



## Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020)

<b>Project reference</b>	26-010
<b>Project title</b>	Know your onions: sustainable plant use in Tajikistan
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Tajikistan
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Centre for Middle Eastern Plants, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Kulob Botanic Garden, Ganji Tabiat, Zam-Zam, Fauna & Flora International
<b>Project leader</b>	Dr Alan Forrest
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)</b>	HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	In development

### **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).**

Given the challenging global circumstances, it can be reported that this project has proceeded with very few issues and has met the majority of its expected targets in the timeframe – although with some general delays - with adaptive planning ongoing to address issues which are discussed in more detail below.

Knowledge gathered from communities about their harvesting, use and income from wild collected species has been extremely informative and has directed discussion of how the project will proceed (summary report attached). Harvesting of the species is extensive – yet direct sales from communities are not. Additional data gathering from a range of identified market actors is ongoing, and discussion under way as to the balance between simply reducing wild harvesting through community horticulture, and to what degree cultivation of these species can add financial benefits.

Establishment of 100 household plots to grow rare and threatened taxa is complete. Initial training was completed with households identified with agricultural experience, and subsequently expanded to communities and households with less experience and in more isolated situations. Discussion has started over the potential to grow target species on a wider scale and the formation of producer groups – this will be decided once the PMSD process is complete and all market actors have been included. Remote PMSD training is ongoing – several workshops have been held online - and will transfer to in-country discussions and decisions moving forwards.

A more formal communications strategy has been implemented, featuring quarterly reports that are illustrated, translated and disseminated to all partners so that different components of the activities are understood by all. Regular online discussions among all partners have been held, as well as online training workshops.

The decision to purchase a vehicle with travel funds has been extremely successful It has given project partners more autonomy, and they have set new records for the number of species collected for both cultivation and display and for their expanding herbarium resource beyond

the confines of the Darwin Initiative project. The vehicle is an asset that will benefit partners for many years beyond the life of the project.

Partners in Tajikistan have taken an impetus and signed up for a variety of online courses relating to Conservation Leadership and Project Management This has resulted in direct discussions about applications to additional funding sources for related conservation and horticulture and replanting programmes.

**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.**

Other than details relating to the effect of COVID-19 on project activity implementation, there have been no major issues.

It is clear that communities are aware that the collection of wild plants in Tajikistan is controlled, and there are standards set through the Forest Code. However, these are difficult to enforce. Also, the Red Book of the Republic of Tajikistan encourages cultivation of many species, but there are few guidelines on the legality of cultivating taxa that are threatened in Tajikistan. Clarification of this issue is ongoing but will not pose any threat to the project outcomes.

The project website still in development – this delay is due to the working schedules of the web designer and the moving of CMEP and RBGE web resources to a new host and registration service to enable compliancy and certification to institutional standards. It is hoped that the website will be live by the end of 2020.

None of these issues will affect the implementation of the project or the budget significantly.

**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.**

Delays to travel to Tajikistan were outlined in end of year report for Year One. Resulting delays to implementation of PMSD training has meant this has switched to online/remote training, with subsequent delays to PMSD and market workshops *in situ*. This involves changes to the implementation timetable and a lot of this work being “crammed” into the final year of the project. A formal Change Request will be submitted to the Darwin Initiative to formalise these changes to the implementation timetable.

Further, it is still hoped that travel to Tajikistan will be possible in Year Three of the project, but this is still dependent on the global pandemic and global and institutional travel restrictions. Kulob Botanic Garden is still due to host a biodiversity symposium in autumn 2021 and it is hoped that UK partners will be able to attend this symposium. However contingency plans are being developed in case travel is still restricted. The Change Request will also therefore detail moving all international travel budgets to the final year of the project.

*In situ* training for Red List Assessments has also been delayed, and has shifted to a blended model – Tajik partners will complete online IUCN training courses supported by UK project staff to adapt to technical and language issues and the availability of data in Tajikistan. Data acquisition is ongoing.

COVID-19 restrictions within Tajikistan have not affected fieldwork. Tajik partners have been exemplary in following local guidelines regarding the wearing of facemasks and have always offered choices to communities as to the level of involvement and protection they are comfortable with.

**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:	No
Formal change request submitted:	No - pending
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.

A Change Request to move the international travel budget to Year Three will involve transfer of less than £5,000.

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

Not at this time.

**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](mailto: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**