



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects
Half Year Report
(due 31st October 2021)

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)	Addis Ababa University (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. HYR1)	31 st October 2021, (HYR2)
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.bgci.org/our-work/projects-and-case-studies/responsible-exchange-of-plant-genetic-resources-for-research-and-development/

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 activities and outputs for year 2 of the project are as follows:

- 1.1. Two MSc studies carried out on the extent and nature of plant material exchange for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development
- 1.2. At least one peer reviewed paper published on the value of biodiversity for sustainable development, and impediments to its use
- 3.2. ABS, biosafety and CITES compliance regulations data gathered and incorporated into the digital platform
- 3.3. Digital platform tested and launched
- 4.1. Meetings held to test digital platform and to discuss accreditation methodology for recognising ABS and biosafety best practice
- 4.1. Accreditation scheme consultation carried out, and scheme agreed

The following progress has been made in the last six months:

Output 1.1. The two MSc studies (changed to one MSc and one study forming part of a PhD) are due to be completed by the end of this year. Progress reports have been appended to this document (**Document 1** MSc report and **Document 2** part of a PhD Study report, respectively).

Output 1.2. The following paper has been published on this topic (copy appended to this document – **Document 3** ABS paper):

Kiehn, M., Fischer, F. & Smith, P. (2021). The Nagoya Protocol and Access and Benefit Sharing regulations of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its impacts on botanic gardens' collections and research. *CAB Reviews* 2021 16, No. 034

In addition, BGCI has published another paper pertinent to the importance of botanic garden collections for sustainable development:

Hudson, A., Smith, P., Gori, B. and Sharrock, S. (2021) Botanic Garden Collections—An Under-Utilised Resource. *American Journal of Plant Sciences*, **12**, 1436-1444. doi: [10.4236/ajps.2021.129101](https://doi.org/10.4236/ajps.2021.129101).

Taking outputs 3.2 and 3.3 together, the digital plant material exchange platform continues to be developed and tested by our developer, Keith Damiani. The next consultation meeting on the beta-version of the platform is scheduled for the second week of November. Although the new platform makes provision for ABS, biosafety and CITES compliance regulations to be defined by the providers of plant material and data, a piece of work remains to be carried out to provide guidance to users as to where country-specific information can be found on ABS, biosafety and CITES guidelines. BGCI asked European Consortium member institutions if any of them would be willing to compile these guidelines but nobody volunteered. BGCI has much of this information in house, and will probably have to hire a consultant to do this work (see below).

For **Output 4.1**, a draft set of criteria have been shared with project partners on a framework for measuring institutional compliance with ABS, biosecurity and CITES regulations (appended to this document: **Document 4** Draft accreditation framework). A consultation workshop was held on this topic on the 20th September with the project's Ethiopian partners at their request, and because Ethiopia currently does not allow material to leave Ethiopia except under exceptional circumstances. The consultation workshop outline and schedule is attached (**Document 5**). In addition, a short report on the meeting is attached, with more specific feedback and the various presentations available on request (**Document 6** Report on accreditation workshop).

In summary, the project is proceeding well, and we expect to meet all of our objectives.

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.

The only activity we are slightly behind on (but which will be completed this year) is the review and collation of ABS, biosafety and CITES compliance regulations data (3.2 above). This is because none of our partner institutions feel they have the qualifications to carry out this work. BGCI holds much of this information, e.g.

- **ABS:** [ABS Learning Package | Botanic Gardens Conservation International \(bgci.org\)](#) – Section on ABS at the Institution
- **Biosecurity:** IPSN guide to plant biosecurity in botanic gardens and arboreta: [Documents | International Plant Sentinel Network](#)
- **CITES:** CITES Learning Modules – Module 5: CITES and botanic gardens [CITES Learning Modules | Botanic Gardens Conservation International \(bgci.org\)](#)

However, BGCI staff time is very limited. We will probably have to hire a consultant to do this work (already budgeted).

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 continues to have an impact on face-to-face activities, although this should become easier now that Ethiopia and Uganda are no longer red list countries.

The continued delay of the CBD's COP-15 and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework has no direct bearing on the project but it is worth pointing out that ABS negotiations are currently very difficult, with Digital Sequence Information (DSI) a particular sticking point between developed and developing countries. Agreeing an ABS accreditation may be difficult in this climate, although we hope that these issues will be resolved by April 2022.

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 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?

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**