

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 2022

Project reference	<i>This should be the project reference provided in your offer paperwork and not your application number</i>
Project title	Strengthening managers' and local communities' capacity for more resilient conservation
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Madagascar
Lead partner	Laboratoire des Recherches Appliquées , Department of Forests, Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Agronomiques (LRA, ESSA-Forêts), University of Antananarivo
Partner(s)	
Project leader	<i>Dr Sarobidy Rakotonarivo</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>25 October 2022 (HYR1)</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i><u>MIRARI – Mitantana ara-dRARIny</u> <u>Facebook</u> <u>Twitter= @Forest4People</u></i>

1. 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).

- Activity 0: Clarify stakeholder needs

During the first three months of the project (May-June), the team met several organizations managing protected areas (PAs) in Madagascar such as the consortium of organisations implementing the Biodiverse Landscape Fund project in Madagascar (Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Kew Madagascar Conservation Centre, Missouri Botanical Garden Madagascar, Care Madagascar, and Madagasikara Voakajy), and other organisations such as Madagascar National Parks, Impact Madagascar, Fanamby, and the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable development.

These meetings confirmed that there is high level of demand for the project's proposed activities. Aspects that were most valued by respondents were the establishment of the database on the social impacts of development interventions carried out in and around PAs and any lessons learnt they can apply in designing more effective social safeguards and sustainable development approaches.

Most of these organisations also indicated that they currently lack the ability to identify and apply tools and methods in monitoring and evaluating the social impacts of conservation and safeguard projects, which confirms the need for the training activities.

These needs were also emphasized at the [project launch workshop](#), which was attended by 40+ participants and honoured by an opening speech by the UK ambassador HEM David Ashley. Several conservation organisations such as [Impact Madagascar](#), [Madagascar National Parks](#) and [Kew Madagascar Conservation Centre](#) as well as the Ministry of Environment have also officially expressed their willingness to collaborate with the project.

- Activity 1: Establishment of the database on the social impacts of social safeguards and development interventions in and around PAs:

So far, four organisations (GERP, KEW, ESSA-Forêts, Impact Madagascar) have provided datasets on the social safeguard activities implemented in the nine PAs that they manage. These datasets include detailed descriptions of any safeguard or development activities implemented by these organisations, the number of beneficiaries, any measures of their social impacts carried out by the organisation, etc.

These datasets were complemented by semi-structured interviews conducted with some staff of the conservation organisations to understand any background contexts and collect any missing information.

We are expecting more datasets from Madagascar National Parks and a few other organisations in the coming months, and will also be conducting follow-up interviews with the implementers.

The Mihari network, which is a network of Locally-Managed Marine Areas in Madagascar has also expressed a keen interest in the establishment of the database and is eager to collaborate.

FAPBM, the national protected area foundation has also expressed its willingness to permanently host the establishment of the database, allowing stakeholders to continue to contribute to it after the end of this project. They have written a letter of support that we can use when contacting conservation organisations managing the protected areas that they are funding.

- Activity 3: Preparation of the training on “Community Management Convention” –

3.1. Local community consultations

We recently consulted local communities across three sites; Madiromirafy, a newly established PA managed by Impact Madagascar in North-western Madagascar, Marolambo, a national park managed by Madagascar National Parks in southeast Madagascar, and Itremo, a new PA managed by Kew Madagascar Conservation Center in the central highlands. These local consultations aimed to: 1) support the development of the convention, 2) prepare the training on the Community Management Convention (how does CGC fit in with the existing

management transfer in the area), and 3) understand local perceptions of social safeguards and cross check the data provided by the PA managers.

In Madiromirafy, where a new PA that is currently being established, we conducted nine focus groups in total with local communities (with 85 people in total). Preliminary findings indicate that local people have very limited understanding of “co-management”, as well as their roles / obligations vis a vis the management of the PAs. Most participants perceived the development interventions carried out by Impact Madagascar as activities aiming primarily to reduce their poverty levels but not to offset any potential local costs caused by the establishment of the PA. There are however some perceptions that the interventions are linked to the restrictions (that they are no longer allowed to go to the forests). Local people find that establishing an agreement or convention with PA managers could help them understand their rights and obligations better. However, they also feared that such agreement will impose new rules and restrictions that they will have to comply with.

In Marolambo, our team visited 3 villages where we conducted a total of 5 focus group with local communities (with 48 people in total). Our preliminary findings suggest that local communities' preferences for social safeguard or development measures vary with ethnicity. For instance, support for irrigated rice is highly valued by Betsimisaraka and Tanala groups but is irrelevant to the local ethnics. The co-management system is well established and well-structured. Most of the participants perceive the link between the restrictions and the socioeconomic interventions carried out by Madagascar National Parks (MNP). However, they are still highly dependent on the MNP support. The participants showed some awareness of their rights and responsibilities and those of the PA manager. The participants found an agreement with the PA Manager to be key to clarifying each other's rights and responsibilities. However, illiteracy is a huge obstacle for local communities to engage in any sort of agreement: they are " afraid of being imprisoned after signing a paper they are not sure they understand".

In Itremo, the team conducted six focus groups with local communities. Our findings indicate that there is a lot of misunderstanding across and within the communities. Less than 10% of the community is engaged in “co-management”, mostly members of community-based management associations who are responsible for managing some of the forest areas. Most participants have a very limited understanding of their roles and obligations towards the “co-management” of the PA. They perceive that the establishment of the PA has brought a lot of restrictions and problems for the community because they could no longer extract the gemstone resources within the PA. Besides, the development interventions carried out by Kew Madagascar Convention Center (KMCC) are not sufficient enough to compensate the loss of revenue due to the establishment of the PA.



Photo – 1) Crossing Ikopa river before reaching Madiromirafy, the protected forest managed by VOI Aina and Impact Madagascar 2) Billboard presenting the main entrance to the rural commune of Madiromirafy and the protected area 3) Project team explaining the aim of their visit in Madiromirafy 4) Project team during focus-group in Ambodimadiro, Madiromirafy.

Additional photos from these local community consultations can be found [here](#).

3.2. Design of posters to facilitate learning in the training

We have started designing posters to aid the training on the community management convention with local communities. The poster will include the key points of the conventions such as the rights of each stakeholder (local community and PA manager), the role and responsibility of each and their obligations.

While designing the poster, we are consulting the committee in charge of the reform of the national policy on environmental and social safeguards at the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable development. This is because the community management convention is expected to be a key component of the reform. The poster design is also developed collaboratively with a professional designer, and a lawyer who is expert on local communities' rights in natural resource management. Such consultation and collaboration will ensure the long-term use of the poster, and its shared ownership.

- Activity 4: Progress with the support for the ongoing reform of the social and environmental safeguard national policy led by the Ministry:

A second draft of the policy, primary produced by staff on this Darwin project, under the leadership of MEDD, has recently been presented to the restricted executive committee composed of 10 representatives of the National Office for the Environment, the Ministry of Environment, Madagascar National Parks, USAID and Natural Justice, in August 2022. The new draft includes a detailed list of the norms on the management of protected areas in Madagascar, a methodology to evaluate the social impact of PA, the mechanisms of grievances, the mechanism of integration of the stakeholders and a draft of the community management agreement or "Convention de Gestion Communautaire (CGC)" between the PA managers and local community.

This new draft is the key output of nine meetings since the beginning of the project in May 2022 which can be summarized as:

- 04th, May 2022: the restricted executive committee discussed the content, social safeguards principles, full and equitable participation of local community and other stakeholders
- 13th, May 2022: reflexion about some terms on the CGC needing to be determined and also about the social safeguards.
- 24th, May 2022: discussion on the content of the text about CGC and its current applications on the field
- 08th, June 2022: reorganization of the content of the policy framework to ensure the effectiveness of future management by taking into account the experiences of protected area managers.
Establishment of the rough draft of the CGC structure, content, and elaboration process.
- 15th, June 2022: decision on what to assess in terms of impact evaluation, scope of application and selection of methods to use
- 17th, June 2022: sharing of the ongoing reform to the national NGOs working in protected area in Madagascar and collect of their experience on the agreement with local community for the co-management of the PA.
- 15th, July 2022: discussion and selection of the norms of the environmental and social management of the PA in Madagascar.
- 31st, August 2022: discussion on the norms and the indicators.
- 18th October 2022: presentation of the norms, discussion about the CGC.

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.

A. Change of % time of the project PI and Project manager on the project

The project PI, Dr Sarobidy Rakotonarivo has recently been awarded a grant from the African Academy of Sciences and has had to decrease her time on the project from 40% to 20% fte. We have increased the % time of the project manager (Dr Manoa Rajaonarivelo) from 80% to 100% fte to compensate for the reduction in the PI's time. We have also recruited an additional research assistant, Sanda Rakotomalala to help us carry out some of our project activities.

B. Establishment of the database (Activity 1)

1/ Availability of the dataset: the data collection from the PA managers took longer than expected (at six months into the project, we are still collecting datasets) because:

- We first needed to establish a data sharing and management agreement with the PA managers, that were validated by both parties (LRA hosting our Darwin project and the conservation organisations).

- The data sharing and management agreement also include details on the good and ethical management of any datasets shared with us.

2/ Quality of the datasets: some of the data we received were lacking some critical information or were poorly formatted. This means we have to spend considerable time formatting them, and following up with the PA managers for any missing information or clarifications.

C. Support for the ongoing reform of social safeguard national policy led by the Ministry (activity 4)

1/ The progress on the reform is slower than expected due to the limited availability of members of the restricted executive committee. Validation by the restricted committee is required the new draft can be presented to the to a larger committee, including policy-makers and broader PA managers.

The slow progress on the policy reform may delay the implementation of the training activities planned for policy-makers and high-level decision-makers as the draft policy will be one of the key tools used in the training.

D. The development of the CGC and training of the local communities (activity 3)

The development of the CGC requires more time than we had anticipated as it needs to fit in with existing local agreements. For example, local communities in Madiromirafy comply with the “dinan'omby”, which regulates the management of cattle in the locality.

While designing the CGC, we also had to carry out three community consultations to understand local communities’ perceptions and capacity needs. These consultations were not part of our original plans but were very useful in designing the CGC and the training.

Shortly after the launch workshop, in July 2022, we also had the opportunity to attend the first IUCN Africa Protected Areas [Congress](#), Kigali, Rwanda. Our project team, Mirindra Rakotoarisoa took part in a panel discussion organized by African Wildlife Foundation on “Rights-based approach to conservation in Africa”. Such panel highlighted the potential role of the CGC in securing local communities rights to decision-making within their PAs, and their rights to the fair and equitable access to the benefits of conservation.

We also recently had a helpful exchange with the [Maliasili](#) team in Andasibe in September, whose mission is to strengthen, enhance leadership capacity, and help local organizations become more effective drivers of positive change in their landscape. They expressed their keen interest in understanding existing models of community-based management in Madagascar and expressed their willingness to support our CGC training.

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

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS: Yes (A. Change in the % time of the PI)

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

Change request reference if known: **request submitted on 22 August 2022 and accepted on 23 August 2023 (DARCC016)**

4a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend: ██████████

4b. 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.

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

None

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), 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.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but should also be raised with NIRAS-LTS International 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**