

## Darwin Initiative Main Project Annual Report



To be completed with reference to the “Writing a Darwin Report” guidance: (<http://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources-for-projects/reporting-forms>). It is expected that this report will be a **maximum** of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes)

**Submission Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

### Darwin Project Information

Project reference	24-003
Project title	Conservation and poverty alleviation through scalable agrobiodiversity practice in Laos
Host country/ies	Lao PDR
Contract holder institution	Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
Partner institution(s)	Village Focus International (VFI) Nam Et Phou Louey Management Unit (NEPL MU), Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO)
Darwin grant value	£ 433,478
Start/end dates of project	1 April 2017
Reporting period (e.g., Apr 2017 – Mar 2018) and number (e.g., Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 Annual report 1
Project Leader name	Ben Swanepoel
Project website/blog/Twitter	<a href="http://www.wcs.org/">http://www.wcs.org/</a> <a href="https://laos.wcs.org/">https://laos.wcs.org/</a>
Report author(s) and date	Ben Swanepoel, 26 April 2018

### 1. Project rationale

Since the approval of the NW extension area by Decree in 2017, Nam Et Phou Louey (NEPL) is now Laos’ largest, and most biodiverse protected area. The NPA is largely situated in the northeast province of Houaphan, which has the country’s highest poverty rate. Over 30,000

people inhabiting 98 villages rely in large part on the NPA, being fully dependent on NEPL’s agro-biodiversity resources for their subsistence and income. In addition to weak governance of these resources, these communities lack the means for effective stewardship and access to improved production systems. This has resulted in unchecked agricultural encroachment, wildlife hunting, and overexploitation of NEPL’s resources, leading to increasing deforestation and subsequent destabilization of local livelihoods.

This reliance of forest-dependent populations on agro-biodiversity for subsistence and income introduces opportunities to improve and diversify livelihoods by mainstreaming climate-smart agro-biodiversity approaches into formal governance instruments to create community-focused incentives that enable sustainable resource management linked to biodiversity conservation.

Through this project, climate-smart agro-biodiversity will be promoted and mechanised through community conservation agreements linked with improved conservation practice. We will employ a phased approach that builds on established participatory land use planning (PLUP) carried out by WCS

**2. Project location**

The project is located within and around the villages associated with NEPL NPA which covers three provinces in the Northern uplands of Lao PDR, Houaphan, Laung Prabang and Xiengkouang Provinces.

Activities presented in this first annual report focused on the 5 villages of the Boumafath cluster in Xone district.



Figure 1: NEPL NPA in relation to Lao PDR with the Boumafath village cluster highlighted in red.

**3. Project partnerships**

**Nam Et Phou Louay Management Unit, Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO)**

This constitutes our primary partnership governed through a formal MOU approval process. A new MOU for the period ending December 2021 was signed during an official ceremony in August 2017. (See document 01)

To further cement the WCS-Gol partnership, WCS has been contracted by the EPF through DOF as the sole provider of technical support to the NEPL MU to implement a 3-year WB funded project aimed at developing the NEPL NPA as a model of PA management and to assist in the establishment of NEPL as one of the first National Parks in Laos. The project will run up to the end of 2021.

## **Village Focus International (VFI)**

VFI are our technical partners in developing the process that will lead to the signing of the Village Conservation Agreements. (CCA) The terms of this partnership is formally captured in the TOR of the consultancy contract between WCS and VFI. (See document 02)

## **4. Project progress**

### **4.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities**

**Output 1 - Model community conservation agreements (CCAs) are developed and implemented in forest-dependent communities.**

#### **A. Conduct CCA development process.**

##### ***Formalising the partnership with VFI***

**June 2017** – The partnership contract titled “Supporting the development and implementation of 10 Community Conservation Agreements (CCAs) at Nam Et Phou Louey National Protected Area (NEPL) under the Darwin funded Project: Conservation and poverty alleviation through scalable agrobiodiversity practice in Laos” was signed by both parties for the period 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2019. (See document 02)

Through this partnership, VFI will provide technical assistance to WCS for the development of the CCA process and support the NEPL site team during the implementation of the CCA’s in the 10 Darwin target villages.

##### ***Development of the CCA approach – (See document 03)***

**July 05 – 07 2017** - Inception workshop and orientation. A three-day workshop led by WCS, was conducted at the NEPL NPA office in Heim to introduce the partnership, clarify the objectives of the CCA activity, identify the villages to be engaged and develop the implementation approach. The workshop was attended by 12 staff from WCCS, NEPL MU and VFI.

After this meeting, an orientation visit was conducted to the initial 5 target villages in the Boumafath cluster in order for the VFI team to gain a better understanding of the scope of the project.

**July 27 2017** – Introductory meeting – District level. IA meeting was held between NEPL MU (3 GOL officials) WCS (3 persons), VFI implementation team (2 persons), Xone District, (8 GOL officials), Houaphanh Provincial office (3 GOL officials)

The objective of this meeting was to provide the relevant district officials with information pertaining to the CCA’s concept and development process. (See document 14 – Figure 1)

**July 29 – August 3 – 2017**- Introductory meeting and baseline data collections – Village level. Visits to each of the 5 target villages were conducted with a similar objective to the district meeting held during July 27. Following a “Free Prior Informed Consent” (FPIC) process. Socio-economic data was then collected as well as information on current village land use (LU) The activity was conducted by VFI (1 person); WCS (2 staff); NEPL MU (1 official).

**August – September 2017** – Data analysis and preparation. The VFI team conducted an analysis of the data collected and developed guidelines for the implementation team to follow. (See document 04)

**October 17 – October 19** – Training workshop for NEPL implementation team for conducting the CCA process.

Three VFI staff conducted this workshop in Xone district office where 13 district officials, WCS and NEPL technical staff attended. Aspects covered during this course included the CCA process, community engagement skills and roles and responsibilities of the team members.

**October 19 to October 24** – Second round of village consultation (See document 05). After the workshop, 2 VFI staff accompanied by 4 NEPL MU staff visited each of the 5 villages in Xone in the second round of community engagement. An average of 50 villages attended each of the 5 village meetings.

***B. Carry out participatory mapping, zonation for appropriate use and establish management regulations for all forest lands within village boundaries.***

**July 29 – August 3 2017** – Introductory meeting and baseline data collections – Village level (See document 06)

As part of the baseline data collection process, the implementation team collected all relevant information pertaining to the PLUP of each of the 5 target villages. Villages and village officials were asked to provide comments in terms of the current PLUP boundaries and any disagreements or uncertainties were highlighted for further attention. (See document 14 – Figure;2)

**January – February 2018** – Baseline socio-economic data collection (See document 07). To better understand the issues related to village land and forest and the specific needs of the communities, a more detailed baseline socio-economic data survey was conducted. The VFI team developed the baseline survey data collection form which covered all necessary questions relating to livelihoods, current management methods, challenges, and the level of awareness in terms of local laws and regulations.

**March – April 2018** – Data analysis. Survey data from the above is currently under analyse by the VFI team and WCS/NEPL team continued to verify or update this data at the request of VFI during the analysis process.

***C. Provide direct support and management for priority agro-biodiversity village forest lands.***

Activities under this section form part of the overall CCA process developed under section 1.1.1 and 1.1.2.

**Output 2: Forest-dependent communities bordering NEPL have improved livelihoods through sustainable use of non-timber agro-biodiversity resources in managed village forests and diversified agro-biodiversity production systems in agricultural land.**

***A. Conduct training in sustainable NTFP collection and processing.***

The focus of activities during this first year has been on the development of a climate smart coffee enterprise in 5 of the 10 target villages where environmental conditions for the growing of coffee are optimal. See section 2.2

***B. Establish demonstration plots.***

For this first year of the project, efforts were focused on the establishment of a climate smart coffee production enterprise in 5 villages of the Boumafath village cluster located within the Xone district of Houaphan Province.

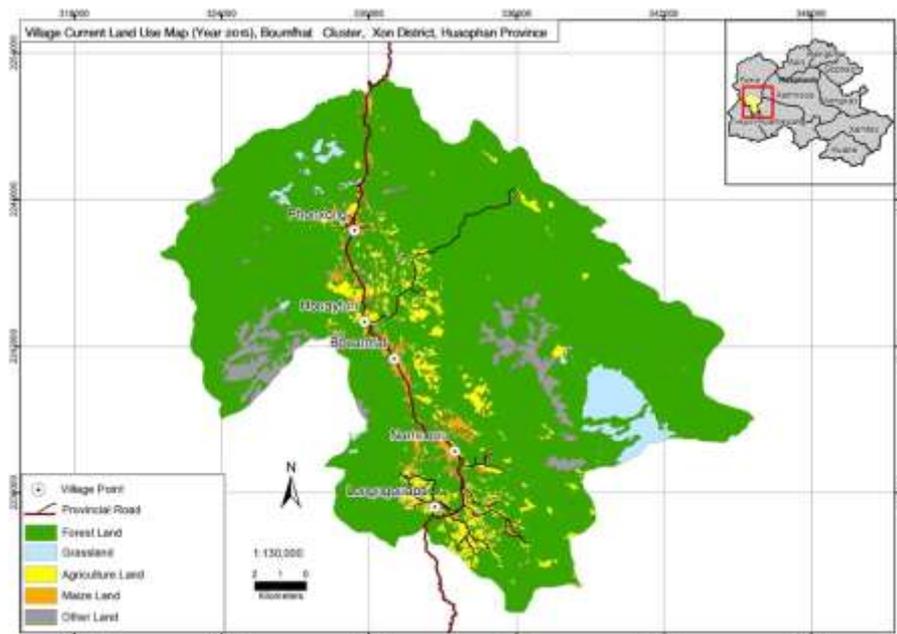


Figure 2: 5 villages of the Boumfat cluster in Houaphan province

### June 23 – Training of NEPL staff in planning techniques

Saffron, our technical partners on coffee production, delivered a training workshop to the NEPL implementation team. The participants were 2 WCS and 1 NEPL MU staff. The objectives of the training were to provide the implementation team with the information needed to assist the 7 families with the preparation and planting of the demonstration plot.

### July 11 – 14 – Clearing demonstration plots of unexploded ordnance prior to preparation

Once the planting areas in each of the 5 villages had been identified, WCS contacted the UXO team (UXO Laos) based in Phonsavan and requested that the areas be cleared of any UXO prior to the preparation and planting of the seedlings. A team of 7 UXO personnel scanned the proposed planning areas and uncovered, removed and destroyed a total of 9 unexploded shells. (See document 14 – Figure 3)

WCS, NEPL MU and DAFO staff conducted regular follow up, monitoring and support missions to the villages during and after the establishment of the demonstration plots. The seedlings for were provided by Saffron Coffee. (See document 14 – Figure: 8)

### C. Establish women’s associations.

This activity will form a part of the development and signing of the Village Conservation Agreements and will thus take place within the second year of operation.

**Output 3: Local income-generating activities that are climate smart and innovative, including environment-friendly sustainable agriculture through the Conservation Enterprise Development Program (CEDP) are set up and expanded in the forest-dependent communities bordering NEPL.**

#### A. Investigate feasibility of NTFP and agro-biodiversity products for conservation enterprise development.

### Coffee

During 2015, WCS commissioned a feasibility study in partnership with David Dale of Saffron Coffee Company, to assess the necessary biophysical conditions, processing and marketing requirements for organic shade-grown Arabica coffee in selected communities in and around the Nam Et Phou Louey National Protected Area.

As a result of the complimentary nature of the WCS Saffron relationship and the common goals in terms of both parties wanting to peruse a high quality, organic, environment friendly, climate smart product, WCS had pursued this relationship during this past report period.

**During January 2017** Saffron, WCS and NEPL MU staff conducted a visit to potential coffee villages around NEPL to evaluate local conditions and to speak with villages and village authorities in terms of their willingness to become coffee growers.

**April 24 - 26 2017** - WCS consultant for conservation enterprise, Mr. Nickolas Spencer, conducted a site visit of the potential coffee villages around the Boumfat cluster in order to report on the feasibility of developing a coffee industry in these areas. He was accompanied by staff from; WCS, NEPL MU, District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO), and staff of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). His report on the feasibility of coffee, current tourism products and selected NTFP products is now available. (See document 08)

### **Cardamom and red mushroom**

During February 2017, WCS conducted feasibility studies on both Cardamom and red mushroom in selected villages within NEPL.

Both the Cardamom and Red Mushroom feasibility studies conclude that there is value in conducting demonstration plots with the potential to scale up for a larger group of villagers. In the case of red mushroom, harvesting areas are currently inside the PA boundary, and therefore access and control issues will need further discussion

### ***B. conservation enterprise development process.***

Following on from the implementation of the development plots as reported under section: 2.2, the project moved forward with the expansion phase.

#### **October 5 – Coffee development meeting**

The implementation team consisting of WCS, DAFO and NEPL staff conducted a meeting in the 5 target villages of the Boumafata cluster in Zone district. 350 households from the 5 villages attended the meeting where details around the coffee enterprise development process was introduced and discussed. As a result of the meeting, a total of 36 households from the 5 villages were selected based on their interest and willingness to be involved and the availability of suitable shade area for the coffee production.

#### **October 30 - 31 – Coffee production training**

Three Saffron technical staff accompanied by three WCS/NEPL staff conducted training to 30 participating villagers from the 5 villages. Training covered theory and practical exercises relating to planting and protection of coffee plants.

#### **November 22 - 26 – Establish coffee nurseries**

The WCS/NEPL implementation team assisted the group of 37 households in establishing nurseries in each of the 5 villages. 16 kg's of coffee seed, provided by Saffron, were sown under plastic tunnels during this first phase of the nursery development. Plastic seedling bags were purchased in preparation of the planting over stage and were distributed to the 5 villages. (See Document 14 – Figure: 5)

#### **December 9 – Processing support**

One of the 5 villages received coffee seedlings from the Lao American project in the early 1900's. No capacity or technical support was provided, and the coffee trees remained unharvested for many years. With the development of the coffee project this year, the three households involved expressed an interest in harvesting the coffee. Saffron evaluated the coffee trees and decided that it could be used as a good demonstration and so we provided a hand operated pulping machine, and technical and logistical support to facilitate the harvest process. As a result of our support, 401kg of high quality coffee beans were sold to Saffron at 22,000kip (\$2,63) per km bringing into the village a total of \$1,058. (See document 14 – Figure 6)

## **February 2018 – Preparation of seedling bags**

Three WCS/NEPL staff provided support to 36 households in the construction of the nursery using shade cloth and in preparing 30,000 seed bags with soil for the planting over process that will take place in May 2018. (See document 14 – Figure: 7)

## **Output 4: Species and forest habitat protection is significantly increased in the total protection and controlled use forests of NEPL adjacent to target communities.**

### ***A. Conduct land-use monitoring.***

Activities during this report period focused on the review of current PLUPs within the first 5 target villages which forms a part of the CCA consultation and data collection activities reported earlier.

In addition, as part of our ongoing land-use monitoring on NEPL, monthly deforestation reports using satellite imagery were generated. These reports inform adaptive management strategies and serve as baseline information for the development of the CCA's monitoring indicators. (See document 09)

Monthly ranger patrols were conducted where threats and changes relating to the PA land use boundaries and zones were reported and captured in the SMART data management system. (See document 10)

Efforts were taken by the WCS /NEPL team to re-delineate the biodiversity corridor between the Boumafat cluster and Xone district capital. Areas of illegal land clearing were identified, and current LU details collected. Meetings were held with Xone district officials in an attempt to move forward with improved management of this important corridor area of the PA which is directly linked to the villages participating in this coffee project. (See document 11)

### ***B. Conduct community monitoring related to CCA.***

Activities during this report period were focused on the collection of baseline community data through the CCA process. Baseline socio-economic data was collected for the first 5 target villages during the CCA activity conducted in July 29 – August 3 (see activity report under 1.1.2 of this report)

### ***C. Conduct outreach campaigns.***

No deliverables due for this report period.

Outreach activities as specified in the project documents will take place after the signing of the CCA agreements. Currently outreach activities are focused on the CCA development process and are integrated into the community engagement activities.

### ***D. Conduct law enforcement monitoring including community-led monitoring.***

Law enforcement activities took place during this report period focusing on key areas of biodiversity aimed at reducing threats in the landscape. Detailed enforcement of the area within the limitations of the project are not conducted as a separate activity but form part of the integrated approach to protection on NEPL NPA.

During this report period, 130 patrols were conducted covering more than 8,900 km of foot patrols. As a result of these efforts, 536 threats were uncovered and eliminated, and 78 people were caught and received some form of sanction. In addition, 80 guns were confiscated, 139 hunting camps destroyed, and 99 snares removed from the field. (See document 10)

### ***E. Conduct biodiversity monitoring.***

Biodiversity monitoring during this report period was conducted through ranger biodiversity observations which are entered into the SMART data management program on a monthly basis.

During this report period, 83 individual biodiversity observations of key species such as; Serow and Sambar, Hornbill and Gibbon sp. were recorded (See document 10)

**Output 5: A scalable model of sustainable, climate-smart agro-biodiversity is established and incorporated into forest resource use practices by forest-dependent communities.**

**A. Develop guidelines**

This is currently in progress as the implementation of the project unfolds. As reported earlier in this report, the development of a CCA process has been completed.

**B. Conduct cross-village exchange and demonstration visits.**

Currently cross-village exchange visits and networking have been facilitated through development meetings, workshops and training sessions that took place during this report period. As soon as the expansion program for 2018 has been completed, a more formal mechanism will be established through the formation of a cluster level coffee enterprise group which will play a key role in the dissemination and exchange of information within the village cluster.

**C. Produce working papers.**

Will be developed as part of the lessons learned during the various implementation activities.

## 4.2 Progress towards project Outputs

**Output 1 – Model community conservation agreements (CCAs) are developed and implemented in forest-dependent communities.**

Indicators relating to village conservation agreements, hectares under CCA management and agro-forestry areas under community rights while still valid and achievable, are currently in progress through the CCA process.

Please see section 1 for details of all related activities. All introductory CCA meeting have been completed and the methodology (step by step approach) to be used in developing the CCA's completed and approved by village, district and provincial levels. Training has been conducted with the implementation team, and all LUP and village socio-economic data has now been collected and is under analysis.

Work on the negotiation of the agreements with the community has been slow in getting under way due to our partner's (VFI) need to understand and adjust to the local context and in adapting their CCA model to the unique NEPL NPA objectives and needs in terms of these agreements. This should not cause a problem for the overall implementation of the activities, and steps are being taken to ensure closer communication between our partners in order to speed up the CCA process.

**Output 2 – Forest-dependent communities bordering NEPL have improved livelihoods through sustainable use of non-timber agro-biodiversity resources in managed village forests and diversified agro-biodiversity production systems in agricultural land.**

Indicator 2.1- 500 farmers trained – currently 36 households training in coffee production

Indicator 2.2 15 Demonstration plots established – Currently 5 coffee demonstration plots established.

Indicator 2.3 4 woman's assassinations established – currently nil.

While the numbers of farmers trained appears low, training was intensive and covered a number of farming skills such as general coffee planting skills, nursery establishment, seedling care and planting during separate training events.

Good progress is being made in terms of establishing a coffee enterprise in 5 villages. Capacity building activities have focused on these households and participating villages and demonstration plots have been planted out in each of these villages.

Progress has also been made in expanding these plots to include a total of 36 households and it is expected that more than 25,000 new coffee seedlings will be planted out in this coming 2018 planting season.

The establishment of women's associations forms part of the CCA process and so no results can be recorded at this point. As reported, the CCA process is well under way.

***Output 3: Local income-generating activities that are climate smart and innovative, including environment-friendly sustainable agriculture through the Conservation Enterprise Development Program (CEDP) are set up and expanded in the forest-dependent communities bordering NEPL.***

Indicator 3.1- 1 Agro-biodiversity conservation enterprise – Current – 1 coffee enterprise under development

Good progress has been made with the development of the coffee enterprise as already indicated in this report. With the inclusion of SAFFRON coffee as a technical partner and buyer, the element of connectivity to regional markets is also a strong possibility.

***Output 4: Species and forest habitat protection is significantly increased in the total protection and controlled use forests of NEPL adjacent to target communities.***

The measurement of all indicators under this section are dependent on the final signing of the CCA's which is currently in progress.

In the interim, baseline data is collected on a monthly basis through SMART enforcement data relating to hunting threats, illegal logging and biodiversity.

Monthly deforestation data is collected and will also serve as baseline data.

***Output 5: A scalable model of sustainable, climate-smart agro-biodiversity is established and incorporated into forest resource use practices by forest-dependent communities.***

Activities and indicators relating to these outputs are not scheduled to begin at this stage of the implementation process, but records are being kept to facilitate the process later in the project.

### **4.3 Progress towards the project Outcome**

**OUTCOME** - *Reduced deforestation and improved conservation practice through implementation of scalable agro-biodiversity practice in village forestland and agricultural land that protects biodiversity while improving incomes and welfare for forest-dependent populations.*

#### **A. Local Livelihoods:**

*By the end of the project, at least 100 households in 10 forest-dependent communities bordering NEPL will benefit from an increase in household revenue (> 15% compared to 2017 baseline) as a result of improved forest resource stewardship.*

As has been reported previously, good progress has already been made in terms of developing local livelihoods with 36 households already involved to the development of the coffee enterprise. While the focus has been on coffee this year, we intend to support communities in the development of variety of NTFP products that are identified during the CCA and LUP process currently underway.

The indicators remain relevant and should be achievable within the grant period.

#### **B. Biodiversity:**

*Populations of target species: northern white-cheeked gibbon, large predators (Asian golden cats, clouded leopards, dholes) and large and medium sized ungulate prey species (sambar deer, muntjac, serow, gaur and wild pigs) will be stable or increasing compared to a 2015 baseline.*

This indicator is not yet able to be measured due to the early stage of project activities. However, monthly baseline data is being collected through the SMART data generated by ranger patrols. Through the CCA consultation process, the level of awareness around biodiversity values is being raised and this will form a strong foundation for the delivery of outreach campaigns later in the project.

### **C. Forest Cover:**

*By the end of the project, rate of deforestation in the NEPL total protection zone adjacent to target communities is reduced by 60% from 2016 baseline.*

Similar to the above, this indicator is not yet able to be measured due to the early stage of project activities. Baseline data is however being collected through the monthly deforestation reports and SMART data generated by ranger patrols.

Through the CCA development process, village LU data is being collected and the level of awareness around land issues is being continually raised.

The indicators remain relevant and should be achievable within the grant period

### **D. Policy:**

*By the end of the project, a scalable model of sustainable, climate-smart agro-biodiversity is established and available for replication in forest resource use practices by forest-dependent communities in other protected areas in Laos.*

This indicator is not yet able to be measured due to the early stage of project activities. Progress towards the development of CCA's, the incentivisation of conservation compliance and the partnership model with SAFFRON and other agencies should form an important body of work for future similar projects.

## **4.4 Monitoring of assumptions**

**Assumption 1 (0.1):** Local communities continue to be willing to participate in innovative activities;

**Comments:** While we were expecting to have a minimum of 50 households willing to participate in the coffee enterprise, only 36 households have expressed interest. This is however expected to grow once benefits start to flow to the participating households.

All other assumptions remain relevant or as yet untested through project activities.

## **4.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and poverty alleviation**

**What contribution is your project making to this higher impact?**

- Through the CCA process which is currently under way in 5 villages
  - Increased level of village land management
  - Improved boundary demarcation between CUZ and TPZ of NEPL NPA
  - Increased awareness of village land use and boundary
  - Increased awareness of regulations

**For all projects, what contribution is your project making to human development and wellbeing (poverty alleviation)?**

- Through the coffee livelihood project in 5 villages affecting 36 households, the following benefits:

- Capacity building and training with regards to coffee planting, disease control and nursery management.
- Providing opportunity and support to 36 households in the development of a coffee enterprise.
- Support to 3 households in processing 402 kg of coffee resulting in an income to these households of just over \$1,000.

## **5. Contribution to the Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs)**

No significant contribution at this stage of the project implementation

## **6. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements**

No significant contribution at this stage of the project implementation

## **7. Project support to poverty alleviation**

**Is there evidence that the project is working to alleviate poverty?**

- While still in its early stages of the project, the nature of the project is to contribute to the alleviation of poverty through the development of local enterprise. Currently the project has engaged 36 households in the coffee enterprise, but economic benefits will only flow following the first crop in approximately 3 years' time.

**Who are the expected beneficiaries of this work?**

- Direct beneficiaries – 100 local village households in 10 villages

**Are there expected to be any direct impacts from this project?**

- Yes, income from coffee and other enterprise sales to 100 households in 10 villages.

**Are there any notable achievements this year?**

- As stated, this is still in its early stages of the project, although 36 households in 5 villages have already established coffee demonstration plots which is a great start.

## **8. Project support to gender equality issues.**

**Is there evidence that the project is working to address gender equality?**

- Through the CCA process, gender equity is being addresses through the consultation process and will form a part of the selection of committees and coffee group organisations.

**Are there expected to be any direct gender equality impacts from this project? If not direct, please comment on any indirect impacts.**

- Direct impacts through the make-up of village conservation committees and enterprise group associations.

**Are there any notable achievements this year?**

- The CCA process is still in progress so other than direct involvement during consultation, no tangible achievements relating to gender equity.

## **9. Monitoring and evaluation**

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**How can you demonstrate that the Outputs and Activities of the project actually contribute to the project Outcome?**

- The project is still in its early stages of implementation and little to no impacts are able to be measured as a result of the current set of activities conducted during this report period.
- We do however continue to collect baseline information in the form of:
  - Monthly deforestation mapping
  - Threat monitoring through SMART
  - Biodiversity monitoring through ranger patrols using SMART

- Land use through the process of data collection in the CCA development process
- Village socio-economic data through surveys conducted as part of the CCA process.

**What are the indicators of achievements (both qualitative and quantitative) and how are you measuring these?**

- Not applicable at this early stage of implementation.

**Have there been any changes made to the M&E plan over the reporting period?**

- No changes to the plan.

## **10. Lessons learnt**

**What worked well, and what didn't work well, this past year?**

- Finding and developing a strong technical partner (SAFFRON Coffee) to assist with the coffee enterprise was key to the implementation of this aspect of the grant.
- The process of developing the CCA's is too long and complex, resulting in delays and at times confusion among the team. This is as a result of using a partner outside of the NEPL NPA geographical area where local knowledge is proving to be more important than first expected.

**If you had to do it again, what would you do differently?**

- For the CCA process, I would have consulted with a partner for a CCA model only, and then undertaken or implemented the model with the local WCS / NEPL team who are more familiar with the local situation.

**What recommendations would you make to others doing similar projects?**

- Partner with organisations who already have a history with the local areas.

**How are you going to build this learning into the project and future plans?**

- Following on to the 10 villages supported by this grant, we need to support NEPL MU in signing CCA's in an additional 40 villages around NEPL. These lessons can be applied during this stage of operations.

## **11. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere**

**Has the design of the project been enhanced over the last year, e.g. refining methods, or exit strategy?**

- On the positive side, WCS have been appointed technical support to the NEPL MU in the implementation of a 4-year WB funded project which includes some level of livelihoods support and increased protection and monitoring within the Darwin areas as well. This will further support and enhance the activities of this grant and improve the exit strategy.

## **12. Sustainability and legacy**

During March 2017 WCS attended the Lao Uplands Conference held over three days in Laung Prabang. The conference highlighted key agro-ecological challenges and opportunities and showcased key institutions and organisations involved in this region. WCS submitted an extract and developed a poster around the coffee initiative funded through this grant and provided a presentation to key officials at the opening of the conference. The poster was on display for the duration of the project.

The Darwin project received excellent exposure during the call for funding for "Support to coffee sector development in Northern Laos", funded through AFD. Government officials based in Xone district (this project site) expressed interest in developing a proposal to develop their community run project based on our coffee initiative model.

No changes are expected to the current model at this point of implementation.

### 13. Darwin identity

**What effort has the project made to publicise the Darwin Initiative, e.g. where did the project use the Darwin Initiative logo and promote Darwin funding opportunities or projects?**

- Darwin logo is used on all training presentations and documentation.
- On poster at the Lao Uplands Conference (See document 12)
- On a number of general presentations about NEPL NPA delivered at meetings and workshops.

**How has the UK Government’s contribution to your project’s work been recognised?**

- We will be developing village project posters within the target villages and also at the farming plot level to create awareness around the project and the UK Government contribution through the Darwin initiative.

**Was the Darwin Initiative funding recognised as a distinct project with a clear identity or did it form part of a larger programme?**

- Yes, all our partners understand the work conducted in these villages as the “Darwin work” During the inception phase with our GOL counterparts the nature of the project was explained as a separate initiative, but one that fits seamlessly within the overall NEPL NPA conservation program under the livelihoods development and community engagement section.

**To what extent is there an understanding of the Darwin Initiative within in the host country and who is likely to be familiar with it?**

### 14. Project expenditure

**Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018)**

Project spend (indicative) since last annual report	2017/18 Grant (£)	2017/18 Total Darwin Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)			-9%	High level of staff time needed during the inception stages
Consultancy costs			12%	Cost negotiations with consultant.
Overhead Costs			18%	Costs shared with other activities.
Travel and subsistence			43%	Most travel and Subsistence costs are local at this early stage but spending with increase as the project expands during this next phase
Operating Costs			76%	Implementation progressing well, but CCA development is slower than expected, resulting in

				lower expenses at this stage of the project.
Capital items (see below)			-	
Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)			-	
Others (see below)			76%	Implementation progressing well, but CCA development is slower than expected, resulting in lower expenses at this stage of the project.
<b>TOTAL</b>				

## Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against Logical Framework for Financial Year 2017-2018

Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2017 - March 2018	Actions required/planned for next period
<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p>Sustainable, climate-smart forest resource use practices are successfully adopted by local communities bordering NEPL and modelled for PAs across Laos, leading to biodiversity protection and improved welfare of vulnerable communities</p>		<p>No direct impacts at this point of the project implementation other than increased awareness due to capacity building, increased understanding of local communities due to data currently being collected as part of the CCA proves.</p>	
<p><b>Outcome</b> Reduced deforestation and improved conservation practice through implementation of scalable agro-biodiversity practice in village forestland and agricultural land that protects biodiversity while improving incomes and welfare for forest-dependent populations.</p>	<p><b>0.1 Local Livelihoods:</b> By the end of the project, at least 100 households in 10 forest-dependent communities bordering NEPL will benefit from an increase in household revenue (&gt; 15% compared to 2017 baseline) as a result of improved forest resource stewardship.</p> <p><b>0.2 Biodiversity:</b> Populations of target species: northern white-cheeked gibbon, large predators (Asian golden cats, clouded leopards, dholes) and large and medium sized ungulate prey species (sambar deer, muntjac, serow, gaur and wild pigs) will be stable or increasing compared to a 2015 baseline.</p> <p><b>0.3 Forest Cover:</b> By the end of the project, rate of deforestation in the NEPL total protection zone adjacent to target communities is reduced by 60% from 2016 baseline.</p> <p><b>0.4 Policy:</b> By the end of the project, a scalable model of sustainable, climate-smart agro-biodiversity is established and available for replication in forest resource use practices by forest-dependent communities in other protected areas in Laos.</p>	<p><b>0.1</b> 36 households participating in coffee development project 5 participating villages</p> <p><b>0.2</b> Not measurable at this point of implementation.</p> <p><b>0.3</b> Not measurable at this point of implementation.</p> <p><b>0.4</b> Not measurable at this point of implementation.</p>	<p><b>0.1</b> Continue to develop and expand the coffee industry activities.</p> <p>Complete the CCA signing</p> <p>Work with additional 5 villages to identify an additional 2 – 3 livelihood improvement activities.</p> <p><b>02, 03, 0,4</b> Continue to collect monthly baseline data.</p>
<p>Output 1 ; Model community conservation agreements (CCA) are developed and implemented in forest-dependent communities.</p>	<p><b>1.1</b> At least 10 villages have village forests under community conservation agreements (CCAs) signed off by the District Governor and neighboring villages by the 3rd year of the project (baseline = 0 in 2016);</p> <p><b>1.2</b> By year 4 of the project, 74,000 Hectares of targeted landscapes are managed under CCAs (baseline = 0 hectares in 2016);</p> <p><b>1.3</b> Forest-dependent communities gain exclusive agro-biodiversity use rights over 7,000 hectares of land during the course of the project</p>	<p><b>1.1 – CCA</b> currently in progress in the first 5 villages of Boumafath cluster</p> <p><b>1,2 – CCA</b> currently in progress in the first 5 villages. Data is being collected on village PLUP's which will form part of the CCA's.</p> <p><b>1.3 - CCA</b> currently in progress in the first 5 villages. Data is being collected on village PLUP's which will form part of the CCA's.</p>	

	(baseline = 0 hectares managed exclusively for agro-biodiversity forest 2015).	
Activity 1.1 Conduct CCA development process		Currently in progress through the CCA's development process. 5 Villages currently engaged as a first round of CCA's.  CCA's in 10 villages signed by the end of Y2
Activity 1.2, Carry out participatory mapping, zonation for appropriate use and establish management regulations for all forest lands within village boundaries.		Currently in progress through the CCA's development process. 5 Villages currently engaged as a first round of CCA's with LU data gathered and undergoing analysis.  CCA's in 10 villages signed by the end of Y2
Activity 1.3 Provide direct support and management for priority agro-biodiversity village forest lands.		Currently in progress through the CCA's development process. 5 Villages currently engaged as a first round of CCA's.  CCA's in 10 villages signed by the end of Y2
<b>Output 2.</b> Forest-dependent communities bordering NEPL have improved livelihoods through sustainable use of non-timber agro-biodiversity resources in managed village forests and diversified agro-biodiversity production systems in agricultural land.	<p><b>2.1</b> By year 4 of the project, at least 500 famers trained in collection and processing of agro-biodiversity resources in managed village forests (i.e. coffee, red mushrooms, bamboo shoots, honey and bees wax,) with at least 25% being women (baseline = 0 farmers training in 2016);</p> <p><b>2.2</b> By quarter 2 of year 3 of the project, at least 15 demonstration agro-biodiversity production systems established in village agricultural land (baseline = 0 demonstration systems in 2016);</p> <p><b>2.3</b> By year 3 of the project, at least 4 women's associations focussed on collection and processing of products established (baseline = 0 NTFP associations in 2016);</p>	<p><b>2.1</b> – 36 households engaged in the coffee enterprise project in 5 villages and received training in coffee nursery management, preparation and planting of coffee, basic processing of coffee.</p> <p><b>2.2</b> – 5 Coffee demonstration plots established</p> <p><b>2.3</b> – process in progress as part on the CCA's development activities.</p>
Activity 2.1. Conduct training in sustainable NTFP collection and processing.		36 households trained in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffee nursery establishment and management</li> <li>• Plant disease management</li> <li>• Preparation and planting of coffee seedlings</li> <li>• Care and management of coffee plants</li> </ul> <p>Y2 – Once additional products have been identified by communities through the CCA process, we will select 2 – 3 NTFP products and begin with the development or improvement process.</p>
Activity 2.2. Establish demonstration plots.		5 Coffee demonstration plots have been established in 5 villages  Y2 – Once additional products have been identified by communities through the CCA process, we will select 2 – 3 NTFP products and begin with the development or improvement process.
Activity 2.3 Establish women's associations.		This forms an integrated part of the CCA development process currently in progress.  Y2 – At least 1-woman association established which will serve as a model for the other villages.
<b>Output 3.</b> Local income-generating activities that are climate smart and innovative, including environment-friendly sustainable agriculture through the Conservation Enterprise Development Program (CEDP) are set up and	<b>3.1</b> By the end of the project, at least 1 Agro-biodiversity / conservation enterprise is established, and linked to national / regional markets (baseline = 0 conservation enterprise in 2016);	<b>3.1</b> – Coffee enterprise established in 5 villages currently involving 36 households. Demonstration plots established and expansion stage to commence in 2018 planting season. Partnership developed through SAFFRON coffee for technical support and training and buyer for the immediate future.

expanded in the forest-dependent communities bordering NEPL.		
Activity 2.1. Investigate feasibility of NTFP and agro-biodiversity products for conservation enterprise development		<p>Feasibility studies already conducted for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffee</li> <li>• Cardamom</li> <li>• Red mushrooms</li> </ul> <p>Y2 - Once additional products have been identified by communities through the CCA process, we will select 2 – 3 NTFP products and begin with the development or improvement process. If additional feasibility studies are needed, then they will be conducted.</p>
Activity 2.2. Conduct conservation enterprise development process		<p>As mentioned – focus has been on coffee production during Y1.</p> <p>Y2 - Once additional products have been identified by communities through the CCA process, we will select 2 – 3 NTFP products and begin with the development or improvement process through capacity development and establishment support.</p>
<b>Output 4.</b> Species and forest habitat protection is significantly increased in the total protection and controlled use forests of NEPL adjacent to target communities	<p><b>4.1</b> Illegal extraction of timber and non-timber natural resources in NEPL total protection zone adjacent to at least 10 village areas is reduced by 50% against a 2017 baseline (to be established);</p> <p><b>4.2</b> At least 90% of community members in the target villages are aware of hunting laws and the impacts of illegal hunting by 2019 against a 2014 baseline = 30%;</p> <p><b>4.3</b> By the end of project there will be a 50% reduction in hunting and poaching in the NEPL total protection zone adjacent to target villages (compared to a 2017 baseline to be established).</p>	<p><b>4.1</b> – Collection of baseline data through monthly deforestation and fire reports collected. Information on illegal logging activities collected through SMART enforcement data.</p> <p>Too early in the project to measure results based on activity implementation.</p> <p><b>4.2</b> – Too early in the project to measure results based on activity implementation.</p> <p><b>4.3</b> – Baseline information collected on a monthly basis through SMART enforcement data.</p> <p>Too early in the project to measure results based on activity implementation.</p>
Activity 4.1 Conduct land-use monitoring.		<p>Baseline information currently collected through CCA process. Monitoring to commence once CCA's have been signed.</p> <p>Y2 CCA's signed, TPZ patrols begun.</p>
Activity 4.2 Conduct community monitoring related to CCA.		<p>Monitoring to commence once CCA's have been signed.</p> <p>Y2 – First annual assessment compiled.</p>
Activity 4.3 Conduct outreach campaigns		<p>Activity to commence once CCA's have been signed.</p> <p>Y2 – Outreach campaign conducted.</p>
Activity 4.4 Conduct law enforcement monitoring including community-led monitoring		<p>Baseline information collected on a monthly basis through SMART enforcement data collection. Monitoring to commence once CCA's have been signed.</p> <p>Y2 – Annual assessment conducted</p>
Activity 4.5 Conduct biodiversity monitoring		<p>Baseline information collected on a monthly basis through SMART enforcement data collection. Too early in the project to measure results based on current status of activity implementation.</p> <p>Y2 – Continue to collect baseline and indirect data through SMART enforcement data.</p>

<p><b>Output 5</b> A scalable model of sustainable, climate-smart agro-biodiversity is established and available for replication in forest resource use practices by forest-dependent communities in other protected areas in Laos.</p>	<p><b>5.1</b> By the end of the project, an evaluation of impacts and lessons learned guidelines from this project is published and disseminated to all stakeholders including local government agencies, CSOs, development and technical partners;</p> <p><b>5.2</b> By the end of the project, at least 4 exchanges are held with other forest-dependent communities bordering NEPL to expose them to sustainable agro-biodiversity concepts and practices in a participatory fashion promote wider adoption;</p> <p><b>5.3</b> By the end of the project, at least 2 working papers outlining the effectiveness of sustainable climate-smart agro-biodiversity are produced and shared at national, regional or international events.</p>	<p><b>5.1</b> – Too early in the project implementation process to assess these indicators against the output.</p> <p><b>5.1</b> – Too early in the project implementation process to assess these indicators against the output.</p> <p><b>5.1</b> – Too early in the project implementation process to assess these indicators against the output.</p>
<p>Activity 5.1. Develop guidelines.</p>	<p>Too early in the project implementation to report on these activities</p>	
<p>Activity 5.2 Conduct cross-village exchange and demonstration visits.</p>	<p>Too early in the project implementation to report on these activities</p>	
<p>Activity 5.3 Produce working papers.</p>	<p>Too early in the project implementation to report on these activities</p>	

**Annex 2: Project’s full current logframe as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed) (See Document 13)**

## Annex 3: Standard Measures

**Table 1 Project Standard Output Measures**

Code No.	Description	Gender of people (if relevant)	Nationality of people (if relevant)	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Year 4 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
6A	36 People Training and capacity building around NTFP management / development	Mixed	Lao Nationals	36	200	214	50	36	500
6B	Various practical skills training and capacity building exercises - Max of 3 days per session	Mixed	Lao Nationals	3 days	6 days	6 days	6 days	3 days	24 Days
13B	Camera trap survey results						1	0	1
14B	Conferences attended			1	1	1	1	1	4
20	Motorcycle				£1,400			0	£1,400
23	£80,000 – US Fish and Wildlife services, AFD ‘ FFEM, KFW,								£80,000

**Table 2 Publications**

Title	Type (e.g. journals, manual, CDs)	Detail (authors, year)	Gender of Lead Author	Nationality of Lead Author	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online)
No publication at this point of the grant implementation						

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

Please see attached folder for all supporting documentation

1. WCS GOL MOU
2. TOR partnership agreements – VFI
3. Training agenda – Implementation process of CCA
4. CCA process document
5. Village visits to introduce CCA'S
6. Attendance register introduction meeting as example
7. Baseline survey data form
8. WCS Mission report conservation enterprises
9. Monthly deforestation threat monitoring
10. NEPL NPA SMART enforcement report – Darwin report period
11. Eastern corridor re-delineation baseline map
12. Uplands coffee project poster
13. Annex 2: project log frame
14. Photo verification

### Checklist for submission

	Check
<b>Is the report less than 10MB?</b> If so, please email to <a href="mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk">Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk</a> putting the project number in the Subject line.	
<b>Is your report more than 10MB?</b> If so, please discuss with <a href="mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk">Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk</a> about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	YES
<b>Have you included means of verification?</b> You need not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	YES
<b>Do you have hard copies of material you want to submit with the report?</b> If so, please make this clear in the covering email and ensure all material is marked with the project number.	NO
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	YES
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	