

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

Project reference:	24-030
Project title:	Controlling an invasive aquatic plant for improved biodiversity and livelihoods.
Country(ies)/territory(ies):	Zambia
Lead organisation:	Birdlife International
Partner(s):	BirdWatch Zambia; Centre of Agriculture and Bioscience Information (CABI); Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA)
Project leader:	<i>Paul Kariuki Ndang'ang'a</i>
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media etc.	birdwatchzambia.org

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).

This project started on 1st July 2017. During the period, the following progress has been achieved, mostly preparatory activities to enable full project implementation:

Output 1. Environmental Impact and Risk Assessment guiding mitigation measures for biologically controlling *Salvinia molesta*:

- BirdWatch Zambia have developed Terms of References, including timelines, in line with guidelines provided by the Zambian Environmental Management Authority (ZEMA) prior to contracting an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) consultant.
- Following recommendations from a number of stakeholders, BirdWatch Zambia are investigating the possibility of downscaling from a full EIA to an Environmental Project Brief (EPB) given the fact that ZARI has already previously done tests on the use of the proposed bio-control agent in controlling *Salvinia molesta* in Zambia which included a Public Hearing Process. The EPB process is quicker than a full EIA as it does not require the public consultative phase but rather focuses on major stakeholders identified by the project team and still retains scientific credibility. If accepted by ZEMA, the EPB would enable the project to start the weevil (biocontrol agent) breeding programme during the hot season and the biocontrol activities would be underway nearly two months sooner than with a full EIA. Consultations have taken place with ZEMA and the Zambian Agriculture Research Institute (ZARI) and based on these, a formal request has been sent to ZEMA.

Output 2: Fishing community members have increased the capacity and interest to participate in *Salvinia* control:

- Main activities under this output will start in the next quarter, but members of the Meembe Site Support Group (SSG) based at the project site have already met with project staff and been fully informed about the project, including the biocontrol method and their involvement in this process. They are therefore ready and waiting for further

engagement and to raise awareness with more community members.

Output 3: *Salvinia molesta* control in Lukanga Swamp improves habitat for wetland biodiversity including increased fish stock leading to increased food security for fishing community households.

- Main activities under this output will start once the EIA/EPB process (see below) is complete. However main project partners and stakeholders, including ZEMA, CABI, ZARI, Fisheries Department and local communities have been involved in preparatory meetings during which process they have provided further advice and are quite ready to engage in the biocontrol activities.

Output 5. Project management, impact monitoring and evaluation structures and processes ensure that the project objectives are achieved on schedule and within budget:

- *Subcontracting of BirdWatch Zambia, the main project partner:* BirdLife International negotiated a contract with BirdWatch Zambia which has since been signed by both parties, taking into account all the requirements for project implementation, management and reporting as set by the Darwin Initiative and the project partnership.
- *Project preparatory meetings:* BirdLife International held virtual meetings with BirdWatch Zambia to agree on the logistical details of implementing the project. Details for the initial project induction and training visit by BirdLife International staff to Zambia were finalised. The visit is scheduled for 2nd to 6th October 2017.
- *Recruitment of staff:* BirdWatch Zambia formalised full time recruitment of the Junior Ecologist (who had been working part-time before-hand).
- *Setting of baselines:* A GIS consultant (MEDEEM) was contracted against agreed terms of references for mapping *Salvinia molesta* coverage and other socio-economic parameters at the start of the project.

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.

BirdWatch Zambia had planned to undertake a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as per recommendation by the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA). However, a number of stakeholders on the project have advised undertaking an Environmental Project Brief (EPB) as an alternative to a full EIA. They have indicated that the EIA will not add much value to studies already done by ZARI about 10 years ago when they used this bio-control method in Zambia. In light of this, BWZ is in negotiations with ZEMA to down-scale the EIA requirement to an EPB. Nonetheless, BWZ will take any advice given by ZEMA whether it involves conducting an EIA or an EPB. However, another cardinal thing to note is that the full EIA will cost the project more time than anticipated as information lately provided by ZEMA states that the process will require at least 115 days to review according to new guidelines, yet an EPB would take 55 working days. The implication of spending this much time on the EIA process is that the start of actual biocontrol activities will be delayed until the EIA is complete and would push the weevil breeding out of peak season(the hot season).

The EPB takes into consideration the ecological sensitivity of the project area by undertaking cardinal processes such as a pest risk assessment but does not go through the 'Public hearing process' as does the EIA. Undertaking an EPB rather than an EIA does not have any scientific credibility implications on the proposed project but instead helps save project time by directly involving the mapped stakeholders and engaging them directly and not through a public hearing.

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

A full formal request is not required for this. Undertaking an EPB will enhance the project by allowing biocontrol activities to start sooner than with a full EIA.

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?

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**