



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31st October 2020)

Project reference	25-029
Project title	Rehabilitation of the ecosystem of the Park W landscape
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Niger
Lead organisation	Tree Aid
Partner(s)	COGEZOH
Project leader	Désiré Ouedraogo
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	31st October 2020, HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	Website: https://www.treeaid.org.uk Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/TREEAID/ twitter account : @TREEAID

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).

The past six months have been a difficult period as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken by the government to curb the spread of the virus, which have greatly impacted movements and gatherings.

In addition, following terrorist attacks over recent months, the security situation in the project area has deteriorated considerably. As a result, the government declared a state of emergency in the area and continues to prohibit all travel by motorcycle, which has hindered project animators' movement between villages.

The project has also undergone some changes in personnel, with the departure of Tree Aid's Country Programme Manager at the end of September. This position has been advertised, with interviews taking place in November. In the interim, Tree Aid's West African Director of Regional Operations (TAWA), Mr Désiré Ouedraogo, will be leading the team from Burkina Faso. At the end of September/early October, Désiré, together with the TAWA Head of Finance, spent a week working together with Tree Aid Niger and our implementing partner CoGeZoH to enable a robust handover and develop a detailed weekly plan of activities that will carefully guide next steps and ensure maximum progress towards goals for the remaining six months of the project.

Our implementing partner, CoGeZoH has been strengthened by the return of an experienced previous member of the project team in the role of Team Lead, which has both strengthened the capacity and created a renewed enthusiasm and drive among the team as a whole.

This combination of challenging circumstances has meant that progress during this reporting period has consequently been limited. However, following the visit from TAWA and the reinvigorated CoGeZoH team, we are optimistic that we will be able to make up for some of the delays over these past six months and finish the project on a strong note.

Output 1: Local communities in 12 villages in the peripheral area of the park W have their capacities strengthened in sustainable forest management

1.5 Support and follow up of the COFOBs especially on the development and implementation of a management plan based on the PAG and on the implementation of the local conventions.

An evaluation of the COFOBs and COFOCOM was planned for the start of May, but due to COVID-19 restrictions was unable to be implemented. The evaluation was rescheduled for September, once the work in the fields had reduced, however the staff changes meant this was delayed again. However, planning has now been completed and an evaluation is due to be undertaken in October. This evaluation will support the team in identifying any additional work required to ensure that the committees are functional beyond the end of the project.

1.11 Rehabilitation and enrichment of degraded communal land by the communities

With training of the various committees and individuals completed and the necessary equipment provided to the farmers in each village, the communities were actively involved in the rehabilitation and enrichment work of degraded communal land in a cash-for-work programme.

By the end of June, over 12 hectares had been enriched, with the bulk of the work completed for two out of the four selected villages. Almost 19ha of half-moons were also completed. These large, semi-circular pits are dug out during the dry season and filled with compost to both collect and prevent run-off of rain water as well as re-fertilise the soil and control erosion.

This activity is always an important source of income for many households during the lean months before harvests are ready, but has been especially valuable this year with the traditional rural exodus not possible due to COVID-19 and security restrictions.

Moussa Hima, from the village of Tchoura who was recruited as a controller, explained:

"This activity came at a time when the population is in great need of it: it is a time when the reserves are empty, a time when very few income-generating activities are possible due to the lack of means of transport and the banning of motorbikes to facilitate movement. A time when many who have left the countryside have returned empty-handed, a time of insecurity and a time when we are waiting for the first rains. The only alternative was either to wait or to go to the gold sites with all the risks and dangers that this brings: missing those first seeds, the danger of death and the risk of being arrested and imprisoned by the forest patrols".

One particular challenge experienced in the villages of Allambaré and Baniguitti was that the farmers felt the daily rate paid for the rehabilitation work was too low, particularly compared to the daily rate paid for farm work at that time (almost double). This led to a much lower area of land completed than expected – the team had expected 7ha to be completed, but the total was just 2ha and 4ha respectively.

1.12 Planting of indigenous trees on private land

The Country Manager undertook a field visit to the three nurseries in June 2020, where a large number of seedlings were big enough to be planted. A total of 17,450 trees were planted in July and August, including 2,000 Khaya senegalensis, 8460 Gum Arabic, 6190 baobab and moringa and 800 neem.

Output 2: Developed partnership between Park W management authorities and local communities in order to protect the biodiversity of the WTBR/Niger

2.8 Organisation of awareness-raising campaigns at the village level in the project area on wildlife behaviour and HWC prevention strategies.

Project facilitators continue to hold regular monthly meetings with local informants and communities to raise awareness of the causes of wildlife incursions into villages, in particular

the effects of the exploitation of the surrounding natural resources. During these meetings facilitators also shared examples of measures that can be taken to reduce such conflict.

2.9 Support for the proper functioning of the network of local informants

Local informants continue to regularly collect data on wildlife incursions and damage to crops.

A total of 37 cases of wildlife incursions into villages were reported during this six month period, which was slightly down on the same period in 2019. While attacks on livestock were slightly higher, attacks on crops were slightly lower than in 2019.

Cases reported	Jan18– Jun18 (Base line)	Jul18 - Dec18	Jan19 - Jun19	Jul19 - Dec19	Jan20 - Jun20	Jul20 - Dec20 (Until 30/09/20)
Total	25	90	38	80	37	24
Crops	2	68	1	19	1	11
Animals	19	12	25	25	28	11
Humans	0	1	0	0	0	0
Human attack on wild animal	0	0	0	0	0	0
Visual/no attack (Rodeur+passage)	4	9	12	36	8	2

Output 3: Supporting local economic development through the establishment of 10 VTEs based on sustainable forest product value chains

3.2 Follow up on the 10 VTEs established and distribution of equipment/material

The planned training on Market Analysis & Development for Tree Aid and partner staff, which had been due to take place in person, was postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions. However it was redesigned and held successfully online in July. This knowledge is being shared with the VTE groups through phases 3&4 of the MA&D plan, with VTE members being supported to develop and finalise their Enterprise Development Plans and to start up their small businesses.

The acquisition of materials and equipment for the VTEs has been a longer process than we had hoped, in particular with considerable delays to the supply of the larger pieces of equipment from the manufacturer. However delivery is imminent and as the members of the cooperative have already received the necessary training, we expect the processing and manufacturing to start as soon as the machinery is delivered. Work over the next 6 months will focus on production and marketing of products.

4.6 Biannual M&E workshops

A planning meeting was held with our implementing partner COGEZOH in the first quarter of Year 3, to assess achievements against targets and staff structures.

The outcomes of these discussions, combined with the ongoing security restrictions, led COGEZOH to propose a redesign of the project team. A new Focal Point was created and the team of animators was restructured, which saw the return of five community facilitators who will ensure the daily follow-up in the villages, supervised by the EV-PFNL Advisor.

4.10 Audit

An audit was undertaken in May 2020 by the Tree Aid West Africa office.

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.

The security situation in the project area remains a challenge. As mentioned previously, terrorist groups have sought to claim ownership of parts of the Park W forest, leading to the government of Niger declaring a state of emergency in a number of different regions, including Say. This is still in place, as is the ban on riding motorcycles and the guidance for international NGO staff to avoid use of logos on vehicles, declare their presence in Park W at the local police station and the recommendation that all field visits in the region should have military escort. A violent and fatal attack on a vehicle as part of an ACTED field visit in August 2020 served as a reminder that the security situation remains critical.

Field visits by both Tree Aid and our implementing partner CoGeZoH have therefore remained limited, but possible. Although all our Tree Aid Niger and implementing partner staff are Nigerien, our team of local facilitators, embedded in the local context, is crucial to enable us to continue operating in the area.

As a result of these ongoing security issues, our implementing partner has undertaken a restructuring of the project team, with the project coordination being taken over by the role of Team Lead, which has been filled by one of the returning members of staff.

In order to overcome the problem of the facilitators' travel between villages, we have also create a team of five local facilitators and redistributed the villages between them according to their location, to better enable daily monitoring visits on foot or by bicycle. These facilitators are supervised by the Enterprise Advisor.

We continue to carefully monitor the security situation and follow all government guidelines to minimise risk to our staff, partners and participants while working towards achieving project targets.

Following the field visit to the nurseries in June, the team delivered training to the women's groups involved in the production of seedlings in the three villages on hygiene measures and compliance with standards and physical distancing to protect themselves against COVID-19. The three groups were equipped with hand washing facilities and masks and were also informed about the importance of regular hand washing with soap and the wearing of masks.

Due to the rate of implementation on the project to date, Tree Aid is working with CoGeZoH to take on direct implementation of certain activities. Therefore, the Tree Aid expenditure may increase in relation to the decrease in spend by the partner. This will have no impact on the project budget overall.

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:	No
Formal change request submitted:	No
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. 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 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.

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: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**