

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2011)

Project Ref No	17-001
Project Title	Conserving Eden: participatory forest management in the Tien-Shan region, Kyrgyzstan.
Country(ies)	Kyrgyz Republic
UK Organisation	Bournemouth University
Collaborator(s)	Fauna & Flora International Botanic Gardens Conservation International BioResources
Project Leader	Prof. Adrian Newton
Report date	October 31 st 2011
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR3
Project website	http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/cceec/conserving-eden/index.html www.walnutforest.kg

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

Progress is summarized below in relation to the relevant activities and milestones listed on the original proposal (which are italicised):

Good progress has been made in the first six months of this final year. Two visits of UK staff members to Kyrgyzstan have been made, despite some travel restrictions still being in force. Jenny Birch from Bournemouth University visited 22 - 28 May to undertake project monitoring and to support the partners in planning the summer field work. Liesje Birchenough, FFI, visited 28 May – 14 June to conduct meetings, to follow up on ongoing participatory management activities in Kyzul Unkor and Kara Alma and to work with in-country staff to organise a training course in participatory management techniques (*Activity 1.2*).

An FFI in-country staff member (Jarkyn Samanchina) attended a four-day Livelihoods & Governance Learning Event in Cambridge in April 2011 along with project representatives from FFI projects around the world. This was a good opportunity for sharing experiences and learning from other similar projects including a community forestry project in Tanzania. Since Dr. Orozumbekov visited the UK at the end of Year 2 (March-April 2011), the third and final visit of Kyrgyz partners to the UK will take place in December 2011 (*Activity 1.1*). The purpose of the visit is twofold (i) to train a Kyrgyz staff member in data analysis techniques, forest modelling and GIS software, (ii) to produce a final project publication for dissemination in Kyrgyzstan at the end of the project. The original intention was to invite two Kyrgyz nationals to the UK, but once again one of the selected individuals has been refused a visa to enter the UK, and therefore the visit of only one individual will be possible.

The final field research campaign took place between June and October with a team of 11 local staff. Four field visits to seven forest areas were undertaken (31/05/11 – 12/06/11; 21/06/11 – 05/07/11; 21/07/11 – 05/08/11; 17/09/11 – 26/09/11). Data were gathered on the target Red List species and these will be analysed to support development of an atlas of threatened tree species by the end of the project. No UK staff were able to take part in this field season due to travel restrictions to that area of the country.

Engagement of the State Agency of Environmental Protection and Forestry has continued through regular correspondence with Prof. Toktoraliev who, due to difficult political circumstances in Kyrgyzstan, is currently the sole representative of the project steering committee. An MoU was signed by both FFI and the State Agency with a small ceremony held in Bishkek on 11 June. However, due to another reshuffle of the government, a new Director was appointed in August. Prof. Toktoraliev remains in a high level position and continues to be actively involved in the project. The new Director is known to our in-country partner, BioResources so a good relationship with the State Agency is expected to continue (*Activity 1.3*).

Analysis has begun by Dr. Elena Cantarello, researcher at Bournemouth University, on spatial distribution, stand structure, stand dynamics and current status of threatened fruit and nut tree species using field data and LANDIS forest modelling software (*Activity 2.1*). This will be written up in collaboration with the Kyrgyz partners for the project publication and as a peer-review paper (*Activity 3.6*). Analysis of the impact of current land use practices on stand structure and composition of fruit and nut forest has occurred through the submission of a Master thesis and will be written up in the project publication (*Activity 2.2*).

Fauna & Flora International organised a training course on Sustainable & Participatory Forest Use & Management in July 2011. This was delivered over five days by Kamel Chorfi (forest expert who developed and delivered this module for the Darwin Initiative national conservation training programme in neighbouring Tajikistan). The training course was delivered to 16 participants (forestry service staff and other relevant local stakeholders). (*Activity 2.3*). Participants received a certificate of training and gave positive feedback on the event.

Participatory workshops for sustainable management practices took place in Kyzyl Unkur in spring. In June, a training session was held with the team from JFDF on the expected structure and content of a management plan (based on a process and manual produced by FFI for a previous Darwin Initiative project in Croatia). The final participatory workshop was held in Kyzyl Unkur on 13 August with 14 local participants including the Chief Forester and the Head of the Village Government. The draft work plan was presented and discussed with active participation from those present. The draft MP (in English) was produced in August; it is now being reviewed (*Activity 3.1*). A management plan is also underway for Kara Alma although progress here has been hindered by a further change of personnel at the *leskhoz* (see below).

Development of the community outreach programme continues through activities in schools: tree nurseries have been established at three schools with threatened tree species planted from seeds sustainably collected in nearby forests. Environmental education activities, including competitions, have taken place; more seed collecting expeditions involving children are planned for autumn 2011. (*Activity 3.3*).

Plans are being developed for organising a workshop to be held in Osh during November 2011, shortly after the presidential elections. The aim of the meeting will be to support knowledge exchange and dissemination of project results and to identify implications for policy-makers at both local and national scales (*Activity 3.2, 3.4*). Because of the political instability associated with the elections, however, this meeting may be postponed to February 2012.

BGCI has been liaising with Gareev Botanical Gardens of the National Academy of Sciences (GBG) to finalise the interpretation facility at the national Botanic Gardens (*Activity 3.5*). A contract for the production of eight species panels has been signed and these are currently being designed by staff at GBG. Progress has been slower than anticipated (see below) but we still aim to have the official launch of the panels in Spring 2012. This will be supported by a media campaign to mark the end of the project.

Other outreach materials that have been produced are two practical manuals for (i) monitoring forest pests and diseases, and (ii) tree propagation and nurseries, disseminated to forestry service staff, village government representatives and local people at our project sites. The development of a book 'Our forests are our wealth' is underway, to be published before the project end (*Activity 3.7*).

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

- Travel restrictions for British nationals still remain for the southern provinces of Osh and Jalal-Abad, where the study areas are located. It is hoped that the forthcoming workshop will take place in Osh as this is more appropriate, being in the region of the fruit-nut forests. However, access for UK staff to this region is still restricted following FCO advice.
- Although no serious political violence has occurred in the country in recent months, there is still political instability. On 30 October, the presidential elections will take place. Caretaker president, Otunbayeva will remain president until 31 December 2011. With such an open contest (eighty-three candidates filed to run in the election by the deadline of 16 August 2011), it is likely that there will be some demonstrations during this time. For this reason, the dates of the project seminar are tentatively scheduled for early November but may need to be altered as the situation is monitored. In-country work on all areas of the workplan could still be affected for the remainder of this project.
- An issue, not a problem, is that Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) are planning Community Forest Management activities at pilot sites including in Kara Alma. Liesje Birchenough of the project team met with GIZ staff in June to discuss the need to coordinate to avoid duplication and to ensure GIZ can build on our activities with any future funded projects in the region. This actually presents an opportunity to increase the legacy of the project, an aspect that will be actively explored during the final phase of the project.
- Prof. Toktoraliev is no longer the Director of the State Agency of Environmental Protection and Forestry. His new role may not be finalised until after the presidential elections in October 2011. We anticipate that he will continue to be engaged in the project as a key advisor. He remains in an academic position at the OSH Technological University - a project partner organisation and will likely take another influential role in environmental politics. The new Director - Mr. Kadyrov Bayan – is known to the project partners and has had previous meetings with FFI staff and BioResources, prior to this project. We are confident that he will be keen to engage in the project.
- Training Mr. Kanaat Musuraliev (a Kyrgyz PhD student) in data analysis techniques, forest modelling and GIS software was scheduled for November 2011 at Bournemouth University, but the UK Consulate refused Mr. Musuraliev's visa application. We are currently exploring whether this training can be provided by a visit of UK staff to Kyrgyzstan.
- There have been a number of incidences of local partners not implementing activities to the standard, or in the time frame, hoped for. This is of course expected when working with local partners, both individual and organisations of varying capacities and motivation, and the reason why FFI's representative in-country closely monitors and mentors the project partners. However, partners also have to be given the responsibility and space to deliver the activities, and this has resulted in some delay to the project.

Specifically:

Progress at Kara Alma has been hindered by a further change of personnel at the *leskhoz* and a planned visit to the village by UK project staff in June was cancelled at the last minute due to the non-availability of anyone to meet. This has caused some delay in preparing the revised management plan. To proceed, FFI is taking on an intern who will be involved in coordinating the review and redrafting of the earlier management plan. The village workshop will now take place in late autumn. GIZ are now also working in Kara Alma so we will be coordinating with them to ensure synergy (see above).

BGCI have had considerable difficulties working with Gareev Botanical Gardens. Feedback on interpretational issues regarding the panel establishment has been limited;

information provided to BGCI to help with the texts was qualitatively unsatisfactory. As a result BGCI itself developed texts on walnut, apple, pear and plum although this should have been part of the work to be undertaken by GBG as per contract. Given the delay with the panel production, it is currently not clear whether it will be appropriate to organise an official launch in November, to coincide with the project seminar in Osh or to postpone to early spring 2012 which will allow to more carefully plan this event. The in-country coordinator has been asked to encourage and oversee the work of GBG to ensure that this deliverable is met.

Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

None of these issues have so far caused significant problems for the project in the past six months. Any increase in the severity of these issues will be raised with LTS International.

Discussed with LTS n/a

Formal change request submitted:

Two formal change requests regarding the project budget have been submitted.

1) Reallocation of funding to partners FFI, BGCI and BioResources.

FFI required additional financial support to enable the successful delivery of the project activities relating to participatory management. They had difficulty in progressing this deliverable last year due to the political instability in the project study area, which has meant that several additional activities are now required this year. BGCI have also requested an increase in their 2011-12 allocation to cover an additional visit of one staff member to Kyrgyzstan for the launch of the environmental education component, and to support in-country partners in producing educational materials for this launch.

2) Reallocation of funds from operating costs to staff costs

Less money will be needed this year for training fees in the UK due to a) planned project activities being mainly covered by the host country, b) training mainly being conducted overseas rather than in the UK. This has been allocated to staff costs, to cover data analysis in the UK, and provision of additional training in Kyrgyzstan. This stafftime allocation will also support the production of a chapter in the final project publication and the production of a peer-reviewed paper.

Received confirmation of change acceptance

Response received and changes accepted

3. Do you expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

No

If yes, and you wish to request a carryforward of funds, this should be done as soon as possible. It would help Defra manage Darwin funds more efficiently if you could give an indication of how much you expect this request might be for.

Estimated carryforward request: £

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures? No

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 or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with LTS International directly.