



Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2014)

Project Ref No	21-020
Project Title	Eels - a flagship species for freshwater conservation in the Philippines
Country(ies)	Philippines
Lead Organisation	Zoological Society of London (ZSL)
Collaborator(s)	TRAFFIC, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Biodiversity Monitoring Bureau (BMB – formerly Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau: PAWB)
Project Leader	Matthew Gollock
Report date and number (eg HYR3)	HYR1
Project website	

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) 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 to end September).

In agreement with LTS, this project start was delayed by a month until May 1st, 2014. We have now recruited a full staff complement - Project Manager, Senior Biologist, Junior Biologist, Senior Community Organizer, Junior Community Organizer and Administrative / Finance Officer. The team have now been orientated and are now in the process of setting up the office in Aparri and beginning procurement – a vehicle has been identified and purchased. The team has begun engagement with key stakeholders and a Memorandum of Understanding has been circulated between in-country project partners – the Bureau of Biodiversity Management (BMB) (formerly the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau) and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

The inaugural meeting of the Technical Working Group, which included staff from ZSL, BMB (regional and national) and BFAR (regional), has been held and terms of reference discussed (**Activity 1.2/2.1 - Y1 Q1 onwards**). Engagement with barangay and municipal level stakeholders (**Activity 1.2/2.1 - Y1 Q1 onwards**), based on previous BFAR studies, has begun in order to familiarise them with the aims of the project and begin the process of identifying study sites and communities for the initial socio-economic survey (**Activity 3.1 – Y1 Q2-Q4**). ZSL London-based staff have begun developing the questionnaire to be used in the socio-economic/community survey in collaboration with the Senior Community Organiser, and BFAR and BMB staff, and will visit the project in November / December 2014 to begin the pilot stage of the survey (**Activity 3.1 – Y1 Q2-Q4**). This process has been slightly delayed (see section 2a) and as such beginning the establishment of People's Organisations (PO) (**Activity 3.2 Y1 Q2 onwards**), the assessment of the eel fishery (**Activity 2.2 Y1 Q2 –Y2 Q2**) and the initiation of the farming project (**Activities 5.1/5.2 Y1 Q2 onwards**) have been delayed – the location for the culture experiment has been identified.

In relation to UK based activities, the trade review (**Activity 1.1 Y1 Q1-Q3**) has now been finalised and will be made public on 3/11/2014. This will be supported with social media and web stories from both TRAFFIC and ZSL, and will be circulated to key international stakeholders. As part of this process, in-country CITES authorities were contacted and this dialogue will continue in light of recommendations made in the report and broadened to include other key identified range states (**Activity 1.5 - Y1 Q1 onwards**).

In addition to these activities, we have secured a short presentation in the 'Water for life' session at the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney, November 2014. The project will act as a case study for wider discussions relating to freshwater conservation.

2a. 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.

The process of recruiting staff members was delayed slightly due to one of the key positions being filled and the candidate leaving due to being offered another post in his first week of tenure. This person was well connected in the region and we had expected him to identify candidate for less senior roles; as such his departure had knock on effects on recruitment for other positions. We have also changed the status of the administrator post from P/T and F/T (while staying within the salary budget line) – this was approved by LTS (see Section 2b).

As a result of this we do expect an underspend; this will primarily relate to salaries, and to a lesser extent, to early stage activities. We have outlined possible solutions to this in Section 3b. In relation to activities, we have highlighted in Section 1 where there have been delays in initiating project work. The socio-economic/community survey is the key activity that will guide much of the other community-based work and as such we are prioritising this. We have also suggestions related to budget underspend that could expedite this activity – see Section 3b.

We do not expect the underspend or delay in activities to have a significant impact on the project, assuming the requests made to account for these (Section 3b) are deemed appropriate.

2b. 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 (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £20,000

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully as it is unlikely that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year. 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 and would like to talk to someone about the options available this year, please indicate below when you think you might be in a position to do this and what the reasons might be:

We have recently submitted requests to LTS regarding budget amendments in order to attempt to reduce the underspend; these are as follows:

In relation to carrying out the socio-economic survey we have proposed using some of the salary underspend to hire in-country casual/short term staff ('enumerators') to support the survey work and post-analysis under the guidance of ZSL staff. This would also allow us to fast-track this key element of the workplan resulting in us completing it on time. We could also explore similar options in relation to the fisheries and habitat survey, depending on the cost of

hiring these short-term posts.

We have also proposed bring forward some of the desk-based work TRAFFIC had scheduled to carry out in year 2 relating to enforcement again allowing us to reduce the under-spend in year 1.

In relation to our capital spend, there are concerns from project partners relating to the use of electro-fishing and as such we are looking at alternative methods such as nets and traps. Further the cost of the water quality probe and laptops have gone up – now that our administrator is full time we would like to purchase a computer for them as well. As such we would like re-apportion the monies set aside for the electro-fishing equipment towards these other costs – the total capital costs would not change.

We would still request, if possible, that a small rollover (£5,000) be considered if possible to support any delayed activities and associated capital expenditure in the early part of Year 2 – this may well apply to the eel farming project.

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

The acknowledgment of funding so close to the proposed start date, and subsequent advice that roll-over of funds to year 2 would not be possible have made planning quite challenging.

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 send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at 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 eg Subject: 20-035 Darwin Half Year Report**