



**Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects**  
**Half Year Report**  
**(due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021)**

<b>Project reference</b>	26-017
<b>Project title</b>	Maximising community and conservation benefits from plants of Mount Mulanje
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Malawi
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Botanical Gardens Conservation International (BGCI)
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust (MMCT), Forest Research Institute of Malawi (FRIM)
<b>Project leader</b>	Kirsty Shaw
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>HYR3</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://globaltrees.org/projects/save-our-cedar-malawian-national-tree/">https://globaltrees.org/projects/save-our-cedar-malawian-national-tree/</a> <a href="https://globaltrees.org/news-blog/world-soil-day-digging-plant-conservation/">https://globaltrees.org/news-blog/world-soil-day-digging-plant-conservation/</a>

**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).**

**1.1 Ten nurseries, established and certified in project 23-026, produce a minimum aggregate total of 400,000 Mulanje Cedar seedlings in years 1-3, benefiting 150 nursery workers.**

Eight Community nurseries (Nessa, Gambeya, Nakhonyo, Kazembe, Chole, Makolera, Lomoliwa and Kadewele) continued to propagate Mulanje Cedar for restoration and hedge planting. 5kgs of Mulanje Cedar seeds were distributed to the nurseries and 98,086 seedlings have been raised to date for the year, as follows:

- Nessa: 11,150,
- Gambeya: 11,067,
- Nakhonyo: 18,330,
- Kazembe: 12,000,
- Chole: 9,408,
- Makolera: 6,573,
- Lomoliwa: 2,700
- Kadewele: 26,858

This brings the total Mulanje Cedar seedlings that have been propagated in the project by the 8 community nurseries to 370,072.

**1.2 Design and implement planting trials at 8 sites on Mount Mulanje by end of year 1, benefiting people employed to transport and plant seedlings**

A series of online meetings were held with Ecological Restoration Alliance of Botanic Gardens (ERA) experts to complete the restoration trial design. Further meetings are planned for November and December with implementation of the trials to be done in January 2022 alongside the planting of restoration sites by WeForest. Four trial sites have been selected and confirmed for establishing these trials. These will build on the data collected from the trial plots established in 2019 on sites planted in the previous Darwin initiative project (23-026).

Nine species of Mulanje Cedar companion species seeds were collected on Mulanje Mountain by FRIM. These included *Erica benguelensis*, *Dodonaea viscosa*, *Diospyros whyteana*, *Pittosporum viridiflorum*, *Maytanus acuminata*, *Podocarpus milanjiana*, *Rausonia lucida*, *Erica nyassana*, *Rapania* sp. The species are being collected to establish propagation protocols and to be propagated to be used in restoration planting. Propagation trials for the companion species were established at six sites in August 2021; three on Mulanje mountain (Sombani, Thuchira and Lichenya); two in community Mulanje Cedar nurseries (Nessa and Nakhonyo); and in FRIM offices in Zomba. The new propagation protocols will be produced from these trials.

**1.3 FRIM and restoration experts from BGCI's network monitor planting trials in years 1, 2 and 3.**

The previously established trial sites, that were monitored for the second year in March 2020, will be monitored again either during the fieldwork in January to set up the new planted restoration trials, or in March before the project conclusion.

**2.1 Establish project steering committee to guide and monitor project progress and development of conservation-commerce model.**

The steering committee met online on 7<sup>th</sup> October to discuss project progress. The group agreed that, due to the impacts COVID-19, a change request will be submitted for an extension to the project for some activities to ensure it is as successful as possible. In particular, we will need funds that the project has budgeted for sustainable essential oils development to be available beyond March 2022.

**2.3 Workshop involving UEBT and TRAFFIC, determining Nagoya Protocol implications and ABS requirements for international oil trade, assessing whether wild harvesting might be appropriate in future**

A further workshop involving TRAFFIC will be organised to reassess the sustainability of industries related to the Mulanje Cedar tree and other useful species from Mount Mulanje Biosphere reserve. We have planned this for February / March 2022.

#### **2.4 Run a public outreach campaign in years 2 and 3 to grow demand for purchase of Mulanje Cedar seedlings for timber and essence extraction.**

An awareness plan has been developed by MMCT's Environmental and Education Programme Officer. The plan aims at raising awareness to increase the market for Mulanje Cedar industries across Malawi through different media such as radio and TV programmes, community meetings, posters. It is a 6-month campaign that is expected to be undertaken once the options for essential oil developments are confirmed.

#### **2.5 MMCT and FRIM monitor nursery certification scheme and Cedar Growers and Planters Association (CGPA) (established in project 23-036) which becomes fully inclusive of planters for essence extraction by end of year 3.**

Due to delays in FRIM providing the community nurseries with seed for propagation, FRIM have delayed the certification work to November so that the stocks in the nurseries are sufficient to be assessed.

#### **3.3 Equip communities with essence extraction equipment at start of year 2.**

MMCT has completed building the housing for the installation of the essence extraction equipment. The purchased equipment will be properly installed at the same time as training by the provider is completed in November 2021.

#### **4.1 Conduct survey to identify other plant species of Mount Mulanje and their potential uses and commercial value in year.**

The consultant researcher (Raheela Ahmed) has completed data collection and compilation on the ethnobotanical study, which has established a comprehensive list of species and their potential uses. A report is currently being finalised by the researcher for November 2021 that will identify those that are most useful for local communities living around Mulanje.

#### **2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for COVID-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

During this implementation period the Project advisors, Dr Tembo Chanyenga and Arthur Stevens, sadly passed away in July 2020. Dr Chanyenga has been key in the project and restoration of Mulanje Cedar and conservation efforts on Mount Mulanje. Arthur Stevens provided vital contributions to the development options for sustainable Mulanje Cedar essential oil enterprises.

There was some confusion over targeted sites for planting, with multiple stakeholders interested in the same sites. To avoid future problems, a forestry group has been established including all stakeholders with an interest in planting trees on Mulanje Mountain to ensure better coordination between organisations. The group meets regularly via Zoom. This ensures planting trials work hand-in-hand with larger scale planting on the mountain by WeForest, separate to this project.

It has also been noted that late provision of seed to the nurseries means that some seedlings will likely be sizable and healthy enough to be planted successfully on the mountain by December. As a result, the planning for restoration planting this project year has been pushed back to the end of January for the best impact.

#### **2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of COVID-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there**

**may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

COVID-19 has continued to restrict travel to Malawi. This has meant that BGCi staff for monitoring and organisation trips and that the essential oil distillation equipment trainers have had to delay the training course until November 2021. Once the training is completed, production of oils from Mulanje Cedar can be carried out locally so that further research can be undertaken on oils (identified gaps from the research in year 2) and oils can be sent to potential industry partners for their analysis for use in their products. The overall delays to this industry development mean that the project team, following on from the end of year 2 reviewer comment, will submit a change request to extend the project beyond March 2022. This will request to move funds from the remaining unspent budget to a fourth year so that the sustainable Mulanje Cedar essential oil industry can continue to be developed.

**2c. 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. 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?**

Not at this time. A change request will be submitted shortly.

**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](mailto: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**