



**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>	29-030
<b>Project title</b>	Controlling invasive alien trees to support conservation and improve livelihoods
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Madagascar
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Missouri Botanical Garden - MBG
<b>Partner(s)</b>	-Regional Directorate of Environment, and Sustainable Development (RDESD) -Regional Directorate of Industrialization, Trade and Consumer Affairs (RDITCA) - Federation LOVASOA (LOVASOA)
<b>Project leader</b>	Adolphe LEHAVANA
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> October 2024 HYR3
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="http://mobot.mg/conservation/pointe-a-larree/">http://mobot.mg/conservation/pointe-a-larree/</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).**

According to the timetable submitted in the project, the following activities were planned from April 2024 to September 2024, and here we report on the progress of each:

1.3 Conducting research to develop annual exploitation plans, map priority zones

Research was conducted to complete an exploitation plan for Melaleuca timber over Pointe à Larrée peninsula. A total of 37 plots covering 105Ha were inventoried to estimate the number of stems of Melaleuca giving a result of 157,216 exploitable stems (more than 5cm of diameter) and 6,010,730 of non-exploitable stems (less than 5cm of diameter).

1.4 Directing monthly members of the “green charcoal cooperative” for producing charcoal

Currently, green charcoal production is operating in three productive sites. To ensure compliance with the two preferred production protocols (MATI and Casamance techniques), three animators from MBG are based at these sites respectively to provide permanent monitoring and coaching to fine tune actions to the charcoal producers.

1.5 Daily patrols within Protected Area

Since August 2023, patrol techniques used by the Rangers changed from Manual techniques (i.e. notebook) to the “SMART” system using smartphones. During the period, April to September 2024, they carried out 273 missions, covering a total of 1796km and 1071 hours. No logging was observed in Protected Area.

In the buffer zone, that is managed by local community, community patrols using manual techniques, continue twice a week. In addition, two other control missions were carried out by the mixed brigade composed of representatives of the forest administration and gendarme, that detected 11 illegal charcoal kilns, that were working to convert dead wood into charcoal. In the buffer zone, at Andrangazaha village, two trees were cut down, probably for charcoal making purpose.

1.6 Verbalisation of infractions

During period, no court proceedings for illegal actions within the protected area or its buffer zone were made. The Dina (locally applied rules approved by tribunal) were applied for those who cut down the two trees in the buffer zone at Andrangazaha by paying ar15,000 (around £3) as a fine.

1.7 Mobilisation of local community for tree planting and removing Melaleuca

After extirpating the population of Melaleuca, several planting sessions were organized during which 4,850 cuttings of *Faguetia falcata* (threatened species that roots well from large stems) and 1403 seedlings of *Syzygium sp* were planted covering 11.3 Ha. A total of 83 people including 34 women and 49 men participated in this event.

1.8 Three monthly transect for participatory monitoring cutting of native trees

During the six last months, 24 participatory monitoring transects to count cut trees were carried out by four COBA Associations, grouped in the LOVASOA with MBG technicians. No felled trees were found within PA nor within buffer zones.

1.9 Mobilisation to remove Melaleuca

Two types of Melaleuca removal were carried out:

1. Uprooting of Melaleuca regeneration in plots that have been already cleared of Melaleuca. This task was assigned to women with the participation of 108 women. 22 hectares were cleaned;
2. First removal of Melaleuca in the new plots. This activity was carried out by 99 men who removed this troublesome plant from 19.4 hectares

1.10 Three-monthly monitoring for compliance with Melaleuca exploitation contracts.

One monitoring session was conducted by forest administration team in September 2024 to evaluate both the progress of activities and compliance with the clauses on operating contracts for *Melaleuca* exploitation. At the end of the monitoring, recommendations were made to improve the results of the project.

## 2.2 Purchase tools for conversion of *Melaleuca* into charcoal

To complete the prototype of Casamance kiln, brought from Benin, a chimney was added in Madagascar. In July 2024, a test of effectiveness of this device was carried out and revealed a higher yield of charcoal compared to traditional and MATI kilns, 80% higher and 40% higher, respectively. In addition, this technique allowed us to collect 100 liters of wood vinegar (pyroligneous liquid) as new product of charcoal production in Madagascar. This interesting product can be used as a natural wood preservative and 90 liters has been sold for this use (at a cost of 2,000,000 MGA or £400).

## 2.3 Training workshops for members of GCC in best practice for the conversion of *Melaleuca* into charcoal

Following the visit-exchange in Benin on carbonization techniques, a training session was conducted for local charcoal producers using the Casamance technique. Prior to this training Cooperative members have only used the MATI technique and reported a yield around 20% compared to traditional charcoal production ovens. The Casamance technique test proved that this protocols was even more efficient than MATI.. In total, 35 members participated in the Casamance approach including 10 women and 25 men.

## 2.4 Coaching the charcoal producers and GCC in best practice

See above.3.5 Training the Leaders of the Cooperative with six topics

A final sixth training session was conducted on the theme: "Market and Business Development Opportunities". The aim was to strengthen the capacity of the cooperative's leaders in sales and in the implementation of marketing strategies. 16 Cooperative's leaders including 15 men and one woman attended this event. .

## 3.6 Purchase charcoal by GCC

During the reporting period, 11.46 tons of green charcoal was produced and purchased by the Cooperative from charcoal producers.

## 3.9 Construction of warehouse and extension of existing warehouse

A third warehouse was built and is now operational. In total, three warehouses are available to store green charcoal of the Cooperative.

## 3.11 Monthly, RDESD validates that charcoal for sale originates entirely from *Melaleuca* and conducts control of stock in the warehouse

Two verification missions were carried out by a local representative of forest service to control compliance with the regulations (species exploited, number of bags declared, etc.). As a result, no non-compliance issues were raised.

## 3.12 RDESD delivers agreement of sale

The agreement of sale issued previously is still valid and used.

## 3.13 GCC and DM implement marketing strategy for sale

A marketing strategy is currently being implemented. To boost sales, advertisements were launched on regional radio.

## 3.14 DM conduct surveys for assessing the needs of consumers (risk mitigation activity).

No progress to report: postponed to November 2024

## 3.15 DM coaches GCC for implantation of business plan

Practical training sessions on business plan implementation were provided to the Cooperative's Leaders including marketing strategy, commercialisation, budget management, effective application of internal regulations and chain of custody.

3.16 RDITC, following each training session, conducts monthly technical monitoring for the two first months, afterwards three-monthly monitoring to continue coaching.

No technical monitoring has been conducted.

3.17 All partners and local authorities conduct half-yearly participatory monitoring of the project progress

This participatory monitoring that was held recently to evaluate project progress . Participants included local authority representatives: Mayors and Presidents of Fokontany. Progress towards the achievement of the project' indicators were discussed. Several challenges were discussed in order to brain storm solutions.

3.18 PM develops collaboration with businesses for shipment and sale:

A credit sales contract was signed between the Cooperative and an Association of Resellers, based at Soanierana-Ivongo. Payment will be made after the sale of 100 bags of green charcoal.

4.2 Bimonthly updating of Project' progress on social media

For YR3, website has been kept updated and two posts monthly were made on social media sharing information on the progress of the project..

4.3 Monthly broadcasting on local radio

In Fénerive-Est, the Regional capital, two radio broadcasts were made to increase public awareness on our green charcoal product.

4.5 Attendance to regional and national events

Two events were attended:

- a. Regional celebration of World Environment Day (05 June 2024), at Antanifotsy where green charcoal was exhibited and approximately 200 persons came visiting stand.
- b. Regional celebration of Cooperative day, held in Fenerive-Est (05 to 06 July 2024) and green charcoal and wood vinegar products were exhibited. A total of 146 persons including 54 women, 83 men, and 9 children visited the stand.
- c. Project exhibition at British Embassy in Madagascar during King's birthday party on 13, June 2024 for the project "controlling invasive alien trees to support conservation and improve livelihoods" . Posters explaining the project as well as samples of green charcoal and wood vinegar were displayed at the stand. Around 90 people visited the stand, including three Ministers.

**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.**

Two main challenges were encountered during the period and have impacted in project progress:

- The market for our green charcoal is not as robust as we would like. This is because it has to compete with charcoal that is produced illegally and avoids paying tax. Much of this charcoal comes from *Grevillea banksii*, *Acacia mangium* and although sold more cheaply has a lower quality. Impoverished members of the community have no choice but to purchase the cheap charcoal and our marketing strategy suggests that we should focus sales are the more affluent. One interesting observation is that once people have tried our more expensive product then they come back for more. Hence, we will attempt to hook clients by offering small trial bags of our charcoal.

- After exploitation, *Melaleuca* recolonizes cleared zones both by resprouting and through the germination of seeds. Hence repeated efforts are needed to suppress this regeneration. Now, following the third clearance intervention over 22 ha we note a remarkable decrease in population density of the species compared to that of the first and second intervention. It would seem that this highly invasive species can be controlled but only with repeated costly interventions.

<b>3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?</b>	
Discussed with NIRAS:	Yes (through annual report)
Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No
Change Request reference if known: <i>If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome</i>	

<b>4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)</b> <b>Actual spend:</b>
<b>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)?</b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>4c. If you expect and underspend, then you should consider your project budget needs carefully.</b> Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.  <b>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.</b>  <b>NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.</b>
<b>5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</b>  No

<b>6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report.</b> 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.
We have already responded to any feedback from the expert committee of project reviewers relating our previous annual report. The response was sent on 12 August, 2024.

## Checklist for submission

<b>For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024)</b>	
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.	
If not already submitted, have you attached your <b>risk register</b> ?	
<b>For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024)</b>	
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.	√
<b>For All Projects</b>	
Include your <b>project reference</b> in the subject line of submission email.	√
Submit to <a href="mailto:BCFs-Report@niras.com">BCFs-Report@niras.com</a> .	√
Have you <b>clearly highlighted any confidential information</b> within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	√
Have you reported against the most <b>up to date information for your project</b> ?	√
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	√