

## 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>	DARCC021
<b>Project title</b>	Strengthening conservation organisations in Madagascar
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Madagascar
<b>Lead partner</b>	Maliasili
<b>Partner(s)</b>	INDRI, GERP Madagascar, Madagasikara Voakajy (MV), Association Tsimoka, Association Famelona, Association Fanamby
<b>Project leader</b>	Karine Nuulimba
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR1
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	Maliasili.org

**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.

Maliasili is dedicated to empowering high-potential African conservation organisations, enabling them to enhance their effectiveness and achieve more significant conservation outcomes. This project's core objective is to bolster the organisational effectiveness, resilience, and influence of six Malagasy organisations. Initially our proposal centred on supporting three organisations (Fanamby, INDRI and Madagascar Voakajy), yet our portfolio is rapidly growing, and a change-request enabled us to double the number of beneficiary organisations benefiting from our leadership and organisational development (OD) expertise. The leaders of these additional three organisations (GERP Madagascar, Association Tsimoka, and Association Famelona) had all participated in the Madagascar Environmental Leadership Program (MELP), which built the trust and vulnerability between leaders that helped them feel comfortable sharing their organisational struggles with each other and learning together. They all work in protected areas management, nature conservation, environmental advocacy and natural resource-based livelihoods among Madagascar's communities and have successfully joined the initial organisations, working together on their path of growth.

Maliasili provides intensive OD services for 3-4 years, working with these organisations to become high-performing and impactful. Our approach is built upon trusted relationships, and on delivering top quality workshops, one-on-one coaching and advisory services on-site where the partners work (both at their head offices and in their field sites) based on a jointly developed annual Organisational Strengthening Plan (OSP) aimed at achieving specific improvements to

their strategy, staffing, board, organisational structure, communications, fundraising strategy, monitoring and evaluation, and overall management and administrative systems.

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems, which encompass indicators and targets, have undergone a comprehensive revision to accommodate changes in the number of organisations involved and ensure alignment with our desired outcomes and outputs, as well as the means by which we verify our progress. These revisions have been accepted. Additionally, we have reaffirmed our underlying assumptions, which can be summarised as follows: (i) Our first assumption underscores the pivotal role of local organisations as primary drivers of change with local community beneficiaries. (ii) The second assumption emphasises that by enhancing the skills, fostering strategic networks, and facilitating access to resources for the leadership teams of local organisations, we can significantly magnify their conservation impact. (iii) Local organisations can be successful in advocating for change in the fundraising landscape in Madagascar.

*Progress Toward Output 1:* Six Malagasy organisations receive organisational development through a holistic, multi-year partnership that enhances their strategy, people-management, and implementation:

- Based on our strategic planning methodology, we facilitated two week-long workshops with Madagasikara Voakajy (MV), which culminated in developing their five-year mission, theory of change, goals, and objectives. Maliasili also conducted an organisational assessment process (based on our organisational assessment survey tool) to diagnose and assess their level of organisational health. During a workshop with MV's team, the results of the organisational workshop were discussed, with priority areas identified for strengthening. The documentation process for their strategic plan has commenced, alongside the outcomes of their situational analysis.
- Maliasili's Madagascar team took a clustered approach to strategic planning in early August 2023. Eighteen (18) leaders from GERP, Association Tsimoka, and INDRI engaged in comprehensive discussions on core elements, including the core problem, vision, mission, unique value proposition, and organisational values, as well as their theory of change. This exercise has led to a more focused approach and an increase in their conservation impact.

Maliasili has successfully pioneered the unique and innovative clustered approach to strategic planning that represents a significant milestone in the conservation landscape. The primary objective of this cluster is twofold: to optimise the cost-effectiveness of Maliasili's services and expand their accessibility to a broader spectrum of organisations, all while fostering a culture of trust and collaboration among these entities.

This pioneering method has proven to be highly effective in enabling organisations to recognize and harness their unique qualities, aided by valuable peer feedback. Through this process, they can take substantial and purposeful steps toward meaningful collaboration. Within the framework of the clustered approach, organisations come together, sharing common challenges, and jointly envisioning their future. It's here that they meticulously carve out their strategic objectives, ensuring a harmonised approach that minimises duplication of efforts. This approach is an example of the power of collective action, as organisations unite to navigate shared challenges and work towards shared objectives while appreciating the distinctiveness they each bring to the table. This innovation is poised to reshape how conservation initiatives are planned and executed, leading to a more efficient, cohesive, and impactful conservation community. This innovation will certainly reshape how conservation initiatives are planned and executed, leading to a more efficient, cohesive, and impactful conservation community.

(A pdf document highlighting the Cluster Approach achievement is attached to this HYR).

- We initiated the first step in Association Famelona's strategic planning process by conducting a situational analysis with their team, allowing them to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, guiding their future strategic pathways.

- Fanamby received guidance to refine and finalise their Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan in alignment with their Strategic Plan. Additionally, their Executive Director benefited from advice on creating their Senior Management team and improving communication with donors.
- Communication: Four of the organisations are also in the process of preparing communication products, particularly their style guide and branding.

Assessment against indicators for output 1: All six organisations are on track for their organisational development frameworks, including four strategic plans, one Monitoring and Evaluation plan, and one situational analysis at the onset of the Strategic Planning process.

*Progress Toward Output 2:* Six Malagasy organisations improve their organisational leadership skills to better guide their organisations and build strategic collaborations and networks

We have worked with each organisation to develop an Organisational Strengthening Plan, and its implementation is closely monitored on a quarterly basis. The leaders from these six organisations maintain regular communication with the Maliasili team to receive guidance and support in developing stronger leadership, achieving greater environmental and socio-economic impacts, and gaining improved access to resources.

Maliasili organised a groundbreaking [forum](#) in Kenya, uniting 157 African conservation leaders to facilitate learning, collaboration, and collective action. Participation in this forum was a unique opportunity for six Madagascar’s conservation organisations comprising 19 participants, who usually have limited direct contact with their peers in mainland Africa, and whose work does not benefit from the cross-fertilisation of organisations who work in neighbouring countries and with whom they have limited access. The forum played a pivotal role in building strategic collaborations and networks among African organisations, as well as fostering connections with donors and international NGOs.

Assessment against indicators for output 2: Six Organisational Strengthening Plans are being implemented for all 6 partner organisations. The institutional- level organisational development audit will be performed by December 2023.

*Progress Toward Output 3:* The influence and voice of the six Malagasy organisations have been amplified, resulting in increased resources and shifts in funding towards local organisations.

Following the African Community Forum, Maliasili, in collaboration with African leaders, including those from the six partner organisations, has developed a vision and set of partnership principles that centres that place people and their rights at the core of their work. This [vision envisions](#) that local leaders and organisations possess the power and agency to advance their work with the support of partners worldwide, through equitable partnerships that bridge the funding gap, thus achieving greater conservation impact. To achieve this vision, [guiding principles](#) were jointly crafted, encompassing five principles on community rights and conservation, four principles on partnership, ten principles on funding, nine principles for building strong African CSOs, and five principles for impactful commercial partnerships in conservation. The establishment of these principles marks a promising starting point towards realising the indicators for Output 3, leading to an amplification of the voice and influence of funding practices in biodiversity conservation, initiating a shift in the fundraising landscape in Africa and Madagascar. This transformation aims to increase funding for local organisations, particularly for our partners.

**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.**

In July 2023, Maliasili submitted a change request to expand the scope of the project. Initially, the project involved working with three partner organisations: Fanamby, INDRI, and Madagasikara Voakajy. This change request was approved, resulting in the inclusion of three more organisations: GERP Madagascar, Association Tsimoka, and Association Famelona, all of which are existing partners with Maliasili. These additional organisations have been engaged in the Madagascar Environmental Leadership Programme initiated by Maliasili the previous year and are forming partnerships with the original three local Malagasy organisations initially benefiting the support in this project. We have learnt that we were too conservative and that more can be achieved with this grant than originally anticipated. By expanding the project to include six organisations instead of three, it becomes more cost-effective. Importantly, this change does not impact the project's timeline or its scheduled activities.

There is no change in the project overall budget, but we have adapted some budget lines:

- Consulting costs increased from GBP [REDACTED] in the original budget to GBP [REDACTED]
- Travel and subsistence was reduced from GBP [REDACTED] in the original budget to GBP [REDACTED]

**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

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

Change request reference if known: Not 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: £ 0

**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?**

So far, no issues have been raised in relation to this project.

**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**