

## 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 2022**

<b>Project reference</b>	28-022
<b>Project title</b>	Restoring the 'water tower' cloud forests of Kenya's Taita Hills
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Kenya
<b>Lead partner</b>	RSPB
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Nature Kenya, Birdlife International, Plants for Life International (PLI), Kenya Forest Service (KFS), Dawida Biodiversity Conservation Group (DABICO)
<b>Project leader</b>	Jake Zarins – Senior Species Recovery Officer
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	31st October 2022 - HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	

**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).**

During the reporting period April-September 2022 project delivery has continued as planned with good progress being made in the majority of activities. The ongoing drought affecting much of the region and related unpredictable rainfall has complicated the planting out of some seedlings produced within project nurseries, but this work continues with additional focus on ongoing maintenance of regeneration areas and with less hardy species retained until the rains begin.

More specifically the project team progressed activities as outlined in the work plan to achieve the project **Outputs 1-5** which contribute to the overall project **Outcome** where *'The cloud forest fragments that currently survive in Taita are protected and expanded through a combination of conservation and livelihood interventions, safeguarding their unique biodiversity and enhancing local water security.'*

**Output 1:** *Protection of all surviving fragments of cloud forest and edge habitat in Taita is strengthened:*

The capacity of 3 CFA management committees was strengthened. In total 53 CFA members (33 men, 20 women) from NGACOFA, IYAWEMBI, and SUNDIFU were given training on Participatory Forest Management, Leadership and Governance at a workshop held on 6<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> June 2022 led by the Kenya Forest Service (**Annex 1**). This training was critical towards commencement of revision and updating of 3 Participatory Forest Management Plans (PFMPs) implemented by the 3 CFAs. As a result of the training, the 3 CFAs sent PFMPs revision/updating request letters to Kenya Forest Service (**Annex 2a-IYAWEMBI letter, Annex 2b-NGACOFA Letter, Annex 2c-SUNDIFU letter**). NGACOFA, IYAWEMBI, and SUNDIFU Community Forest Associations convened site-based meetings coordinated by Kenya Forest Service to plan and

discuss the revision and updating of the PFMPs (**Annex 3**). Desktop revision of the 3 PFMPs is on-going ahead of consultation with community groups and other relevant stakeholders.

In Yr1 Nature Kenya developed the Terms of Reference, training materials for and standard operating procedures for Community Scouts. To operationalize this, Chawia and Vuria CFAs recruited volunteer community forest scouts to enhance forest protection. The twenty-one (21) volunteer community forest scouts are to be provided with basic training on forest protection by Kenya Forest Service (**Annex 4**).

**Output 2: Restoration of cloud forest habitat is initiated around key existing fragments:**

Working with PLI who supported with specialist botanical and restoration expertise the forest restoration plans and restoration approaches for the targeted forest areas have been developed (**Annex 5**) providing details of the planned best practice approaches for restoration. In collaboration with KFS and the Taita Taveta County Government, 15 ha of land was restored through the enrichment planting of 9,265 indigenous tree seedlings of 12 indigenous tree species. 8ha of restored forest in Vuria/Msindunyi was maintained through spot weeding and removal of invasive *Acacia Mearnsii* (**Annex 6 pg3**). Targeting the rainy season of Oct-Dec, site preparation in Msindunyi/Vuria, Iyale and Ngangao forest areas is on-going and earmarked for significant restoration planting where 7600 indigenous tree seedlings of 44 tree species among them endemic and rare species will be planted (**Annex 6 pg 4**).

With co-finance from Rain Forest Trust (RFT), Nature Kenya advanced the land purchase of one identified parcel in Msinduyi area by entering into a legal sale agreement (**Annex 7**).

**Output 3: Livelihoods of local communities are enhanced through climate resilience initiatives including agro-forestry, improvement of water storage infrastructure and diversification of income sources:**

Continued mentorship and training were provided to 29 community beekeepers (24 Males and 5 females) to share knowledge, experiences and challenges in apiculture and develop apiculture enhancement plan (**Annex 8**). Approximately 18 kg of native seeds constituting 31 different species were collected from the local forests by local community members to be used in local tree nurseries. 37 (21 men, 16 women) community Trainers of Trainers were trained on fruit tree grafting (avocado and acadamia trees) by the Taita Taveta County Agricultural Extension Officers (**Annex 9**). The skills gained will be cascaded to other members of the local communities reaching out to 800 households. To improve community water storage infrastructure an implementation strategy (**Annex 10**) was developed informed by a rapid assessment of the statuses of water provision by community water tanks around Vuria and Ngangao forests which was carried out in June 2022. With target communities now identified discussions have been initiated around the viability for communities to form the water management committees essential for proper governance and ongoing maintenance of the proposed water tanks and related infrastructure.

Work around the long-term water balance study to monitor the impacts of forest restoration and agro-forestry on Taita's 'water tower' function is developing alongside a very positive relationship with the Kenyan Water Towers Authority. Following joint field assessments in June the anticipated level of support from KWTA will greatly expand upon the data collection activities originally outlined in the grant application. Project generated information will additionally complement ongoing efforts of the KWTA to increase the levels of protection afforded to the Taita Hills catchment.

**Output 4: The conservation and livelihood impacts of the project are monitored and evaluated:**

Detailed species field assessment led by the field research team surveyed 4 main forest fragments (Mbololo, Ngangao, Vuria/Msindunyi, Chawia). Preliminary results show that a total of

7248 birds representing 56 species were detected during the point count surveys: 2606 individual representing 51 species in Ngangao, 1354 individuals representing 31 species in Mbololo, 2182 individual Representing 38 species in Chawia and 1106 individual representing 36 species in Vuria/Msidunyi (**Annex 6 pg 2**). Local SSG –DABICO in collaboration with Community Forest Associations carried out routine community-led biodiversity surveys documenting a total 28 species of birds - 11 forest specialist species (FF),8 forest generalist (F) species and 9 forest visitor species (f) in different forest vegetation types (**Annex 11**). Further data analysis is on-going to compare these results with previous surveys.

Working in collaboration with experts from the Kenya Water Towers Agency the project hydrological consultant from Arctium, visited field sites between 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2022 and baseline data for the water balance study was collected. The initial water survey is aimed at laying foundations for a long-term program to monitor impacts of forest restoration in the Taita Hills Forest, augmenting and enhancing monitoring skill capacity of mandated local institutions like the Kenya Water Towers Agency.

**Output 5: *The project is effectively managed:***

Coordinated with the visit of the project’s hydrologist a field monitoring visit to Kenya to meet with project partners and visit field locations was made between the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2022 and 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2022. Following this a project partner steering committee meeting was held on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022 in Nairobi to discuss EoYR1 reviewers’ feedback and approaches to addressing comments as well as monitoring overall project implementation status and to discuss areas identified as requiring strengthening. (**Annex 12**).

**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.**

During the past few years and inclusive of the last 6months, Kenya has been experiencing a prolonged period of drought period which has slowed down execution of some aspects of the forest restoration programme as the field team are reluctant to plant some of the more sensitive and delicate seedlings during periods without some predictable precipitation. However, it is still too early to predict the impacts of drought on the project or to warrant any discussion around changes in budgets and timetable of project activities. The project partners continue to monitor the situation closely and adapt their approaches where possible.

**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
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Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes/No
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Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes/No
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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?**

Please see 'M&E - Response to Y1 EoY Report Recommendation' document to see project partners response to a recommendation from the reviewer of the projects Year 1 EoY report. The project team have considered this recommendation as best they can but are very open to further discussion on this matter to ensure all parties expectations are met.



M&E - Response to  
Y1 EoY Report Recor

**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](mailto: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**