



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



**Darwin Initiative/D+ Project
Half Year Report
(due 31st October 2019)**

Project reference	25-023
Project title	Conserving Rosewood genetic diversity for resilient livelihoods in the Mekong
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam
Lead organisation	University of Oxford
Partner(s)	Bioversity International (Malaysia) Institute of Forest & Wildlife Research & Development, Cambodia Forest Science Research Center, National Agriculture & Forestry Research Inst., Lao PDR Forest Genetics & Conservation Dept, Center for Biodiversity & Biosafety, Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences Expert Office, Forest and Plant Conservation Research Office, Department of National Parks, Wildlife & Plant Conservation, Thailand University of Copenhagen, Denmark
Project leader	Prof. John MacKay
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	31 October 2019 HYR2
Project website/blog/social media etc.	http://www.apforgen.org/initiatives/conserving-dalbergia

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).

Progress in carrying out project Activities

Output 1: Regional assessment of the conservation status of *Dalbergia cochinchinensis*, *D. oliveri* and *D. cultrata*

Activities reported as completed at the end of Year 1: Activities 1.1-1.3, 1.5

Activity 1.4: Validate maps and models through expert consultation (ending Y2 Q1)

- This activity was largely conducted in Y1 although it was planned for Y2 (see Y1 annual report). In year Y2, Maps were refined in May-June based on expert feedback received in March 2019.

Activity 1.6: Populate database with collected data (Y2Q1) Activity 1.6: Populate database with collected data (ending Y2 Q1)

- Database was populated in May with data as follows: 244 records from 4 countries for *Dalbergia cochinchinensis*, 152 records from 5 countries for *D. oliveri*, 112 records from 5 countries for *D. cultrata*

Activity 1.7: Identify conservation priorities through comparison of distribution, threat, and socioeconomic data, existing collections, strengths of past initiatives (ending Y2 Q3)

- Project partners identified national and regional conservation priorities for the 3 species in the project's annual workshop on 9 September 2019.

Output 2: Filling gaps to conserve *Dalbergia* genetic resources through *in situ*, *ex situ* programmes and provenance testing

Activity 2.1: Identify locations for conservation units in collaboration with stakeholders & between countries, to ensure sustainability & complementarity (ending Y2 Q3)

- The identification and prioritization of locations has been discussed and validated with the partners. This work has served to validate the output indicator on the number of conservation units to be developed, including both *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation.

Activity 2.2: Develop institutional arrangements and management guidelines, including material transfer agreements for regional trials

- A project collaborative draft agreement has been circulated with comments now received from the partners.

Activity 2.3: Develop and translate training materials, based on assessment of capacities (1.2) and new conservation strategies (2.2) (ending Y2 Q3)

- Evaluation of existing materials is underway for relevance/suitability and will be available on time for the training planned Activity 2.4

Activity 2.4: Organise and run trainings (ending Y2 Q4)

- Training dates in Y2 Q4 and locations have been agreed with partners (Cambodia 5-6 March, Lao PDR 9-10 March, Vietnam 11-12 March). A profile of participants was agreed at the annual workshop in September 2019.

Activity 2.5: Design and conduct seed collections among country partners

- Seed collections were planned by partners in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam; plan designs were discussed and validated at the Y2 annual workshop. Work will occur in Q3 and Q4. The seeds will be used for Activity 2.6 in Y3.

Activity 2.7: Evaluate progress and changes in knowledge and practices and communicate lessons learned

- Anything to report?

Output 3: Multiplication to support use, income generation and reduced pressure on natural populations (propagation strategies, community nurseries etc)

Commented [JM1]: ?? Nothing to report from me

Activity 3.1: Develop D. cochinchinensis vegetative propagation method (Cambodia) (ending Y2 Q3)

- The Cambodia partner conducted series of tests evaluating different rooted cutting techniques both in-house and collaborating with a private nursery in country (partial report in Y1 annual report). They reported findings at the annual project workshop. The identified methods that produce a high rate of success (up to 50% of cutting develop healthy roots and vegetative growth) and others techniques that appear less suitable. Most of the work is completed and a few more tests are planned in Q3.

Activity 3.2: Test D. cochinchinensis vegetative propagation method in other countries and Dalbergia spp. and Activity 3.3: Develop guidelines for appropriate use to multiply genetically diverse planting material

- These activities will begin later in Y2 and continue in Y3.

Activity 3.4: Analyse current practices for seed & seedling sourcing in ≥3 state-owned & ≥3 private sector nurseries, knowledge of seed quality & genetic diversity among programme staff, & their attitudes to community-based seed supply (Y1 Q3-4)

- The Y1 AR described the survey development and interviews in Cambodia and Lao PDR, both by Bioversity. Further interviews were carried out in Y2 in Vietnam.

Commented [JM2]: Riina, please validate / amend / add

Activity 3.5: Identify strengths & weaknesses in communities' current seed collection practices, seed exchange networks, market linkages, tree planting, community-level institutions & capacities (7 communities in 3 countries), including income generated from seed & seedling sales (ending Y1 Q4)

- In Vietnam, data collection training was organised on 29 July-1 Aug and partners subsequently collected data. The training was delayed from Jan 19 due to severe illness of project staff. The trainings in Cambodia and Lao had been organised in Y1. The collected socio-economic data was subsequently analysed for all 7 project villages and project baseline for forest-related income was established. Results were presented to the project partners at the annual workshop in Sept 2019.

Activity 3.6 In collaboration with stakeholders, formulate strategies for overcoming identified barriers, with recommendations & training materials for their implementation (ending Y2 Q3)

Commented [JM3]: Riina, do you have an update here

- **Initial discussion on strategies was conducted among project partners at the annual workshop in Sept 19. Trainings for trainers to identify the strategies will be organised in Lao 11-12 Nov, and in Cambodia 14-15 Nov. The activity has been delayed due to the overall delay with project activities detailed in the annual report.****Activity 3.7: Conduct 2 trainings on improving germplasm quality & community-based seed sourcing approaches for government and private sector nurseries (ending Y2 Q1)**
- Trainings will be conducted in Y2Q4, after the training of trainers in Q3. See above for the reason for delay.

Activity 3.8 Train & mentor community members in good seed collection practices, propagation (including vegetative propagation), tree nursery management, developing business plans & pursuing market linkages (Y2Q1 onwards)

- Trainings and mentoring will be conducted from Y2Q3 onwards, after the training of trainers in Q3. See above for the reason for delay.

Activity 3.9 Evaluate changes in seed production & value chains between communities & government & private sector nurseries, communicating lessons learned (Y2Q2 onwards)

- Can only be evaluated in 2020, after trainings have been conducted. See above for the reason for delay.

Other Activities. her activities

- Annual project workshop: update of activities; finalize conservation unit designation plans; seed collection plans; planning for training sessions; collection of materials for DNA testing, team building.

Progress towards project Outputs

Output 1: Regional assessment of the conservation status of *Dalbergia cochinchinensis*, *D. oliveri* and *D. cultrata*

Indicators reported as completed in Y1 annual report

Indicator 1.1 Subregion distribution & threat maps for 3 Dalbergia spp. overlaid with existing seed zones, forest cover, climate predictions, threats, etc.

Indicator 1.3 Identified population genetics gaps in seed collections and existing materials (end Q1, yr 2)

Indicator 1.2 Subregion database of existing in situ reserves and ex situ collections for 3 Dalbergia spp. species (incl. seed sources, molecular data, environmental data, threats) (end Q1, yr 2)

- Database was populated in May with data as follows: 244 records from 4 countries for *Dalbergia cochinchinensis*, 152 records from 5 countries for *D. oliveri*, 112 records from 5 countries for *D. cultrata*

Output 2: Filling gaps to conserve *Dalbergia* genetic resources through *in situ*, *ex situ* programmes and provenance testing

Indicator 2.1 At least 25 new in situ/ex situ conservation units for 3 Dalbergia spp across 4 countries (units may overlap between species) (end Q3, yr 3)

- The indicator was originally set as 25 new conservation units; however, the annual report had stated the indicator differently as a 50% increase (see annual report and response to the report). The 23 new conservation units in total, across the three target species and countries. A change request has been prepared and submitted with the report. The final numbers are below and the Y2 annual report will present a detailed of the units.

Table 1. Number of conservation units proposed for designation for each partner country

	Cambodia	Loa PDR	Vietnam	Total
<i>Dalbergia cochinchinensis</i>	2	3	1	6
	1	2	1	4
<i>Dalbergia oliveri</i>	1	3	1	5
	0	2	1	3
<i>Dalbergia cultrata</i>	0	3	0	3
	0	2	0	2
Grand Total	4	15	4	23

Indicator 2.3 At least 15 new, coordinated seed collections for 3 Dalbergia spp. across 4 countries (end Q3, yr 3)

- Three collections secured in Cambodia in year 1. At least 12 additional seed collections are expected by the end of Y2.

Indicator 2.4 Regional/national provenance trials established to study adaptation of D. cochinchinensis (4 sites, 8 provenances across 4 countries) (end Q3, yr 3)

- Trial site identified and secured in Cambodia; sites are being identified and secured in Lao PDR and Vietnam.

Output 3: Multiplication to support use, income generation and reduced pressure on natural populations (propagation strategies, community nurseries etc)

Indicator 3.2. Policy paper on recommendations; records of surveys, interviews, focus group discussions with programme staff and community members (sex-disaggregated data)

- Household surveys (158), interviews (25 male, 6 female) and focus group discussions (9 male, 9 female groups) were carried out in project countries between Nov18 and Aug19. Policy paper will be developed in Y2 based on the results and identification of priority activities as part of trainings for trainers in November 2019.

Progress toward Project Outcome

Indicator 0.1: At least 50% increase in number of designated in situ/ex situ Dalbergia conservation units across 4 countries (new for some countries or species)

- Plans for conservation unit designation have been finalized and work was initiated for their development.

Indicator 0.2: At least 20% increase in forest-related income of 175 rural households in 3 countries (end year 3), through Dalbergia seed/seedling production and planting.

- Household surveys (158), interviews (25 male, 6 female) and focus group discussions (9 male, 9 female groups) were carried out in project countries between Nov18 and Aug19. Policy paper will be developed in Y2 based on the results and identification of priority activities as part of trainings for trainers in November 2019.
- Project baseline and income increase targets were established during Y2Q2 based on the household survey results. Income generation target varies between 47 and 75 GBP per household per year depending on project country and village. In addition, more detailed assessment of the realistic income gains will be made in Y2Q3 during the trainings of trainers on community-based seed tree supply, where practitioners will interpret the survey results and develop action plans. See Comment 1 in section 2a.

Indicator 0.3: Methods and training materials for conservation, multiplication and value chain development exist and >100 professionals and 175 rural households trained to use and adapt them to enable scaling out.

- The Outcome indicator is to be completed in Year 3; it is assessed as still adequate and likely to be achieved. Plans for its delivery were reviewed at the Year 2 annual meeting (September 2019, Vietnam) via training, material development, and activities with communities/households.

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.

1. It may be difficult to fully reach the project's income generation targets in the target villages in Vietnam and Lao, due to the way the villages were selected at national level. In Vietnam, field data collection revealed that currently there is no farmer-to-farmer exchange of tree seed, contrary to the expectations based on detailed discussions with national project partners during proposal development. In Lao, the target villages were selected by the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office staff according to national policy. Detailed site surveys revealed that there are no or very few remaining Dalbergia trees in forests surrounding the target villages, meaning that income for seed collection and seedling sales can't be rapidly realised, without first building up seed supply through the establishment of seed orchards.
2. Negotiations with the Thailand partner for them to formally participate in the project have progressed very slowly and are still incomplete. While all of the other 5 project partners have agreed to sign the project funding letters, Thailand has not. This has prevented the flow of funds to Thailand. We believe that we can rectify situation in Y2

and transfer the funds to Thailand. The Thailand partner may sign the letter and would be able carry out their planned activities. The delay will affect the Thailand partner and delay their activities. It will have a minimal impact on other partners as it has been established that forest reproductive materials may not flow to or from Thailand. Should the negotiations fail, we will discuss possible actions with LTS/Darwin Initiative. These may include: 1) inviting (English-speaking) partners from Thailand to attend the Output 2 trainings in the other countries (trainings will be in English); 2) having work conducted by other partners (e.g. genetic studies planned in Output 1); 3) possibly expanding other project activities in the other countries, if partners there are able to intensify activities; 4) include for Thailand in regional training on in situ / ex situ / project results in Y3, and consider participants from Myanmar, regional NGO, among others.

3. We have been unable to hold M&E Advisory Board meeting. This was partly a knock-on effect of delays in setting up the project and in flow of funds to the partners. It was also partly due to slow communications surrounding the identification of Board members and in scheduling meetings. We now plan to hold a first meeting in Q3 of Y2. We do not expect any impacts on budget or timetable.

4. The project collaborative agreement has not been signed yet as we aimed to get the Thailand partner to first sign the funding letter. As negotiation with the Thailand partner has been delayed, we are proceeding with the other 5 partners. We do not expect this will have any impact on budget or timetable.

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, CR submitted along with this report
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.

Commented [DoPS4]: Do we need to add a comment about how much the Thai money would be if it had to be returned?

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

The flow of funds from Oxford to partner countries has been normalized.

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 R25 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate document.