

58 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	<i>DARCC016</i>
Project title	Strengthening managers' and local communities' capacity for more resilient conservation
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Madagascar
Lead partner	Laboratoire de Recherches Appliquées, Department of Forests, Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Agronomiques (LRA, ESSA-Forêts), University of Antananarivo
Partner(s)	Bangor University, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Impact Madagascar, Kew Madagascar Conservation Centre, Madagascar National Parks
Project leader	<i>Dr O Sarobidy Rakotonarivo</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR1 (April-Sept 2023)</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i>MiRARI – Mitantana ara-dRARIny:</i> http://forest4climateandpeople.org/mirari.php.en <i>Facebook:</i> https://web.facebook.com/mirari.mg <i>Twitter:</i> @Forest4People

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.

We have made some considerable progress over the last six months. We consider that our indicators are appropriate and elaborate below on the progress we made in carrying out our project activities from April to September 2023.

Activities are in bold.

2.1 Design and run the field-training course for high-level national stakeholders and facilitate sharing of best practices (contributing to Output 2)

4.1 Support ongoing reform of Madagascar's national PA safeguard policies (led by the Ministry of Environment and Madagascar National Parks) (contributing to Output 4)

On 16 June 2023, we convened a national workshop for high-level national stakeholders to facilitate sharing of best practices (activity 2.1) and advance the reform of the national safeguard plan for protected areas in Madagascar (activity 4.1).

The workshop was attended by a total of 42 participants (including representatives from the national government, conservation managers, donors, research institutes, and local communities) organized in collaboration with Natural Justice and was an opportunity for our project team to present our research results on the social impacts of forest conservation and restoration and the key recommendations from the national committee (composed of the ESSA-Forêts project team, members of the Department of Protected Areas and Natural Resources of the Ministry of Environment, Madagascar National Parks, USAID staff, the National Environment Office, and Natural Justice) on the reform of the national safeguard policy for Protected Areas in Madagascar.

We covered four key themes of the national safeguard policy i) the assessment of the social impacts of protected areas and development and safeguard projects in and around protected areas, ii) the identification of beneficiaries of development and safeguard measures, iii) the Community Management Agreement, iv) the grievance mechanism.

We used the workshop to:

- Share our recommendations to establish an equitable and effective social management of a protected area, including methods for identifying and assessing the socio-economic impacts generated by the PA, methods for identifying Persons Affected by the Project and setting up equitable compensation and development activities, and assessing the impacts of these various activities. Decision-makers were reminded not to confuse social safeguard measures with poverty reduction measures. Although managers may engage in both, the former responds to the need not to harm or impoverish communities, and thus to the primary obligation of managers.
- Discuss at length the value of the community management agreement, a key tool for the management of protected areas which defines the rights and obligations of managers and local communities.
- Establish an effective and context-appropriate grievance mechanism, which is another key reform point we advanced in the workshop. This mechanism should facilitate the resolution and management of complaints, conflicts and concerns as early as possible, enhancing both biodiversity and development outcomes.

The workshop was a success as participants showed great interest in the Environmental and Social Management Framework (CGES in French) and its practical application. It permitted as well to listen to the views and reflections of decision-makers and managers on our key recommendations, which we incorporated to improve the CGES reform.

3.1 Train local communities on the community management agreement (CMA) (contributing to Output 3)

1.2. Establish draft evidence synthesis and best practice manual and present them to at least nine communities in three selected PAs plus circulate to partners and stakeholders (contributing to Output 1)

In July in partnership with Natural Justice, ESSA-Forêts and Bangor University teams [ran two very successful week-long pilot training courses with local communities and protected area management staff on the community management agreement \("Convention de Gestion Communautaire" \(CGC\) in French\) across two sites](#), in Itremo protected area, and in Madiromirafy that is currently being established as a protected area. This training also enabled us to share our synthesis of best practice in social safeguards to the local communities, and we integrated several key themes from this synthesis into the training courses.

In total, 63 participants took part the training: 27 in Itremo of which 10 women, and 36 in Madiromirafy of which 3 women.

The community management agreement (CMA) training mainly aimed to inform and build the capacity of local stakeholders around protected areas on the CMA and its establishment process. It was also an opportunity to strengthen local communities' knowledge and skills to be able to negotiate their needs and aspirations with the co-managers.

Through these training sessions, we were also able to share the importance of evaluating the CMA and related safeguard measures that had been conducted / negotiated. We shared the results of our database analysis on whether the activities were effective and whether it matched the needs and aspirations of the local communities. This enabled the community to understand why and how communities should take part in the CMA and its evaluation.

Various modules were covered during these training sessions, including i) the vision and objectives of the PA, ii) the community management agreement, iii) The Rights, Obligations, Responsibilities, iv) CMA negotiation techniques, v) the grievance management and vi) CMA evaluation including the social safeguard measures.

To run the training, we first produced a durable canvas poster that explains the CMA establishment process and content and facilitates understanding by the local community. The national committee, which includes the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and Natural justice were involved in the design of the poster as the CMA it is a crucial part of the reform of national safeguard policy. This process ensures validation from national authorities and promotes the uptake of the CMA by PA managers. Additionally, we developed booklets summarizing key CMA training takeaways for the participants in Madiromirafy from our experience during the first pilot training in Itremo.

The first CMA training was conducted from 8 to 15 July 2023 in the Massif d'Itremo protected area (IUCN Category V). The Itremo protected area was established in 2015, is located in the Ambatofinandrahana District of Amoron'i Mania Region and is managed by Kew Madagascar Conservation Centre. The establishment of a CMA is valuable due to the presence of small-scale artisanal mining, which represents a significant source of income for the local community and a source of conflict between various stakeholders. Facilitating the training helped our project team to understand better how local communities perceive Kew Madagascar Centre as a conservation organisation and to clarify any misunderstandings with them. It was also an opportunity for the Kew team to consult local communities and hear their needs and aspirations. The training made the Kew staff even more aware of the needs to implement and negotiate an agreement with local communities.

The second training took place in the Madiromirafy site in the Maevatanana II District of the Betsiboka Region from 21 to 28 July 2023. Madiromirafy is a site currently under community management transfer, and is co-managed by a local community association and Impact Madagascar. The site is also being gazetted as a protected area and waiting for the legal decree from the government. As a protected area currently being established, Madiromirafy represents an interesting case study for the CMA and allows us to have two contrasting protected area contexts.

The training courses were highly successful and well received by both the communities and protected area managers and helped improve their knowledge of the various CMA-related topics, and their perceived ability to take part in the future negotiations (more than 50% of men and 32% of women had higher perception scores on these aspects after the training)¹. However, we were only able to work with a few community representatives. Also, as we indicated in our last change request (August 2023), the first two pilot trainings showed that the establishment and negotiation of the community management agreement, which is a much longer process than a one-off week-long training, will require a great deal more support for both PA managers and local communities to see it come to fruition.

Thus, we plan to conduct one additional training session each for the two protected areas to support the processes of negotiation to the establishment the CMA. We plan to run these two training sessions in December 2023 and in February 2024 (in Itremo and Madiromirafy respectively), with the aim of supporting the previous trainees to disseminate knowledge of the CMA throughout their communities, while also further enhancing their capacity. In addition, these follow-up trainings will enable progress to be made towards the negotiation stage (which will be the main focus of further trainings beyond this project end data – which we expect to be funded by Darwin in 2024-2026), by building local capacity to conduct community meetings focusing on CMA and about the key points which need internal consultations (within communities and within the PA managers).

In the longer term, there is also a need to carry out the CMA training in other protected areas and cover a wider range of contexts as 30% of PA stakeholders who attended the national workshop were not aware of the CMA, despite it being a legal requirement, and very few protected areas have one. This highlights the need for continuous capacity building for both communities and other protected area managers on the CMA, as well as to support the production of toolkits and guidance which are currently lacking for CMA establishment and implementation at the national level.

4.1 Support ongoing reform of Madagascar’s national PA safeguard policies (led by the Ministry of Environment and Madagascar National Parks) (contributing to Output 4)

The project team has been providing ongoing support to MEDD in the development of the PA Environmental and Social Management Framework (CGES in French – aka the national safeguard policy for PAs). The team successfully submitted the fourth version of the framework to the Ministry in May 2023, which includes a comprehensive list of regulations for managing protected areas in Madagascar, a methodology for evaluating the social impact of protected areas, mechanisms for addressing grievances, and draft recommendations and processes for the community management agreement between the PA managers and local communities. As the framework aims to serve as a national tool to guide the management of protected areas in Madagascar, the key recommendations have been presented to the environmental ministry and wider national PA managers, and funders at the national workshop in June 2023.

¹ Response to comment 1 on our first year report

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.

The main unexpected developments that our project has faced are in our activity 1.1 and 4.1 as detailed below:

Activity 1.1 Establish and maintain a database platform on the social impacts of PAs as well as social safeguard measures and other development interventions around PAs:

We have collated evidence on this from four protected areas. The datasets we have collated so far include detailed descriptions of any safeguard or development activities implemented by the four 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 were expecting more datasets from Madagascar National Parks and a few other organisations but have not been successful (these organisations have not been able to share these datasets with us, even after we have reached the final stage of drawing up a data-sharing contract). Our plan was for these datasets to feed into an open-source database which will be permanently hosted by FAPBM allowing stakeholders to continue to contribute to it after the end of this project. Although this activity has proceeded broadly as planned in terms of accessing datasets, the nature of the data received has necessitated some changes to the outputs. Briefly, the data acquired does not generally allow us to rigorously evaluate the success of safeguard interventions, and establish the open-source database, and we think this is representative of the situation in Madagascar – our work suggests that most PA managers have focussed on monitoring implementation, rather than evaluating impacts of their work in this area. As a result of this, and also demand expressed from stakeholders during the training course in February, we have re-oriented this output towards identifying strengths and weaknesses in PAs monitoring and evaluation of safeguards, in order to distil “lessons learned” and best practice recommendations for the future, which will be presented in a ‘best practice brief’ that we are planning to share with stakeholders by February 2024².

Activity 3.1. Train local communities on the community management convention

As noted above, we originally planned to conduct the training on the community management agreement with selected communities across three protected areas (PAs); Itremo PA (savannah woodlands in the central highlands managed by Kew Madagascar Conservation Centre and beneficiary of the new UK-funded Biodiverse Landscapes Fund programme in Madagascar), in the Ankirihitra-Mariarano PA (dry forest in the Boeny region managed by Impact Madagascar) and Marojejy National Park (rainforest in North-eastern Madagascar managed by Madagascar National Parks). The two first trainings we ran in July 2023, showed that the establishment and negotiation of the community management agreement will require much more sustained support to both PA managers and local communities required more support to see it come to fruition. We have therefore decided to drop the third protected area of Marojejy, and instead provide follow-up trainings to Itremo and Madiromirafy. These two additional trainings will be funded by the budget planned for the third PA as well as the underspend from the salary of one of our project team (Dr Manoa Rajaonarivelo) who recently completed a postdoctoral project in Switzerland and is now working part time for our Darwin project from September till March 2024.

Dr Neal Hockley from Bangor University has participated in these two trainings in person and has also been actively contributing to all the project activities through the project team regular weekly meetings (he also assisted in person with the technical training course in February)³.

² Response to comment 3 on our first-year report

³ Response to comment 1 on our first-year report

Activity 4.1 Support ongoing reform of Madagascar’s national PA safeguard policies (led by the Ministry of Environment and Madagascar National Parks)

We submitted a fourth full draft of the policy reform, primarily produced by our project, and in collaboration with 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) to the Ministry of Environment in June 2023. We also presented that draft and our project key recommendations to broader PA managers in the national workshop that our project convened in June 2023.

To be able to provide the final draft of this reform, we are currently waiting for the restricted committee feedback session led by the Ministry of Environment, as sign of their ownership of the CGES reform (represented by the department in charge of PAs and natural resource management). After completing this final version, the next steps would be having the Ministry sharing this with the larger committee, including policymakers and broader PA managers (originally planned for October 2023, and now postponed to December 2023).

These adjustments do not affect our budget and the revised timetable (submitted alongside the change request in August 2023).

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: The change request was approved on 10 August 2023 by BCF Senior Administrator, Eilidh Young

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)?

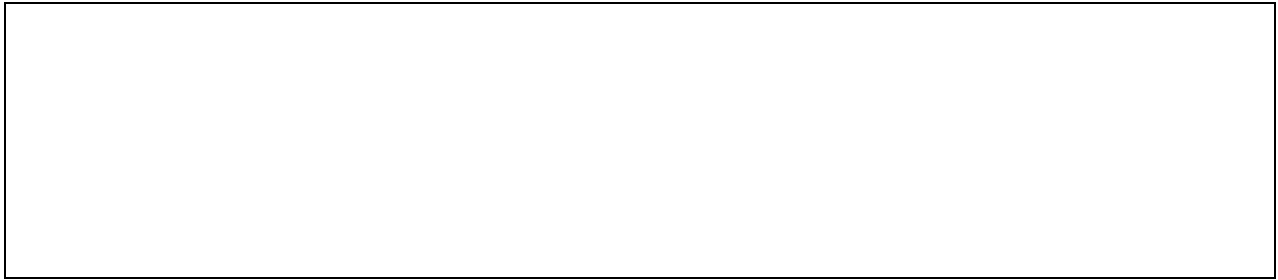
Yes No Estimated underspend: £

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. 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**