



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31st October 2020)

Project reference	26-008
Project title	Market-led Approach to Sustainable Management of Agrobiodiversity for Livelihood Outcomes
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal
Lead organisation	Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD)
Partner(s)	Annapurna Rural Municipality; Lekhnath Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Machhapuchhre Development Organization (MDO) Kaski; Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperative; Panchadham Agriculture Development Cooperative; Phewa Watershed Ecosystem Management Board; Pokhara Metropolitan City; Ramsar Management Authority; Rupa Rural Municipality; Seed Change (formerly known as USC Canada); The Bazaar
Project leader	<i>Ram Bahadur Rana, PhD Principal Investigator</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	<i>Half Year Report 2 (HYR 2)</i>
Project website /blog/social media	<i>www.libird.org</i>

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

The project team prepared and submitted the Lake Cluster of Pokhara Valley-Darwin Initiative (LCPV-DI) Year I Annual Report, which was duly approved. Nepal went to complete lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic from 24 March 2020 that lasted till 21 July 2020. During the entire lockdown period the project staff worked from home. Since field level implementation of activities was completely curtailed, the project team utilized the time in planning process, coordinating with the relevant stakeholders, hiring consultants and drafting contracts, preparing action research protocols, developing knowledge management plan, and preparing database management framework for data recording. Also, weekly/fortnightly virtual meetings were organized to review and reflect on the progress of activities and to prepare implementation plan for coming weeks. The meetings are well documented by having proper meeting minutes.

The project team finalized the detail activities and budget for Year II, which was shared with the project partners and municipalities, i.e. Pokhara Metropolitan City (PMC), Rupa Rural Municipality (RRM) and Annapurna Rural Municipality (ARM). We managed to conduct one partners meeting (virtual meeting) on 29 September 2020.

Output 1: Increased income and employment opportunities to smallholder farmers through the production and sale of agricultural biodiversity-based products at local and regional markets.

Year II of the project was mostly about increasing the production of the keystone crops. In Year I, needed technical, financial and material support was given to the farmers for growing identified

keystone crops. For Year II, the project focussed in increasing area and production of seasonal vegetables. The project focussed on continuous monitoring and follow up of other keystone crops like rice, foxtail millet, shiitake mushroom, coffee, fish, and honeybee. Since the project sites were least affected by COVID-19, intra-district travel was not restricted hence the consultants were able to provide their expert services to farmer groups and cooperatives.

Background work for the establishment of packaging house was accomplished. A 10-year business plan of the packaging house was developed and shared with the prospective shareholders. A name for the company 'Annapaat Agro Private Limited' has been registered and logo developed.

To liaise the project team with municipalities and government institutions, a consultant with strong linkages with Provincial and Local Governments was hired. The consultant is helping to influence the government institutions especially on policy discourse and generating co-funding.

Output 2: Increased consumers awareness and knowledge about the value of local biodiversity based food products.

The project team finalized the key topics and identified relevant resource persons for increasing consumer's awareness and knowledge through radio FM and school programmes. Some key awareness topics include: lake pollution and control measures, concept of Unified Landscape Branding and packaging house, biodiversity conservation, seed system, organic agriculture, etc.

Output 3: Local stewardship and capacity for the conservation and management of biodiversity and lake ecosystem enhanced.

The project prepared Capacity Need Assessment Report of 14 cooperatives in Year I. The report recommended the need for strengthening the capacity of those cooperatives in specific areas. Hence, in Year II, the project hired a consultant to provide expert services to cooperatives in good governance, financial management, compliance management, policy development, computer-based accounting system, implementation of business plans, etc.

In Year I, the project team developed business plan of eight fishery cooperatives. Those business plans were submitted to all the cooperatives so that the plan can be utilized by them for securing co-funding. Together with Lake Conservation and Development Authority (LCDA) of Gandaki Province, the LCPV-DI project has been advocating for optimum utilization of lakes for fish production. The LCDA approached the LCPV-DI team to support them in proposal development, which we did, where they included the 10-year business plan of four fishery cooperatives.

Output 4: Policy framework developed for scaling up market-led approaches for agrobiodiversity management for improved livelihood outcomes

The project worked on achieving targets/indicators of Outputs 1, 2 and 3, i.e. generate field level evidences, which will supplement developing policy frameworks planned in Year III (Output 4).

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for Covid-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

There was no such notable problems or unexpected developments over the last 6 months. So, there will be no change in the budget and timetable of the project activities.

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of Covid-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

In response to COVID-19 pandemic, Nepal government ordered nationwide lockdown from 24 March to 21 July 2020. However, the inter-district travel was relaxed only in mid-September. As a result, the field movement of staff was restricted. Fortunately, our field staff are from within the project district, so they managed to visit project sites and provide technical advice to farmers. During lockdown period, the project team worked from home, and completed background works as mentioned in Point 1 above. One major task – establishment of packaging house – saw considerable delay because of lockdown. As per the plan, the packaging house should have been operationalized by August 2020, but the new deadline is December 2020. The project team completed preliminary works such as preparation of business plan of the packaging house, retail price monitoring study, company name, potential shareholders identification, etc.

The project team connected virtually once a week and updated their progress, and planned for next week. This process ensured that all staff, scattered in different places, have a common understanding of what is going on in the project.

The negative impact of COVID-19 will be reflected in project Output targets/indicators, which we have already communicated to Darwin Initiative/LTS International through **changes made in the logical framework**. At the beginning, the pandemic situation affected the timetable of the project activities but we have recovered fully, except for packaging house establishment, with no effect on the budget of the project activities. That said, COVID-19 situation in Nepal is acutely severe, so government's directive could change anytime that might have impact on the project.

2c. 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 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. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

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

No.

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.

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 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: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**