



Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project
Half Year Report
(due 31st October 2018)

Project reference	25-021
Project title:	Prosperous Mekong Communities Through Fisheries Co-management That Protects River Biodiversity
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Xebanghien River basin, Savannakhet, Lao PDR
Lead organisation	WWF Laos
Partner(s)	Department of Livestock and Fisheries National University of Laos
Project leader	Francois Guegan
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	July-September 2018, HYR1
Project website/blog/social media etc.	

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).

We are still in a preparation phase (since May) during which a series of coordination and discussion meetings have been organized with our Government counterparts, the Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF) and the National University of Laos (NUoL), as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Besides gradual progress in terms of coordination and documentation i.e. preparing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the DLF and a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with NUoL, activities have not yet officially started and we are experiencing serious delays in overall project implementation.

Progress made up until end of September include:

- Consent from target communities and Government offices at the provincial and district level showing their willingness for the project to be implemented in the area;
- WWF Laos and NUoL have agreed upon terms and conditions of an MoA. Nevertheless, it has not yet been signed;
- A draft MoU was submitted to the DLF, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, for consideration and agreement before signing. The MoU will then be submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for approval.
- The volunteership from Australian Volunteers International (AVI) has been confirmed and will start on November 27th, 2018. To speed things up in designing the various monitoring surveys, the volunteer has started to work closely with the Faculty of Agriculture at NUoL and WWF Laos in doing desk review and GIS mapping of target and control villages, thanks to additional WWF Laos' financial support.

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.

The main problem we have encountered is the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is requiring for us to sign a totally new MoU for this project, as opposed to the original plan, which was to add all of this project's activities to the current MoU we have for a similar project on the Mekong – in fact these two project are meant to work together as described in the project proposal, and match funding arrangements.

Preparation of official documentation in the Lao PDR is an extremely time-consuming process where exact timelines cannot be fixed. In addition to this, a hydropower dam collapsed in July 2018 in Sanamxai district, Attapeu province, Laos, which caused widespread destruction to the entire infrastructure and the living of the people in the area and neighbouring provinces. Since then, Government agencies have been focusing on facilitating recovery, which has further effected the time needed for various procedures by the whole Government's offices and of course for this project in particular.

Officially, activities should not be undertaken without a signed MoU between WWF Laos and the DLF. As a result, at the end of September, no field activities have started yet. But we hope some of them can start at the end of November, in particular those related to Monitoring and Evaluation, in partnership with NUoL and AVI. Also, since the DLF and its line agencies in the province and districts have agreed to start the project, we can reasonably hope that at least preparatory work will be possible before the signing of the MoU is finally allowed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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

Formal change request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

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?

The significant underspend for year 1 is due to the MoU delays as explained above. The figure above is for now just an estimate and will be confirmed in the coming weeks. We will submit a Change Request in the first 2 weeks of December 2018. This will include:

- Virements
- Re-budget

- Changes to logical framework (however, only limited to milestones, i.e. final results will most likely not change)
- Potential 3 months no-cost extension from July to September 2020 (if at all possible)

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 R24 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**