

**Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects
Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus
Half Year Report**

Note: 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 2023

Project reference	29-004
Project title	Kaya Connect: Restoring the Eastern Africa Coastal Forest Biodiversity Hotspot
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Kenya
Lead partner	Botanic Gardens Conservation International - BGCI
Partner(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kenya Forest Service 2. National Museums of Kenya 3. Little Environmental Action Foundation 4. Mandhari Plants & Designs 5. International Tree Foundation 6. Kilifi County Government 7. Kivukoni Indigenous Tree Nursery 8. Green Heart of Kenya
Project leader	Cristina Coletto (maternity cover for Kirsty Shaw)
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.bgci.org/our-work/inspiring-and-leading-people/where-we-work/africa/

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 is progressing well and in line with the work plan, and the main activities implemented during the last semester are the following:

Administrative: We developed and signed sub-grant agreements with the project partners for the second year of the project, which outlined their targets, activities, budget implications and reporting requirement.

Project evaluation meetings: We held another project steering committee meeting in May. This meeting brought together all the project steering committee members, to go over the status of the project after completion of the first year. The targets versus achievement were highlighted for each section.

Training: We have conducted refresher trainings on phenology monitoring, documentation, seed collection, post-harvest preparation, seed storage and *in situ* protection to 60 community members 24 women and 36 men. This was done in the respective forest fragments where the seed collectors are assigned to do their collection. We also conducted refresher trainings to 65 nursery workers (36 male and 29 female), which was preceded by doing a comprehensive knowledge and skills gap assessment that informed the scope of the training. The nursery workers were therefore trained on seed handling, seed extraction, pre-treatment, germination pricking out, watering, pest and disease control and preparing the seedlings for field transfer.

Seedlings production: Two additional nurseries have been added to the project, which are the Kenya Forest Service Gede nursery and the County Government of Kilifi nursery. We expect an additional 100,000 seedlings by the end of the project with the addition of these two nurseries. In this reporting period, the nurseries have been able to produce a total of 109,187 seedlings. The breakdown per nursery is as follows: Green hearts of Kenya – 30,409; LEAF – 4,595; Mandhari – 19,169; Kivukoni – 4,000; CFCU – 6,416; Chasimba – 3,444; Kaya Rabai nursery – 20,167; Kaya Kauma nursery – 7,169; and Kaya Chonyi nursery – 13,818 seedlings.

Seedling sales: A total of KES 80,000 has been earned by the Kaya nurseries from the sale of seedlings. The breakdown per nursery is as follows: Kaya Kauma KES 45,500; CFCU nursery – KES 1,500; Kaya Rabai KES 2,000 Kaya Chonyi KES 10,000 and Chasimba KES 21,000. We intend to carry out a business development training for the nurseries which will help in ensuring they build their business and marketing skills, and to be in a position to sell more seedlings and add to their income.

Surveys and seed collection: The surveys that were done at the time, showed that most of the trees were flowering or in the early stages of development. Therefore, only a small volume of seeds was able to be collected and distributed to the nurseries. Further surveys were done in August and September and there were sufficient seeds for collection in Arabuko Sokoke Forest. The seed collection team has so far collected from 22 species and a capacity of about 180kgs of seeds.

Forest surveys were also conducted in July which led to the identification and collection of seeds from 12 indigenous species, including *Coffea pseudozanguebariae*, *Dovyalis keniensis*, *Kigelia Africana*, *Vitex payos*, *Cordyla Africana*, *Diospyros squarrosa*, *diospyros kabuyana*, *Raufolia mombasana*, *afrocanthium kilifiensis*, *Erithyrina saculexii*, *bligia unijugate*, *Vitex ferruginea*, *diospyros cornii* and *Antiaris toxicarica* among others.

Seed bank operations: A seed bank has been set up at Mandhari Plants and Designs and a seed technician hired to undertake the operations of the seed bank. The 180kgs of seeds that were collected from Arabuko Sokoke forest were delivered to the seedbank for processing, and then distribution to the nurseries.

Model schools and Education Program: A baseline assessment visit was done to the schools to determine which of them will serve as the model school. The project is currently working with 11 schools and Gardini Primary school is the selected model school.

Each school has different numbers of students in grade 4: Kibaoni primary school 205, Kilifi primary schools 212, Gede primary school 175, Mida primary school 59, Maereni primary school 36, Chasimba primary school 53, Vwevvesi primary school 142, Chang'ombe primary school 97, Gandini primary school 103, Mwatsama primary school 113 and Isaac Nyondo primary school 140. A total of 1,335 students have been involved into the education program.

During the start of Year 2, 11 schools began planning for the tree planting exercise that took place towards the end of the month of May. The species planted include: 50 *Cordia goetzei*, 100 *Bauhinia mombassae*, 150 *Azela quanzensis*, 50 *Gyrocarpus americanus*, 100 *Gardenia volkensii*, 40 *Antidesma venosum*, 20 *Milicia excelsa*, 100 *Kigelia africana*, 100 *Ludia mauritiana*, 10 *Sideroxylon inerme*, 50 *Garcinia livingstonei*, 20 *Sterculia africana*, 30 *Antiaris toxicaria*, 10 *Ficus sychomorus*, 30 *Strychnos spinosa*, 30 *Ziziphus mucronata*, 20 *Terminalia prunoidies*, 30 *Markhamia zanzibarica*, 20 *Balanites wilsoniana*, 30 *Tamarindus indica*, 10 *Cussonia zimmermannii*, making a total of 1000 indigenous seedlings. In addition to this Starseed natural, a regenerative skin care brand based in the UK, bought 502 fruit seedlings that were also distributed to the schools. Apart from tree planting, the students have taken part in composting, mulching, tree labelling, and art using plastic bottles recycled around their school. Some of the topics that they have benefitted from include: soil, composting, waste management, indigenous trees, intensive and regenerative agriculture, insects, water cycle, biodiversity, types of habitats, what are mushrooms, parts and functions of a tree.

Model farm foresters: We visited, selected, profiled and recorded baseline information for 5 model farm foresters for the project. They are based in Chasimba, Vumbini, Dida and Kauma. The model farm foresters serve as a learning-hub for the small holder farmers. The model forest farmers will be enhancing Kaya Connect project's work towards catalysing efforts to restore degraded private lands for local communities through enhancing their capacity to plant indigenous trees of ecological, social, and economic value.

Additional restoration sites: We managed to enter into a formal agreement with Kenya Forest Service for a restoration site that is under their management. The land approximately 45ha and degraded, comprising mostly of shrubs and small trees. Overgrazing and wood fuel are the drivers of degradation. Along with tree planting in the site, we will also build the capacity of the community forest association to enhance protection of the site and enable its restoration.

Tree planting activities: In April-May period, we managed to plant 8,000 trees in small holder farmlands, and in schools. Mandhari Plants and Designs have planted 400 native trees in the Gede Tropical Nursery restoration site.

The partnership with Catholic Diocese of Malindi has solidified a commitment to plant trees in land owned by the churches for the benefit of the local communities. The Diocese has committed to plant in 3 sites in Marafa, 1 in Gede, 1 acre in Waresa, 2 acres in Mbaoni, Karimoni and Chamari. Community outreaches on indigenous tree planting, and distribution of seedling for planting will also be done through the parishes after mass for 3 communities beginning on end of October.

Carbon credits registration: Given the extent of the work and expertise needed to establish a successful carbon project, we engaged the services of a consultant. We have been able to develop the initial drafts of Project Idea Note, which is to be submitted to Plan Vivo by the end of year. We are in the process of getting all the relevant agreements and documentation in place. We have also partnered with AirImpact to assist in connecting the project to potential buyers through their platform.

Public awareness and outreaches: We attended the African Climate Summit 2023 in Nairobi, where we were able to share about the Kaya Connect project with other delegates attending the summit. Through these engagements, we were able to cultivate potential partnerships for tree planting with Equity Bank Group, Young Women Christians Association, and World Vision among others. We will also attend and hosted a tabletop exhibition at the Global Landscapes Forum in Nairobi, to showcase the project. 1 exchange visit was conducted to Kaya Chonyi and Kauma for the community nursery workers from all the nurseries. The 2 days event involved 21 nurseries workers and two CFCU staff.

Communications, marketing and business development: The communications and marketing consultant has been working with the nurseries to develop marketing materials for each of the nurseries. We also have an actionable communications and marketing plan that we are currently implementing to aid in creating more awareness about the project, and for the nurseries to be able to market the nursery products they are producing.

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.

We have experienced a challenge during the distribution of seedlings for planting to the farmers. During the first year of the project, when registering the farmers, we did an initial round of sensitization about the benefits of planting indigenous trees and getting information from them on their preferred species of indigenous trees. However, during the distribution, some of the small holder farmers rejected the indigenous trees and mentioned exotic trees that they wanted to plant. These incidences showed us that more education is needed with the local communities to shift their mind towards planting indigenous trees in their farms. To remedy this, we are developing more in-depth education and outreach materials, and plan to do more in depth engagement, including connecting them to the model farm foresters for demonstration of native tree planting benefits in farms like theirs. This issue didn't impact too much on the project since the trees the farmers didn't accept to plant have been planted in the schools.

The carbon component of the project is proving to be more resource intensive than we initially anticipated and budgeted for. The additional funds we redirected from year 1, after approval of the change request submitted last year, has enabled us to engage the consultant and begin the certification process. We have also started a new partnership with AirImpact, a digital platform connecting developers, investors and buyers in the nature-based carbon market. This partnership will help us bring the project into the carbon market and thus finance a future expansion and ensure the sustainability.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: **No**

Formal Change Request submitted: **No**

Received confirmation of change acceptance

Change request reference if known:

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)

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 2024)?

No Estimated underspend: **None**

4c. 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 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 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?

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**