

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

Project reference	26-023
Project title	Bridging agriculture and environment: Southern African crop-wild-relative regional network
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia
Lead organisation	Bioversity International
Partner(s)	University of Birmingham (UoB); Southern African Developing Community (SADC) Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC), Lusaka, Zambia; Malawi Plant Genetic Resources Centre (MPGRC), Lilongwe, Malawi; National Plant Genetic Resources Centre (NPGRC) Tropical Pesticides Research Institute (TPRI), Arusha, Tanzania; Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI), Lusaka, Zambia.
Project leader	Mohammad Ehsan Dulloo
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	31October 2019 HYR1
Project website/blog/social media etc.	<i>Website: http://www.cropwildrelatives.org/sadc-cwr-net/ Blog: https://www.bioversityinternational.org/news/detail/bridging-agriculture-and-environment-southern-african-crop-wild-relative-regional-network/.</i>

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).

Management coordination: The project started on 1st April 2019. Letters of Agreement (LoA) for each of the five partners were prepared to detail their activities and to transfer the funds to them. To date only Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia have signed their LoA. The signature of the LoA for UoB is still pending. SPGRC was not capacitated to sign an LoA and a letter of collaboration has been prepared by Bioversity and sent to SPGRC. (See section 2a). The project also established a project repository using Microsoft Teams platform, where all the documents of the project are stored for easy access by the project partners.

Five Coordination meetings were held during the period under review to inform and discuss the progress on activities. It also provides the mechanism for taking collective decision on the implementation of the project. Notes of meetings are prepared after each meeting and kept under the Teams project repository, A WhatsApp group was also created to facilitate quick communication among partners.

A Steering Committee has been established. Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Steering committee defining the mandate and scope of work, composition, specific tasks and working procedures of the SC was developed. Five members have accepted to serve on the SC: The SC members were invited to attend the project inception meeting, and the first SC meeting was held during the inception meeting on 8th August 2019. Dr Lefulesele Lebesa was elected as Chairperson and Dr Chikelu Mba as Deputy Chairperson. Efforts are being done to recruit a sixth member for the SC.

Inception meeting: The inception meeting of the Darwin SADC CWR project was organized jointly by Bioversity International and SPGRC in Johannesburg, South Africa from the 7-8 August

2019 and was attended by 29 participants. It was held back to back with the SPGRC curators' meeting to maximize participation with all the 16 SADC countries members, which constitute the key stakeholders of the project.

A Communication and visibility Plan for the project was developed and finalised. Branding of the project was done with the creation of a logo, banner and the project's website. A leaflet about the project was produced and copies distributed to project partners at the inception meeting. A blog post was released after the inception meeting held in South Africa on the website of Bioversity International and SPGRC for media coverage and to promote the project.

A draft Data Management Plan has been developed and shared with project partners for inputs. It provides guidelines to ensure proper storage and licensed sharing of the data collated during the project and to comply with GDPR rules.

A Monitoring and Evaluation Plan has been prepared by the project which details all the expected result chain, deliverables (Indicators), deliverable due date, methodology on how the deliverables will be produced, data source(s) and the person responsible for the delivery.

Hereunder is the progress achieved on the technical activities carried out:

Activity 1 – Establishment of regional SADC CWR network	The plan of work was discussed during the project inception meeting. A presentation was made on network policies governing agrobiodiversity and discussed the project activities relating to the process for preparing the guidelines on Access Benefit Sharing of <i>in situ</i> conserved materials.
Activity 2 – Enhanced SADC <i>in situ</i> CWR conservation Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia	National Multi-stakeholder committee has been constituted in Zambia and Tanzania comprising of 13 members and 11 members respectively. Zambia held its first meeting on 4 th July 2019. Malawi has yet to constitute and hold its committee. Further conservation planning activities have been invited by UoB in Malawi and Tanzania. National staff are being trained in the use of conservation planning toolkit. Progress has also been made in developing the regional strategy action plan. A paper is being drafted.
Activity 3 – Enhanced SADC <i>ex situ</i> CWR conservation	The SADC Information System (SDIS) database list of CWR has been updated to include species occurring in the region. This now forms the baseline for monitoring the further collection of CWR that will be undertaken in the second and third year of the project. An analysis of the distribution of the SDIS has been made and there has been no distribution of CWR to breeders.
Activity 4 – Enhanced SADC CWR use in crop improvement	Activities have been discussed during the inception workshop with project partners. In Zambia, two breeders working on sorghum/millet and rice respectively from the public research institution are included on the Multi-stakeholder Committee. Further linkages will be created with other breeders for cowpea, vegetables and roots and tubers in the countries. Links with International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) has been made.
Activity 5 – Enhanced farmers benefits from CWR conservation and use	Presentation related to underlying background, concepts and implementation approach was made at the inception workshop. There has been an initial national (Tanzania and Malawi) partner identification of relevant project team including discussions on national team 2019 meeting dates with a view to jointly elaborate a detailed plan of action.
Activity 6 – Capacity building	The training needs of the project countries and the remaining SADC countries were assessed at the inception meeting in August 2019 and specific topics for training identified through a training needs survey among the SADC countries. Two trainees from Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia, and one from the SPGRC and the remaining 13 countries will be trained. A capacity building plan has also been developed by UoB.

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 main notable problem has been delays in finalisation of the Letter of Agreements (LoA) with project partners. UoB implemented a new digital system for their agreements and needed to do due diligence on Bioversity. The signature of their LoA is still pending. With Malawi and Tanzania, there has been a long process of negotiations on the budget share and a long delay in the transfer of funds through the bank. SPGRC informed us that they are not allowed to sign an LoA as this project was not listed in their annual work plan. After negotiation with them, it was agreed to sign a letter of collaboration between SPGRC and Bioversity. Another notable problem has been the quality of communication with the partners. Some partners respond promptly while others do not. Connectivity to the internet has also been an issue, especially in Tanzania. Despite the difficulties in finalising the LoAs, the project is pretty much on track for most of its activities except holding of Multi-stakeholder Committee meetings in Malawi and Tanzania, due to the delay experienced in fund transfer.

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

No, Bioversity has been able manage these administrative problems which are being resolved. It will not have an impact at the moment on the original agreement.

Discussed with LTS: No

Formal change request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance 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?

We have no issues to raise.

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**