



**Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge  
Fund  
Half Year Report  
(due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021)**



<b>Project reference</b>	IWT083
<b>Project title</b>	Illegal trade & sustainable use of medicinal orchids in Nepal
<b>Country(ies)</b>	Nepal
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University
<b>Partners(s)</b>	Greenhood Nepal, Department of Forests and Soil Conservation (called as Department of Forest at the time of our application), The Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN), Annapurna Conservation Area; University of Oxford, IUCN SSC Orchid Specialist Group - Global Trade Programme, University of Hawaii at Manoa
<b>Project leader</b>	Dr Jacob Phelps
<b>Report date and number</b>	31 OCT, 2021 HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	Social media: #NepalOrchids @GreenhoodNepal

**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 the end September).**

**Progress reported per key activity in the proposal for the reporting period**

Activity 1.4: Scoping of 5 villages across 3 districts, and formal/official permission obtained: We received official permission from the Department of Forest and Soil Conservation (DoFSC), Social Welfare Council (SWC), and respective local government offices in Gorkha (Dharche Rural Municipality, Laprak), Kaski (Annapurna Rural Municipality including Panchase Forest Area, Bhadaure Tamagi), and Makwanpur (Thaha Municipality). We conducted scoping of all the selected villages across 3 districts to understand the key species in trade and harvest regime/management. This process was, however, delayed by COVID-19.

Activity 1.5: Research instruments (trade dynamics and livelihoods): Scoping conducted to understand trade dynamics, and draft research instruments prepared, which we plan to test in the field in Nov.-Dec 2021.

Activity 1.6: Conduct field observations and interviews in 3 districts and Kathmandu on trade dynamics, and also establish contacts with harvesters: We conducted preliminary observations, and established relationships/contacts with the key harvesters and traders, which will be needed for upcoming fieldwork. We conducted >15 interviews with stakeholders in Kathmandu, including herbal entrepreneurs associations, the CITES Focal point, and traditional medicinal practitioners.

Activity 1.7: Analyse and integrate secondary data (seizure, CITES, legal review) into a report: We compiled all the available secondary data (from official seizure records, CITES Trade Database). We reviewed over 50 legal documents and had one-to-one discussions about the legal provisions with government stakeholders. We completed three mini-reports covering this information, and are currently preparing the first manuscript analysing orchid trade dynamics and governance in Nepal.

Activity 1.8: Analyse primary data (field observations, interviews, etc.) into a report: We have completed the field observations, interviews, and prepared several small site-specific reports with all the details. The final report is yet to be prepared.

Activity 1.9: Prepare journal publication: We have identified the journal (Biological Conservation) and have already drafted the manuscript highlighting the findings from analysis of legal, illegal trade, and legal review.

Activity 2.14: Gather data for PVA from orchid experts internationally: We have convened a group of 10 top, international orchid ecologists (from Hawaii, Greece, Mexico, UK, Puerto Rico, Japan, etc.) who are collaborating to identify the most salient variables for monitoring, and are developing a framework to guide our monitoring protocol. This is in an advanced draft.

Activity 2.2: Host workshops with local harvesters (n=>100) across 5 CHAL communities to discuss trade dynamics, livelihoods, and conduct discussions about the viability of different types of data collection (see Activity 2.4). Also identify target community for trial harvester monitoring (Activity 2.7, 2.8): This has been heavily delayed by COVID-19, but we hosted several group discussions with the harvesters (due to COVID restrictions) as well as with traders associations, and government officials. Further engagement will be conducted in Nov.-Dec. 2021.

Activity 2.3: Formally recruit participants, including ethics procedures: We have conducted networking during scoping to enable recruitment, and have drafted the contract documents. we have also prepare ethics procedure documentation for university approval.

Activity 2.4: Draft protocols for orchid harvester monitoring: Based on the expert group above, we have developed a draft instrument for the harvester and eco-monitor monitoring. This will be trialled in Nov.-Dec. 2021, and is significantly delayed, due to COVID-19.

Activity 2.8: Establish Task Forces in the target village, including the appointment of an independent eco-monitor to oversee the harvester data collection: We have discussed the Task Forces with local level government officials and village level Community-based Anti-poaching Units. We have drafted the ToR for Eco-Monitor and reached out to some perspective people.

Activity 3.5: Recruit “champions” in CHAL and nationally during various meetings/workshops, keeping records of likely supportive candidates and keeping in touch with them via meetings and email updates: We have identified champions (n=10) who are eager to deeply contribute to orchid conservation and reached out to them for informal agreements. More champions will be identified. We have drafted ToR to formally recruit the champions

Activity 3.6: Monitor government enforcement data/seizure records: We compiled seizure records from newspapers, the Central Investigation Bureau, and all the Division Forest Offices of our project sites. This is ongoing.

Activity 5.1: Maintain active Facebook and Twitter presence, highlighting project progress including sharing knowledge products: Using the Greenhood Nepal, the project host in Nepal, we have shared 30 posts related to the project (n= 12 Tweets, n= 5 Instagram posts, n=5 LinkedIn posts, n= 8 Facebook status). All can be tracked via the #NepalOrchids hashtag.

Activity 5.2: Publish 4 blogs (e.g., on PVA, harvest, enforcement data analysis, trade data analysis): We have already published 2 blogs based on the background work.

Activity 5.3: Publish 4 editorials in Nepal (e.g., on PVA, harvest, enforcement data analysis, trade data analysis): We have already published 3 Editorials based on the background work

Activity 5.4: participate in international conferences to highlight outcomes: Delayed due to COVID-19.

**2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for COVID-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

- Obtaining government permission, especially at the central level, took longer than anticipated. This is not only because of COVID-19 but also because of new requirements. We recommend starting on these permits even earlier.
- It took us more time to build trust with the traders and harvesters. We were aware of this challenge but it was exacerbated by recent legal changes in Nepal that have made orchid harvest more sensitive.
- The project is premised on some forms of more sustainable harvest being possible, and there is greater than expected demand, from the government and traders, to help identify policy options. However, we are also finding that the ecological data we need to make this possible is even scunter than we expected. As such, we can collect information to begin answering related questions, but it is very difficult to confidently issue policy advice. We recommend being (even more) cautious about working with species about which there is little ecological data, especially in the context of sustainable trade.
- Some of the priority sites that we have learned about during our scoping (as there was so little baseline on this topic) are very isolated and more challenging/expensive to access. This may present some budget challenges, although we expect to be able to manage it.

**2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of COVID-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

- Lockdown affected mobility and government functions, which affected the project permission process at the national and site-level. This created a number of backlogs that we are still recovering from.
- We could not visit our project sites for scoping until the travel restrictions were eased. Instead, we focused more on secondary data analysis, desk-based studies, and preparing editorials, blogs for national and international media. However, these delays have resulted in backlogs, including that we have missed much of the orchid harvest season in 2021 that will be hard to make up for within the project period. We are adapting but pushing back timelines and doing our best, but recognise that there may be limitations in the data collected due to the seasonality of harvest.

We have not yet sought changes to the timeframe or budget, but will soon be making a request related to parts of the budget earmarked for international travel that has not been possible.

**2c. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?**

Discussed with LTS:  Yes/No

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

**3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?**

Yes  No

We have an estimated underspend, which is currently earmarked for the Nepal team visit the UK. We will soon be submitting a budget change request proposing to move it from Y2 to Y3.

**3b. 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 rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget, 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.**

**4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to IWT Challenge Fund management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

No. However, we will submit a Budget Change Request Form shortly.

**If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review 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 LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to [IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk). The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: IWT001 Half Year Report.**