

## 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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023**

<b>Project reference</b>	30-013
<b>Project title</b>	Better livelihoods for shifting-cultivators from conserving and restoring Malagasy forests
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Madagascar
<b>Lead partner</b>	Missouri Botanical Garden
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Fikambanana Bongolava Maintso
<b>Project leader</b>	Chris Birkinshaw
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR1
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	

**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).**

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.

Over the last 6 months (to September 2023) the project has proceeded in line with the timetable presented as part of the application. In particular

MBG staff have worked with Wai-Line (FBM's Assistant Project Manager or APM) to purchase the capital items listed in the approved budget and trained the APM in the application of MBG's manual of procedures; and

FBM staff have:

- Identified the project zone (a 19,290 ha area in the centre of the forest corridor) (Activity 1.1.);
- Identified, recruited and trained 52 local farmers as rangers (1.2./1.3). These have been organised into 4 groups under the supervision of 4 head rangers and since July have patrolled the project zone to detect and report infractions (1.4). Patrols were informed by alerts from Forest Watcher (Global Forest Watch - OSMTRACKER);
- Recruited the nursery coordinator (Jeannot) and 5 head nurserymen/women;
- Organised the 2-weeks of training of these 5 people at Parc Ivoloina in best practice for the propagation of native trees (2.2);
- Supported the nursery leaders to each create 3 to 4 informal groups of local people who will provide, in rotation, the labour required in the nurseries – in total, these groups contain 250 women and 79 men (2.2);
- Supported the nursery leaders to install one large nursery (80,000 seedlings per year with 2 head nurserymen/women) and two smaller nurseries (40,000 annual seedling

capacity). One of the smaller nurseries (at Bemilolo) is adjacent to a national highway (RN6) and will provide the ideal showcase for the project. One nursery has not yet been installed because the person trained as head nurseryman is currently not available for family reasons (2.3)

- Identified candidate native trees species whose performance in reconstructive restoration at this site will be evaluated (2.4)
- Directed the collection of seed samples from the target tree species: samples from 12 species have been collected to date (2.4)
- Started the production of compost (2.4)

The indicators that we presented as part of the application are appropriate, and the means of verification are, for the most part, realistic. The Forest Watcher app. available from the Global Forest Watch is a very useful tool for mapping threats and measuring forest loss - however the Smart Phones (used by the rangers) do not have adequate battery capacity to record data from the whole 3-4 day patrol. Hence we have purchased power banks to ensure that the whole patrol can be recorded. Also, currently, FBM lack staff with the capacity for complete the social monitoring (household surveys and local perceptions) proposed in the application and therefore we urgently need to build this capacity.

**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.**

One of the three nurseries that have been installed was conceived to be a model nursery and a showcase for the project. As such we decided to install propagation benches made of concrete and cover these benches with a roof of shade netting. Both the cement (to make the concrete) and the shade netting (and their transport) were more expensive than anticipated in the project budget and consequently the budget line for "Other Costs" has been overspent. Thus we propose to make a change request in which we will ask that ca. £3000 from the budget line "Operating Costs" will be transferred to the budget line "Other Costs"

**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 No

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: £ [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 2024)?**

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: £

**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](mailto: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**