



Darwin Initiative Main Project Half Year Report (due 31 October 2015)

Project Ref No 22-004

Project Title Collaborative Conflict Management for Community Livelihoods and Conservation

Country(ies) Mongolia, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan

Lead Organisation University of Aberdeen

Collaborator(s) Snow Leopard Trust (SLT), Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH)

Project Leader Dr. Steve Redpath, Chair in Conservation Science, University of Aberdeen

Report date and number (e.g., HYR3) 30 October 2015, HYR1

Project website/Twitter/Blog/Instagram etc NA

Funder (DFID/Defra) Defra

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 red are the agreed baselines from our timetable for Q1 and Q2, with progress towards each:

1. UoA and SLT collate and review existing information

An initial partner start-up meeting was held between UoA, SLT and CEH on April 16, 2015. Project Leader and Partners met over Skype to review the goals and activities of the project, assess needs, and assign tasks. The first priority was to collect data from our partner NGOs in Mongolia, Pakistan, and Kyrgyzstan in order to review the current state of their programs, e.g. what communities they were working in, which communities were managing which programs, current participation rates, etc. These data were critical for designing the activities of this project. Through the collection of data, SLT and UoA became aware of an interesting paradigm shift that was not readily apparent during our proposal: the term ‘community’ refers to a much different formation in Mongolia than in Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan. In the latter, a community is much like we expected—a large group of geographically confined households sharing a communal bond, with some households actively participating in conservation programs and some not. In Mongolia, individual settlements are remote and far removed, and communal or cooperative ‘neighborhoods’ do not naturally occur. Herders must consciously and somewhat artificially aggregate to form a ‘community,’ which means that ‘communities’ are actually *formed* by multiple households deciding to all join into a program at the same time, under the same contract. Therefore extra time was spent establishing a standard understanding for how to count/reference ‘communities’ in Mongolia and ensuring we could make equivalent comparisons with Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan. In the end, this exercise was fully completed by August 2015.

During this process, we also decided to purchase a robust repository (aka workstation) to begin storing and managing the intense amount of data generated from this project.

2. UoA, SLT and CEH agree protocols for surveys at partner start-up meeting

This was accomplished through a series of correspondences between UoA, SLT and CEH following our start-up meeting. UoA and SLT developed the protocols and forms, reviewed with CEH, reviewed with field teams in Mongolia, Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan, then finalized and shared back with the field for translation and implementation.

3. Baseline (yr 1) survey data collected in sample of communities on livestock losses, income and attitudes (Q2 & Q3)

This activity, scheduled for Q2 & Q3, is in progress. In Mongolia, baseline data has been collected from 28 communities and 4 control communities. Household data has been collected from 70 households.

Data is currently being summarized. In Kyrgyzstan, community surveys are scheduled for November-December. In Pakistan, the field team tried to initiate surveys in combination with another community project, but ultimately realized it was too difficult to handle both activities simultaneously without affecting the quality of both. They rescheduled community surveys to the latter half of October. They hope to complete them by mid-November.

As mentioned above, in Mongolia the structure of communities is more complex than in Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan, and it's taking a small amount of trial and error to ensure the protocols for the surveys are met. The surveys themselves have turned out to be time and labour intensive for the field staff and interviewees, which means more time has to be budgeted for their completion. UoH, SLT and CEH plan to review questionnaires to see if they can be condensed, and/or if more time and expenses need to be dedicated towards extended field trips. **To be safe, we are recommending to extend the amount of time noted in our timetable for completion of YR 1 baselines.**

4. Toolkits prepared for field implementers by UoA, SLT and CEH

CEH has created a training toolkit for field implementers based on a document called 'PARTNERS Principles for Community Engagement.' This document, written by Dr. Charudutt Mishra of SLT, is a summary of best practices in community-based conservation based on over 20 years of experience. The full document was shared with partner NGOs in Mongolia, Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan at the beginning of the project.

At the heart of the kit is a training course developed by Dr. Juliette Young of CEH. The course is adapted from the PARTNERS Principles (which are over 80 pages long) into a practical and interactive module. The goal of the training course is to provide participants the opportunities to share their own experiences of community engagement and, as a group, evaluate successes and shortcomings and how to deal with challenges in the future. The course aims to be participatory, self-reflecting and constructive. The course consists of input from the trainer based on his/her experience and the PARTNERS principles, and is structured around six training exercises (also in the toolkit) and seven group exercises. The hope is that the toolkit and follow-up workshops will provide confidence, knowledge, support and new skills to field implementers.

5. Training workshop for field implementers delivered, based on negotiation theory and PARTNERS Principles, and SLT's field monitoring manual Training programmes delivered by SLCF, SLFK, SLFP

Three training courses have been given to field implementers. The first 'pilot' training course was held in Mongolia from June 2-4 (8 participants). A number of changes to the toolkit and training course agenda were made after the Mongolia training course, based on the feedback from the questionnaire and the course organisers. The participants in the Mongolia training course stressed the need for more discussion and sharing of experiences. This resulted in a major change in the toolkit and resulted in training exercises where the focus is on building skills (e.g. self-reflection, listening skills, and negotiation skills) and group exercises, where the focus is on group discussion and sharing of experiences. From September 3-8, a second training course was held in Kyrgyzstan for our joint Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan teams (10 total participants). Although India is not part of this project it's important to note that the course has since been replicated for our colleagues in India as well, showing the applicability across partners.

The feedback from the latter training courses reflects that our new approach had been welcomed by participants. Some additional constructive suggestions include translating the course into local language, expand on the length of the training course, carry out regular follow-up (e.g. every 2 years) to refresh skills, and add elements on communication techniques that could be used with local communities.

Overall, feedback from all trainings has been positive and shows high degree of learning. Trainees appreciated the opportunity to reflect on past community work and to place this work in perspective of other people's experiences. This led one participant to remark on the need to focus on relationships rather than forcing outcomes. Some participants were surprised that so many lessons could be learned from negative experiences of community engagement—i.e. what could have been done differently. For a number of participants, the provided them with the opportunity to refresh their skills. For those less experienced, the training course allowed them to learn some key skills and build their confidence.

Attached is a blog post highlighting some of the valuable take-away's from the training session in Kyrgyzstan. This was also Reposted on Darwin Initiative Blog.

6. Toolkits for local champions developed by UoA, SLT and CEH

This grant has given us an invaluable opportunity to define what makes a Community Champion. This

concept is new for SLT and all partners in Mongolia, Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan. While the concept is relatively simple, it soon became apparent that the practical application is more complex. Fruitful discussions were had with all field teams about what makes a Champion, and significant learning and consensus was achieved. Three different types of people have since been identified under the term 'Champion':

- 1) Community conservation leader—someone who is elected by the community to act as a bridge between the community and a conservation program, and/or elected to officially represent the community in larger discourse.
- 2) Volunteer ranger—herders with a natural conservation interest and good field skills who are nominated by the community to collect data and patrol in community responsible areas.
- 3) 'Influencer'—people who have esteemed status in the community either for knowledge, relative wealth, lineage, etc. They are often progressive, reflective, humble, non-political, and naturally facilitate communications, relations, sharing of history.

Ideally, each community might have all three types of Champions to provide the highest level of conservation presence; however we realize that for the purpose of this project we are aiming for 47 Champions falling within any three of these types.

This discussion also helped us better understand what will motivate and support Champions, which we found to be different for each type—i.e. there is no unified 'toolkit.' For example, Influencers primarily need recognition. Community conservation leaders most often request leadership, finance, legal, team-building training, etc. Rangers most often request equipment and maps, and training in basic ecology, law enforcement, etc.

Therefore, instead of one toolkit as planned, what we have accomplished is preliminary identification of a set of tools we would like to develop for each type of partner. **We will request a little more time to fully develop this set of toolkits.**

7. Any killing of snow leopards and wild ungulates recorded Yrs 1

We often receive illegal hunting information in three ways—from key informants, formally from wildlife managers and official poaching reports, and from general community interactions. Thus far, we have not informally or indirectly heard of any snow leopard killings through any of these channels. Formal reports for snow leopards and wild ungulates will be collected through December and will be analyzed in January. **We will amend our timetable to reflect this.**

8. Snow leopard abundance surveys in representative programme and control landscapes undertaken in Yr 1 through camera trapping

In Mongolia, snow leopard surveys in control sites (Noyon & Bayasakh Mountain) are planned to take place in November 2015. 14 additional cameras were sent from SLT to our Mongolia NGO partner to fulfil the needs of these surveys.

Trap camera surveys were completed in a representative programme site (Tost) in August 2015. 30 cameras were placed and will be collected in November 2015. Additionally, two researchers are working on data from cameras placed between March-May 2015 in Tost.

In Kyrgyzstan, one trap camera survey is currently running in an existing conservation landscape. However we were late initiating due to high water levels in the rivers prohibiting safe access. For the control site, the timing is complicated and we may not be able to access a neighbouring hunting concession before December (active hunters moving around with loaded guns and ammunition).

In Pakistan, we planned camera trapping and ungulate surveys from mid-October in control site (Terichmir valley), however this was delayed since legal permission to work in this area took longer than anticipated. Permissions have since been granted, and surveys will begin during the first half of November. This study will take about one and half month; once done we will initiate camera trapping our existing programme site (Hoper-Hisper valleys).

We will amend our timetable to reflect these changes.

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2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt 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.

Three most notable issues are:

1) The community surveys are more time demanding than anticipated, and we are receiving feedback that they are too time intensive to accomplish efficiently. In some cases, field teams are having to plan multiple trips to complete them, which was not our intent. Such intensity could impact our budget or our timetable, however we are still discussing possible solutions. Luckily Mongolia has trailblazed the surveys, which has given us the opportunity to make course corrections still for Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan. Right now, we suggest amending the timetable to allow for field teams to adjust and complete.

2) The concept of Community Champions has evolved into a multi-faceted approach—which is highly positive and gives us a better chance of success. Our next step is to develop a clearer strategy for how to develop multiple toolkits to support and engage the various types of Champions. We request extending the timetable for completing this activity.

3) Snow leopard abundance surveys are taking longer than anticipated, largely due to weather, hunting, permissions. This will cause a slight delay in completion in YR 1. We will request to extend the timetable for completing this activity.

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: No

Formal change request submitted: Yes
A change request to amend our timeline has been submitted with this report.

Received confirmation of change acceptance Not yet

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 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:

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

No thank you. We are grateful for the support and appreciate the guidance.

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 e.g., Subject: 20-035 Darwin Half Year Report**