

Darwin Initiative/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31st October 2019)

Project reference	24-010
Project title	Mobilising useful plant conservation to enhance Atlas mountain community livelihoods
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Morocco
Lead organisation	Global Diversity Foundation (GDF)
Partner(s)	Moroccan Biodiversity and Livelihoods Association (MBLA); High Commissariat for Water and Forests and Desertification; Faculté des Sciences Semlalia Marrakech, Université Cadi Ayyad; Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II, Rabat (IAV); Ressources Ingénierie (RESING); International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and Agropolis Resource Center for Crop Conservation, Adaptation and Diversity (ARCAD); Association des Amis du Centre Hospitalier Universitaire (CHU) and Radiant Design.
Project leader	Gary Martin
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	HYR3, 31st October 2019
Project website/blog/social media etc.	A general description of the project is available on GDF's UK website and periodic updates are posted on the stories page .

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).

Concerning **Output 1**, which focuses on *developing conservation action plans for 12 regionally threatened and culturally important species*, the remaining 7 conservation assessments, which have been submitted to IUCN for review and publication, will be published 5th December 2019 on the [IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#).

During this reporting period, we have continued the cultivation of all 12 target species in both our partner community nurseries in Imegdal and Ait M'hamed. The Year 3 cycle of household plant distribution in the communities of Imegdal and Ait M'hamed will be carried out in January 2020 – the optimal season for successful enrichment planting. This also contributes to Output 2 on local livelihoods.

In July 2019, a new Local Product Commercialisation Coordinator was recruited, [Dr. Mohamed Ouknin](#), who is currently leading on the commercialisation component of our work. He is assisted by [Mohamed El Haouzi](#), who is interviewing producers, wholesalers and retailers of local products across a broad geographical region that includes the primary urban areas that frame the High Atlas, and [Hamza Aboubaiqi](#), who is documenting the market value of goods derived from the target species. Their work has been enhanced by a new complementary IUCN project funded by the MAVA Foundation and conducted by this GDF team, on 'Supporting the socio-economic sustainability of cultural practices in selected Mediterranean cultural landscapes'. This six-month initial study documents the 'household basket of plant products', with a particular focus on completing ethnobotanical monographs, profiles of the actors involved in the commercialisation and analysis of the market value chains of five selected products.

In addition, we finalised an ethnographic research report on the production and sale of honey and other beehive products, with a focus on the Wabzaza Honey Cooperative in Aït M'hamed. The full report "*Ethnography of beekeeping: an exploratory study of the socio-cultural dimensions of beekeeping practices in the High Atlas*" is provided in Annex 1.

Finally, under Output 1, our team of Field Scientists have carried out our third annual cycle of participatory ecological monitoring and remote sensing of species habitat and enrichment planting areas, of which the data is currently being analysed. The final report will be delivered by the end of Year 3.

Regarding **Output 2**, which concerns ***Livelihood improvements for Amazigh villages, households and residents achieved***, GDF has continued its support to Dar Taliba, an all girls' boarding house that provides Amazigh girls from remote villages of the Ourika Valley an opportunity to obtain a high school education. Through Darwin co-funding, GDF has continued to support the operations of the Dar Taliba boarding house since the beginning of this academic year (September 2019), while granting access to secondary education for 60 new students from 15 different villages located in the communes of Setti Fadma, Oukaïmeden and Ourika (see Annex 2 for admission lists).

Furthermore, in collaboration with our partner RESING, we are building a water reservoir in the rural commune of Ait M'hamed which will serve agricultural plots and arable lands that currently have insufficient water for cultivation. A detailed report will be provided by the end of Year 3, once construction works are finalised.

Finally, in partnership with MBLA and l'Association des Amis du CHU Mohammed VI (a Moroccan organisation providing improved access to health services in mountainous areas), we are planning our third annual health caravan, which will take place in Imegdâl at the end of December 2019.

As part of **Output 3. *Capacity-building for Amazigh associations, community members, community researchers and institutional representatives delivered***, we continued our weekly training programme in the Dar Taliba boarding house for girls in collaboration with our partner Radiant Design. During the months of April and May 2019 (as part of the 2018-2019 school year), we delivered 8 trainings to 143 Dar Taliba students on composting, healthy soil management and medicinal plants and their traditional uses such as lavender and rosemary.

Building on the success of the series of [capacity building workshops](#) organised in our partner communes Imegdâl and Ait M'hamed in Year 2, we are currently developing a follow up series of workshops that will include a deeper and more practical focus on the different topics covered last year, including sustainable water management techniques, seed conservation, permaculture, and plant commercialisation. The above-mentioned workshops will be carried out in both Imegdâl and Ait M'hamed in December 2019.

We have also recruited Fatema Wahmane as our new Community Liaison and Focal Point at the Dar Taliba boarding house for girls, who will coordinate all of the Dar Taliba school garden project field activities. Additionally, our 8 community researchers in Imegdâl, Ait M'hamed and Oukaïmeden have continued to receive on-the-job training in seed conservation, nursery management and participatory processes.

As part of **Output 4**, we are working on the case study on the implementation of new national law #29-05 and its relationship to law #22-07. As part of this process, we have carried out two interviews, one with the director of Toubkal National Park, Souraya Mokhtari, and another one with the head of partnerships at the Regional Directorate of Water and Forests in Marrakech. These interviews revealed that the information collected at the regional level is not sufficient and that actions developed by regional services mainly concern fauna, and very little action is undertaken on flora. We expect the case study to be completed by January 2019.

Given the existing governmental focus on fauna (and important independent academic efforts to document their commercialisation), Mohamed El Haouzi has focused on updating and fleshing out information on floristic entries in the database of products commercialised in the markets (souks) of Marrakech.

Finally, concerning **Output 5. *The identification and characterisation of additional plant genetic resources***, we have produced a final draft of a popular manual, in Arabic and French,

of the household basket of more than 50 useful plants that can improve local livelihoods and wellbeing in the High Atlas (see Annex 3 for the final draft). The dissemination of the final product to local High Atlas communities and schools, is planned for December 2019. Our local product commercialisation team is making good progress on initial market analyses of 20 species, with additional scope provided by new study on the 'relationships between traditional land use practices, biodiversity and community wellbeing in a cultural landscape in the High Atlas', funded by the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund (CEPF) under their Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot programme, which has contracted GDF's partner NGO Moroccan Biodiversity and Livelihoods Association (MBLA) to conduct it.

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: 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 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 R25 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 DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to 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: 25-035 Darwin Half Year Report**