



**BIODIVERSITY  
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



## **Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects** **Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus**

### **Half Year Report**

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

**If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.**

**Submission Deadline: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024**

**Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.**

**Submit to: [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line.**

<b>Project reference</b>	28-001
<b>Project title</b>	Building wetland resilience in Madagascar: Community-based conservation of Lake Tseny
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Madagascar
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	WWT
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Madagasikara Voakajy (aka Mavoa)
<b>Project leader</b>	Mark Grindley
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2024 (HYR5)
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://www.wwt.org.uk/join-and-support/partner-with-us/who-we-partner-with/">https://www.wwt.org.uk/join-and-support/partner-with-us/who-we-partner-with/</a>

**1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end of September).**

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

Further progress was made in a number of areas over the past six months:

- A tree seedling nursery was established and planted with over 10,000 seed from 16 different native species. The seedlings are growing very well under the supervision of designated nursery carers from the local community.
- A project monitoring field visit was undertaken by the project managers from WWT along with the CEO and head of conservation, on their first visit to Madagascar. Discussions were held with the community to hear their views on the project, which were highly complementary and appreciative.
- A review of the monitoring framework was undertaken by the project managers, and plans put in place for the final project evaluation in the final quarter of 2024 to ensure sufficient information is available to indicate progress against the project indicators.
- The net exchange programme was launched.

**2. 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.**

As the management transfer agreements are due for renewal next year, it was agreed to use the final project evaluation to document the progress made by the community groups and the conservation and livelihoods impact it is having using the project indicators. A final consultation is now planned for the end of 2024.

**3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?**

Discussed with NIRAS:	Yes/ No
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Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes/ No
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Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes/ No
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Change Request reference if known: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome*

**4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)**

Actual spend: [REDACTED]

**4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2025)?**

Yes ☐ No ☒ Estimated underspend: £

**4c. If you expect and underspend, then you should 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 re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes to your project if necessary. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.****

**NB:** if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

**5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

None

**6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report.** If your project was subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment please use this space to comment on any changes to international human rights risks, and to address any additional mitigations outlined in your offer letters. Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.

In the reviewer feedback from our previous annual report, we were requested to use this half-year report to discuss the project's exit strategy "in light of the changes to the process of Ramsar site nomination". This refers to the fact that we are not currently pressing forward with a Ramsar nomination until the local communities fully support it. The project exit strategy we have therefore agreed with the project partner, ministry of environment and the communities is as follows:

1. We will review progress of community management of Lake Tseny and its catchment using the Darwin project monitoring framework by the end of 2024.
2. The project partners (WWT and Mavoa) will continue to support the implementation of the community 'management transfer agreements' granted under the project (in 2022) until 2025.
3. To this end, Mavoa has secured three years of additional funding to support community resource management at the site and WWT has additional funding to continue the forest restoration, and will pilot a small grant scheme in Sofia Region specifically targeting to community wetland managers.
4. When the management transfer agreements are being reviewed, WWT, Mavoa and the MEDD will outline the case for a Ramsar nomination; we have already documented evidence that the site meets the criteria, but the implications and obligations need to be made clear to the communities to give them the chance of making a free, prior and informed decision on whether to proceed with a nomination.
5. If they so agree, the updated final management transfer agreements – which are then valid for 30 years – will be prepared taking into account the management needs of the Ramsar site; WWT will support that process.
6. If the communities choose not to apply for Ramsar status at this time, the needs of biodiversity and livelihoods can still be incorporated in the updated management transfer agreements but the option to nominate the site for Ramsar recognition will be put on hold and reviewed regularly throughout the life of the agreement.

## Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2024)	
Have you <b>responded to any additional feedback</b> (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	n/a
If not already submitted, have you attached your <b>risk register</b> ?	n/a
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2024)	
Have you responded to <b>feedback from your latest Annual Report Review</b> ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	Yes
For All Projects	
Include your <b>project reference</b> in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to <a href="mailto:BCFs-Report@niras.com">BCFs-Report@niras.com</a> .	Yes
Have you <b>clearly highlighted any confidential information</b> within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	Yes
Have you reported against the most <b>up to date information for your project</b> ?	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Ok