

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

Project reference	27-016
Project title	Responsible exchange of plant genetic resources for research and development
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Ethiopia, Uganda
Lead organisation	Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI)
Partner(s)	University of Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) Makerere University (Uganda) University of Vienna (Austria) African Botanic Garden Network European Botanic Gardens Consortium
Project leader	Paul Smith
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	Not applicable yet

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 project commenced on July 1st 2020 due to late notification of funding approval from Defra. In addition, no funding has yet been received from Defra for this project. However, the first tranche was authorised on October 5th. Progress to date as follows:

Output 1.1. Two MSc studies carried out on the extent and nature of plant material exchange for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

Project outlines have been agreed with the University of Addis Ababa and Makerere University as follows:

MSc topic 1: Review of the importance of the exchange of plant material to plant conservation and sustainable development (Makerere University)

This study will carry out a review of plant material exchange records and the scientific literature to assess to what extent the exchange of non-crop plant material supports plant conservation and sustainable development research, and what the impact of that research is. Material exchange data sources will include PlantSearch, EURISCO, Index Seminum and the institutional databases of the European Consortium of Botanic Gardens and the African Botanic Garden Network. In addition, a review of scientific literature linked to the exchange of plant material will be assessed in order to provide qualitative and quantitative data on the impact of the research supported by access to plant material. The study will use the information gathered to assess the importance of plant material exchange to plant conservation and to research sub-disciplines related to sustainable development (e.g. water, health, energy etc.).

MSc topic 2: Review of the exchange of plant material between developed and developing countries, and impediments to such exchange (University of Addis Ababa)

Our working hypothesis is that exchange of living plant material (including seeds) is very limited in the south compared to the north, and that this is an impediment to plant conservation and sustainable development research. In this study, germplasm databases, such as PlantSearch, EURISCO, Index Seminum and the institutional databases of the European Consortium of Botanic Gardens and the African Botanic Garden Network will be assessed for levels and trends in exchange of plant material between institutions in different geographical and economic zones. In addition, through discussions and interviews with researchers, the main impediments to exchange of material will be identified and the impacts on their research will be quantified. Finally, recommendations will be made on how to facilitate exchange of material in developing countries.

Makerere University has appointed a student, Peter Omaswa, to carry out MSc study no. 1 and he has produced a detailed outline of his study. The University of Addis Ababa have suggested a potential candidate but we are waiting for the project outline before confirmation. Grant agreements have been drafted by BGCI and sent to both universities.

Output 1.2. At least one peer reviewed paper published on the value of biodiversity for sustainable development, and impediments to its use

Plant material exchange data has been gathered from >20 European botanical institutions ready for analysis, and the University of Cambridge has started to analyse >17,000 requests for material through BGCI's PlantSearch database. These data will be used in the MSc studies above, and will form the basis of at least one peer-reviewed paper.

Output 2.1. Consultation workshop on constraints to plant material/data exchange and development of digital exchange platform

This activity is scheduled for the last quarter of financial year 2020/21, i.e Jan-March 2021. It was meant to be a face to face meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. However, due to COVID-19, it is likely that this workshop will need to be held on a virtual platform. We have had preliminary discussions with our African partners to this effect, and will make a formal change request if need be (see below).

Output 2.2. Specifications for a digital platform agreed and software company engaged to develop digital platform

A total of 14 consultation meetings on the specification of the digital platform have been held to date internally in BGCI (13 July; 3 August; 7 September), with botanical institution partners (2, 9 July; 9, 18, 24 September) and with potential developers (28 July; 13, 20, 28 August; 4, 22 September). In addition, a specification outline has been written and circulated. We expect to appoint a software developer in the next few weeks.

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.

None to date.

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.

As mentioned above, it is highly likely that the consultation workshop planned for January-March 2021 in Addis Ababa will need to be held on a digital platform instead due to restrictions on international travel as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The host institution, the University of Addis, is looking in to this, including the possibility of outsourcing the meeting to ensure good connectivity. If this happens, then the budget for travel to this conference is likely to be unspent.

We will submit a formal change request once we have more details.

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:	No
Formal change request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Not applicable

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?

No.

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**