



**Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project
Half Year Report
(due 31st October 2018)**

Project reference	23-026
Project title	Domestication of Mulanje Cedar for Improved Livelihoods
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Malawi
Lead organisation	Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI)
Partner(s)	Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust (MMCT), Forestry Research Institute of Malawi (FRIM)
Project leader	<i>Paul Smith</i>
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	<i>HYR3</i>
Project website/blog/social media etc.	www.bgci.org / www.globaltrees.org / #SaveOurCedar

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

During the last six months we have continued to make good progress on project activities. Progress is reported against each activity scheduled from April 2018 – September 2018.

1.1 Monitoring and evaluation methodology defined and implemented

The most recent Steering Committee meeting took place in June 2018, and the next meeting will take place in December 2018. It is not anticipated that any problems hindering project completion will arise. The December meeting will assess progress before the next planting season commences and provide advice to ensure seedling marketing efforts are a success.

1.3 Edaphic and climatic conditions measured for in situ populations of cedar on Mulanje Mountain and ex situ stands in Malawi and in botanic gardens around the world

1.3 Cedar growth rates monitored in all trial sites (years 2 and 3), and optimal requirements for cedar growth determined by end of year 3

The second set of measurements are due to be taken at trial sites on Mulanje Mountain and at trial sites across Malawi in December 2018, prior to the next planting season commences. Information is also being collated from botanic gardens around the world that hold collections of Mulanje Cedar, including Brackenhurst Botanic Garden in Kenya, where the three individual Mulanje Cedar trees that they hold in their collection have recently produced seed and >50 seedlings have germinated.

2.2 Seedling establishment, survival and growth baselines measured and monitored in nursery trials throughout the project.

2.3 Optimal horticultural protocols published and available in local languages to users by beginning of year 3.

In April 2018, Richard Jinks from Forestry Research UK and Louise Egerton-Warburton, a mycologist from Chicago Botanic Garden, travelled to Malawi to provide advice on planting, collect soil samples for analysis and provide advice to community nursery groups on establishing nursery trials.

Daniel Luscombe from Bedgebury National Pinetum travelled to Malawi in July 2018 to set up trials in the community nurseries around Mulanje Mountain, following suggestions made by Richard and Louise, and findings of the trials that were previously set up at Bedgebury to identify optimum horticultural protocols.

Three trials were set up in community nurseries to test;

- i) Different planting media
- ii) The impact of raising the pots above the ground (i.e. for aerial pruning) and
- iii) The impact of adding soil from historic Mulanje Cedar stands on the mountain, which contains mycorrhiza, to pots.

The trials are currently being monitored in the nurseries. The results will be combined with results of the trials conducted at Bedgebury and used to refine optimal horticultural protocols for Mulanje Cedar, which will be published by the end of the project and made available in local languages.

3.5. At least 500,000 cedar seedlings and 10,000 seedlings of other species produced by the 10 nurseries per annum in years 2 and 3.

In the current growing season, 550,000 pots have been filled across the ten nurseries. The number of seedlings that have germinated so far is 286,271. Seed has not yet been sown in all pots and some seed was sown recently so has not yet germinated.

We anticipate that the target figure of 500,000 Mulanje Cedar seedlings will be produced for the next planting season, 250,000 of which will be available for commercial sales and the remaining seedlings will be planted in restoration sites on Mulanje Mountain.

A planting strategy for Mulanje Mountain in year 3 of the project is currently in development. This will involve planting in gaps where seedlings from the previous year's planting have died. Seedlings will also be planted in sites that were identified as priority areas for restoration in the planting site working group meeting that was held in year 2, which assessed suitability of potential planting sites in each basin on the mountain.

3.7 Baseline socio-economic survey of recruited staff (disaggregated by gender) carried out by socio-economic researcher, assessing household income levels, income sources, use of natural resources and attitudes to cedar and natural resource conservation and management. Survey repeated in years 2 and 3.

The socio-economic survey will be repeated again before the project ends, to measure the impact of the full project on household income levels, income sources and attitudes towards cedar and natural resource conservation and management.

4.1 Mulanje Cedar Growers and Planters Association formed from nursery staff, cedar planters and local community leaders.

All nursery groups have joined the Cedar Growers and Planters Association (CGPA). It was noted that the CGPA would also benefit from identifying local ambassadors to promote Mulanje Cedar conservation and encourage others to join the CGPA and plant Mulanje Cedar seedlings. In September 2018, MMCT conducted interviews with existing local conservation groups, recognising that these active and self-motivated organisations will be good candidates for Mulanje Cedar conservation and will help enhance marketing of seedlings. Identified ambassadors will be part of the national cedar publicity campaign.

4.2 National cedar publicity campaign launched by FRIM and EAD with support from the Eden Project, targeted at areas of Malawi where the cedar will grow successfully as defined in Output 1.

This activity commenced in year 2 to help ensure that there is a strong commercial market for Mulanje Cedar seedlings by the end of the project. A timetable and budget has been produced for publicity campaign activities in year 3. The majority of year 3 publicity campaign activities will take place from December 2018 onwards, to align with the availability of Mulanje Cedar seedlings for sale from community nurseries and to align with the planting season. Public outreach activities will include additional national radio programmes and TV shows to promote

purchasing of Mulanje Cedar seedlings and the importance of conserving replanted stocks on Mulanje Mountain.

5.3 Mulanje Cedar Growers and Planters Association works with MMCT and FRIM to promote the Cedar Management Plan, and the value of the cedar to local communities.

The national cedar publicity campaign is being supported by work at the local level by the CGPA, MMCT and FRIM to promote the value to local people of keeping planted stands of Mulanje Cedar on Mulanje Mountain secure in the long-term.

2a. 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.

N/A

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

Discussed with LTS: N/A

Formal change request submitted: N/A

Received confirmation of change acceptance N/A

3a. 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: £

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.

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

N/A

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. Additionally, if you were funded under R24 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate 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 send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@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: 22-035 Darwin Half Year Report**