

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	28-027
Project title	Strengthened livelihoods and conservation management in Virachey National Park
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Cambodia
Lead partner	FFI
Partner(s)	Cambodia Ministry of the Environment; local NGO Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) Organization
Project leader	Garry Allen Shea
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable

Activity 1.1: Biodiversity survey equipment and GPS units procured. Consultant carried out Herpetological survey in Veal Thom, Virachey National Park, as part of targeted biodiversity surveys for evidence-based zonation and management plan.

Activity 1.2: No reportable progress.

Activity 1.3: MoE has carried out an internal zonation process - waiting for the zonation plan.

Activity 1.4: No reportable progress.

Activity 2.1: NTFP Organization and the ICLT carried out a series of workshops (3 each) with 4 CPAs to gather detailed information on the production and management of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) from CPAs. The main focus was on Malva Nut and Cobra Mushrooms, which are high-value NTFPs. This included a review of existing management plans and by-laws, and recommendations for improving the quality and quantity of NTFPs from CPAs and for better protecting NTFPs (Malva Nut and Cobra Mushroom) from destructive harvesting practices by outsiders. The main issues have been documented with recommendations. This will serve as inputs for the revision of the CPA Management Plans and Bylaws.

Activity 2.2: Training needs assessments were carried out (ICLT and NTFP Organization) with the 4 CPA Committees, and members of the Committees documented and prioritized their training needs.

Activity 2.3: Workshops have been held to identify and document issues related to the sustainable management of NTFPs in CPAs and training needs assessment to prepare CPA Committees for the revision of CPA Management Plans. Revised Draft Management Plan will be prepared during the period Oct-March 2023.

Activity 2.4: No reportable progress.

Activity 2.5: Gender-inclusive workshops have been held in the target communities with CPAs. Awareness training provided on regulations in protected areas during livelihood meetings, and information posters have been displayed at strategic meeting halls in communities with CPAs.

Activity 2.6: School-based environmental education programmes (EEP) were started with support of ICLT in 7 indigenous primary schools, and the formation of eco-clubs was part of this

program. Indigenous children were very interested to learn about local biodiversity and its importance, climate change, and environmental issues. FFI's Community Engagement Lead provided training and coaching for the local NGO NTFP to continue EEP and eco-clubs in these indigenous schools, and extend EEP to other schools.

Activity 3.1: Workshops were held to discuss livelihood activities and these were used to gain a better understanding of gender roles in indigenous communities through FGDs. Based on these initial assessments, the ICLT and NTFP Organization have developed a household livelihood survey which will be carried out in period Oct 2022-April 2023 using Kobo Tool.

Activity 3.2: ICLT and NTFP Organization have developed a community socio-economic/household livelihood survey which will be implemented during the period Oct 2022-April 2023. The survey includes traditional and current agricultural and NTFP/wildmeat harvesting practices.

Activity 3.3: Community workshops have been held for communities with CPAs to identify and develop strategies based on conservation goals, agro-ecology conditions, traditional practices, existing skills/interests and market demand based on market system analysis. The workshops and assessments identified malva nut and cobra mushrooms as the two main NTFPs for development and marketing, and cashew nut and high-value fruit trees as the agricultural commodities with most potential for development and marketing. The strategy focuses on the establishment of clonal seed orchards for clonal cashew nut and high-valued fruit trees, and the training of indigenous farmers, men and women, in modern nursery practices, grafting/cloning, and pruning. Once there is a source of quality planting stock (cashew nut, high-value fruit trees) and indigenous people have the required knowledge and skills, they will be empowered to develop their own family farm enterprises to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

Activity 3.4: During the period April-Sept 2022, the project (ICLT and NTFP Organization) has delivered technical training and has developed the capacity of indigenous producers in climate-smart agriculture for 86 Indigenous Family Farm Enterprises, with 5 or more household members.

Activity 3.5: ICLT and NTFP Organization has carried out Initial market system assessments for key agricultural commodities, with priority given to improved cashew nut production and marketing. This included Key Informant Interviews (KII) with village and provincial traders. Workshops have been held with cashew nut farmers in indigenous communities with CPAs. The main issue identified during the workshops was the poor quality of the cashew nuts and fruit being produced and markets leading to low price. To address this, the project (ICLT and NTFP Organization) have engaged with 86 lead farmers to establish clonal seed orchards/gardens for the recommended variety of cashew nut and improved fruit trees. Once these orchards start to fruit in 3 years, they can be used as a local source of quality planting stock (seeds and cuttings). The project will provide men and women farmers with training in improved nursery practices, grafting and pruning which will improve the production and quality of cashew nut being marketed in the future. Combining high-value fruit trees with improved cashew nut will help diversify incomes and livelihoods in an environmentally-friendly way.

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.

In the Darwin Application Approval Letter for Project Reference No. 28-027, there were a number of recommendations from the Darwin Expert Committee which were not addressed in the Y1AR. These are addressed here.

1. FFI's Core Staff, as outlined in the proposal, have changed, with FFI internal promotions and resignations. SCW, the original local NGO partner, has been replaced by the Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) Organization, and therefore NTFP staff now fill the positions of Project Coordinator and Livelihood Project Officer. Therefore, FFI is submitting a Change Request for changes in staffing for project.
2. It was noted that the logframe specifies the number of people whose livelihoods are intended to improved, but there is no reference to "by how much". As a result of community engagement with farmers, both men and women, tree crop improvement (cashew nut and high-value fruit trees) have been prioritized. The planting materials are clonal (grafted)

planting stock which will start producing after 3 years with an increase in production as trees mature. Therefore, incomes of participating households should increase by 10% after 3 years and 20% after 5 years.

Communities with CPAs have formal and legal access to NTFPs in CPAs (protected areas within Virachey National Park which are being managed by indigenous communities). Therefore, most households are not engaged in illegal incursions into the National Park. Most illegal incursions into the National Park for illegal logging and poaching are done by people from outside the indigenous communities with CPAs. Some indigenous households may also be involved, but they are subject to fines and sanctions from the CPA Committee, Ministry of the Environment, and local law enforcement.

3. Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) is an integrated approach to managing landscapes – croplands, livestock, forests and fisheries – that addresses the interlinked challenges of food security, sustainable livelihoods, and climate change. (WB Accessed 2022). The project is assisting indigenous communities with CPAs to transition from unsustainable slash and burn subsistence agriculture (seasonal and annual crops) to multi-storied, mixed-species agroforestry systems. Such systems provide sustainable incomes for indigenous households while mitigating climate change through sequestering more carbon in vegetation and soil and helping indigenous communities to adapt to climate change by the planting of trees species and varieties which are most adapted to present and future climate (i.e., being more drought resistant for longer dry seasons, better adapted for more intense rainy season). Multi-storied, mixed-species agroforestry systems are also more wildlife friendly and serve as wildlife corridors connecting protected areas.
4. The Darwin Expert Committee noted, that apart from no loss of forest cover, there are no indicators for specific species in the logframe. Specific species will be identified during the biodiversity surveys and the zonation process, and, if feasible, specific species indicator(s) will be added to the logframe.

Note: In the Annual Report Review for Project Reference 28-027, under Comments and queries for Project Leader, Comment 1 is “*Even where few activities have been carried out, please provide evidence e.g., photos from meetings, early drafts of document.*” This is requested for the Next Annual Report. FFI and NTFP Organization will include these as requested in Y2AR.

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	Yes
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Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes/No	Yes
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Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes/No	Yes
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Change request reference if known: E-mail, Eilidh Young (Eilidh-Young@itsi.co.uk, 27 April 2022, Re: Project 28-027 – update and change request query.

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: £

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

No