

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

Note: 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.

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2022

Project reference	28-020
Project title	Safeguarding globally important forests by improving livelihoods and strengthening governance
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Viet Nam
Lead partner	Fauna & Flora International
Partner(s)	The Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD)
Project leader	Hoang Van Lam, lam.van.hoang@fauna-flora.org
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	October 31, 2022; HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.facebook.com/FaunaFloraVietnam

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).

Output 1 – Quality and sustainability of community-based patrolling, crime prevention and protected area (PA) monitoring is improved.

1.1 Implement SMART patrols by rangers and Community Conservation Teams (CCTs- 20 members across both sites), providing support and training on snare removal, awareness raising, and SMART (including using SMART reports to inform adaptive PA management).

This activity takes place continuously throughout the project life cycle. With support from the Darwin Initiative, the project has recruited more 6 people. Field data collected from the 26 CCT members in both sites were fed into their respective SMART databases, from which patrol and threat locations were mapped over space and time. During the reporting (April 1st 2022 to the October 2022), the 26 CCT team members conducted 1,825 patrol days, over 18,664 kilometers with 11,746 patrol hours, that stopped 30 illegal cases and activities operation thereby providing protection to critically important forest habitat for black gibbons and other species. This information was used to strategically plan future patrol sites to target at-risk areas and elicit greater on-the-ground impact.

During the reporting period, the project provided a range of field supplies for patrolling work such as purchasing 2 cameras and tripods, 6 binoculars, 2 BlackView mobiles, and several other equipment and personal belongings. In particular, a new patrolling camp in Che Tao, Mu Cang Chai Species and Habitat Conservation Area (MCC SHCA) has been built and has been ready for CCTs and rangers use since June 2022.



Photo: Left: a new patrolling camp build in Che Tao, MCC SHCA
 Right: A Photo of a back gibbon. This photo was taken by CCT in October 2022

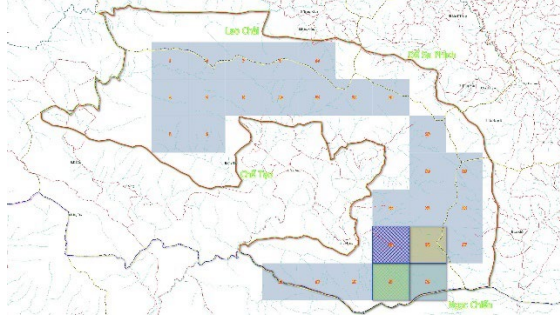
In April 2022, the project also provided further training on SMART to 14 staff in Muong La Nature Reserve (NR). The training focused on using the SMART Mobile application for patrol data collection, including how to collect patrol data, declare patrol information, how to start/finish patrol and upload data to the cloud after each patrol; as well as guidance on how to divide and plan complementary motorbike and foot patrols.

Based on the results of training needs assessments using the IUCN Competency Standards for Protected Areas, the project delivered law enforcement training workshops in both PAs in June 2022. The two training courses were attended by 20 PAs staff, 26 CCTs, and 8 commune police officers at both sites. The courses were taught by the Head of Law Enforcement of Yen Bai/Son La Forest Protection Department (FPD) and the Vice Head of the Police District department in Muong La and Mu Cang Chai districts. In project landscape, where strong law enforcement is not the most strategic approach, these courses related to building a law enforcement curriculum for forest rangers, CCTs, and commune policers and opened discussions on many issues, including how to improve knowledge and skills in judicial assessment, investigations, and handling of violations in the forestry sector. Having government officials based in Yen Bai and Son La districts as trainers ensured that the material delivered was suitable to a context where heavy handed law enforcement is not the most suitable and strategic approach.

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

FFI’s Senior Technical Advisor Dr. Oliver Wearn has developed a grid cell map of the two protected areas included in this project to direct intensive patrol trips towards areas particularly affected by biodiversity loss and illegal activity (See Annex 1). Each large cell has an area of 400 hectares and is divided into 16 small cells with an area of 25 hectares. The snare removal team at each PA will be divided into 3-4 sub-groups and have 3 - 5 people per sub-group, each sub-group was to carry out 3-4 small cells per day (about 80-100ha/day/group). The routes our model proposes are expected to cover areas with higher poaching risk as compared to the original sampled routes.

In July 2022 and October 2022, intensive snaring removal campaigns was completed to a high standard following this model and involved capacity building for rangers, local government official including the local youth, and CCTs. There were 6 sub-groups with 30 participants at both sites to join 5-days intensive patrolling trips. There were ways to ensure that substation performance is maintained including the rotation of rangers and teams into different locations; ensuring police and local authorities join, and conducting unscheduled substation checks based on a grid-cell method.



Annex 1: A grid cell map of MCC SHCA to for intensive patrol trips

These intensive campaigns complement the activities above and serve to significantly reduce threats in the short-medium term while also raising local awareness of the law and its enforcement, and helping to improve the transparency and accountability around the snaring issue, without alienating counterparts.

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

This activity is combined with the activity 2.5. Please also see Activity 2.6.

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

To assess protected area performance, the project delivered a Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) workshop for Muong La NR. More than 35 participants attended including from the Son La FDP, Muong La NR staff, local authorities from Muong La district and buffer communes of Ngoc Chien, Nam Pam and Hua Trai, Women Union, Youth Union and CCTs in June 2022. The METT is designed to be a basic and simple mechanism for monitoring progress towards more effective management over time. The 2021 METT score (report) for Muong La NR was in Vietnamese and the score is 68 of 123. To boost effectiveness, Muong La NR set a minimum target score of 68 in the coming years.

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.

Discussions were held with the PA managers regularly regarding critical threats and adapting protected area management plans. The project team kept the two PAs managers and FPD fully informed of its activities through regular briefings and presentations to senior staff teams. Mid-year project meetings were held in June 2022 to review good practices and challenges to inform future work and planning.



Photo: Director of FFI – Vietnam programme had a mid-year meeting with Director of MCC SHCA and their rangers as focal point contacts.

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

A MAC strategic meeting has been held in June 2022 with 16 delegates including Mu Cang Chai SHCA management board, Mu Cang Chai District People Committee, district police officers, 5 buffer-zone communes, representatives of other departments, and civil organizations. This meeting gave an opportunity for policymakers and PA managers to sit down together to open discussion which then advises the PA management board but also acts like a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) to represent the local communities. Participants have agreed to maintain MAC meetings and build an effective advisory committee as a contribution towards the co-management MCC SHCA to ensure that it represents the views and voices of all community members. However, the Director of MCC SHCA advised that this MAC model needs to be discussed with the law authorities to see if it is based on Vietnamese regulations, decisions, and laws in relation to establishing a CSO. The project continues to seek legal documents to revise/update MAC regulations and membership, to ensure it still supports collaborative PA management, and to ensure it follow Vietnam’s law.



Photo: A MAC strategic meeting has been held in June 2022

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.

This activity is combined with the Activity 3.1. Please also see Activity 3.1

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.

During August and September 2022, we successfully held gibbon festivals in Ngoc Chien Commune of Muong La NR; Che Tao and Pung Luong commune at Mu Cang Chai SHCA. Approximately 800 local people and 200 students joined the festivals. These were the first-ever

festivals in Muong La and Mu Cang Chai with a series of community-based and cultural activities. The focus of the event included student drawing competitions on forests and wild animals' protection; a competition among each village teams depicting stories about Muong La- Mu Cang Chai forest's biodiversity in connection with the local, endangered Black-crested gibbons - the pride of Muong La forest; Men's and Women's soccer tournament; Traditional folk games. The festival was well-welcomed by the locals, and well-supported by the local governance and Muong La Nature Reserve Management board. The festival was an event for the community to get connected and to raise local people's awareness about Black-crested gibbon conservation in Muong La the rare and endangered species in Muong La Nature Reserve. In this series of festival activities, all participating residents and students signed a conservation commitment to protect black gibbon, wildlife and forest. The main message of the festival was: "Black-crested gibbon - The pride of Muong La/ Mu Cang Chai"; "Say no to illegal wide animals hunting, trading, and use".

There was [Viet Nam National Natural Resources and the Environment Newspaper coverage](#) of the first gibbon festival in Ngoc Chien, Muong La; and [Yen Bai provincial TV Station](#) and [Mu Cang Chai District Newspaper](#)s was published about this festival in Pung Luong commune.

From 13th to 17th May 2022, the project team also facilitated a study tour between four protected areas which FFI collaborates with. Representatives of 48 participants including 32 MCC SHCA, Muong La NR management board staff, rangers and local authorities were able to visit Pu Mat National Park. This study tour enabled them to adjust their management plans to better manage their protected area, both in general and with a focus on gibbon conservation specifically.



Photo: Mu Cang Chai SHCA, Pu Mat NP and FFI staff were in the study tour.

2.7 Undertake IUCN Green List assessments for both PAs.

The project has been working with IUCN experts at the Vietnam office in regard to learning more about the IUCN Green List and the benefits for sites which covers four areas good governance; sound design and planning, effective management, and positive conservation outcomes. This helped to further understand the process of assessing the IUCN Green List criteria and preparing materials and documents for introductory workshops for Mu Cang Chai SHCA and Muong La NR.

An official workshop to assess the two sites against IUCN Green Lists criteria will be scheduled in January 2022 by an IUCN expert.

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

The project team has met with potential consultants to discuss the scope of work and expected outcomes. Unfortunately, these candidates were not able to arrange the work schedule to carry out this activity and some of them did not guarantee the expected outcomes. Therefore, the project continues to post vacancies for this position more broadly. The project continues to seek a solid national consultant to progress with this feasibility study. In the meantime, to

further and thoroughly understand the local context and requirements for upgrading MCC SHCA, the project team conducted a series of formal and informal meetings with Yen Bai Provincial FPD, MCC SHCA managers, and local people to discuss options and the next steps to gently push the (political and administrative) process forward and to ensure the new PA is granted a Management Board, which does not currently have.

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

The project team has worked with the technical support of FFI UK's Wildlife Trade Technical Specialist – Dr. Laure Joanny to develop a crime prevention strategy for MCC SHCA and ML NR. During the reporting period, the project team held several meetings to work on developing a crime script of snaring issues in the two protected areas, building on a wildlife trade assessment conducted in Year 1 and SMART data collected during patrol and using it for spatial analysis of snaring and wildlife trading in the landscape.

Regarding fieldwork, the project team and Laure Joanny conducted a workshop introducing the principles of situational crime prevention and the process of developing an illegal wildlife trade prevention strategy to reduce opportunities for illegal activity at MLNR on 10 October 2022. The project also introduced 25 crime prevention techniques that can be used to reduce the opportunities of engaging in illegal activities. In October, the project team also interviewed various of key stakeholders such as CCT members, community leaders and PA staff for complementary information on snaring and other illegal activities in the landscape.

The project continues working with PA managers to analyse the illegal activities in the landscape and develop a Situational Crime Prevention Strategy and implementing activities in the coming year(s).



Photo: Introduce and develop a SCP in Muong La NR

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



Photo: A technical workshop on social safeguards in Sep 2022

This activity is combined with activity 2.4.

To develop MCC SHCA and MLNR social safeguards, including land-use mapping and planning, grievance redress mechanism (GRM) and stakeholder Analysis, a series of internal discussions were held with the project team and technical support from FFI UK Technical Specialist, Social Equity and Rights– Dr. Timur Jack-Kadioglu from January to September 2022. This planning was a crucial phase for the project team to reflect and adapt in terms of social safeguards, FPIC to Vietnam contexts for each protected area and help to identify, avoid, and minimize harm to local people.

The project, therefore, plans to deliver 17 village meetings in December 2022.

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 completed in August 2022. The results of this activity will be shared with local government officials, district policy makers, two protected areas managers, private sectors and local community in PMSD workshops which will be held from 31st October to 4th November 2022 in MCC SHCA and MLNR (Please see activity 3.6).

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 will be conducted from 31st October to 4th November 2022 in both protected areas.

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.

In 2022, the annual revenue for Muong La NR through the Payment for Environmental Services scheme will be VND [REDACTED] of the annual budget for CCT member salaries. Although PES is not yet accounting for [REDACTED] of CCT salaries, progress made during the project marks a significant achievement and step forward. 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.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Not applicable at this time.

3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS-LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS: Yes/No

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

Change request reference if known:

4a. 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: £

4b. 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 re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget 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.

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Not applicable at this time.

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response 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 NIRAS-LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**