



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

Project reference	26-012
Project title	Ghodaghodi's Guardians: Communities Restoring a Ramsar Wetland at watershed scale
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal
Lead organisation	Zoological Society of London
Partner(s)	Department of Forests and Soil Conservation, Ghodaghodi Municipality (GM), Comprehensive Ghodaghodi Lake and Tourism Board (CGLTDB) and Himalayan Nature (HN)
Project leader	<i>Hem Sagar Baral</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	31 October 2019, HYR1
Project website/blog/social media etc.	https://twitter.com/HimalayanNature/status/1132969063913644034 https://www.facebook.com/himalayannaturenepal/posts/himalayan-nature-signed-a-project-agreement-with-zsl-nepal-in-an-event-held-at-z/2487959431223687/

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).

This project works in one of Nepal's ten Ramsar sites to support Nepal government to restore the Ghodaghodi Lake Area's (GLA's) ecological integrity through community-led, natural capital-based sustainable management. The project inception workshop, held on 24 May 2019 at Sukhad, close to GLA in Kailali District, was attended by all project stakeholders including the Divisional Forest Office of Kailali District and GM. Community leaders and elders, GM officers and divisional forest officers showed commitment to the project. ZSL is coordinating with CGLTDB and HN to ensure the successful implementation of the project and has built a strong relationship with all project partners as well as local communities around GLA.

One community officer and two social mobilisers, all based at the project site, have been recruited. Freshwater project advisor Dr Matthew Gollock conducted an initial scoping trip and identified immediate term priorities including improving understanding of community freshwater-based livelihoods; establishing a robust ecological baseline and sustaining engagement with local government and communities to co-develop project implementation plans.

Output 1: Natural capital of GLA governed equitably through CGLTDB, and established governance mechanism

Short training courses on GESI have sensitized 41 participants on gender equality, social responsibility and social inclusion and the appropriate channels to raise grievances through the project, as well as the intended benefits sharing mechanisms (Act. 1.1). Attendees represented all stakeholders including GM, CGLTDB, project staff, CFUGs, tourism board, social workers, media, single women, local clubs, and other CBOs. CGLTDB and GM have taken ownership of the FISH scheme and have recruited 40 FISH representatives representing different settlements and wards (Act. 1.3). The training for these representatives is planned for the coming quarter. Also, a GLA working group has been established (Act 1.4), in preparation for a

workshop to develop good governance principles for GLA (Act 1.2) in the next reporting period. The working group includes 138 representatives of GM, CGLTDB, FISH representatives, divisional forest office, media persons, social workers, local leaders, and local CBOs.

204 active fishermen have been identified from GLA's fish-dependent communities through focal group discussions and initial engagement meetings. Initial training and engagement to co-develop sustainable fisheries management is planned in the next period (Act. 1.9).

Output 2: Access to sustainable natural capital-based livelihood secured for the most vulnerable, marginalized fresh water dependent communities within GLA

A meeting was conducted by HN with CGLTDB members to identify vulnerable groups. Based on the information obtained through these meeting and discussions with board members, 22 focal group discussions were conducted in strategic locations in and around GLA which identified 598 vulnerable households (Act. 2.1). Here, mostly the poor and marginalized people, houses led by single women, differently abled persons and bonded labourers were considered as vulnerable households. More precise targeting will be developed with social survey data to identify households for inclusion in two new women-led cooperatives (Act 2.2).

70 fish dependent community members were trained by experts from Nepal's agriculture and fisheries department and experts from a local private hatchery (Act. 2.7). Participants were taught the techniques to culture native fish species, snails and water chestnuts. This included sustainable aquaculture techniques, productivity raising techniques, appropriate harvesting methods, policy and legal provisions for aquaculture in the country and also highlighted the importance of native species of fish in maintaining wetland biodiversity.

Output 3: Growing tourism industry in GLA is increasingly sustainable, with wider community benefits, based on tourism master plan that provides a model for other tourist destinations

Initial consultations have been held with the mayor, ward chairs, executive officer and officials from the tourism promotion department of GM and CGLTDB to plan the assessment of existing tourism infrastructure, capacity and markets to identify areas likely to negatively impact GLA's ecological integrity (Act 3.1). GM has agreed to support the assessment work and implement the recommendations from the assessment.

Output 4: A robust protection framework is implemented, by designating GLA as Nepal's first Bird Sanctuary, and building on the existing Basanta Protected Forest designation in the upper watershed, to address upstream threats

Two initial participatory land-use and land cover (LULC) mapping workshops have engaged 70 community members from six different upstream settlements; with four further settlements still to be engaged (Act. 4.1). Using existing land use data (ICIMOD 2010, and google earth images), two different maps were prepared and used during the discussion session. LULC changes including succession from grassland to forest and forest conversion to agriculture were marked through collective discussion sessions and will be used as a reference to prepare GIS maps. These participatory maps will be ground-truthed once the workshops are completed.

Output 5: Data and experience from GLA, with its natural capital and socio-economic monitoring, inform evidence-based conservation interventions, management plans and policy

Under this output, annual household surveys on livelihoods, income and wellbeing metrics, wildlife knowledge and natural capital dependency (Act. 5.7) have been designed. The scoping visit from the Freshwater Project adviser has informed the ToR for a rapid assessment of biological monitoring in GLA (Act. 5.1 and 5.2). This assessment has been extended into the next period to facilitate bringing together the set of researchers who have previously studied GLA and to draw together expertise and pre-existing data sets.

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.

This project has been implemented in collaboration with local government (GM) which has proven to be a promising implementation modality for area-based conservation, given the local government's in-depth knowledge and engagement with a specific site. Though GLA is listed as a Ramsar Site, its development and conservation status have been a low priority in previous years, and many community people including few members of GM were unaware of its importance. In this short period of time, we have already been able to build promising cooperation with GM and a range of communities. We have already witnessed communities' positive attitude and deep concern in conserving GLA and its biodiversity - a good omen for the future of the project.

CGLTDB is a new institution established to conserve GLA, and thus has limited experience. Through co-development and delivery of the project, CGLTDB is already increasing its capacity and taking increased ownership, which will bode well for the impact and legacy 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: No

Formal change request submitted: No

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.

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

None to report.

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/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: 25-035 Darwin Half Year Report**