

Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31st October 2017)

Project reference	24-015
Project title	Community conservation of Chitwan National Park's freshwater ecosystems and Gharials
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal
Lead organisation	Zoological Society of London
Partner(s)	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) and Himalayan Nature (HN)
Project leader	<i>Gitanjali Bhattacharya (UK lead) Hem Sagar Baral (Nepal lead)</i>
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	<i>31 October 2017, HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media etc.	NA

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).

Meetings were held at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) to share the project activities; intended outputs; roles and responsibilities of partners; revised timeframe; and the budget. Permission for the implementation of the project activities in Chitwan National Park (CNP) was granted by DNPWC. The Programme Coordination Committee (PCC), already formed at the central level for previous ZSL DI-funded projects, is being used to facilitate the implementation and coordination of this project as well. The PCC is led by the Deputy Director General of DNPWC and includes senior officials from DNPWC and ZSL-Nepal as members. Representatives from partner organisations are invited to attend PCC meetings as required.

Similarly a site-based Project Management Unit (PMU) has been formed with the Chief Conservation Officer of CNP as the coordinator. PMU members include: the site manager of the National Trust for Nature Conservation - Biodiversity Conservation Centre, Chitwan; ZSL's field coordinator; the head of the Nepal Army unit stationed at CNP; representatives from other conservation organisations working in the area; and attendees from the Buffer Zone Management Committee (BZMC). This project implementation model was highly successful in the implementation and coordination of the DI project in Suklaphanta National Park so ZSL replicated the model for the new DI project in CNP. The PMU is responsible for the implementation of the project in close coordination with the local communities, and will share information about the project and seek advice as required. In the case that any adjustments to the project are considered necessary, the PMU will submit these to the PCC, which will advise ZSL, following which ZSL will submit a formal change request to LTS for approval.

Project agreements were also signed with other partners NTNC and HN.

Progress against the outputs

Output 1: Improved river ecosystem management delivered through improved management plans and environmental policy based on a robust Gharial and riverine ecosystem monitoring programme

Literature on gharial research and surveys is being collected (*Activity 1.1 – ongoing*). A project inception workshop was organised at CNP to introduce the project activities and objectives. All concerned stakeholders including the Chief Conservation Officer of CNP, and representatives from BZMC, local government authorities, and wetland dependent communities participated in the inception workshop (*Activity 1.4 – ongoing*). A PMU meeting was held to discuss the plan for annual gharial surveys and the monitoring of gharials released from the Gharial Conservation and Breeding Centre (GCBC) (*Activity 1.5 - ongoing*). The process to develop gharial/river monitoring guidelines was also discussed (*Activity 1.6 – ongoing*).

Output 2: Threats to fish stocks and gharials are reduced through protection provided by 10 Community-Based Anti-Poaching Units (CBAPUs) patrolling sensitive riverine zones in the Narayani and Rapti watersheds to protect the area from unsustainable fishing, poaching and other damaging and unsustainable uses of the river.

Consultation meetings with BZMC representatives were held to identify the existing Community-Based Anti-Poaching Units (CBAPUs) for support through the project (*Activity 2.1 – ongoing*). The Chief Conservation Officer of CNP proposed titling these Gharial Guard Groups (3Gs) rather than the generic CBAPUs. This is a positive development for the project. It demonstrates CNP already taking ownership of the project, which will support the achievement of the projects objectives and its sustainability. 3Gs will be dedicated conservation enforcement and anti-poaching teams focused primarily on gharials. The 3Gs will be registered to BZMC and coordinate with CNP to provide information on illegal activities on the rivers.

Output 3: Increased post-release survival of Gharial's from the Chitwan Gharial Conservation Breeding Centre (GCBC) delivered through implementing improved husbandry and release protocols, and post-release monitoring.

ZSL and staff from partner organisations visited GCBC to assess the existing physical infrastructure. The team identified upgrading the GCBC information centre as an immediate need (*Activity 3.1 – ongoing*).

Output 4: Food security of local communities improved through implementing sustainable fishing, and reducing the dependence of local communities on fishing through generating sustainable aquaculture livelihoods.

A community engagement programme was organised in CNP to identify the fish-dependent communities for project support. Communities from the Amaltari, Nanda Bhauju and Pithauli Buffer Zone User Groups have been initially identified for livelihood support. (*Activity 4.1 – ongoing*)

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.

NA

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: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

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. 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, please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

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

None to report.

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. Additionally, if you were funded under R23 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate 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: 22-035 Darwin Half Year Report**