and analyses during Y1. The project's partner NGO was to be tasked with carrying out the gender analysis and the development of a gender action plan for the project. However, integrity and potential corruption

issues led to FFI dropping the original IP SCW and carrying out a process, including due diligence, to identify an alternative suitable local IP.

The project will work towards and target women's economic empowerment through gender-sensitive livelihood and value chain work. Indigenous girls are at risk of becoming involved in child labour and human trafficking, so the project will work with Commune government and provincial departments to identify and help at risk families with social assistance and improved livelihoods. Initial focus will be on building provincial, Commune, village, and household awareness of the negative impacts of child labour and human trafficking on the future of children and their families. This will be done by the new IP with strong technical support from FFI.

Gender-sensitive and child-sensitive market system/value chain assessment will guide the identification of interventions which will promote gender equality, empower women, and lead to the elimination of child labour and human trafficking within the selected value chains.

7. Monitoring and evaluation

The following are the indicators of achievement for the three Outputs.

Output 1: Zonation and management plan developed and being implemented for Virachey National Park.

There are three indicators for this Output.

Indicator 1.1

1.1 By end of Y1, generation and dissemination of data and knowledge to inform evidence-based zonation of the national park.

Indicator 1.2

1.2 Indigenous community representatives (at least 30% women) actively participate in zonation workshops in Y1.

Indicator 1.3

1.4. Zonation map finalised by end Y2, taking into account needs and rights of IPs (Indigenous Peoples)

Output 2: Revised CPA management plans established and implemented by indigenous communities.

There are three indicators for this Output.

Indicator 2.1

2.1 Management plans for the four CPAs in Ratanakiri Province revised by end Y2.

Indicator 2.2

2.2 50% of CPA Committee members upskilled in CPA management by end Y3.

Indicator 2.3

2.3 CPA members take part in community patrols.

Output 3: Resilient and sustainable livelihoods strategies adopted by women and men in target households in indigenous communities.

There are three indicators for this Output.

Indicator 3.1

3.1 At least 400 producers and community-based extension workers (at least 50% women) trained in climate-smart agriculture, poultry production, and sustainable NTFP. collection by project mid-term.

Indicator 3.2

3.2 At least two climate-smart agriculture techniques are applied by 200 households (mid-term) and 400 households (end of project).

Indicator 3.3

3.3 400 households (50% female members) have increased annual income from existing land holdings and sustainable NTFP use and sale, by 10% (mid-term) and 20% (end of project).

These Outputs and Indicators remain valid for the project.

Trip reports are prepared by FFI and IP for every trip and activity implemented under the project. The report records the people met and participants in activities. The information is disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, and disability. Trip and activity reports are consolidated into donor reports.

8. Lessons learnt

FFI works in Cambodia under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of the Environment. This, in the past, covered work in the provinces. However, with more provincial autonomy, the Provincial Department of the Environment (PDoE) has requested a Letter of Agreement between FFI and PDoE to cover cooperation under the project. The LoA specifies the contributions provided by FFI and PDoE. Meeting restrictions and lower availability of relevant government staff during the first quarter of 2022 due to a surge in Covid-19 cases resulted in a delayed preparation of the Letter of Agreement, which delayed the start of project activities during Y1. In future, FFI will negotiate such provincial agreements at or before the start of projects, or as part of the project proposal development process.

The originally proposed implementing partner (IP) was Save Cambodia Wildlife (SCW). At the start of the project, meetings were held with SCW to develop the final TOR and draft a subcontract agreement. During this process, it came to FFI's attention that SCW had been dropped as a project partner by other international NGOs because of integrity and potential corruption issues. After consultations with these NGOs and FFI's legal team, it was decided that it would be a serious risk to the project to go ahead with the subcontracting of SCW. Moving forward with SCW would have posed a serious reputational risk to FFI and the Darwin Initiative. Therefore, SCW was dropped as the local Implementing Partner for the project. This was a learning experience for FFI, which had put its trust in SCW. Identifying and doing due diligence for a new IP is a long process which delayed the start of most project activities for Output 2 and Output 3. For future proposals, FFI will try to engage with more than one IP from the beginning of project development, in order to ensure that there are options if one IP has to be dropped for unforeseen reasons.

Note: Due Diligence was carried out for SCW during the original proposal development phase, and no issues came to light. However, COVID has negatively impacted the finances of local NGOs, and this may have led to SCW trying to cover some of its losses through manipulation of project funds, which led to them being dropped as implementing partners by some NGO. Other NGOs let SCW's contracts expire and did not renew them.

9. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

N/A

10. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

N/A

11. Sustainability and legacy

The start of the project was delayed by eight months; from April 2021 to December 2021. In December 2021, FFI and its' partners re-engaged with meetings held with the Ministry of Environment (MOE) at the national level and the PDoE at the provincial level. This renewed the interest of MoE and PDoE in the project. Interest increased with a renewed understanding of how the project will contribute to the development zoning and a management plan for Virachey National Park, a national priority. Meetings at the provincial level raised PDoE's enthusiasm for the project, since it will support the zoning and development of a management plan for VNP and will include the participation of PDoE's staff and rangers in biodiversity surveys. On-the-job training (learning-by-doing) will increase the capacity of PDoE rangers to carry out biodiversity surveys, including camera trapping. PDoE briefed the Governor on the project and raised the status of the project with key political figures in Ratanakiri Province.

FFI also met with key provincial government departments in Ratanakiri (January 26-27, 2022) and had face-to-face meetings with key leaders and decision-makers in these provincial government departments (Environment, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Tourism and Women's Affairs). This increased their understanding of the project and stimulated their interest in working with the project.

FFI is committed to sharing information and data, and routinely provides data to MoE. Some information and data are restricted, especially information on the location of protected species – not wanting to draw the attention of poachers to these populations.

The project's exit strategy is still valid. The project is designed so that outputs can be achieved within the budget and timeframe of the project. Zoning and the development of the management plan will be completed by end of the project, and CPA management plans will be revised, with CPA's having increased capacity to implement them.

Livelihood interventions are carried out within market systems, and any improvement in the performance of the selected market system will be systemic and permanent. The project will, however, lead to innovations that can be up-scaled by the people working alone, with local NGO or government support, or with additional funding support from new donor-funded projects led by FFI or partners.

FFI and partners (NGO and Government) have a long-term commitment to VNP and the indigenous and local communities located adjacent to VNP. These communities lie in conservation corridors which link protected areas across the landscape. This long-term commitment guides FFI's exit strategy from specific project interventions.

12. Darwin identity

Due to delays in the development of the Letter of Agreement with the PDoE and the dropping of the proposed IP, the project has not publicised the Darwin Initiative to any meaningful extent. To date, awareness about the Darwin Initiative has been largely limited to project partners (FFI, IP, relevant government Ministries and Departments) and CPA leaders and members. The UK Government's contribution is well known to these project stakeholders. With these stakeholders, the initiative is recognized as a distinct project. Activities under Outputs 2 and 3 are new for FFI in the landscape/province and are therefore recognised as part of a new and distinct project.

13. Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

Stringent COVID-19 prevention measures required by the government of Cambodia and by FFI contributed to the delayed start of the project from April 2021 to December 2021. By the start of the project, government prevention measures had been relaxed and it has been possible to travel to the project area and engage in face-to-face dialogue with provincial government departments, CPAs and community members, although a surge in cases in early 2022 resulted in some further delays. Masks and sanitation measures were applied for all meetings through the reporting period.

Further delays during the reporting period resulted from delays in signing a Letter of Agreement with the PDOE and the dropping of the proposed IP partner, due to integrity and possible corruption issues and not COVID. It is unlikely that COVID will cause future delays to project implementation. The government's successful vaccination program, which is on-going, has reduced the frequency and severity of infections.

The project is assuring the health and safety of project staff and beneficiaries by ensuring that all are fully vaccinated under the government program and have an up-dated vaccination card. Staff are still required to wear masks in the office and when engaging with partners and beneficiaries. Sanitation measures, and the monitoring of temperatures, are still in effect. Staff with any symptoms are required to self-isolate at home and be tested before return to work. Staff only engage with communities who have been fully vaccinated and are open to having visits and outside engagement. Masks and sanitation are provided for all meetings, whether formal or informal.

COVID-19 has had a negative impact on the economy and has negatively impacted the livelihoods of poor households. It has made the production, transportation, and marketing of produce more difficult. COVID-19 has had a direct impact on the livelihoods of indigenous peoples living in the project's target area. Farmers received less income from the sale of their agricultural products and labourers have had less access to jobs. There has also been an increase in out-migration with labourers looking for work outside of their community and province. The project has the potential to increase the quantity and quality of agriculture products, including NTFPs, and to re-establish links to national and international markets for the benefit of indigenous peoples in the target area.

COVID-19 has had a negative impact on indigenous women. There is anecdotal evidence that violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, has increased because of the stress of COVID-19 and the negative impact on household livelihoods. Women in Cambodian society are often responsible for managing household finance and are often blamed if there is a decline in the standard of living. Helping women to become productively engaged and earning income will help relieve household tensions and improve the status of women within the household. Being involved in women's groups will provide them with a support system/social capital which will also help cope with COVID and its persisting impacts.

It is anticipated that FFI, partners and stakeholders will continue to hold virtual meetings post-COVID as these have proven successful and also cost effective (costs and time).

14. Safeguarding

Please tick this box if any safeguarding or human rights violations have occurred during this financial year.

If you have ticked the box, please ensure these are reported to ODA.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk as indicated in the T&Cs.

15. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022)

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2021/22 Grant (£)	2021/22 Total Darwin Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)	████████	████████	████	
Consultancy costs	-	-		
Overhead Costs	████████	████████	████	Overheads charged in line with previous budget; will adjust in Year 2 to bring back to revised budget amount.
Travel and subsistence	████████	████████	████	Travel limited due to Covid-related meeting restrictions and partner delays (see narrative)
Operating Costs	████████	█	████	Operating costs not yet accrued due to implementation delays (see narrative)
Capital items (see below)	████████	████████	████	
Others (see below)	████████	████████	████	Implementation delays (see narrative)
Audit costs				
TOTAL	████████	████████		

16. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project during the reporting period (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes

I agree for the Darwin Initiative Secretariat to publish the content of this section (please leave this line in to indicate your agreement to use any material you provide here).

While not implemented within the project's timeframe, a preliminary camera trapping effort in Virachey (with seed funding from the British Embassy in Cambodia and FFI) has revealed a rich array of threatened wildlife in the national park, including the presence of the critically endangered large-antlered muntjac (*Muntiacus vuquangensis*), a species not previously known to occur in Cambodia. See:

<https://www.fauna-flora.org/news/christmas-in-cambodia-deer-with-antlers-and-shiny-nose-delivers-seasonal-cheer/>

<https://www.discoverwildlife.com/news/camera-traps-capture-first-images-of-baby-deer-species-in-cambodia/>

Annex 4 Onwards – supplementary material (optional but encouraged as evidence of project achievement)

Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the correct template (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and deleted the blue guidance text before submission?	x
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk putting the project number in the Subject line.	x
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	
Do you have hard copies of material you need to submit with the report? If so, please make this clear in the covering email and ensure all material is marked with the project number. However, we would expect that most material will now be electronic.	
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	