



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

Project reference	26-021
Project title	Biodiversity conservation, vicuña health and local livelihoods in Apolobamba, Bolivia
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Bolivia
Lead organisation	Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
Partner(s)	Marka Cololo de Antaquilla, Apolobamba protected area
Project leader	Oscar Loayza Cossio
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	Period: April 1 st to September 30 th , 2020 HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	https://bolivia.wcs.org/

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).

During the past six months of the project, activities have centered in systematizing all the information gathered during the first year of the project.

Output 1: Completed diagnostic of peatland and their water sources; native pastures and associated biodiversity indicator species (*Activities 1.1, 1.3*)

Activity 1.1. Transects were conducted in pastures to identify plant species diversity, estimate biomass, productivity, forage offer and animal carrying capacity in both grassland and peatland. This information, together with an analysis of the ecological dynamics will be presented in a baseline document on conditions of the grazing grounds in Apolobamba. Transects were complemented with aerial monitoring using drones. Aerial monitoring was conducted during the wet season (March – April 2020), while monitoring during the dry season was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Monitoring will be carried out during the 2021 dry season to look at the season of scarcity. To date, the results of aerial monitoring report show important fragmentation due to two main causes: overgrazing and reduction of water flow and sediment accumulation due to mining activities.

Activity 1.3. Based on the already completed monitoring plan for biodiversity indicators, a “virtual” workshop was conducted in coordination with Apolobamba protected area personnel (both park guards and the director) in order to include selected indicators into the existing protected area monitoring program. Out of a total of 21 indicator species of plants and animals, that were selected previously based on their high vulnerability to climate change and representativeness of the Andean native grasslands and peatlands (further details are provided in Annual Report 1), a total of 10 species were selected for inclusion within the protected area monitoring plan. The species were selected based on the skills the park guards have on properly identifying them on the ground. Initially, only animals are being considered since the plant species are harder to identify, training sessions will be organized and field guides developed in order for the park guards to be able to identify them accurately. These indicator species will be monitored during the patrolling campaigns starting in January 2021. Additional

meetings are planned for December 2020, as soon as the travel restrictions are lifted, in order to define the monitoring methodologies to be employed.

Output 2: Completed diagnostic of vicuña health condition and mange prevalence as an indicator of carrying capacity and climatic trends (Activities 2.1 & 2.3)

Activity 2.1. The baseline document on the prevalence of sarcoptic mange was completed and presented in the previous Annual Report 1. The community workshops that were planned to present the information and receive feedback have been postponed for sanitary reasons.

Activity 2.3. The baseline report on the scenarios of climate change and vulnerability is also complete, and is pending validation by the vicuña manager communities. This report represents essential input for the development of a climate change management plan for Apolobamba.

Output 3: Apolobamba protected area, Marka Cololo Indigenous organization and the regional association of vicuña managers establish a pasture, peatlands and their water sources, and vicuña health management plan (Activities 3.1 & 3.3)

Activity 3.1. The different diagnostics will be the basis for a management plan for vicuña health, grasslands and peatlands that we plan to complete by December 2020. Depending on the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions we expect to validate this plan with the vicuña manager communities by March 2021.

Activities 3.3. As a result of meetings and workshops with ACOFIVB (Community Association for the Commercialization of Vicuña Fibre of Bolivia) and its regional associations of vicuña management communities and national (DGBAP, Biodiversity and Protected Area Directorate; SERNAP, National Protected Area Service) and departmental authorities, WCS provided technical support to consolidate "Technical Guidelines for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Vicuña in Bolivia 2020-2021", which was approved by DGBAP for its implementation.

In this new semester, we will organize a workshop to be led by ACOFIVB, with participation from SERNAP and DGBAP to design a new updated format for the development of vicuña management plans, which will then guide the process to update the vicuña management plan for Apolobamba (2021-2025). Four documents to guide vicuña management have been completed to date:

- a. **Protocol of biosecurity against COVID-19 for vicuña management.** The protocol provides details of all the biosecurity measures to be implemented in each stage of vicuña management. It has been presented and reviewed in virtual workshops with the participation of the DGBAP, the Departmental governments of La Paz, Oruro, Potosí, Cochabamba and Tarija; Regional Associations of Vicuña Management Communities and the local NGO, PROMETA. The protocol has been approved by the DGBAP and is ready for dissemination.
- b. **Technical Manual of Good Practices for Animal Welfare and Sanitary Measures for Vicuña Management.** A manual for field technicians involved in the management of vicuñas was prepared and included two protocols: 1) A protocol for the application of animal welfare in the different stages of capture, shearing and release of vicuñas and; 2) A protocol of preventive and curative sanitary measures to be applied during capture and shearing of vicuña fibre. The manual also includes a methodology for monitoring the health of vicuña populations and their habitat. The technical manual is currently in the final stages of editing. This manual will be accompanied by a non-technical document such as a flyer/instruction card for good practices for use by all local vicuña managers, which is already as a draft.

Two additional protocols are being developed:

- c. **Guide for mechanized shearing of vicuñas.** This document is currently being revised and includes the different steps and instructions on how to handle animals properly as well as the proper and safe use on how to handle the mechanic razor, the important considerations for caring for the animals, the equipment and the fibre itself.

d. Manual of good practices for the sanitary and productive management of alpacas for the communities of the ARMV in the Apolobamba ANMIN. This document includes four chapters: i) Sanitary management; ii) Productive management; iii) Sanitary and management calendar and; iv) Pasture management. The manual is based on the experience developed during field work with producers affiliated with the Regional Association of Vicuña Management Communities of Apolobamba.

Additionally, a Photographic guide of plants present in vicuña habitat in the Apolobamba ANMIN for the Regional Association of Vicuña Management Communities of Apolobamba is in the process of being completed.

Output 4: Increased resilient livelihoods through improved business capacity and quality control of the regional association of vicuña managers of Apolobamba

Activity 4.1. A business plan will be developed together with ACOFIVB. The first step will be to gather historical information on vicuña management to date. The business plan will evaluate the potential internal national market, alternatives and scenarios, as well as exploring segmented markets interested not only in first quality fleece but also in providing added value to the remaining fibre currently discarded.

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.

All delays were related to the COVID 19 pandemic restrictions.

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.

Since the middle of March until the end of September 2020, all field work has been suspended, and consequently, all in-person meetings at the communities have been postponed. The work of the technical team has focused on the development of instruments to guide management of wild vicuñas as well as domestic camelids such as alpacas. Validation of these documents is pending. Due to the restrictions of the pandemic, there has also been a noticeable delay of about 4 to 5 months in conducting an official international auction to sell the vicuña fibre harvested during the 2019 shearing campaigns. Nevertheless, the fibre is guaranteed to eventually be sold and the earnings will be distributed as usual.

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/No

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/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?

There is no additional issues to comment besides the ones explained in the previous sections above.

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**