

## Darwin Initiative Main Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the “Project Reporting Information Note”:  
(<https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources-for-projects/information-notes-learning-notes-briefing-papers-and-reviews/> ).

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum** of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes)

**Submission Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

### Darwin Initiative Project Information

Project reference	28-020
Project title	Safeguarding globally important forests by improving livelihoods and strengthening governance
Country/ies	Viet Nam
Lead partner	Fauna & Flora International
Project partner(s)	The Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD)
Darwin grant value	GPB 327,783
Start/end dates of project	July 2021 – June 2024;
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2021 – Mar 2022) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	July 2021- March 2022; Annual Report 1
Project Leader name	Josh Kempinski
Project website/blog/social media	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/FaunaFloraVietnam">https://www.facebook.com/FaunaFloraVietnam</a>
Report author(s) and date	Josh Kempinski – 30 <sup>th</sup> April 2022

#### Note:

- **Please ensure you have selected the correct template for your project and please remove the blue guidance notes from all sections before submission.**
- **Your report will be published on the Darwin Initiative website. If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.**

All Annual Reports are reviewed by a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) consultant. They will use your original application and logical framework (or the most recent approved logframe) as a basis of their review. Therefore, it is important that you refer back to this document when writing this report. The review acts as an independent viewpoint of whether the project is making the progress it states based upon the report and associated evidence submitted. **Therefore, it is strongly recommended that you submit the means of verification listed in your logframe to support your assertions of progress.**

When making statements of progress or impact please ensure you refer as much as possible to sources of evidence including the indicators and means of verification outlined in your project logframe. For example, when reporting training events, some measure of effectiveness is required as well as the numbers participating and duration. In order to comment on quality of

work it is useful to share with the reviewer project documentation such as training manuals, meeting reports, training feedback etc.

**Please note:** Major changes in the logframe (e.g., Output and Outcome level changes) must be approved. You can do this through submission of a Change Request form which can be found [here](#).

Submission of changes to the project design in the Annual Report does not constitute notification. Changes requiring formal approval include, but are not restricted to: a delay or change in project implementation causing a re-budget; staff changes (relating to CVs provided at application stage); changes in Outputs or Outcome; project termination. If not clear whether a change requires formal approval please check with Darwin-Projects@itsi.co.uk.

**Report formats:** This report should be sent in MS Word only (if you have concerns about layout you may submit a PDF but this is in addition to a Word version). If you have already answered a question in one section, do not repeat the information in another section, but refer back to the section number.

Each section contains questions to guide the completion of the report.

Not all guiding questions have to be answered - Project Leaders should exercise judgement as to those most relevant to the project.

The assumption is that project partners will play an active role in writing the report.

## 1. Project summary

Please provide a brief overview of your project and what the project is aiming to achieve. For this section you should consider the following:

- What biodiversity challenges is the project designed to address?
- Why are they relevant, and for whom?
- What human development and wellbeing challenges (poverty reduction) is the project also intended to address?
- How did you identify these problems?
- Briefly describe the location (with a map if possible) of the project.

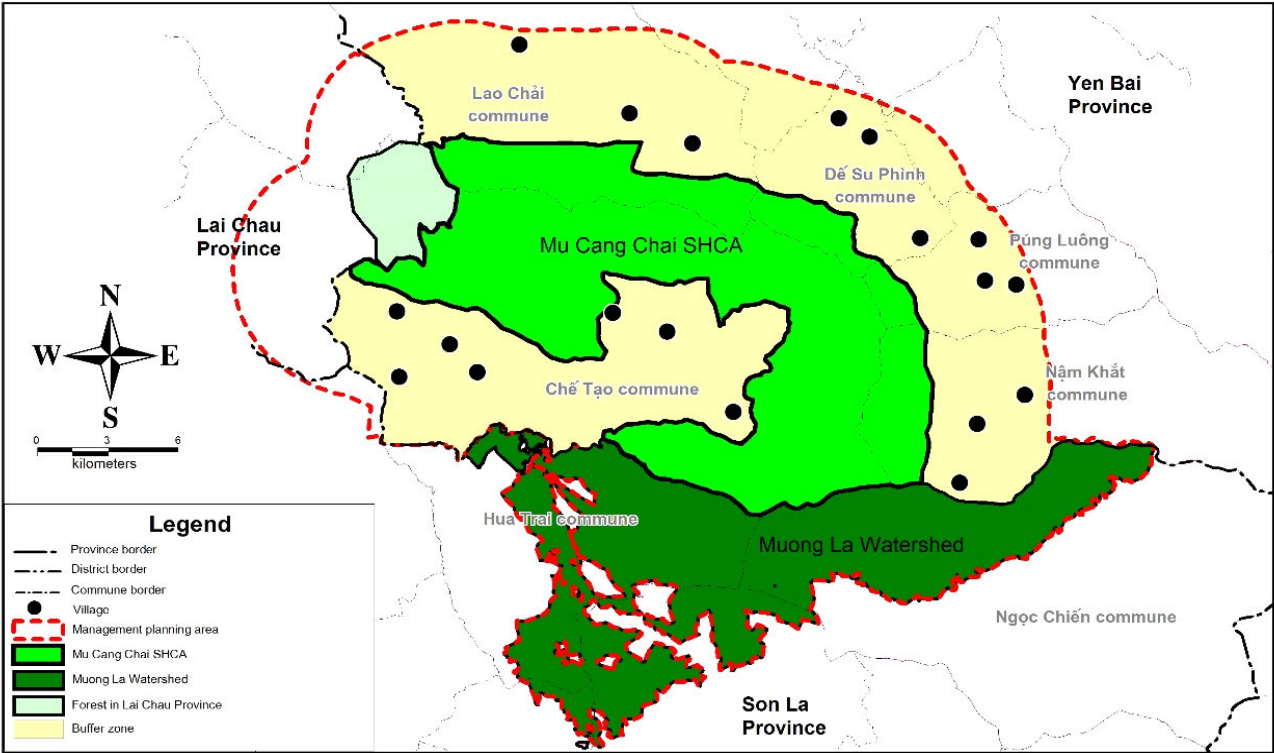
You may find it helpful to refer to your original application form, and you may use text from your application form to provide information in this section.

Western black-crested gibbon (*Nomascus concolor*) is now Critically Endangered (IUCN) with a global population of fewer than 1,400 individuals globally in 2006. The number today is likely far lower. It has been reduced to a few patches of primary forests, mostly due to tremendous deforestation, illegal hunting and wildlife trade, and weak law enforcement. In Vietnam, the contiguous forest block of Mu Cang Chai Species Habitat Conservation Area (SHCA) and the Muong La Nature Reserve (NR) [hereafter refer to as protected area – PA] represent the country's last viable population, comprised of 19 groups and around 80 individuals. The conservation of this population in Vietnam is of critical importance not only from a genetic standpoint, but also as a distinct, separate and thus 'insurance' population against continued declines in neighbouring China and Laos. Most important to conservation efforts in the combined Mu Cang Chai – Muong La forest complex and buffer zone have been the operating the Community Conservation Teams (CCTs) established by FFI since 2003 with 22 CCT members (14 people/three teams in Mu Cang Chai and 10 people/three teams in Muong La).

With very high rates of biodiversity and endemism, notably in herpetofauna, avifauna, trees/flora and primates, two contiguous protected areas, Mu Cang Chai SHCA) and Muong La NR, are among the most intact in terms of the forest ecosystems and the assemblage of terrestrial wildlife, which elsewhere in Vietnam is being extirpated by hunting and snaring. Local populations primarily consist of poor and marginal ethnic minority Thai and H'Mong groups. Terraced rice fields, livestock and natural resources are key livelihoods, but also drive threats to biodiversity. Snaring persists in local forests, including these PAs, and there is a growing threat from cardamom cultivation. Grown under canopy in natural forests, cardamom drives the clearing of forest understory (severely impacted upon forest regeneration) and also thinning of the canopy;

a form of forest degradation that is a direct threat to primate habitat. Illegal logging includes extraction of valuable *Fokienia hodginsii* (VU) and forest clearance for crops and timber removal. A window of opportunity exists to address critical needs for transparent, collaborative governance around Mu Cang Chai SHCA and Muong La NR. Through a pioneering landscape planning framework - a first for Vietnam - that includes zoning plans (multiple scales), collaborative protected areas and improvements to local livelihoods, this project will empower marginalised ethnic minorities to become conservation champions, reduce poverty and assure the survival of Critically Endangered primates (including Western black-crested gibbon).

**Figure 1: Map of project site – Mu Cang Chai SHCA and Muong La NR landscape**



**2. Project stakeholders/ partners**

Darwin Initiative projects are required to be collaborative.

Please describe the support or engagement between all formal partners and key stakeholders and this project, and how this has developed over the last year of the project. You should focus on:

- Whether partnerships were based on demand stemming from the host country/ies and the extent to which all partners are involved in project planning, monitoring and evaluation and decision making.
- Particular achievements, lessons, strengths or challenges with the partnership(s), and how have the latter been met. Describe how relevant local institutions (including, where relevant, UK Embassies and British High Commissions), local communities and technical specialists who are not formally partners in the project have been involved as appropriate.

Please support comments with evidence.

The project has developed long-term working relationships with two key provincial government counterparts through our long-term MoUs with Yen Bai Provincial Forest Protection Department and Son La Provincial Forest Protection Department (FPD). Muong La NR under Son La FPD and Mu Cang Chai SHCA under Yen Bai FPD are working in partnership as the main

implementing agencies of the project. At sub-national level, the primary decision makers are the Provincial People's Committees (PPC) who are responsible for project approval. The project therefore built a very good relationship with both PPCs of Son La and Yen Bai through communication.

At both sites, the project signed agreements (MoUs) with the management boards of the PAs. The form of cooperation includes joining field visits, attending CCT monthly meetings and, together with CCTs, developing work-plans on monthly basis. Regarding sustainable financing, the project supported management boards of PAs develop a 'proof of concept' model for villages around the PAs in allocating part of revenues from the Payments for Forest Ecosystem Services (PFES) to cover part of salaries for CCTs. The project informed partners all activities and project progress on monthly basis and received comments/feedbacks from them. In particular, the project also organized a Darwin kick-off workshop in Muong La NR in November 2021 with 44 participants who are representatives of relevant agencies, local authorities and local communities. This further strengthened our relationship with government partners and communities.

For this Darwin-funded project in MCC-ML, we are directly partnered with a Vietnamese NGO named Sustainable Rural Development (SRD). The purpose of the partnership is to bring in high-level and national expertise in community empowerment and livelihoods, and specifically to develop such opportunities for increasing sustainable livelihoods for local communities who live in and around the PAs, offsetting improvements in forest protection and creating result-based incentives for forest protection. Together, these outcomes will in-turn lead to a reduction negative impacts on forests and wildlife. Some key activities, under the leadership of SRD, include: Participatory Market Systems Development; Providing training to farmers to cultivate Climate Smart Rice (CSR) and/or other varieties of higher value and more resilient crops; and explore ecotourism and other locally owned enterprise options. The partnership with SRD has been going well and smoothly since the project began; when we signed a sub-grant agreement with SRD. The FFI project team and SRD worked together on activity planning and in collaboration of doing field work.

In general, the project has strong partnerships with all partners, including government partners, local communities, and the local NGO through building on existing relationship of FFI with partners in the project site, through formal and informal meetings to discuss project objectives and shared /co-workplanning. The project received positive feedback as well as renewed commitments to take part in and to support project actions, from all partners.

### **3. Project progress**

This section (3.1- 3.5) is the main narrative report on project progress in the last year, and should be a flowing paragraphed presentation written in a formal style. Sub-sections reflect the progress against the project's logframe. We do not require a summary at the start, just clear reporting under 3.1 to 3.5. Please ensure that you clearly refer to evidence to support the narrative.

Annex 1 requires you to provide a condensed version of this narrative against the logframe. In this section and in Annex 1 please report against the latest approved version of the logframe. Please also include your full project logframe in Annex 2. If there have been changes to the logframe please indicate where these are, and please note that, as described above, major changes to the logframe must be submitted for approval by separate email.

#### **3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities**

**Briefly**, please report on progress in implementing the project's Activities for this year. **You should report the progress of Activities under the Outputs to which they relate.** Have the Activities been carried out in the manner and time planned? Please support comments with evidence to support progress towards Activities.

**Output 1 – Quality and sustainability of community-based patrolling, crime prevention and PA monitoring is improved.**

### **1.1 Implement SMART patrols by rangers and CCTs (20 members across both sites), providing support and training on snare removal, awareness raising, and SMART**

This activity takes place continuously throughout the project life cycle.

In PY1, the project continues to apply – and expand – SMART in forest patrols, by both rangers and CCTs. The project provided technical assistance through a gibbon ecology monitoring training course and provided field equipment to 16 CCT members in Mu Cang Chai SHCA and 10 CCT members in Muong La NR. They have been patrolling gibbon habitat for at least 10 days per month, including threat mitigation and snare removal, and improved gibbon monitoring.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the project was unable to organise the face-to-face international workshop on gibbon conservation, instead the project organised an on-line international workshop on the conservation of western black crested gibbon. One of the outcomes of this successful event was the creation of a new forum for participants to share lessons and best-practices for *Nomascus concolor* (and other *Nomascus* gibbons) research and conservation, via 'road-testing' a '*Nomascus concolor* network'. This coalition of people with keen interest in the species is now providing a platform for sharing ideas and data, and provides an opportunity for international review of Vietnam's *N. concolor* population-level Conservation Action Plan, developed by FFI and partners in 2019.

The project also delivered a first aid training for CCT members and PA staff at both sites. This helped CCT members and PA staff understand and address first aid injuries, make better plans regarding field safety and risk/management, while carrying out work in forest.



Photo: A western black crested (*N. concolor*) gibbon in MCC SHCA taken by CCT member

### **1.2 Conduct forest cover, quality and connectedness surveys at project start and end.**

This activity was planned in Q2 Year 1. However, due to unseasonably bad (wet) weather, this activity has been postponed to Q4 Year 2. In March 2022, the project conducted a ground truth survey of forest cover, quality and connectedness and mapped cardamom areas in both PAs by drones fitted with hi-res RGB and thermal imaging cameras. This is the first time, not only for this project, but in Vietnam as a whole, that drones are being used in this way. Moreover, this ground-truthing was also the first step to even more high-resolution, satellite-based imagery and analysis of the scale and extent of the cardamom cultivation (and threat) in the two protected area, and

from this we have set baseline for the cardamom for the first time. This absolutely pioneering work, led by FFI, was made possible through a partnership with the Crayon ESG Innovation Fund. Crayon are a global IT and AI company, working with NASA and FFI on ultra-high resolution imagery for the detection of cardamom under the canopy. This partnership has been made possible because of this Darwin project.

After the field trip, above, the biodiversity team shared initial results with all project partners. There is a shared concern – i.e. a threat – from cultivation of cardamom to natural forest habitat, which it is evidently increasing. Although this is the first ever robust, systematic and hi-res study (and baseline) ever conducted, we know anecdotally and subjectively that there is very much more cardamom than there used to be, from around 5-10 years again. With this fact, the Director of Muong La NR agreed to assign at least one ranger to join patrol with CCTs on monthly basis to strengthen law enforcement in the PA. The project is in the process of analysing field data and drafting report. The report, which will include the work with Crayon, will provide a current statement on forest cover, gibbon population monitoring, and related cardamom farming issues. This will be the evidence-base to provide recommendations and suggestions for activity planning.

**1.3 Develop a sustainable incentive programme for CCT and PA rangers to motivate them beyond salary and SMART-based performance monitoring (annual payments).**

In December 2021, the project organised annual meetings with CCTs and protected areas partners, at both sites, to review annual performance and plan for 2022. At these meetings, based on the 2021 SMART data and nomination from all CCT members, two CCT members in Mu Cang Chai SHCA and two CCT members in Muong La NR received small cash rewards from project, for effort and excellence. In addition to this, the project also issued ‘general’ certificates to all CCT members to acknowledge their contributions to conservation over a year. From Year 2, and as planned (in the original project timetable), a more sophisticated, sustainable incentive programme will be finalised and applied. This is likely going to include a combination of SMART, photo and GIS (effort) data, to provide a ranking of CCT members or probably more appropriately for CCT sub-groups. Seeing as patrols, and indeed all actions, are undertaken as a team, we are likely to reward the best teams (sub-groups), and indeed provide some incentives for all CCT members.



Photo: Certificates have been awarded to two CCTs members in MCC SHCA

#### **1.4 Conduct intensive annual snare removal surveys by CCT and PA rangers, supported by Youth Union and volunteers.**

This activity was planned in Q1 Year 2. The project piloted this intervention in Muong La NR with engagement of Muong La NR rangers, district rangers, local police, local authorities and CCT members. However, this was not successful as expected because a member of the team became unwell and tested positive with covid-19 during this intensive trip. We therefore had to stop the activity earlier than planned. The activity is going and FFI will re-organise this activity in Muong La NR and Mu Cang Chai SHCA in the coming quarter, taking lessons learned from other FFI project sites, where we have run similar interventions. This includes Pu Mat National Park, where FFI succeed with intensive snare removal campaigns. The project will help partners in designing the methodology by creating and following a systematic grid-cell approach to ensure snare removal covers all priority (hotspot) snaring areas, as defined from SMART data, and carefully search/scan and detect wire snares or traps in forest, to calculate their density, and then remove them.

#### **1.5 Sign conservation agreements with community leaders and specific households (of known hunters), specifying project benefits and conditionality of benefits**

This activity was planned in Q3, Q4 of Year 1 and Q2 of Year 2. The activity relates to livelihood activities that project intends to provide with the conditionality of benefits being linked conservation outcomes, especially behaviour change / threat reduction. However, the process of identifying livelihood the most appropriate and relevant interventions was somewhat delayed because of the national lockdown (to prevent Covid-19 disease). Therefore, aside from some internal and partner discussion, at this stage of the project FFI/SRD have not yet implemented livelihood interventions and as a result we have not been able to ask local communities to sign the conservation agreements. The project will carry on this activity in year 2.

#### **1.6 Conduct annual METT assessments at project start (to establish baseline), mid-project and project end.**

The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT-4) assessment has been planned in Q1 Year 2, Q1 Year 3 and Q1 Year 4. The project organised a two-day workshop in Mu Cang Chai SHCA in December 2021 with more than 30 participants – during a brief gap in Covid restrictions – who are FPD rangers, PA staff, representatives from Management Advisory Committee, relevant stakeholders in Mu Cang Chai district Forest Protection Department, representatives from communes in the buffer zones, and CCT members.

The METT-4 (version 4<sup>th</sup>) tool was used to measure effectiveness scores and use these to plan for improving management effectiveness for the coming year(s). The 2021 METT score (report) for Mu Cang Chai SHCA was written in Vietnamese and the score is 66 [max score is 123]. This means there are many areas needing to improve in coming years and project will help to improve it through capacity building, including training, supported learning and study tours.

The project also planned to organise a METT (data gathering) workshop in Muong La NR in January 2022 but then due the Covid-19 pandemic it was delayed several times. It is now confirmed by Muong La NR that the METT workshop is being held shortly, in May 2022.

#### **1.7 Develop and implement a bio-monitoring protocol, for black gibbons and key indicators species, in addition to SMART monitoring.**

This activity has been scheduled throughout the project life cycle, and is therefore currently under development. Based on work already undertake and specifically the results of Activity 1.2, the project will develop a bio-monitoring protocol early in Year 2, for the implementation thereafter.

#### **1.8 Conduct annual market/wildlife trade surveys in surrounding districts and urban centres in Son La and Yen Bai (overt, not covert, data collection, including risk assessments).**

This activity has been scheduled annually. With support from an FFI Technical Specialist from the IWT team in FFI UK, in March 2022 the project started undertaking the semi-structured wildlife trade interviews with key informants in Mu Cang Chai SHCA and the largest town nearby, including 'wild meat' restaurant workers, CCT members, village leaders, rangers, PA staff, and

district police. The purpose of this survey is to comprehensively understand the market chain of illegal wildlife trade, including who hunts wildlife, and why, who sell wildlife products and who consumes wildlife products (end users). The project will continue to survey using the same approach in Muong La NR and a town nearby in June 2022. All data and information will be analysed and reported after completing the survey in Muong La NR.

## **Output 2 – PA governance is effective, sustainable and collaborative.**

### **2.1 Develop collaborative PA management plans, including discussion facilitation and technical input, maintaining and supporting SMART ranger and CCT patrols.**

This activity was planned from Q4 Year 1 to Q1 Year 3. The project has started this activity at the beginning of the project as planned.

At both sites, the project signed agreements with the management boards of the PAs. Each management board thus assigned one ranger to work closely with the project and directly to supervise CCT operation, collect patrol data from CCT members and share data with FFI SMART/CCT Manager (to analyse and produce SMART reports, to assist adaptive PA management).

Cooperation also included joining field visits and forest patrols, attending CCT monthly patrol planning meetings and, together with CCTs, developing work-plans on monthly basis.

Regarding sustainable financing, the project facilitated operationalising a payment mechanism using Payment for Forest Ecosystem Services (PFES) revenue to cover part of the salaries for CCTs. Muong La NR is now paying 50% of salaries for CCTs i.e. around VND1,400,000 [US\$65] per person per month, which is a significant change and very important contribution. Whilst not yet entirely sustainable, as 50% of salaries are still paid for by the project (Darwin) it is very much a (large) step in the right direction and a model that can replicated in other sites, nation-wide.

The project will keep facilitating this model and scale it up to include Mu Cang Chai SHCA. Here FFI will help the protected area to obtain approval from provincial governments, through providing evidence, but also socialising and advocacy, in both sites, such that that it is written into law as an official, sustainable financing mechanism for the PAs.

### **2.2 Develop and deliver training courses for PA staff, based on training needs assessments using the ARCBC/IUCN Competency Standards for Protected Areas.**

This activity was planned in Q2 Year 1; Q1, Q2 Year 2; and Q1 Year 4. The project organised a workshop to assess the training needs at both Mu Cang Chai SHCA and Muong La NR using the ARCBC/IUCN Competency Standards for Protected Areas in November 2021 and March 2022, respectively. This assessment identified several gaps of PA staff' competency in working and managing the PA. The project is now developing the training programme and will soon deliver trainings to PA staff of both sites. The [assessment report](#) was completed in March 2022.

Some key gaps were identified for capacity development include:

- (1) research, survey and monitor biodiversity;
- (2) investigate and monitor natural forest resources usage;
- (3) research on illegal wildlife trade;
- (4) development of crime prevention strategy;
- (5) developing volunteering network on crime prevention;
- (6) investigate forest violations;
- (7) planning and leading awareness raising and small group educational activities;
- (8) planning and delivering educational activities in the local schools; and
- (9) applying SMART in forest patrol and adaptive management. [Full report via this [LINK](#)].



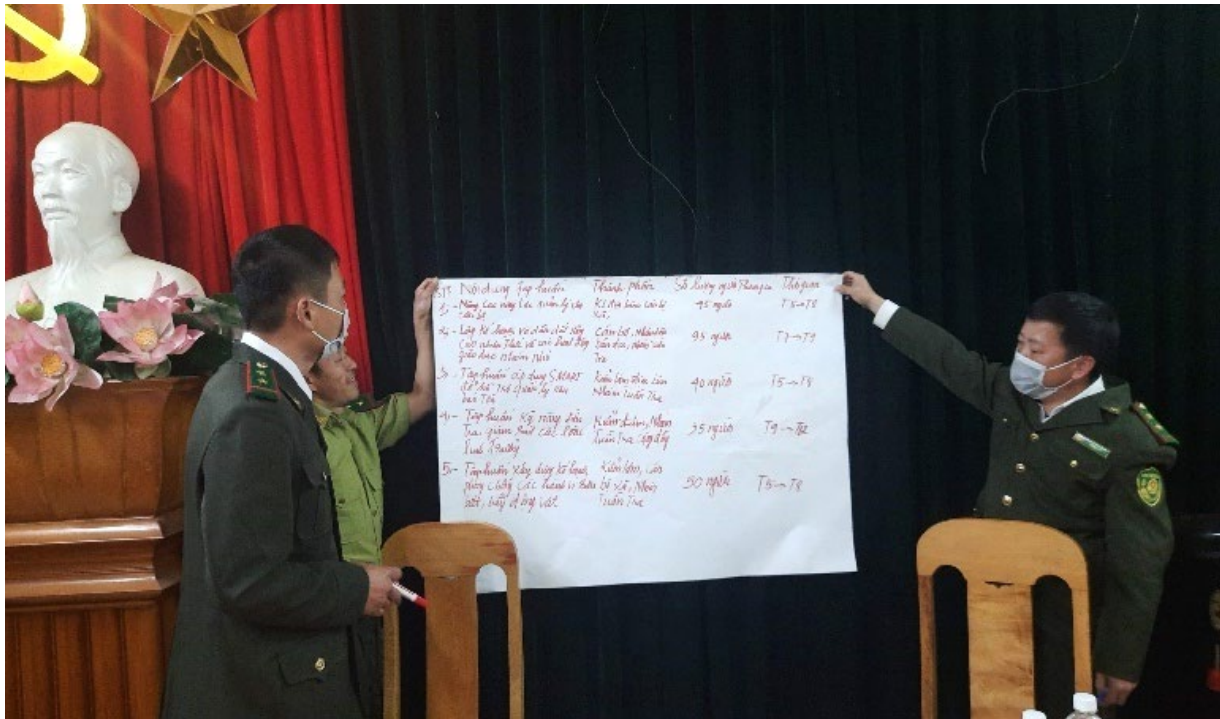


Photo: MCC SHCA rangers shared a list of training needs for themselves

**2.3 Maintain and strengthen Collaborative Management Advisory Committees (MAC), including regulations, scope and memberships, and inclusive of MAC facilitation and technical advice.**

This activity has been scheduled throughout the project life cycle. The Management Advisory Committee (MAC) was facilitated and established by FFI since 2007 and continues to this day. Its functions are to ensure that local communities are empowered and included in both information sharing and decision making, related to Mu Cang Chai SHCA management. It is a forum for open discussion which then advises the PA management board but also acts like a CSO to represent the community(s).

After 15 years of functioning, the project partners agree that there is a need to revise/update its regulations and membership, to ensure it still supports collaborative PA management and to ensure that it represents the views and voices of all community members, including (and especially) women. In December 2021 and March 2022 the project held several discussions with Mu Cang Chai SHCA management board on this topic, to revise regulations, and planned to organise a workshop to collectively review its regulations and membership. The draft of the updated regulations and proposed membership (that will add some more representatives from Women Union and Youth Union) was is now in place and has been socialised. The workshop was, however, delayed because the Chairman of MAC wanted to hear feedback from members and other relevant stakeholders, prior to holding the event. It is now confirmed that the workshop is being organised for June 2022, to review and finalise its regulations and membership.

**2.4 Develop site-specific/PA social safeguards, monitoring plan and grievance redress mechanism (GRM), through village-level, household and focus group discussions, ensuring participation of women and vulnerable groups.**

At the early stages of project implementation, project informed all partners and local communities in buffer zones of two PAs, launched a kick-off workshop in Muong La NR with relevant stakeholders, partners, and representatives of local communities. Information of project was given to all concerned local communities. Due to Covid-19 pandemic and restriction of travel and meetings with more than 30 people at the same time as national lockdown and policy on Covid-19 disease prevention, the project was unable to organise village meetings in 2021 until April 2022. At the time of writing these gathering are now allowed again. The project therefore plans to deliver this activity next month, in May 2022, with the following steps:

- Organise village meetings in at least 17 villages;
- Further inform them of the planned project activities and seek feedback;

- Consult with local people on activity implementation and make revisions as needed;
- Consult with local people on project-specific safeguards, agree on these and how to measure and monitor them;
- As part of the safeguards process, install project information boards at all villages, with a summary of project objectives/actions, contact details of whom the local people can seek help or raise complaints, as part of the grievance redress mechanism (GRM) - which is already in place but requires further awareness/socialising;
- Establish village-level representative boards, in all key villages, to receive reports/complaints from local villagers, as part of the GRM and its functioning

## 2.5 Conduct Knowledge-Attitude-Behaviour (KAB) surveys at project start (baseline), mid-project and project end.

This activity was planned annually to collect data at project start, mid-project and project end.

To get better understanding of the awareness, attitudes, behaviours towards wildlife / conservation and socio-economic conditions of the communities living around Mu Cang Chai SHCA and Muong La NR, the project conducted surveys to update socio-economic situations and assess Knowledge-Attitude-Behaviour (KAB) in both sites, in November 2021. There were 544 ethnic minority people living in 24 villages in buffer zones engaged in these surveys. Of them 59.4% are Hmong, 33% are Thai ethnic minorities, the rest are others such as Kinh (Vietnamese). The project finalised this [report](#) in February 2021 with some key recommendations to develop an awareness raising for communities included:

- Establishing a mechanism for cooperating with relevant stakeholders in Mu Cang Chai and Muong La to mainstreaming the gibbon and wildlife protection and conservation activities in a formal system, possibly through expansion of the MAC(s);
- Necessary to strengthen awareness raising for local people in Mu Cang Chai and Muong La on forest protection and wildlife conservation and biodiversity, especially gibbon conservation. Empowering women in this must be central and prioritised;
- Livelihood improvements, and associated messaging, must include and prioritize sustainability and control or mitigation of threats from cardamom cultivation, in Mu Cang Chai, as well as cassava cultivation in Muong La;
- Livelihood support needs to put market access or market orientation at the core of activities, and also link this to PFES (forest protection income) payments, changes to current farming systems incl. husbandry (buffaloes), crops (maize) and afforestation;
- Strengthening gibbon conservation must include law enforcement activities, including control of home-made firearms, and the using situational crime prevention wildlife to disrupt and weaken the local trade in wildlife (IWT).

[Full report in this [LINK](#)].



Photo: Local volunteer interviewed a local Thai woman to collect KAB data

## **2.6 Develop awareness-raising and communications strategies about the project at local (trainings, events, printed literature, schools curricular), sub-national (workshops, study tours), and national (fora) levels.**

This activity was planned in Q3 Year 1, Q3 Year 2 and Q3 Year 3. Based on the results and recommendations from first KAB survey, which is also therefore the baseline, the project is developing an awareness raising programme and will start this from June 2022 and it will continue until the end of project. The KAB survey will be repeated annually to measure the impacts of project and the associated changes in Knowledge-Attitude-Behaviour of local people regarding to conservation.

## **2.7 Undertake IUCN Green List assessments for both PAs.**

This activity was scheduled for Q4 Year 1, Q2 Year 2, Q4 Year 3 and Q2 Year 4. The project initially made some progress by explaining the contexts of IUCN Green List to both PAs and received full support and interest from both of them. FFI Country Programme Manager also attended the Green List application of Pu Mat National Park conducted by IUCN expert in March 2022. This helped to further understand the process of assessing the IUCN Green List criteria. In addition, the project will send a technical staff to attend the workshop on IUCN Green List being held by IUCN in May 2022. With internal resources and expertise, together with support from IUCN experts, project will start the process of assessing criteria and completing applications for both PAs in Q2 of Year 2.

## **2.8 Develop a feasibility study for upgrading MCC HSCA to full Nature Reserve status and actively support the upgrade through consultation and data sharing.**

This activity was planned during Q3 Year 2 to Q1 Year 3. During Year 1, the project has been developed a TOR to seek a National consultant to review current situation and gaps, from that create a roadmap for the development of feasibility study for upgrading Mu Cang Chai SHCA to a Nature Reserve with full functioning as a special use forest. The project team has met with the potential consultant twice in March 2021 to discuss scope of work and expected outcomes. The project will finalise scope of work with consultant and has its recruitment process done in early May 2022.

## **2.9 Develop and implement a Situational Crime Prevention Strategy for each PA, working in close cooperation with commune authorities and police departments.**

This activity was planned for Q4 Year 1 to Q1 Year 3. To date the project is currently mid-way through conducting wildlife trade survey [although it is already completed field survey in Mu Cang Chai SHCA and a town nearby]. The project will base on the results and recommendations of these wildlife trade surveys at both Mu Cang Chai and Muong La to then work with PA staff, rangers, police, and relevant stakeholders to develop a Situational Crime Prevention Strategy in Year 2, with support of IWT experts from FFI UK.

## **Output 3 – Resilience of forest-using communities is increased by land-use planning and sustainable livelihoods, creating result-based incentives for forest protection leading to reduced negative impact on forests and species.**

### **3.1 Facilitate and produce Participatory Resource/Land-Use Maps and Plans (PRUM/PLUPs) in 17 villages in the buffer zones surrounding the two PAs, following an FPIC process.**

This activity was planned in Q2 to Q4 Year 1. The process requires gathering many people at the same time and same place. Due to the national lockdown and policy on Covid-19 disease prevention, it was not allowed to conduct this activity in late 2021 until April 2022. Restrictions have now been lifted and the project plans to conduct this activity from June 2022.

### **3.2 Support a consultative process of the review and strengthening of land tenure, in partnership with a local lawyer, following an FPIC process.**

This activity was planned in Q4 Year 1 and Q1 Year 2. Because the activity 3.1 has not yet started so this activity will be postponed until completion of activity 3.1.

**3.3 Collect socio-economic and social impact assessment data bi-annually, including a participatory identification of associated indicators of change that can be used for monitoring.**

This activity is combined with the activity 2.5. Please also see Activity 2.5

**3.4 Conduct a review of existing farming systems, participatory SWOT and gap analyses, and farmer surveys, to inform and monitor agri-livelihoods interventions.**

This activity was planned in Q3 and Q4 Year 1. As planned, the project and SRD conducted a review of existing farming systems, conducted a participatory SWOT and gap analyses to inform and monitor agri-livelihood interventions during January to February 2022. Through group discussions and in-dept interviews in this survey, the project engaged more than 370 Hmong and Thai ethnic minority people (50% female; 50% male). The surveys have been conducted through interviews and consultations at 17 villages in the buffer zones of both PAs. A report on this activity also completed [please find report in this [LINK](#)].

**3.5 Implement PMSD process in 17 villages to select products for market analysis and development, evaluating products under social and biodiversity criteria.**

This activity was planned in Year 2. The project will start this from Q2 of Year 2.

**3.6 Develop and implement an action plan based on multi-stakeholder workshop(s) with market actors and communities, ensuring participation of women and vulnerable groups.**

This activity was planned in Year 2 after the completion of activity 3.5.

**3.7 Pilot five livelihoods models, including agriculture and ecotourism interventions, developed and co-implemented with SRD, including business planning and training for communities on: crop diversification, yield maximisation, supply chains and market access.**

This activity was planned from Year 2 to the end project life cycle. The project has made some progress through a review of farming system [Activity 3.4]. Based on this assessment and recommendations from report, the project will further consult with local farmers and local governments then pilot livelihood models in Year 2.

**3.8 Implement an eco-stove design and procurement work-stream to reduce local fuel wood requirements for households and for cardamom drying.**

This activity was planned in Year 1 and Year 2.

In February 2022, the project successfully delivered 198 eco-stoves to the same number of households living adjacent to both PAs. Each household contributed 13.9% cost share to receive this stove. This portion, voluntary contributions from households, aims to ensure they use the stoves in an effective way and look after the stoves. This eco-stove design secured the reduction of local demand on natural resources (firewood) from both PAs by an estimated 50%. The project will evaluate the efficiency of this type of eco-stove and local fuelwood demand in Year 2. More eco-stoves will be delivered depending on effectiveness and local household needs in the region.



Photo: Local communities receive and use eco-stoves

## **Output 4 – Novel sustainable finance approaches for enforcement and PA management are piloted for both PAs.**

### **4.1 Explore innovative sustainable financing options for enforcement and PA management, developing a business plan to secure PES (and other) funding for these, including at least one additional CCT group.**

This activity takes place continuously throughout the project life cycle.

The modelling of FPES has just been put in practice since October 2020 and is now being implemented. With about 50% increase in CCT's monthly salaries using money from FPES revenues, the CCT members added at least 05 more days in forest patrolling every month. This new PFES financing mechanism will potentially ensure local community's deeper engagement in biodiversity conservation in the long-term. Further sustainable finance options will be explored during the project life cycle, including scaling up to include MCC.

### **4.2 Obtain legally binding government approval of all PES agreements, for community-based forest protection, through a process of collaborative policy development and advocacy.**

This activity takes place continuously throughout the project life cycle.

There has been slow in process in advocating a districtwide business plan and landscape management in Year 1. The project has several informal meetings with PA management boards at both sites to explore viable PFES agreements, and this has been one area of significant success. The project continues to conduct consultation meetings with PA management boards and FDP to obtain additional PFES agreements throughout the project life cycle, and will continue to develop wider ideas on sustainable financing.

## **3.2 Progress towards project Outputs**

Report on how overall progress has been made towards the project Outputs and how likely the project is to achieve them by its close. Address each Output in turn, identifying the baseline condition, change recorded to date, and the source of evidence for this change. Please comment on how you are measuring the Output indicators. Please support comments with evidence and use indicators to support progress towards Outputs.

As shown above, all scheduled activities for the reporting year have either been completed or are well underway, and the project is therefore on or ahead of schedule in relation to outputs 1, 2, 3, and 4, with remaining project activities continuing or commencing in April 2022 and extending through to project end as scheduled.

### **Output 1 – Quality and sustainability of community-based patrolling, crime prevention and PA monitoring is improved.**

During PY1, the project continues to support the operation of CCTs both at Mu Cang Chai SHCA and Muong La NR, through technical training and oversight, through building their capacities and financial support, including the facilitation of sustainable financing, as an increasing share of funding, from state PES (PFES) [Output 4]. The CCT have been patrolling gibbon habitat for at least 10 days per month in Mu Cang Chai SHCA and 15 days per month in Muong La NR, including both threat detection and mitigation (deterring illegal activity), and also snare removal. The CCT are also employing improved gibbon monitoring, through the design of more systemic coverage and recording protocols. During this reporting period, one of the key efforts (and achievements), contributing directly to the protection of gibbons and other wildlife, was the confiscation of 13 hand-made hunting guns by CCT members in Muong La NR. This makes the CCTs one of the first-ever local community teams to provide such direct enforcement support. Overarching progress towards this output is being achieved. The proposed indicators at output level are still the best indicators of what the project will achieve.

### **Output 2 – PA governance is effective, sustainable and collaborative.**

During this reporting period, the project has implemented a range of activities to achieve Output 2, such as conducting METT-4 process (workshop and evaluation) for Mu Cang Chai SHCA, and

maintaining the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) in Mu Cang Chai. Crucially, the project also worked to improve its functions in co-managing the PA – as far as is possible – through facilitating and planning a process to review and revise its regulations and membership. At the end of Year 1, the project and partners agreed to further engage more stakeholders in project planning and implementation, and develop better governance for PA, that is more sustainable and collaborative. The revision of MAC in Mu Cang Chai SHCA is being carefully considered, and consulted with relevant stakeholders, and is therefore not yet concluded. The project progress toward the output is ongoing, but we have largely achieved what was planned for Y1. The proposed indicators at output level are still the best indicators of what the project will achieve.

**Output 3 – Resilience of forest-using communities is increased by land-use planning and sustainable livelihoods, creating result-based incentives for forest protection leading to reduced negative impact on forests and species.**

Work towards this output focused on identifying how to develop incentives for forest conservation and ensure associated well-being of local communities is ensured or improved. In this reporting period, the project has made good progress in terms of developing a robust understanding of the socio-economic status, and local attitudes/behaviors, and also the analysis/review of current livelihoods and barriers, undertaken by SRD. This (review) has shown very clearly the twin challenges of poverty and resource scarcity that face the residents who live around two PAs. A wide range of PRA tools has been applied to collect this data and engage local community in project activities. This helps the project get a deeper understanding of the situation of local communities. In addition, the result of the review of existing farming and the socio-economic report have been shared with the PA management boards and with the Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), in both provinces, to discuss alternative (sustainable) livelihood options to reduce pressure on the PAs and to improve adaptive management effectiveness, as part of better forest (PA) management. Overall, the project progress toward this output at this stage has been achieved, but is ongoing. The proposed indicators at output level are still the best indicators of what the project will achieve.

**Output 4 – Novel sustainable finance approaches for enforcement and PA management are piloted for both PAs.**

During this reporting period, the project conducted a series of informal and formal meetings with local people, local authorities and managers of both Mu Cang Chai SHCA and Muong La NR to discuss options and political will to approaching and applying sustainable financing models, based largely on PES (PFES). As a result, the project has continued to support functioning and expansion of the Payment for Ecosystem Services finance model, initiated in Muong La NR, such that PFES money is now covering around 50% salaries for CCT members. With this significant achievement and step forward toward to Output 4, the project will continue to assist the progress to get PFES mechanism legalized (written into law) which further contributes to the long-term sustainability of financing for CCT operations in Muong La NR and its replication in Mu Cang Chai SHCA. Overall, the project progress toward this output, at this stage, has been achieved but is clearly ongoing. The proposed indicators at output level are still the best indicators of what the project will achieve.

### **3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome**

Please report on progress made towards the project Outcome. You should make specific reference to the Outcome indicators including baseline condition and progress to date, and provide evidence against them. Consider the following:

- Are the indicators adequate for measuring the intended Outcome?
- Is the project likely to achieve the Outcome by end of funding? If not, what action will you take to ensure the situation can be improved?

**The Outcome of the project is** two priority PAs in Northern Vietnam demonstrate improved and sustainable protection of forest habitats and associated species through enhanced governance, sustainable finance and improved local wellbeing. At the time of reporting, the project has naturally not yet achieved the Outcome but there has been clear, and in some cases measurable,

progress across all four Outcomes, and associated indicators, along with some notable achievements. Although we are still relatively near the start of the project, having not yet completed a full 12 months of operations, these results – and general progress – appear to demonstrate that the project is appropriate, realistic, well designed and will achieve its Outcome, by end of funding.

### 3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Monitoring of critical conditions (risks and assumptions) is crucial to project success. Report on whether Outcome and Output level assumptions still hold true. If there have been changes in assumptions, in what ways is the project meeting or managing these? Please support comments with evidence.

Assumption 1:

Comments:

Etc.

**Project Outcome:** Two priority PAs in Northern Vietnam demonstrate improved and sustainable protection of forest habitats and associated species through enhanced governance, sustainable finance and improved local wellbeing.

#### Assumptions:

- Evidence that monitoring by local people (patrol teams) and rangers is accurate and consistent, and produces reliable data sets.
- The gibbon census is able to record a significant (enough) proportion of the population and occupancy from which to infer change.
- Target communities / project beneficiaries have the sufficient capacity (including time), and/or the project mitigates any shortcomings (e.g. language or literacy barriers) and continues interest to engage in and benefit from the project as planned.

#### Comments:

It is too early to assess the full impact and measure outcome of the project, but the project has been made strong progress towards to the stated purposes and outcomes. The purpose level assumptions still hold true, and the indicators for measuring outcomes remain appropriate. The assumptions made regarding project outcome have not changed. As of this reporting time, we confirm all assumptions at outcome level still hold true.

**Outputs 1.** Quality and sustainability of community-based patrolling, crime prevention and PA monitoring is improved.

#### Assumptions:

- The community patrol team members have sufficient support (from FFI and PA staff), capacity (built by FFI as needed) and ongoing motivation (internal but also linked to incentives) to undertake the required forest patrols (approx. 15 days/month).
- CCT and ranger patrols and snare removal, coupled with awareness raising and crime prevention activities, is enough to significantly reduce threats.
- That FFI financial support to the CCT patrollers incentivises effective enforcement / monitoring
- That target species has the time and ecological ability to respond to improved protection outcomes and demonstrate changes in population, abundance or occupancy in the timeframe of the project.

**Comments:** CCT members will be trained to support rangers with SMART patrols, species and threat monitoring and continue to undertake forest patrols. A sustainable incentive programme will be developed and implemented to motivate CCT members. During Year 2, the project in collaboration with PA rangers, police departments will develop two PA Situational Crime Prevention strategies and further follow up activities will be implemented to reduce illegal wildlife

crime. The project also provides a series of trainings based on the training needs assessments using the ARCBC/IUCN Competency Standards for Protected Areas to increase capacity for rangers. The project therefore confirms the assumptions still hold.

## **Output 2. PA governance is effective, sustainable and collaborative.**

### **Assumptions:**

1. Management effectiveness tools reflect the genuine condition of and change in PA management effectiveness
2. Improvement of local patrolling and law enforcement, by state and non-state actors, is a sufficient deterrent to change local behaviour / reduce threats. SMART data/reports will be used to measure this and inform adaptive management or other interventions, as needed
3. That local government authorities and other state actors, including PA management boards, remain – and are increasingly – open to the active participation of local community members and/or CSOs in PA/forest governance
4. That local community members / representatives maintain interest in and/or have the time and (other) capacity to meaningfully engage in PA management

### **Comments:**

CCT members and rangers have been built capacity and keep continuing to take patrolling and gibbon monitoring. SMART data and reports have been sharing with PA management boards to develop workplans towards to enhancing good governance. The revision of MAC's regulations and membership in Mu Cang Chai SHCA is under discussion and expected to organise a MAC workshop in Year 2. In addition, the roadmap to upgrade MCC SHCA to a full natural reserve status has started at some initial steps of hiring consultant and scope of work. The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT-4) workshops has been conducted in Mu Cang Chai SHCA, will be conducted in Muong La NR, and will be conducted annually to help PAs and local stakeholder keep track and monitor progress of achievements year by year. By the completion of this project, the assumptions made regarding this output still hold true.

**Outputs 3.** Resilience of forest-using communities is increased by land-use planning and sustainable livelihoods, including results-based incentives for forest protection, leading to a reduction in negative impacts on forests and wildlife.

### **Assumptions:**

1. That local community members have the capacity, and continue to have motivation, to engage in the planning, development and implementation of sustainable livelihoods
2. That local government authorities maintain openness to the clarification and/or strengthening of tenure and customary legal and land rights
3. That no unexpected events happen to substantially, negatively affect local attitudes and behaviours towards forest and gibbon/wildlife conservation
4. That the locally-owned development of safeguards and grievance redress, through processes that enable equitable participation, results in mechanisms that are ultimately appropriate, such that community rights and wellbeing are fully protected, enhanced, and take into account the differing roles, power and status of men and women, and other vulnerable groups (relates also to Output 2)

**Comments:** Still holds. The project in collaboration with SRD has started to review farming system in both sites. Further activities will design a full package of technical support to improve local livelihoods. During year 2, the project will focus more on conduct market chains analysis, gather comments to develop an action plans, recognise viable 5 livelihood model. The local



villagers fully supported all project activities. We therefore confirm all assumptions made regarding this output still hold true.

#### **Output 4 – Novel sustainable finance approaches for enforcement and PA management are piloted for both PAs.**

##### **Assumptions:**

4.1 Explore innovative sustainable financing options for enforcement and PA management, developing a business plan to secure PES (and other) funding for these, including at least one additional CCT group.

4.2 Obtain legally binding government approval of all PES agreements, for community-based forest protection, through a process of collaborative policy development and advocacy.

**Comments:** The slow in process of advocating a districtwide business plan and landscape management slowed down in Year 1. In Year 2, the project has been worked with SRD, local counterparts, and communities to discover more sustainable financing options such as community-based ecotourism. The project also continues work with government policy makers to seek for approval of PFES agreements. Study tours at another protected areas will be held to show a successful sustainable financing model. Therefore, the assumptions made regarding this output still hold true.

### **3.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and poverty alleviation**

The Impact is not intended to be achieved solely by the project. This is a higher-level situation that the project will contribute towards achieving. All Darwin Initiative projects are expected to contribute to biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation.

- What impact was in your original application form?
- What contribution is your project making to the higher-level impact on biodiversity conservation?
- What contribution is your project making to a higher-level impact on human development and wellbeing (poverty alleviation)?

Please support all comments with evidence.

Currently, FFI is the only international NGO to support the conservation of Western black-crested gibbons in Mu Cang Chai SHCA and Muong La NR with a focus on species monitoring, management capacity building for local partners and sustainable livelihood development for buffer zone communities for more than 20 years. Regarding the higher goal/impact of biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation, the project raised concerns of direct threats to the biodiversity in Mu Cang Chai SHCA and Muong La NR, are among the most intact in terms of the forest ecosystems and the assemblage of terrestrial wildlife, which elsewhere in Vietnam is being extirpated by hunting and snaring.

FFI has developed a long-term relationship and received strong collaboration of local governments and forest owners in strengthening the forest patrol forces by establishing two Community Conservation Teams with 26 team members at both sites. CCT members have been maintaining forest protection and gibbon monitoring, slowly phasing out financial and technical support for full handover towards project end. For example, during 2021, based on SMART data, forest fire slightly reduced; 13 illegal hunting/poaching cases captured (handmade guns confiscated); land for cardamom production encroached, made more sustainable; further study of the extent and impacts of cardamom warranted.

Regarding human development and wellbeing, the project will implement a wide range of activities to engage local communities, including land use planning, social safeguards and livelihood development. The project also focuses to address these root causes of hunting,

deforestation and degradation, supporting minority communities in developing sustainable livelihoods strategies, clarifying customary rights, and providing livelihoods diversification opportunities.

We should see impacts on biodiversity conservation and human wellbeing start to emerge in the final year of the project.

#### **4. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements**

The overarching objective of the Darwin Initiative is to work with countries to meet their obligations under the major biodiversity Conventions, Treaties or Agreements. Since 2011 this has included the following:

- the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);
- the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);
- the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS);
- the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA);
- the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands;
- the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS);
- the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

In your application you will have defined which convention, agreement or treaty your project would contribute to. Please comment on what contribution your project is making to support your host country/ies to meet their objectives under one or more of these Conventions, Treaties or Agreements. Please refer to the Convention texts including the CBD objectives, Aichi Targets, Programmes of Work and other relevant materials.

Has the project had any interaction with any host country convention focal points, via host country or UK partners in the last 12 months? This is encouraged. Please give details of any interaction.

Please support any comments with evidence and indicators.

The project has not yet been able to provide an evidence based to show positive outcomes towards supporting to the Conventions at this reporting period. In general, the project does support Vietnam meet its commitments under the CBD and UNFCCC, but it is too early to port on this (in terms of direct or measurable contributions).

#### **5. Project support to poverty reduction**

Darwin Initiative projects are required to contribute to a reduction in poverty. Projects working in Upper Middle Income Countries must clearly demonstrate:

- advance knowledge, evidence and impact in Least Developed or Low-Income Countries, or
- contribute to the global public good, for example by advancing understanding and/or strengthening the knowledge base related to biodiversity conservation/sustainable use and poverty reduction, or
- contribute to serious and unique advancements on a critical issue as a result of specific circumstances of the upper-middle income country that could not be made elsewhere.

Describe how your project is contributing to a reduction in poverty. When writing this section, consider the following:

- Who are the expected beneficiaries – i.e. which communities are affected by the issue this project is seeking to tackle, and how will this project help them?
- Are there expected to be any direct poverty impacts from this project (e.g. improved personal security for community members/rangers, increased household/community income etc.)?
- If indirect only, what evidence is there that the project will contribute to poverty alleviation in the long-term (e.g. improved ecosystem services, increased awareness about the value of wildlife, improved community governance etc.)?
- Are there any notable achievements this year?

Please support all comments with evidence and use indicators from your logframe.

The Darwin Initiative has produced an [Information Note on Poverty](#) which may help you understand the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty that can be reported on.

No evidence is yet available to demonstrate poverty alleviation impact. The main intended beneficiaries are local villagers within the 17 target villages, living around Mu Cang Chai SHCA and Muong La NR. The project also intends to design and implement at least five livelihood models such as improved / diversified / more resilient agriculture and securing better prices / market access, and also enterprise development, including ecotourism interventions. The project expects to achieve direct impact on improve well-being of local ethnic minority people by providing a livelihood improvement technical package including access to market system development for these local communities. During Year 1, the project has, however, started such interventions with a review of livelihoods and options which could promote sustainable use of forests and other natural resources outside the PAs (through improved agroforestry/agricultural market access, higher yields and crop diversity). These interventions will take into account the specific needs of women and other vulnerable groups to ensure all can benefit, equally, from opportunities development.

As the implementation of livelihood models has not yet started, these poverty reducing impacts cannot yet be measured in Year 1, however PRA, K-A-B, socio-economic assessment and local livelihoods analysis have all been undertaken, and a market analysis of potential products, combined with an action plan and future recommendations for sustainable livelihoods, are indeed planned for the next reporting period, and will run through the project to the end of funding.

## 6. Consideration of gender equality issues

The [International Development \(Gender Equality\) Act](#) came into force in May 2014, ensuring that gender equality is an explicit objective in UK Government funded projects. Describe how your project has taken gender equality into account. When writing this section, consider the following:

- Is there evidence that the project is working to address gender inequality?
- Are there expected to be any direct gender equality impacts from this project? If not direct, please comment on any indirect impacts.
- Are there any notable achievements this year?

Please support all comments with evidence and reference any relevant indicators from your logframe.

This project prioritises, and is designed to support gender equality, by balancing gender involvement in all project activities, within protected area management and by actively supporting marginalised women to better access livelihood development opportunities, such as market system development and transferable skills. At all village meetings and consultations, the project communicated the central importance of gender equality issues with PA management boards, village leaders and other stakeholders. The project also collected gender disaggregated data,

and worked to improve the coverage (and awareness of) both the social safeguards and the village-level GRMs, which also provide pathways for the resolution of gender-related issues or complaints.

A high portion of women were invited to and presented at all village meetings, consultations, trainings, workshops and social surveys. For example, about 60% of respondents in the socio-economic conditions and KAB survey are women. We will be encouraging women to be involved in project activities of Year 2, as we move to improve the MAC membership (especially its gender balance) and roll-out the livelihoods and enterprise development activities.

## 7. Monitoring and evaluation

Discuss systems and processes employed internally to monitor and evaluate the project this year. Comment on the suitability of this approach, and whether you have identified any areas for improvement.

When writing this section, consider the following:

- How can you demonstrate that the Outputs and Activities of the project actually contribute to the project Outcome?
- What are the indicators of achievements (both qualitative and quantitative) and how are you measuring these?
- Have there been any changes made to the M&E plan over the reporting period?
- Do partners share the M&E work or is this the role of one organisation? How is information shared amongst partners/stakeholders?

The project used the original logframe as the main metric to monitor and evaluate the project indicators against its Outputs and Outcomes. The Project Manager and the project's M&E Officer have worked together to determine from which sources the indicators/monitoring data is collected, as well as where and how to store them. After this review, an M&E tracker (and excel file) containing data forms was designed and specified what data needed to be collected and how, and to store monitoring data. The monitoring data, both quantitative and qualitative, will continue to be collected during activities implementation and inputted into the tracker immediately, subsequent to the implementation stage. FFI takes the main responsibility to collect and manage the M&E data; however, a small number of livelihoods-related indicators are collected by partner organisation – SRD and then submitted to FFI.

To improve collaboration and communication on M&E issues between Project Manager, M&E Officer and technical staff, FFI has decided to employ an online software called ActivityInfo. The project now has a fully developed M&E system on ActivityInfo, which was built based completely on the original M&E tracker but in far more open, useful and easy to use format. This online software also supports better coordination between FFI's management and M&E aspects of the project, by having the project workplan, logframe and M&E tracker all on one single platform and connected to each other. This site (MCC/ML), supported by this Darwin project, is the first of all FFI's sites in Vietnam to develop this new and combined online/offline project management and M&E tool, and would not have been possible without the Darwin project.

Going forward, the (Darwin/MCC-ML) Project Manager will have a meeting with the M&E Officer on a 3-monthly basis, to review the data, assess data collection progress, discuss any challenges in obtaining monitoring data and how to address them, and outline data collection plan for the upcoming period.

## 8. Lessons learnt

Use of lessons learned is important for continuous improvement and adaptive management. This includes lessons from all levels including administrative, management, technical, and M&E. When writing this section, consider the following:

- What worked well, and what didn't work well, this past year?
- If you had to do it again, what would you do differently?
- What recommendations would you make to others doing similar projects?
- How are you going to build this learning into the project and future plans?

Local communities in Mu Cang Chai SHCA are of Hmong ethnic minority and most of them cannot speak Vietnamese. They communicate using the Hmong language. At times, the project staff has struggled to communicate with local communities, especially for the Hmong elderly. Therefore, in community-related project activities, such as the KAB survey, the project recruited local youths to help, who can speak both languages fluently.

Further lessons learned to date are principally related to finding ways to improve the smooth communication between the project (FFI and SRD) and PAs management board, regarding project activities and coordination. PA managers are evidently often busy with multiple tasks and at times demonstrated a reduced interest in supporting Darwin project activities, which they may consider to be 'extra work', despite being designed with their involvement and to overtly support them in improving their PAs. Our aim in Year 2 of the project is to ensure that these staff, including PA management board members, are fully engaged in all activities and that the resources / approaches developed by FFI (and SRD) are useful to them, in terms of capacity-building and improving impact of the activities they will be engaged in.

## **9. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)**

For this section you should consider the following:

- Have you responded to issues raised in the review of your last year's Annual Report?
- What were the views of project partners on the review?
- Briefly describe what actions have been taken as a result of recommendations from last year's review, unless you have already clearly done so through a separate note or the half year report.
- Please also use this section to respond to any feedback received when your project was funded, if appropriate.

Not applicable as this is first year of review.

## **10. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere**

Please use this section to provide any further comments on progress that have not been covered elsewhere in this report. Issues that might be covered in this section include:

- Has the design of the project been enhanced over the last year, e.g. refining methods, or exit strategy?
- Discuss any significant difficulties encountered during the year and steps taken to overcome these if not already discussed elsewhere.
- Does the project face any particular risks?

The project went slow at the first quarter because of a delay in recruiting a new project manager, until October 2021. In light of the recent COVID-19 outbreak, Vietnam has imposed several travel restrictions on those entering the country including project sites. Lockdown in Ha Noi was applied since September 2021. Meanwhile, travellers should monitor restrictions and comply with advisories issued by the local and national authorities. Under the unparalleled circumstances,

training courses might be shifted to virtual forms and the fieldwork activities would have to be flexible and approve an extended period of fieldwork. In general, the project has been adapted and adjusted plans accordingly.

## 11. Sustainability and legacy

Discuss the profile of the project within the country/ies and what efforts have been made during the year to promote the work.

- What evidence is there for increasing interest and capacity resulting from the project?
- Please describe any action you have taken as part of the project's open access plan.
- Is your planned exit strategy still valid given the project is now running, or have you, or are you, planning to make changes to what was originally proposed?
- Likewise, how do you plan to ensure a sustained legacy (e.g. social, economic, ecological, technical etc.) of your project Outcome?

The project has been working with key government counterparts at provincial from the very beginning of the project to ensure that the experience and lessons learned are known, embedded and continue beyond the life of the project. In particular, the Darwin project has been approved by Yen Bai and Son La Provincial People's Committee according to the Decree 80/2020/ND-CP. This project was fully recognised by local people, stakeholders, and other NGOs working in the region. Improvements already achieved in relation to state (PES) funds for CCT salary are a very good indicator of improved sustainability, and the project will absolutely continue to build on this. Moreover, much of what is planned for Y2 is designed to provide long-term improvements to PA management capacity (as measured by METT scores) and reduced local threats (to the forests/wildlife), through a range of community empowerment and wellbeing improvements.

## 12. Darwin identity

- What effort has the project made to publicise the Darwin Initiative, e.g. where did the project use the Darwin Initiative logo and promote Darwin funding opportunities or projects?
- How has the UK Government's contribution to your project's work been recognised?
- Was the Darwin Initiative funding recognised as a distinct project with a clear identity or did it form part of a larger programme?
- To what extent is there an understanding of the Darwin Initiative within in the host country and who is likely to be familiar with it?
- If you have a Twitter/Instagram/Flickr/Blog/YouTube etc. account is this effective and have you linked back to the Darwin Initiative and its social media channels?

The Darwin logo and identity have been prominently used/referenced during all of our project activities. i.e. presentations, banners, reports and FFI Vietnam Programme Facebook Fan page's post. Its identity is also understood by the project partners, the government counterparts, consultants, etc. It has also been explained to project partners, local communities that 'This work has been done/carried out with financial support from Darwin Initiative'. The Darwin Initiative is now well known in Viet Nam due to a series of highly successful conservation projects such as Kon Plong, Kon Tum Province, Viet Nam.



Photo: Darwin Logo being used at the Darwin Kick-off workshop's banner.

### 13. Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

For many of our projects, we know that COVID-19 will have impacted project delivery and so it might be relevant to discuss the pandemic throughout your report. Here, we would like you to summarise the impact of COVID-19 on your project as well as providing an overview of how you have responded.

- To what extent has COVID-19 impacted your project?
- How have you responded? For example, by adjusting your workplan or approach to help maintain delivery.
- Are longer-term delays expected?
- How are you assuring the health and safety of project staff and beneficiaries?
- Could any of your project outcomes or impacts assist with the response to COVID-19 or reduce the risk of future pandemics?
- Do you expect or hope to continue with any of the new ways of working adopted over the past year, once the pandemic passes? For example, greater use of virtual meetings to reduce the need to travel?

Arguably the most significant achievement of the project in 2021 was the effective, efficient and flexible approach in responding to the Covid-19 – leading collaboration amongst other stakeholders, actors for planning and provision of support to the protected area management to enable meet the challenges and keep the project on-track.

Regarding the pandemic specifically, the project's fieldwork was delayed several times over the course of the project period (Y1 reporting period) due to travel restrictions by local authorities and restrictions placed on gatherings over 30 people, as well as periods of total 'lock-down'. More specifically, each province has a different set of restriction policies, which is especially difficult considering we are working in two provinces here. The project needed to follow the strict policy in line with both national and local restrictions. In order to maintain day-to-day operations such as CCT patrols, workshops, and fieldwork to take place, throughout the pandemic, meant that we had to learn new skills for coping with disruptive changes, adapting to constantly changing conditions, and bouncing back from setbacks.

## 14. Safeguarding

Please tick this box if any safeguarding or human rights violations have occurred during this financial year.

If you have ticked the box, please ensure these are reported to [ODA.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ODA.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk) as indicated in the T&Cs.

Projects funded through the Darwin Initiative must fully protect vulnerable people all of the time, wherever they work. All projects are expected to provide a safe and trusted environment which safeguards anyone who the organisation has contact with, including beneficiaries, project staff, volunteers, and downstream partners. In order to provide assurance of this, projects are required to have appropriate safeguarding policies in place. **Please outline and/or provide any updates on your lead organisation's policies or procedures, outlining how you have ensured all project action (including activities led by downstream partners) has applied these principles in practice. Please provide any information on how safeguarding concerns relevant to your project have been managed during the reporting year, and how future risks will be mitigated.**

This question applies to all projects, but will be particularly relevant for projects working directly with communities or with informant networks. As outlined in the terms and conditions for your project, the lead organisation must:

- have a safeguarding policy, which includes a statement of your commitment to safeguarding and a zero tolerance statement on bullying, harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse
- keep a detailed register of safeguarding issues raised and how they were dealt with
- have clear investigation and disciplinary procedures to use when allegations and complaints are made, and have clear processes in place for when a disclosure is made
- share your safeguarding policy with downstream partners
- have a whistle-blowing policy which protects whistle blowers from reprisals and includes clear processes for dealing with concerns raised
- have in place a Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers that sets out clear expectations of behaviours - inside and outside the work place - and make clear what will happen in the event of non-compliance or breach of these standards

Additional guidance can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Fauna & Flora International is a UK charity organisation. The organisation has its strong regulations and clear set of policies on safeguards, safeguarding, disciplinary procedures, whistle-blowing and a staff code of conduct. All such policies, and more besides (including policies on human rights, IPs, gender, FPIC etc.), are available on request.

## 15. Project expenditure

Please expand and complete Table 1. If all receipts have not yet been received, please provide indicative figures and clearly mark them as Draft. The Actual claim form will be taken as the final accounting for funds.



**Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 July 2021 – 31 March 2022)**

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2021/22 Grant (£)	2021/22 Total Darwin Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)	████████	████████	████	
Consultancy costs	████████	████████	████	
Overhead Costs	████████	████████	████	
Travel and subsistence	████████	████████	████	
Operating Costs	████████	████████	████	
Capital items (see below)	████████	████████	████	
Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)	-	-	-	
Others (see below)	████████	████████	████	Underspend due to the cost is charged to other funds.
<b>TOTAL</b>	████████	████████		

Highlight any agreed changes to the budget and **fully** explain any variation in expenditure where this is +/- 10% of the budget. Have these changes been discussed with and approved by Darwin?

**16. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project during the reporting period (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes**

In this section you have the chance to let us know about outstanding achievements of your project over the year that you consider worth highlighting to the Darwin Secretariat and sharing with the wider Biodiversity Challenge Fund community. This could relate to achievements already mentioned in this report, on which you would like to expand further, or achievements that were in addition to the ones planned and deserve particular attention e.g. in terms of best practice. We may use material from this section for various promotion and dissemination purposes, including for example, publication in the Defra Annual Report, Darwin Initiative promotion material, or on the Darwin Initiative website. As we will not always be able to ask projects on an individual basis for their consent to publish the content of this section, please note the above agreement clause.

As aforementioned, probably our most notable achievement during this first reporting period is the agreement of protected area authorities to use state PES funds to cover 50% of the salary of the Community Conservation Teams, who undertake SMART patrols, snare removal and gibbon monitoring, in cooperation with PA rangers. This is a highly significant step not only in improving and ensuring financial sustainability of the patrols, but also in embedding, normalising and institutionalising community-based conservation within the local and PA authorities.

**Checklist for submission**

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the <b>correct template</b> (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and <b>deleted the blue guidance text</b> before submission?	Yes
<b>Is the report less than 10MB?</b> If so, please email to <a href="mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk">Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk</a> putting the project number in the Subject line.	Yes
<b>Is your report more than 10MB?</b> If so, please discuss with <a href="mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk">Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk</a> about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	No
<b>Have you included means of verification?</b> You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	Yes (links)
<b>Do you have hard copies of material you need to submit with the report?</b> If so, please make this clear in the covering email and ensure all material is marked with the project number. However, we would expect that most material will now be electronic.	Yes (links)
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	Yes
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	Yes
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	Yes