



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

Project reference	27-001
Project title	Conserving High Atlas agrobiodiversity to improve Amazigh livelihoods in Morocco
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Morocco
Lead organisation	Global Diversity Foundation
Partner(s)	Moroccan Biodiversity and Livelihoods Association (MBLA); High Commissariat for Water and Forests and Desertification (HCWFD); Faculté des Sciences Semlalia Marrakech, Université Cadi Ayyad (FSSM-UCA); Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II, Rabat (IAV); International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and Agropolis Resource Center for Crop Conservation, Adaptation and Diversity (ARCAD); National Institute for Agronomic Research (INRA); Slow Food International; Federation of Leagues for Women's Rights (FLDF); University of Cagliari; Terre et Humanisme Maroc; Provincial Directorate of Agriculture (DPA); Réseau des initiatives agroécologiques au Maroc - RIAM and DEAFAL.
Project leader	Gary Martin
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	www.global-diversity.org <i>A general description of the project is available on GDF's UK website and regular updates are posted on the GDF news page.</i>

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).

Despite the limitations on our activities related to COVID-19, which we describe in greater detail below, we were able to initiate activities under each of the outputs since the launch of the project on 1 June 2020. As part of *Output 1*, which focuses on the assessment, characterisation and conservation of High Atlas agrobiodiversity, we worked with community researchers to collect 81 different seed varieties in our three partner communes: Imegdâl, Aït M'hamed and Oukaïmeden (Activity 1.2). Once the collection of the remaining varieties is completed, the seeds will be stored in the community, regional and international seed banks in order to maintain the variability, quality and availability of local seed varieties. We completed the IUCN Red Listing Protocol for Agricultural Crop Species, Varieties, Landraces and Crop Wild Relatives.

Concerning Output 2 (*Sustainable and climate resilient agroecosystem and crop management implemented*), we have been in contact with project partners DEAFAL and Federation of Leagues for Women's Rights (FLDF) to organise and plan the implementation of Farmer Field Schools (Activity 2.4) and Gender and agricultural caravans (Activity 2.6). The next editions of our Farmer Field Schools will focus on livestock management (February 2021) and plant health (April 2021). Special permission is required to organise any assemblies or community events in Morocco, and we expect this will be obtainable for these field schools starting in early 2021. In the interim, we are developing a practical booklet on agroecological practices to support the outreach work of the farmers who have been selected as community trainers.

Output 3 focuses on livelihood improvements through product valorisation and commercialisation; since June we have provided virtual and phone-based support to local cooperatives in the High Atlas to enhance their local product commercialisation processes. As part of our continuing programme of capacity building and institutional strengthening of rural cooperatives, we supported the Nisae ASKA women's cooperative in Aït M'hamed during the past few months with expert advice on the process of product labelling and packaging of local products (*Thymus satureioides*, *Mentha suaveolens* subsp. *timija*, *Romarinus officinalis* and *Artemisia herba-alba*) following the necessary procedures.

As part of the same output, we also reviewed our approach on the RHoMIS household surveys (Activity 3.8), based on the outcomes of our experience with this survey during our previous Darwin project (24-010) which closed in April 2020. We found the RHoMIS survey presented multiple challenges as they were very time intensive which limited our ability to conduct surveys on a larger scale. Therefore, we have developed a new approach which we call Socioeconomic Impact Assessments which includes a questionnaire tailored to our project. We have identified a list of participants, which are all project beneficiaries. In addition, we met with the coordinators of our partner organisation Network for Agroecological Initiatives in Morocco to discuss implementation of a participatory system of guarantee for High Atlas products.

In contribution towards Output 4, in particular indicator 4.3 '*Case study of the High Atlas agroecosystem and agrobiodiversity management and policy implications compiled*', we have collated all of the data, results, analyses and descriptions related to agroecosystem and agrobiodiversity management in the High Atlas that we have gathered in 5 years of field research. This will be used as a basis for the development of our case study for this output. In parallel, we developed a case study of Moroccan national policies related to agrobiodiversity, seeds and small-holder agriculture. Currently available only in French, this work will be translated and included in the final case study in Year 2.

Finally, we have established [a dedicated project page](#) on the GDF website, summarising the expected outcomes and outputs of this project.

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.

All unexpected developments and or issues that our team has encountered over the past 6 months are COVID19 related, as detailed below.

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.

The COVID19 pandemic has presented a significant challenge for fieldwork due to national travel restrictions in Morocco. We have been obliged to postpone the implementation of several activities that involve gatherings, including Farmer Field Schools (Activity 2.4). However, our team has used this desk-based time to continue remote capacity building and to develop a detailed planning of activities for roll-out once Moroccan authorities allow for group events to take place and national travel to field sites in the High Atlas is more flexible. We have used the opportunity of travel restrictions and business closures to begin working on other elements of the programme – in particular related to market development in Marrakech – that were originally slated for later on in the project. For example, we have begun networking with urban chefs, whose restaurants are currently closed, to explore the development of new dishes made with High Atlas food products.

Although the national restrictions on travel and group events may possibly affect our initial timetable, we are confident that our team is highly adaptive. This includes developing and implementing an intensive capacity building programme for our community researchers in collecting data and taking surveys, which will ensure the continuation of our activities in case our Marrakech-based team is unable to carry out field work due to travel restrictions.

In addition, our lead implementing partner Moroccan Biodiversity and Livelihoods Association (MBLA), has recently obtained a three-week extendable travel permit from the local authorities which we consider an excellent development as all team members plan to carry out intensive fieldwork during this period.

We have not discussed these issues with LTS international because we are confident that we will catch up with these delays in fieldwork as soon as the situation resumes some form of normality, and in the meantime we have been creative in how to adapt to the restrictions productively.

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?

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**