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: 31st 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 including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	28-007
Project title	**Building smart seed systems for biodiversity, livelihoods and resilient restoration**
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Cameroon
Lead Organisation	Bioversity International as part of the Alliance of Bioversity-CIAT
Partner(s)	Ministry of Forest and Wildlife (MINFOF); Actions pour la Biodiversité et Gestion des Terroirs) (ABIOGeT); Promotion de l'Ecotourisme, Encadrement des Couches Vulnérables et autres Minorités (PEM); Asaah Fonyam and Angwi Foundation (AFAF); University of Yaounde 1 (Yaounde 1); University of Aberdeen (UoA)
Project leader	*EKUE Marius Rodrigue Mensah*
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	*HYR April – October 2024*
Project website/blog/social media	

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.

The project's standard indicators, means of verification and assumptions as presented in the last annual report still hold true. The following progress has been made during the last six months:

Output 2. Seed collectors, nurseries, seed centers, and the government stakeholders gain the capacity to document, verify, and track the performance and quality of valuable tree species native to Cameroon

*Activity 2.3. Seed collectors, nursery workers, and forestry department managers have started using the SeedIT (*MyFarmTrees) *app to record data about tree seeds collected in project sites*

During the reporting period (which are the beginning of the fruiting season for most tree species) we have recorded over 115 new uses of the MyFarmTrees Collector and/or MyFarmTrees Nursery apps during the reporting period mostly in the centre of Cameroon. The usage will increase exponentially between September and December when most priority tree species mature and produce seeds.

Activity 2.4. Build capacities of 1000 new stakeholders to use the SeedIT (MyFarmTrees) mobile app to record and track seed quality.

42 new stakeholders in Garoua (North Cameroon) were trained to use MyFarmTrees apps to document seed collection and manage nurseries in this region not covered previously. We have also strengthened the capacities of over 250 stakeholders trained previously through field visits, phone calls and data collection in the field. This will continue until the end of the season in all project sites with the increasing availability of seeds to be harvested.

Output 3.
The capacity of key stakeholders to manage increased planting and survival of priority species in the future is enhanced
Activity 3.1. Stakeholders (forestry department, seed collectors, community nurseries, small FGR agri-businesses) use recommendations from the provenancing strategy to restore new sites

Recommendation from the Diversity for Restoration (D4R) tool were used to match 4 000 seedlings produced to the planting sites mostly in West Cameroon between June and September.

Activity 3.2. Nursery managers, managers of seed collections, seed centers, and forestry department personnel have improved their capacity to manage increased planting and survival of priority species via (i) technical assistance and mentoring from the project and (ii) a written protocol for management of native FGR.

Over 8,000 seedlings produced from seeds collected and documented by MyFarmTrees Collector were planted and tagged in the field for future monitoring of their survival and performance.

Output 4. Increase in livelihoods for smallholder tree farmers, local seed businesses, seed cooperatives, and community nurseries driven by increasing Government demand for, and largescale procurement of, bulk quantities of high quality, native tree species seed to fulfil urgent national restoration commitments.

Activity 4.2 Stakeholders (forestry department, seed collectors, nursery managers, small FGR agri-businesses, community nurseries) use the MyFarmtrees app's verification of quality function to negotiate better prices for FGR along existing value chains.

Two WhatsApp groups were created (one for seed collectors and one for nursery managers) where: 1) challenges encountered using the apps are reported; 2) information are exchanged

on the availability of seeds of different species, and 3) linkages are made between the supply and demand for seeds and seedlings of native species.

Activity 4.4 Baseline socio-economic study carried out in Year 1 and repeated in Year 3 to understand the impact of production and of good quality seedlings of native species on different stakeholders, including an analysis of the forward and backward economic multipliers within the specific value chain. The study will include an assessment of the economic returns for the various actors within specific value chains.

Surveys of stakeholders involved in the tree seeds supply chain who have used the apps for a full production year have started with 100 nurseries. This will continue with seeds collectors, wholesalers, communal forestry associations and government actors involved in the supply chain in the last quarter of 2024.

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.

None

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
Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes/ No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes/ No

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:

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.
No feedback has been yet received about the annual report.

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1st April 2024)	
Have you **responded to any additional feedback** (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.	None
If not already submitted, have you attached your **risk register**?	
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to **feedback from your latest Annual Report Review?** You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	None
For All Projects	
Include your **project reference** in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to **BCFs-Report@niras.com**.	Yes
Have you **clearly highlighted any confidential information** within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	None
Have you reported against the most **up to date information for your project?**	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Yes