

**half Year report Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects
Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus**

Half Year Report

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

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 2024

Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	<i>This should be the project reference provided in your offer paperwork and not your application number</i> 31-008
Project title	Lao communities tackle poverty and biodiversity loss for sustainable development
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Lao PDR
Lead Organisation	Humana People to People Laos
Partner(s)	Lao Biodiversity Association LBA
Project leader	Birgitte Hector Nielsen
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31.10.2024 HYR 1 -
Project website/blog/social media	hpp-laos.org

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end of September).

Humana People to People Laos (HPPL) and the partner Lao Biodiversity Association (LBA) started the new project funded by Darwin Initiative on the 01st of July 2024. 6 Field Officers and one project Leader were employed and initiated the project with a Baseline survey in three of the 12 focus villages in the three districts: Mahaxay, Khunkham, and Ngomalath. The survey questionnaire was based on the relevant indicators from the project application and will be used throughout the project to measure progress compared to the farmers' starting point. The baseline questions to the villagers included their resent food consumption, the present use of herbs, the state of the community forest, the use and management of the forest, and the cutting of trees for use or sale during the last half year.

The Field Officers introduced the project to the village authorities and the people of 10 of the 12 villages and found a pronounced eagerness to participate. Many people in the villages use the forest for food supplies and know the effects of many herbal medicines because knowledge from their ancestors has trickled down through generations and is still used. People are eager to learn more about herbal medicine to participate in maintaining and recovering forests and expanding their agriculture businesses.

The field staff and the villagers established Farmers' Clubs with their subgroups in 10 villages, and each Farmers' Club selected its own committees. The participants went to see the areas they had chosen for demonstration gardens, which they will use in the Farmers' Clubs to learn conservation agriculture methods and organic vegetable production. The demonstration gardens are between 2,500 and 3,000 m².

The MOU for the project was signed by the Government and Humana People to People Laos the 16th of September, 2024, with participants from the districts, province and relevant ministries, The Governments participants included a total of 40 people, 33 men and 07 women. They expressed their satisfaction with the idea and plans of the project which they know is very important for the environment and for the people in the villages.

Conclusion on the first three months of the project:

1. 500 people in 10 villages have signed up for the project. (missing 2 villages to be added in Qt 3)
2. A Baseline survey performed
3. 10 Farmer's Clubs with demonstration gardens established.
4. MOU signed with the Provincial Government.

The plan for the first 3 months has been followed except for the establishment of 2 project villages which were postponed until Qt 3.

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.

Two villages in Gnomalath District were not ready to participate in the project. The villagers are from the Makong ethnic group, and because of their beliefs, they did not feel ready to participate.

Recognizing the importance of community participation, the District authorities proactively identified 2 other villages near the Phu Hin Boun protected area. This decision was well-informed, as the authorities already had other villages in mind that could participate. The project introduction, membership establishment, and formation of Farmers' Clubs for these two villages were rescheduled to Qt 3 (October, November, and December).

The project could solve this challenge without any changes in the program or budget.

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

Discussed with NIRAS:	No
Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No

Change Request reference if known: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome*

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024)

Actual spend:

The budget's significant underspending is mainly due to the change of plan for purchasing 200,000 tree seedlings for planting. The purchase will take place in Qt 4, which is close to the rainy season in Laos and the best time for planting new trees. With the reallocation of the purchase of trees, the project manager confirmed that the expense budget is to be used within the first financial year.

The significant under spending of the budget is due to the change of plan for purchasing 200,000 tree seedlings for planting. The purchase will take place in Qt 4 which is close to the rainy season in Laos, and the best time for planting new trees. With this purchase of trees the plans for using the budgeted money within the first financial year will be fulfilled.

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2025)?

Yes No

4c. If you expect and underspend, then you should 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 to your project if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

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

No issues

6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report. If your project was subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment please use this space to comment on any changes to international human rights risks, and to address any additional mitigations outlined in your offer letters. Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.

A risk register is attached the HYR 31.10.2024

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to any additional feedback (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	Yes
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	Yes
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	N/A
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Yes