

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	DARCC002
Project title	Building capacity and community resilience for grassland conservation in Bhutan
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Bhutan
Lead partner	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, 20a Inverleith Row, EH3 5LR
Partner(s)	Government of Bhutan, Department of Forest and Park Services. Government of Bhutan, National Biodiversity Center
Project leader	Colin Pendry
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 October 2022, HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	n/a

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).

Project start date: 9 May 2022

Overview

Tshering Dorji travelled to the UK at the beginning of May for a one month visit for project orientation and to undergo training needed to conduct the first period of fieldwork in the Dagala region of Bhutan. Following the completion of the fieldwork he returned to RBGE to begin his MSc studies.

Output 1

1.1 Enrol Darwin Fellow (Tshering Dorjii) to MSc in Biodiversity and Taxonomy of Plants at RBGE/University of Edinburgh, and provide support throughout the course.

Tshering joined the MSc course as scheduled.

1.2 Organize training programme for Darwin Fellow in digital plant photography, with particular focus on macro photography.

The training was carried out during Tshering's initial visit to RBGE.

1.3 Organize training programme for Darwin Fellow on database management of graminoid species. Dataset creation and maintenance.

Tshering was trained in the use of Padme, RBGE's in-house taxonomic database system and a new dataset was created to record his data.

Output 2

2.1 One month field study in Dagala region of Bhutan to study the grassland communities to assess the conservation status of graminoid species, and threats and opportunities to livelihoods.

The field work took place from 12 July 2022-14 August 2022

2.2 Collect ecological and population data, and voucher herbarium specimens of at least 30 key graminoids and economically important grassland species of medicinal importance.

147 herbarium specimens were collected during the fieldwork, and they have been identified to 62 morphospecies.

2.3 Prepare bilingual identification guides for at least 20 species of graminoids using high quality images using Plants and You format developed at RBGE.

Images have been collected for 26 species and these will be the basis of the bilingual identification guides.

2.4 Upload image profiles and occurrence data in PI@ntNet system for at least 20 species of graminoids to improve the identification confidence scores of the PI@ntNet identification app.

Uploading of images to PI@ntNet will begin when the identifications have been finalised.

Output 3

3.1 Conduct awareness-raising programme on the importance of rangeland biodiversity and carry out initial baseline and end of year surveys amongst 50 HH in Dagala.

Initial baseline survey conducted and household information collected from 32 HH (80% coverage)

3.2 Conduct awareness raising programme including 3 days community workshop for least 50 HH in importance of biodiversity and sustainable management of rangeland resources.

Tshering has met and discussed with project partners in Bhutan to identify resource persons to develop materials for awareness program in Y2.

3.3 Test and revise prototype bilingual identification guides with the community groups and use the feedback to improve the identification guides developed in Output 2.

n/a

Output 4

4.1 Identify herbarium specimens using the resources in India (CAL), Nepal (KATH) and UK (Natural History Museum, RBG Kew, RBG Edinburgh), and liaising with the grass specialists at these institutions.

Identification of the specimens has begun at RBGE.

4.2 Gain experience and receive mentorship in biodiversity/poverty alleviation projects from experienced Darwin Initiative project leaders/partners at RBG Kew and RBG Edinburgh.

n/a

4.3 Work with specialists at RBG Kew (Maria Vorontsova) and RBG Edinburgh (Caroline Lehmann) to improve understanding of grassland ecology, sampling methods, and sustainable management.

Tshering has joined Caroline Lehmann's research group and standardised his sampling protocols with the methods they have developed.

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.

The start of the project was delayed by 5 weeks because of the time taken for Mr Dorji's UK visa to be issued to him in Bhutan.

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: No

Formal Change Request submitted: 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?

n/a

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**