

## 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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023**

<b>Project reference</b>	IWT119
<b>Project title</b>	Reduced illegal wildlife trade and strengthened rural communities
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Cambodia, Laos
<b>Lead partner</b>	Rising Phoenix Co. Ltd.
<b>Partner(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stung Treng Provincial Authority (STPA), Ad-hoc Committee for IBIS Rice and Siem Pang PATROL.</li> <li>2. Siem Pang District Administration (SPDA), Siem Pang PATROL Operational Working Group.</li> <li>3. Border Liaison Office</li> <li>4. Stung Treng Department of Environment</li> </ol>
<b>Project leader</b>	James R.A. Lyon
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	N/A

**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: Expansion of IBIS Rice Programme at villages surrounding Siem Pang Wildlife Sanctuary, increasing household income.**

### **1.1 Expand the IBIS Rice scheme and sell the IBIS Rice at a minimum 10% premium price**

In June 2023, 1,151 households from sixteen villages registered in the IBIS Rice scheme. After conducting the Internal Control System, by the end of September, we got 949 households representing 4,745 rural people who are growing IBIS rice. There were 370 new households representing 1,850 rural people joined the scheme in 2023.

### **1.2 Capacity building to Village Marketing Network committees (VMN) to become Village Agents**

From April to July 2023, a total 53 VMNs from 15 villages received training on several courses included Women Empowerment Impact, Farm Diary, Sale Agreement and Farmer Contracts in June, and Internal Control System (ICS) in July 2023.

After discussion between SMP, IBIS Rice Conservation Co. Ltd. (IRCC), and Rising Phoenix we agreed to transform VMNs into Producer Groups (PG) registered at the commune. This is in response to the changing of the EU organic certification requirements. The structure and by-law of the PG was drafted for consultation with the commune councils. The PG will be finalised in November 2023, and this is a key step for the sustainability of IBIS rice in Siem Pang.

### **1.3 Rice field mapping and registration for 300 households with the Department of Land Management**

The land mapping activities were successfully completed by the end of September 2023. From April-September, we have mapped 452 land parcels with a total area of 1,591 hectares belonging to 396 households in 15 villages in Siem Pang district. The list of land mapping has been approved by commune chiefs in four communes and the shapefiles are kept at Rising Phoenix and SMP offices for the purposes of compliance monitoring, and IBIS Rice production work.

### **1.5 IBIS Rice compliance monitoring and forest cover change assessment of SPWS**

From April – September 2023, we conducted ground truth checking for 30 times/days in four villages of Khes Kraom, Khes Svay, Pong Kriel and Lun at 190 locations. We found 115 villagers were suspected to violate the PA law. In May, we conducted six village meetings in three villages with 37 villagers and found 7 IBIS Rice farmers violated the IBIS Rice rules and we stop purchasing their rice for three years. We are going to conduct more village meetings with the rest of suspected farmers to find more non-compliance members in the next quarter.

## **Output 2: A diverse and gender inclusive scout teams are established and operational.**

### **2.6 Monthly reporting – produce monthly reports on activities using smart data, earth rangers and field reports.**

Six monthly reports on the scout's activities have been produced over the reporting period. Below is a summary of the scout's operation coverage between April to September 2023;

- Boat patrol cover a distance of 1,855 km with 280 km<sup>2</sup> area coverage
- Foot patrol cover a distance of 1,562 km with 47 km<sup>2</sup> area coverage
- Motorbike patrol cover a distance of 12,124 km with 121 km<sup>2</sup> area coverage
- Vehicle patrol cover a distance of 520 km with 474 km<sup>2</sup> area coverage

Below is a summary of the scout's operation results between April to September 2023;

- Removed 921 snares and traps
- Removed 7 illegal fishing tools and reported 294 fishing tools
- Reported 11 chainsaws, of which 4 were confiscated
- Reported and collected 5.3 m<sup>3</sup> of timber
- Confiscated and released 10 wild animals
- Recorded and reported 36 cases of land encroachment
- Recorded 8 carcass

- Confiscated 1 homemade gun
- Recorded and reported 36 guns shot
- Recorded 490 wildlife sighting 263 of which were direct sighting

**Output 3: Siem Pang PATROL Programme fully operational with multi-agency, patrols and investigations, transboundary dialog and ad-hoc investigations with Lao PDR occurring along the border**

**3.1 Development of Advance Investigation Training – working with the Siem Pang PATROL Operational Working Group (SPPOWG) and the Border Liaison Office (BLO) finalize curriculum outline and material, translate any new material from English to Khmer, and English and Khmer to Lao, select competent instructors.**

An Advanced Investigation Training Curriculum Development Workshop was held from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The workshop was attended by 22 males and 2 females from Cambodian and Lao Agencies including Provincial and District Administration, Border Liaison Office, Environment, Royal Gendarmerie Khmer, Border Security, Immigration, Anti-Narcotics, Anti-Weapon, Anti-Human Trafficking District and Provincial Police.

The workshop was designed to gain as much input and feedback on what are the present problems the officers from Cambodia and Lao PDR are facing with crime and investigating crimes along the porous border, and with this information the participants were able to identify gaps in knowledge and skills that would be required to coordinate on transboundary investigations. From the information gathered we can now determine the required training outcomes and thus material to be developed and used.

**3.2 Study Tour – working with the Siem Pang PATROL Operational Working Group (SPPOWG) and the Border Liaison Office (BLO) organize the approvals, schedule and selection of personnel from Lao PDR to attend a 5-day study tour to the Siem Pang PATROL Coordination Center, Siem Pang Wildlife Sanctuary and Border Area.**

Part of the funding under this was used to commence with the strengthening of wildlife law enforcement within Siem Pang by inviting the Stung Treng PDOE Director Mr. Sreng Cheaheng from 18-22 September, to see the level required to establish a professional specialist ranger team for Siem Pang Wildlife Sanctuary/Stung Treng and learn from Ta Phraya National Park and their issues and solutions on managing a protected area on the Thai Cambodian Border. The PDoE Director was able to see and discuss with the “King of Tigers” a specialist ranger team established for nationwide interdiction and training. This team had been established and training by Mark Bowman in 2014 and has had a very successful record.

Mr. Sreng Cheaheng is now committed to developing a ten-man Specialist Ranger Team for Stung Treng Province with capacity development supported by Rising Phoenix which links to the refresher training component of this grant.

**3.5 Patrol Refresher Training – Conduct refresher training for already existing Patrolling Officers under the Siem Pang PATROL programme, to update on any new tactical procedures to counter any threats utilized by poachers and violators.**

Partial funding under this activity was used from the 10<sup>th</sup> of September to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2023, Rising Phoenix supported 2 Rangers from Stung Treng Province to attend the PROTECT Border Enforcement Ranger Training Course in Ta Phraya National Park in Thailand on the border with Cambodia. This training was an active step in Siem Pang PATROL being also operationalized along the Thai-Cambodian Border in Banteay Meanchey Province.

**3.6 Patrolling and Investigation Meetings, Monitoring and Reporting – Through the Siem Pang PATROL Coordination Centre, the Border Liaison Meetings, and the Siem Pang PATROL Operational Group meetings, feed information into agencies for investigation and monitor and report on successes and lessons learnt, utilizing operational meetings minutes and data provided.**

On 23 August the Siem Pang PATROL met with the representatives of the Border Liaison Office chaired by the Deputy Provincial Governor in-charge of the BLO and attended by the Deputy Director of Law Enforcement NACD and Officer in-charge of BLO's in Cambodia,

representatives from BLO Traepang Kreal International Border Crossing Point and 5 members from the BLO Lao PDR, District Governor and Chairman of the SPPOWG and members. This meeting led to the organisation of the advanced investigation training curriculum development workshop as reported on above.

Additional activities of note under Siem Pang PATROL have included:

- District directives on wildlife selling & poisoning of domestic cattle - On the 15th of May 2023, the District Governor on the request of Siem Pang PATROL Operational Working Group issued directives to all agencies and stakeholders. These new directives were presented at commune meetings by the Governor and PDoE staff in June a plan will be developed to inspect and post these regulations in shops and the markets. By reducing a consider major demands, it is hoped that this will reduce both hunting and snaring of wildlife for the Siem Pang Market.
- Market Inspection led by District – In August & September the Deputy District Governor, Prum Udom led a team of 5 from relevant authorities to conduct market inspections of wildlife meat and snares and have the shop/restaurant owners sign a notice, also place the laminated District Directives at the shop. In total 115 men, 32 women in 5 villages in 5 communes, signed the notice.
- Operation Golden Gaur – From the 17th of July to the 26th of July Operation Golden Gaur was implemented by the Rangers, District Army and Border Police, specifically targeting the illegal armed poaching within Siem Pang Wildlife Sanctuary’s core and southwest. The operation was designated as a search and capture of armed poachers.
- Illegal Fishing Along the O’Khampa – From 28 August to the end of September a check point was established at the mouth of the O’Khampa River to intercept, educate, check for illegal items and record people entering. This involved 2 Rangers and 4 Scouts.

**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.**

One named staff member on the project resigned, and a new staff member was recruited to replace his role in the project.

In addition, Rising Phoenix restructured two units Surveillance, Intelligence, and Reporting Unit’s [SIRU] Scout Unit, whom are responsible to support the law enforcement personnel under the SPPU and Siem Pang PATROL unit [SPPU] whom are responsible to implement law enforcement activities. This has resulted in one member of staff transferring out of SIRU into the Community Development Unit, and one member of staff transferring from the Logistic Support Unit to SPPU.

The elections in Cambodia have created delays in implementing activities within expected timelines under Output 3. This is due to senior government officers being transferred and new official documentation needed to be produced from the senior policy level in Phnom Penh addressed to new government officers being appointed to positions with responsibility over Siem Pang PATROL and the Border Liaison Office. Also there has been a hold on some mid-level provincial level position transfers until the end of 2023 and it was recommended not to do activities prior to the new transferred officer coming into the new position, that would be involved directly in training and follow-on investigations. These changes will most likely not affect budgets, but have delayed implementation within timeframe.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: Yes

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance      Yes

Change request reference if known:

**4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)**

Actual spend: £ [REDACTED]

**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 2024)?**

Yes     No     Estimated underspend:    £0

**4c. 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.

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

No