



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



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

Project reference	25-030
Project title	Biodiversity Conservation and Community Development in Al-Makhroul Valley in Bethlehem, Palestine
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Palestine
Lead organisation	Bethlehem University - Palestine Institute of Biodiversity and Sustainability/Palestine Museum of Natural History (BU-PIBS/PMNH).
Partner(s)	Institute for Community Partnership (ICP); Byspokes Sustainable Community Development.
Project leader	Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	October 25, 2019: HYR 2
Project website/blog/social media etc.	https://almakhroul.palestinenature.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).

Project activities are being implemented, and ongoing endeavours of the project team and the partners are hiking towards the achievement of required results.

This six months report briefly demonstrates the progress towards results of the project, through highlighting work done on the scheduled activities as per timeframe and log frame sequence of activities planned.

Activities for the accomplishment of Output 1. Inventory and assessment for biodiversity at both habitat and species level are conducted in order to consolidate the scientific data required to propose various forms of conservation management and protection within the project area.

Activity 1.1 Analyse literature for national and global relevant research documents.

Activity implemented, progress and work implemented for this activity had been reported in the previous report. Link to report can be found at <http://bit.ly/2ppBleS>

Activity 1.2 Initial town-hall style meetings for community members in each targeted locality.

Activity implemented, progress and work implemented for this activity had been reported in the previous report. Link to the documents pertaining to this activity is available in the previous report), <http://bit.ly/31W6Omh>

Activity 1.3 Conduct biodiversity inventory for Al-Makhrour valley; including comprehensive surveys for ecosystem, habitats and species

A systematic process for surveying biodiversity components of fauna and flora, in addition to key habitats described and emphasized using maps and tables of data, with the follow up and in partnership with the project team, the consultant's team that performed the inventory was composed of four specialized people of PCC staff as following: Mr. Adel Abu Ayyash, Mrs. Roubina Ghattas, Eng. Mohammad Abu Amrieh and Miss Marian Rishmawi. Some are specialized in plant taxonomy, others in nature conservation. .

Please see detailed data regarding inventory reports on <http://bit.ly/2plr7wc> and <http://bit.ly/2plr7wc>

Activity 1.4 Prepare baseline evaluation report for ecosystem/biodiversity status at Al-Makhrour Valley (conducted during Spring year 2019)

For the purpose of exploring and establishing a status analysis about the biodiversity of Almakhrour valley describing fauna, flora & habitats. More than 18 field visits were conducted by the consultants of PCC to study, analyse & produce a report that shall serve as an integral component of the biodiversity assessment process for the targeted area and constitute a step in creating conservation management plan and further required actions to conserve and sustain biodiversity. The process had been with the follow up of the PMNH project team and the inventory was done through implementing scientific methodologies and approaches for surveying plant species on site, while investigating their habitats, their supporting abiotic elements such as soil, and topography of the site, etc. The main threats and human interferences were also recorded as seen on site. For the complete report document plant biodiversity data, Please see detailed data on. <http://bit.ly/2plr7wc>.

Activities 1.5 & 1.6 Establish ecology, biodiversity, monitoring databases linked to project webpage (the indicators will be linked to specified area blocks along the valley and specified species population).

The biodiversity committee consisting of key local experts with some outside consulting of scientists. It consisted of Mohamad Mahasna (Environmental Quality Authority,) Prof. Mazin Qumsiyeh (BU), Elias Handal (BU), Dr. Anyton Khallieh (Bird Expert), Dr Rami Arafah (PPU), Roubina Ghattas (PCC). The committee held more than 4 meetings during the period of this report. The database compiling existing data (desktop study – [<http://bit.ly/36d2aDN>] and new data (links provided above) is about 80% complete and will soon be uploaded on our project website almakhrour.palestinenature.org).
<http://bit.ly/32WmRSv>

Activities 1.7 & 1.8 Prepare biodiversity management plan for the Valley & Identify key sensitive habitats along the valley and set their conservation frameworks and restoration schemes

On the scope of building the conservation plan the project team alongside the consultant's team of PCC have started producing chapters setting conservation targets that shall serve as indicators, and means of measurement for the scope of applying the plan. Several meetings had been held to discuss and decide upon the important conservation factors, the targeted area had been described in the report and produced materials as of Battir World Heritage Property (WHP), "Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines — Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir, Palestine", I would like to highlight here that this refers to the same targeted area of our project which is Almakhrour valley consisting of areas and lands in the villages of Beit Jala, Hussan, Alwalaja, & Battir. See produced materials in *Biodiversity conservation targets report posted on this link* <http://bit.ly/2ppW8PF>.

Activities 1.9 to 1.14 Submit conservation plan, establish a committee, communicate the plan

The management plan alluded to above is now being evaluated by our internal team and with help of external experts like Prof. Zuhair Amr from Jordan to make minor changes but most importantly to think of how it will be implemented and by whom in the coming months of work until the end of the project.

Activities for the accomplishment of Output 2. Economic benefits to the local communities; including women and youth, in proximity to Al-Makhrour Valley are secured through sustainable agriculture and eco-tourism enhancement.

Activities from 2.1 to 2.4: Activities implemented, and reported in the earlier reporting period. The report can be found at <http://bit.ly/2ppBleS>

.Activity 2.5 Purchase agricultural inputs: This activity is repetitive as purchases of agricultural inputs "seeds & transplants" will be procured for each season.

Purchases done in the preceding seasons had been reported, and new purchases are under way for this winter season. Kinds of seeds and inputs and quantities are decided in participation with our partner beneficiaries whom are the 81 farmers of the project, trying to take into consideration listens learnt from the previous farming seasons.

Activity 2.5.1: Irrigation networks are functional as installed and reported before.

Activity 2.5.2: Water tanks are on the ground in the fields and operational as reported.

Activity 2.5.3: More than 55000 seeds and 100 transplants had been requested for procurement and on the under processing to be handled to the farmers for planting during this winter season.

Activity 2.5.4: More than 45 sacks of compost had been handed to farmers and the project team had been overseeing the deployment on land, while promoting better agricultural

practices, this for the last two seasons, and similar amount is planned to be deployed on farmers land for the coming seasons during next summer.

Activity 2.6. & Activity 2.8 Land preparations, weed removal and organic compost additions for selected land-farms & conduct 4 follow up field visits per farmer per season

At least 100 field visits were performed, to follow up the land agricultural status and the farmers who haven't cultivated their crops because of late precipitation season, which affected in general of Palestine summer season for this year (2019). Also the high level of growth of the grasses and weeds did not give farmers the chance to grow vegetables early as usual. On the other hand, these field visits included activities to remove weeds and prepare land better for farming, the visits also supported farmers with technical knowledge at specific topics such as advising them to do some IPM practices and to avoid other practices which are less friendly to the environment. Local committee representatives were part of these visits too. Also the field visits performed had other targets which is to follow up the current situation at the end of summer season, in addition to finish selecting winter crops by the farmers, also making record by GPS coordinates for each farmer. the field visits also consisted of activities such as collecting the plant debris for the dried plants and do composting for it, collecting the dried seeds either store it to the next summer season or to plant it for the coming winter season such as basil as a repellent plant. *Annex (1)*, (<http://bit.ly/2JpNs2z>) illustrates the provided extension service and the next step for each targeted area, notes had been written regarding the abundance of biodiversity close to their fields. The following plants and insects are the mainly noticed there: Inula, pink rock rose, Capparis, grass hoppers, butterflies, bees, and deer. Most farmers are preparing for the winter season, while some of them still producing more vegetables mainly eggplants, tomatoes, hot pepper.

Some of the warmer areas farmer (like Battir farmers) brought a winter propagules and plant it to produce an early products such as cauliflower, where they either have the seedlings or bought it, so in this case as well they'll have two different production stages.

Part of the visits was confirming of the practical training on water and soil management and attending the marketing festival if they want to visit it, where some farmers have no fresh products to sell.

The production sheet of the summer season were collected from farmers who committed to fill it and the other farmers who were not able to fill it were asked about the amount of harvested

Activity 2.7 Distribution of agricultural inputs and cultivation of diverse summer and winter vegetable crops

Agricultural inputs had been quantified, and decided upon, concerning kinds of seeds and transplants in partnership with farmers, whom inputs were the baseline for deciding list of quantities and kinds, the list is being procured and on processing in Bethlehem university's finance office. The seeds and transplants will be available for disbursement at end of October, and disbursement will occur immediately so farmers can plant ASAP.

Activity 2.8 Conduct 4 follow up field visits per farmer per season (320 visit/ season), supported with report

Reported with Activity 2.6 (Field visits were of diverse purposes).

Activity 2.9 Conduct two cross village exchange and demonstration visits (during first three cultivation seasons)

Will be implemented after the third cultivation season is concluded and before the end of this year.

Activity 2.10 Evaluation report for summer /winter vegetables production

Data is being gather about the production figures per farmer, in order to get better view of the value of the output and in order to be able to evaluate and analyse if there should be better practices and plants to focus on, the full report about the production of harvests of the seasons will be ready before the end of the second year.

Activity 2.11 – Conduct first/second festival during harvesting period of summer/winter cultivation seasons.

The first festival on the scope of the project had been branded as “Nabe’ Al Khayrat” occurred on Saturday 5/10/2019 at the community centre – Beit Jala city. The preparation started with inviting the farmers, women cooperatives and small scale producers in the four communities to participate in the festival through an application form that was distributed to them during their meetings in the workshops held at PMNH premises, and also through the municipalities and village councils. Two applications were received from Beit Jala, 4 applications from Walajeh village, 3 from Hussan village, and 6 applications from Battir Village. The festival shall constitute a launch for a sustainable selling channels for farmers and participants products.

There were 13 booths with 17 exhibitors from farmers, women cooperatives, women clubs and small scale producers, and the exhibits were fresh vegetables (tomato, grapes, eggplant quince, olive, pomegranate an green leafs - mint – parsley - sage), pickles, dried fruits, dairy products, honey, jams, oil, molasses, pastry, embroidery, woodcraft, wool crafts, bead and stone accessories.

Beit Jala Municipality offered their property “the community centre” to use for the festival, booths, and facilitated the availability of electricity and other logistics arrangements.

TORs were prepared for the festival site supplies (stage, sound, lights, food court booths ... etc.), festival printings (invitation cards, flyers, posters, booths banners, stage banners and street banners), rental of tables and chairs.

The festival was announced in Al Quds newspaper, Facebook boosting event, and radio spot broadcasting. In addition to 8 street banners that were hanged in very lively areas in Bethlehem district, as well as distributing flyers and posters at restaurants and supermarkets and overcrowded areas.

Local media was invited to the opening of the festival, and live coverage was made by Palestine TV and Radio Mawwal, in addition to the interviews conducted with the project manager and mayor of Beit Jala Municipality.

Festival invitation was sent to local and international organizations, schools, municipalities, village councils, Chamber of commerce, universities, partners, donors, ministries, hotels, scouts, youth clubs and others.

The opening of the festival was under the patronage of the governor of Bethlehem governorate, with the presence of local institutions and individuals.

The program of the festival included different shows from traditional dabkeh, Palestinian heritage show and clowns to play with children.

The exhibitors were very happy with the organization of the festival, and they were satisfied with this experience.

There were more than 1000 visitors during the whole day, they shopped from the different products.

During the opening of the festival, the project manager Abdelsalam Aljanazreh briefed the attendance about the project and its required impact, highlighting the importance of biodiversity conservation and better farming practices, also Eng. Mohammad Najajreh of PMNH talked about ecological farming and its importance. In addition, there was an announcement to the participants and visitors for the marketing hub that will be opened every Saturday all over the year, and participation is open for farmers, cooperatives, women clubs and small scale producers. The opening of the market will take place very soon. Which will constitute a sustainable selling point for the producers.

There were volunteers of youth females and males who helped the festival team during the event, and they were very active and happy with the experience.

Conclusion, the preparation of the festival went very smoothly, there was a high level of cooperation among all stakeholders and the project team, there was a diversity of products and exhibits, visitors were happy and satisfied, and are waiting for the next festival under the project.

Links for festival media coverage:

https://www.bethlehem.edu/news/2019/nabe-khayrat-icp-pmnh?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/PalestineTv/videos/389064305350142>

<https://www.facebook.com/RadioBaladna95.7/photos/a.2735142279858904/2735147443191721/?type=3&theater>

<https://www.facebook.com/mawwalfm/videos/326684311476889/UzpfSTeZNTk5NzIzNjQ1NzYyNzoyODQ1NTg3ODQ1NDk4NTM5/>

Annex (2) shows some pictures of the festival. <http://bit.ly/31QECRD>.

Activity 2.12. Prepare the follow up report for the success and lessons learnt from the festival

A report will be written to communicate the lessons learnt from the festival. Highlighting challenges that might face farmers and participants regarding selling techniques and pricing issues.

Activity 2.13. Conduct 2 day workshop for cooperatives' partnerships and business enhancement

A two-day' workshop about *cooperatives' partnerships and business enhancement* was conducted on 11 + 12 June 2019 at PMNH premises, the workshop was announced for in cooperation with the Beit Jala and Battir municipalities and the village councils of Walajeh and Hussan. Farmers, women clubs and small producers in the four communities were invited to participate in the workshop. Dr. Issa Ismirat was contracted to facilitate the workshop, pre and post assessment were conducted to evaluate the knowledge of the participants about the topics of the workshop, and the results were as follows:

#	Topic	Pre-Assessment Results				Post-Assessment Results			
		Weak	Average	Good	V. Good	Weak	Average	Good	V. Good
1	The extent to which cooperatives need partnership	6	56	17	22	0	11	61	28
2	How to start a partnership	39	22	33	6	6	11	56	28
3	Key Elements of Partnership	44	33	17	6	0	6	44	50
4	Key functions and roles of partnership	39	39	17	6	11	11	44	33
5	Qualities of good Partnership	28	28	44	0	0	6	61	33
6	Building partnership	44	22	33	0	0	11	56	33
7	the Importance of value chain	22	39	28	11	0	0	61	39
8	Value Chain Analysis	33	56	6	6	0	0	56	44

There were 22 participants in each day, of which 17 females and 5 males in the first and second day.

Activity 2.14. Prepare the follow up report for marketing progress of the selected cooperatives

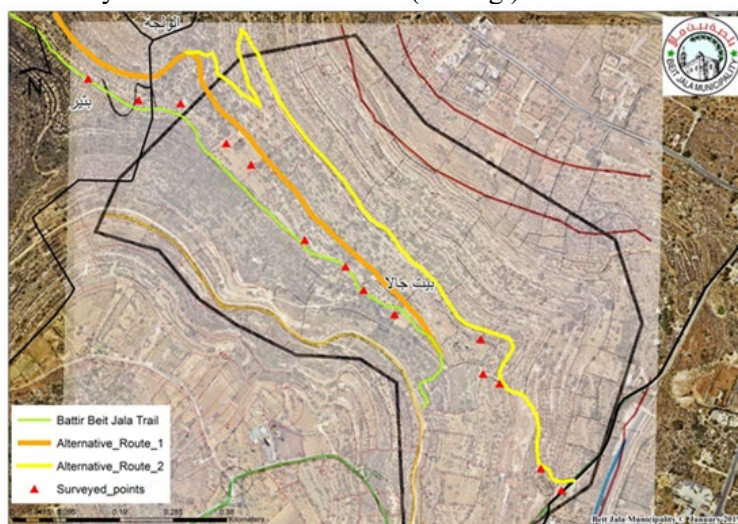
A template will be produced and communicated with producer cooperatives, the template's role is to establish a tracking sheet for the monitoring and communication of the marketing progress, focusing on products, prices, places, sales, promotion techniques.

Activity 2.15. Formulation of one committee for eco-tourism program from key stakeholders from local communities

The committee had been established and this had been reported in earlier report, see link, <http://bit.ly/2BNNr4a> However the role of the committee needs reviving in terms of designing and planning for eco-tourism activities and impacts, in the scope of the coming months and before the end of the second year the eco-tourism committee will offer initiative congruent with the eco-tourism business plan.

Activity 2.16. Study the Valley's path and identify the best places to mark the visitors' path

Activity implemented, progress and work implemented for this activity had been reported in the previous The project team worked with Beit Jala Municipality and with the environmental quality authority to map alternative trails and then decide and mark a refined trail for ecotourism going through the valley from Beit Jala to Battitr (see Fig.)



Activity 2.17. Conduct cleaning works and install 20 arrow signs, 20 plant-info signs and 2 maps with some volunteer works along the Valley's visitors' path

A cleaning voluntary campaign was carried out with participation of more than 15 from team, farmers, & volunteers covering part of the chosen trail to be identified as the trail of tourism for Almakhrour valley. However the signs have not been installed yet because of the occupation's forces forbidding any one from installing signs or building anything in the area, our farmers had been warned several times by the Israeli occupation forces that anyone who tries to install anything will be subject to punishment and fining, in addition to the confiscation of the signs or the materials to be installed in the area, this had been evident when the Palestinian ecology quality authority tried to install similar signs and the occupation forbade them from doing so. Our team is trying to figure out how to resolve this issue in dialogue with farmers and partners.

Activity 2.18. Prepare follow up report for the level of enhancement in tourism sector in targeted area

Will be implemented in the coming reporting periods.

Activity 2.19. Provide four sub-grants (for £4000 each) for four existing/initiated women business enterprises

The first announcement for the sub-grants was made during the workshop that took place in June 2019, and during the workshops on 7 + 8 July 2019, the announcement with the application form was distributed to all participants, in addition, it was announced to the four communities through Beit Jala and Battir municipalities and Walajeh and Houssan village councils, and deadline for receiving applications was on 17/7/2019. A committee of four members was formed, and the members were: Mr. Moussa Rabadi – ICP Director; Mr. Nibal Nasser – Deputy Director, Abed Salam Aljanazreh – Project Manager and Nisreen Mansour – Project Coordinator.

12 applications were received from the four localities, and the evaluation and selection process started on 25/7/2019 using the following selection criteria:

#	Selection Criteria	Weight
1	Three women members minimum	0 - 1
2	Other Sources of Income	Full time Job - Part Time - Unemployed 0 - 1 - 2
3	Business idea	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
4	Availability of location for the project	Low Potentiality - Medium Potentiality - High Potentiality 1 - 2 - 3
5	Capital Investment needed	0 - 1 - 2
6	What is the motivation to establish/improve the business	Low - Medium - High 1 - 2 - 3
7	Participation in previous training courses and workshops under the project	No Participation - Activity 1 - Activity 2 - Activity 3 - Activity 4 0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
8	Previous experience in sales (selling products)	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Upon the selection process based on the criteria and based on the recommendation of the committee, the following project ideas were selected:

Beit Jala: Turathuna Alaseel Society

Housan: Hussan Women Club

Battir: Battir Women Production Society

Walajeh: Group of three women to merge between the two proposed ideas and work with them further on the project idea.

A TOR for developing four business plans was prepared and request for price quotation was sent to individual consultants and firms, and deadline for receiving price quotation was on 22/8/2019, three price quotations were received; and the evaluation and selection committee awarded the bid to a consultant for supplying consulting service who provided the lowest prices. A meeting with Walajeh Village Council and the beneficiaries from Al walajeh took place on 14/6/2019 regarding the selling point, where they asked to have the selling point at the marketing hub that will be every Saturday in Beit Jala, the reason for this request is because there is not enough visitors to Walajeh village like the other villages Battir and Houssan, and accordingly a change request was sent to Darwin for this purpose, and it was approved to establish the selling point of AL Walajeh at Beit Jala weekly market.

Activity 2.20 & Activity 2.21: will be implemented in the coming reporting periods.

Activities for the accomplishment of Output 3. Raise awareness of and build capacities of local communities and stakeholders to better manage their natural resources, support conservation measures and benefit from sustainable agricultural and eco-tourism interventions while impacting the national legislation and involving both females and youth.

Activity 3.1 Conduct one-day workshop for key stakeholders to present the Valley’s biodiversity management plan

Will be implemented in the coming reporting periods. When the biodiversity conservation management plan (link) is fine-tuned and key plan to implement worked out with Ministry of Tourism, Environmental Quality Authority, and Ministry of Agriculture.

Activity 3.2 Conduct four one-day workshop to enhance marketing networks

Two workshops were implemented and another two workshops will be implemented next year. The workshops discussed **“Start up your own Business and Methods of Good Governance”** were conducted on 7 + 8 July 2019 at Walajeh Village Council. The two workshops were announced in cooperation with the Beit Jala and Battir municipalities and the village councils of Walajeh and Houssan, farmers, women clubs and women producers in the four communities were invited to participate in the two workshops.

The first workshop about Start up your own business was facilitated by Mr. Usama Khalilieh, and there were 20 participants of which 15 females and 5 males.

The second workshop was facilitated by Dr. Issa Ismirat, and there were 14 participants, of which 12 females and 2 males.

Pre and post assessment were conducted to evaluate the knowledge of the participants about the topics of the workshop, and the results were as follows:

#	Topic	Pre-Assessment Results				Post-Assessment Results			
		Weak	Average	Good	V. good	Weak	Average	Good	V. good
1	Knowledge of how to identify market needs	18	64	9	9	0	18	55	27
2	Ability to develop distinctive entrepreneurial ideas	36	27	36	0	0	9	45	45
3	How to make a marketing research / Data Collection	27	27	45	0	0	18	55	27
4	Define target groups	18	64	18	0	0	18	45	36
5	Principles of marketing & developing marketing plan	36	36	27	0	0	9	45	45
6	Marketing mix	45	36	18	0	0	18	45	36
7	Key elements of Governance	64	18	18	0	0	36	27	36
8	Definition of governance and its benefits	64	27	9	0	0	18	45	36
9	Problems of lack of governance	73	18	9	0	0	9	45	45
10	Reasons for failure of projects and cooperatives	45	36	18	0	0	0	45	55
11	Pillars of good governance	64	27	9	0	9	18	36	36

Activity 3.3 Conduct two-days’ workshop for alternative tourism operators

Activity implemented, and reported in the earlier reporting period.

Activity 3.4 Conduct four two-days training sessions for best sustainable farming practices, permaculture, organic farming

This activity was implemented via four workshops in Husan, Battir, Al Wallajah and Beit Jala (see below table for details the training delivered using mixed methodology of practical coaching on the land and some theoretical instruction). The practical coaching & training focused on water and soil management techniques. The workshops included discussion of agro-ecological farming and its political and environmental significance as well as feed-back from farmers on the challenges they face on a day to day basis.

Topics mentioned by farmers included:

- water challenges
- pest management challenges
- marketing challenges
- sourcing appropriate seedlings
- Infrastructural challenges (e.g. lack of agricultural roads and water supply), which are a result of the repressive policies of the Israeli occupation.
- settler damage to property and the threat of physical violence

The consultant gave a presentation using her own farm in Wales as a model, and how they are using agro-ecological principles to manage soil, water and pests and to make themselves more resilient to climate change; as well as their marketing strategy and outreach to their local community as a Community Supported Agriculture project.

Several practical demonstrations were then carried out including:

- Aerated compost tea – how to make it and when to use it
- Use of water-level to find contour lines and measure the drop in land
- Use of A-frame to find contour lines
- Swales – digging, planting and over-flows
- Trench beds – on contour or gently sloping to make use of water from springs
- Sheet mulching with cardboard and straw to suppress weeds around trees
- Infiltration basins and boomerang bunds around trees for water harvesting
- Sheet mulching for vegetable production ('sandwich strategy')
- Mulching with straw

Note: not all practical topics were covered at every site – a selection was made based on the topography of the land and the interests of the group as stated in the discussion.

At the same time i24 channel covered the event for one day at Beit Jala site as illustrated in

Table : number of participants in the training practical training on water and soil management techniques (Planned compared with attended)				
<i>Trainer: Alice Gray (Byspokes)</i>				
Area	Date of training	Place of training	Attended	Planned
Husan	30.09.2019	Husan village council and Hasan Zauol's (a farmer) field	17	19
Al-Walaja	1.10.2019	Al-Walaja village council and Nabeel & Majed Ala'raj (farmers) filed	16	21
Battir	2.10.2019	Battir municipality and Ra'ed Mua'mmar (a farmer) field	20	19
Beit Jala	3.10.2019	Beit Jala	17	21

Please see for pictures *Annex 3*, <http://bit.ly/2q1SH1k>

Activity 3.5 Conduct four two-days training sessions for best practices in conserving biodiversity

Four groups of farmers from the targeted villages attended two days workshops (2 targeted areas per day) the workshops conducted aimed at raising awareness of biodiversity conservation practices and how to include them in agricultural practices. As the workshops focused on biodiversity conservation and its relationship to the agriculture, also there had been an educational tour show farmers the environmental/ agricultural modules in the botanical garden and the community garden at PMNH. These modules include: water harvesting techniques, composting: compost bays way (another way than the way that was applied in the practical training), Hugo culture system, aquaponics system, reusing plastic bottles to build a greenhouse/ nursery, the green wall technique using plastic bottles, in addition to show them rehabilitated animals at the museum to encourage them to protect the animals and nature.

Date of implementation	# of participants in the training workshop (Planned compared with attended)		
	Areas	Attended	Planned
17.08.2019	Biet Jala	18 in addition to two children	29
	Al-Walaja	6	13
24.08.2019	Husan	18	19
	Battir	21 in addition to 4 children	19

Please see *Annex 4* for pictures <http://bit.ly/335Ea3H>

Activity 3.6 Conduct one-day training session for women entrepreneurs

Will be implemented in the coming reporting periods

Activity 3.7 Conduct two two-days food processing training sessions

Will be implemented in the coming reporting periods

Activity 3.8 Ten meetings for 5 schools located in Bethlehem District to present the project, the valley

A committee formed of members of the project team in addition to the public relations coordinator of PMNH had approached the ministry of education in Palestine and coordinated to approach the schools and deliver the message required to school children. The permission was granted and the project team had started to deliver the meetings on the scope of lecture to student in their classes and later on there will be visits for the children to the botanical garden in order to inform targeted school children about the importance of biodiversity conservation and deliver the message of awareness creation and awareness raising about the impacts required by the project. Four meetings to schools were conducted and the process is ongoing and will be reported clearly in the coming report of this year.

Activity 3.9 Finalized 10 modular that are based on project studies

Work on process and will be finalized in the coming reporting periods.

Activity 3.10 Follow up report for the school environmental clubs at the selected school

Will be written and reported when the meetings are concluded for this year.

Activity 3.11 Disseminate up to 106 social media announcements, 15 newspaper news

During this reporting period 15 posts on social media were published by PMNH and stakeholders, so far, including social media platforms from the four communities, covering the different activities of the project Also press releases for the trainings and the festival had been

placed in two famous local newspapers, and 2 announcements on news websites. All of these media coverage will be demonstrated in the coming reporting periods.

Activity 3.12 Conduct 4 TV sessions to discuss on air the different subjects the project is dealing with and supporting.

Two TV sessions had been conducted, one was titled our respect for our environment can be found by copying the link <https://youtu.be/-yA9il9GVYk>, and the other is on the scope of the Festival highlighting the project and its impact. Can be found on <http://bit.ly/2MY7gwh>

Activity 3.13 Prepare a webpage for the project under the PIBS- BU website to present all project accomplishments

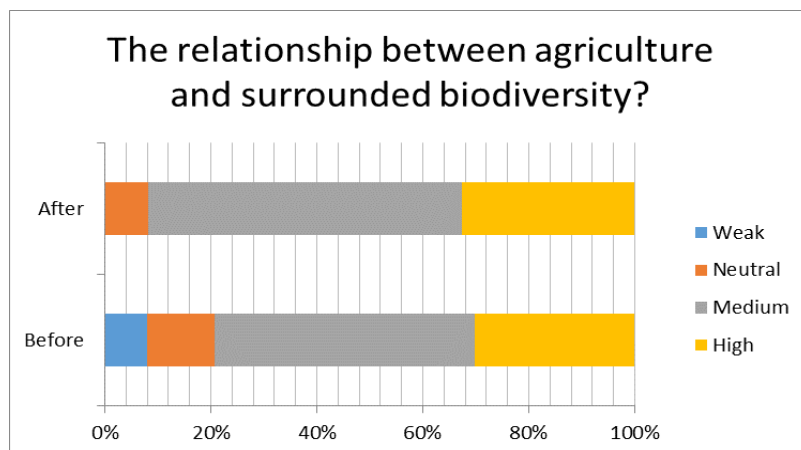
The website is operational and is being updated periodically, the website is going to be restricted and renewed for the coming month. The link <https://almakhrour.palestinenature.org>

Activity 3.14 Prepare and Print brochure for the project area

Will be implemented in the third year of the project.

Activity 3.15 Conduct follow up surveys for sample of local households (20%of total beneficiaries (of which 50% females)

There had been several occasions when the project team had communicated their practices and their improvements towards the impacts of the project, the below are two sample graphs describing the status while making the workshops with the farmers. This is an analysis chart taken from one of the surveys conducted on more than 50% of beneficiaries.



Activity 3.16 & Activity 3.17 Progress reports and Final technical and financial audit reports

Reporting is operational and according to plan.

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.

There has been some challenges concerning the implementation of the project mainly formed by three levels.

1) Of the Military and settler activities: Almakhrou valley is occupied territory by the state of Israel and activities are being done there contrary to the fourth Geneva Conventions. Mostly of the area is designated area “C” according to Oslo accords (the Israelis have military and civil control). Numerous attempts by settlers supported by the Israeli were recorded that encroach on the buffer Zone of this world heritage site. Our team working on this project has challenged these activities writing to UNESCO about them (see this letter as an example, <http://bit.ly/31WckFA>) Palestinian farmers and inhabitants of the valley complained about demolishing of farm houses, burning structures and confiscation of lands. Limitations on movement and work are evident. For example activities relating to installation of ecotourism path signs were postponed until because the Israelis are not allowing this. We cannot get permits for infrastructure for some agricultural infrastructure such as digging cisterns so we install above ground plastic watering systems. These systematic obstacles added extra burden and made it harder for the team and beneficiaries of the project, Continuous efforts are exerted by the project team working with farmers and the communities in general to address and transcend these challenges and hence be resilient in our lands

2) Commitment of some beneficiaries and stakeholders: human motivation will fluctuate. Farming activities and conservations behaviours fluctuates. Those cases are being dealt with in a via being dynamic and thinking outside the box. For example motivation increased by using the language of human rights (our rights to the land, work in permaculture as a form of resistance) and use of cultural heritage issues. The latter was a fortuitous discovery as our museum was engaged in a project (ended in August) to preserve and protect threatened agricultural and natural heritage (both tangible like agricultural tools and intangible like proverbs and knowledge). We noted that farmers get motivated as we revive their nostalgia to their parents and grandparents habits and connectivity to the land.

3) Other local actors in the area who practice interventions that are not based upon proper measures of biodiversity conservation: These activities sometimes come in the form of land rehabilitation for private owners who don’t apply to be beneficiaries of our project, those local private actor’s intervention might jeopardise biodiversity conservation in their lands which are near to our target area, the project team is working on involving those actors on the scope of our activities of our project, and some of them had stated that they tend to change behaviour which disseminates the impact of the project.

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	<i>No</i>
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Formal change request submitted:	Yes/No	<i>No</i>
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Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes/No	<i>No</i>
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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.

None

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

None

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.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/work plan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to 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: 25-035 Darwin Half Year Report**