

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

<b>Project reference</b>	27-001
<b>Project title</b>	Conserving High Atlas agrobiodiversity to improve Amazigh livelihoods in Morocco
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Morocco
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Global Diversity Foundation
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Moroccan Biodiversity and Livelihoods Association (MBLA); High Commissariat for Water and Forests and Desertification (HCWFD); Cadi Ayyad University; Cagliari Botanical Gardens; 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.
<b>Project leader</b>	Gary Martin
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2021, (HYR2)
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="http://www.global-diversity.org">www.global-diversity.org</a> A general description of the project is available on <a href="#">GDF's UK website</a> and regular updates are posted on the GDF <a href="#">news page</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).

During the past 6 months of this project, we have made significant progress towards Output 1 (*'High Atlas agrobiodiversity surveyed, assessed, characterised and conserved'*) by completing regional seed surveys in three different regions (Demnate, Azilal and Al-Haouz) through 6 local focus groups, 157 household surveys and interviews with farmers in their plots and at local markets during which we also gathered seed samples (Activity 1.2). Through these seed surveys, market visits and focus groups, we collected and stored 147 accessions of local landraces of alfalfa, fava beans, green peas, barley and wheat (*Medicago sativa*, *Vicia faba*, *Pisum sativum*, *Hordeum vulgare* and *Triticum durum*), the 5 key species that are the focus of this project.

Regarding Activity 1.3 (*Conservation assessments for High Atlas varieties of 5 crops compiled and published*), we decided to collaborate with Cadi Ayyad University Marrakech by recruiting a MSc student from the Science Faculty to further develop and finalise the conservation assessments, based on initial data we gathered in Year 1. In addition, we have initiated the development of a manual for High Atlas community seed banks and community biodiversity registers by drafting an outline for both outputs (Activities 1.4 and 1.5).

On 15<sup>th</sup> October 2021, we organised a capacity building workshop in Zaouiat Ahansal on sustainable seed collection and seed banking for a group of 20 community members (Activities 1.6 and 1.7). The workshop was co-led by two local community researchers (Touda Atyah and Hassan Ouchacha) who have been managing the local seed bank in our project site Aït M'hamed, which provided a great knowledge-sharing opportunity for both community researchers.

Concerning Output 2 (*'Sustainable and climate-resilient agroecosystem and crop management implemented'*), we carried out a livestock assessment at the end of September in both Imegdal and Aït M'hamed with support of our partner DEAFAL, who provided expertise through consultations with local livestock owners. After the assessment, we organised 2 Farmer Field Schools on effective livestock management in Imegdal (4 October) and Aït M'hamed (6 October) with a total of 30 participants for both events (Activity 2.4). Additionally, we continued our [training programme for 8 community trainers](#) (Activity 2.5), by organising 3 additional workshops during the past 6 months on 1) plant health, 2) sowing and multiplication of seeds and 3) crop management.

Concerning capacity-building and institutional strengthening for rural cooperatives (Activity 3.1), we organised a second [High Atlas Food Market on World Food Day](#) (16 October) building on the success of [the first edition in May 2021](#). During the event, 11 rural cooperatives participated (two representatives of each) by hosting their own stand to sell their products and engage with new and existing customers. The day after the market, we organised [two trainings on traditional soap-making and aromatherapy products](#) for cooperative members, facilitated by Rachid Jaafari from Terre d'Eveil Maroc and in collaboration with local partner Moroccan Biodiversity and Livelihoods Association (MBLA). The workshops aimed at providing cooperatives with a fresh perspective on developing and improving their products and by-products. Participants learned how to make and blend essential oils and use organic raw materials that preserve their benefits in soap making.

In addition, we developed and launched the concept of the first [Harvest Festival Marrakech](#), in collaboration with MBLA. Harvest Festival Marrakech draws on the tradition, present in many parts of the world, of holding an annual celebration around the time of the main harvest, which varies from place to place. Harvest Festival emphasises the "local": agroecology, biodiversity, culture and gastronomy performed and produced in the Marrakech-Safi region and beyond. We invited partners, local business owners, creatives and other community members to participate and co-design the two-week festival (15 – 31 October), during which we brought together urban and rural communities through practical workshops on agroecology and gastronomy, film screenings, food markets, food tastings, art openings and more (Activities 3.5 and 3.6). During the festival, we organised 35 events and engaged over 40 community members and 25 partners. All events of the festival are featured on the Harvest Festival website ([available here](#)) and Instagram ([@harvest\\_marrakech](#)) and the festival has received a lot of media attention thus far. Additionally, the festival has been an excellent opportunity for GDF to network, build relationships with new partners, and engage a wide audience in agroecology, local gastronomy and food justice. Given the success and great potential of the festival, we decided to make it a recurring event, with special editions taking place multiple times a year. A detailed report on the event will be provided during the next reporting period.

Regarding Output 4 (*Stakeholder participation in national policy-making on smallholder agriculture and seeds, and implementation of ITPGRFA*), we produced three policy briefs covering seeds, smallholders, and the International Plant Treaty, which will be disseminated during future workshops and stakeholder meetings.

Building on the policy briefs mentioned above, we held a policy workshop in July 2021 on the International Plant Treaty (ITPGRFA) and Morocco's national agricultural policy during which 24 stakeholders from High Atlas cooperatives and agricultural associations participated. Understanding international and national legal commitments and strategies around biodiversity conservation and agriculture is key for our stakeholders. Through this workshop, participants better understood the conservation measures and agricultural policy at the international and national levels, as well as their significance for the High Atlas region. After examining the mechanisms and principles of the International Plant Treaty (ITPGRFA) and its implementation in Morocco, participants also learned about and discussed Morocco's current agricultural

strategy, Green Generation 2020 - 2030. Through breakout sessions, participants discussed policy implications in their local contexts and key takeaways on the international and national policies presented.

**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 the past 6 months, we learned that we will not be able to respond correctly to the Indicator of Activity 2.7 ('100 farmers engaged in the use of the Diversity Assessment Tool for Agrobiodiversity and Resilience (DATAR), by Year 2'), due to the following three reasons:

- 1) The DATAR (Diversity Assessment Tool for Agrobiodiversity and Resilience) application is very technical and requires intensive long-term training, which we are unable to offer to 100 farmers;
- 2) Most farmers do not own and/or use a smartphone in their daily work, which is an indispensable tool to use the DATAR application;
- 3) The DATAR application is still in progress as it is a brand-new platform that the creators are regularly updating, based on feedback from its users (including GDF). Our team is in the position to easily manage and understand these new changes and updates through regular contact with the developers of the application. However, the farmers are not in that position due to communication challenges (language, access to internet, etc).

Although we weren't able to deliver direct training to the farmers in the application, we engaged over 100 farmers by collecting data from them to use in DATAR for agrobiodiversity characterization and we are training local community researchers instead. We were unable to foresee this as the DATAR application is a brand-new platform that the team has only recently received access to. We therefore propose to adapt the initial indicator to "3 staff effectively use DATAR application for data collection and analysis in collaboration with 100 farmers and 3 Regional Community Researchers trained in the use and application of DATAR". We would like to emphasize that the farmers will continue to participate in DATAR, albeit in indirectly, and that this tool is very promising and offers a wide range of applications for data management and analysis for current and future research on agrobiodiversity.

Another development not anticipated in the original proposal is co-funding through a Salvia Foundation grant to Living Seeds Foundation for a project, in which GDF is a partner, on "Organic legume breeding for establishing seed diversity and use for small-scale farming – a cooperation project between the Iberian Peninsula and Morocco" With a focus on participatory varietal selection of fava beans (*Vicia faba*) and peas (*Pisum sativum*) it will contribute directly to achieving activity 2.1. Plots of several varieties of these two crops will be planted in the 2021-2022 season, with plans to continue for several additional seasons in coming years.

**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.**

Unlike the previous reporting period, we haven't encountered any major challenges as a result of COVID-19. This is mainly due to the fact that the Moroccan government, which has spear-headed an effective vaccination campaign with over 70% of the target population fully vaccinated (by far the highest rate in Africa), has lifted a number of restrictions related to national travel and group gatherings which allowed us to implement a number of activities that had previously been delayed such as the Farmer Field Schools (Activity 2.4). However, we remain cautious and flexible in case new restrictions arise and have learned to effectively adapt to changing regulations during the past 6 months.

**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](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**