

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	DAREX001
Project title	Developing a Global Biodiversity Standard certification for tree-planting and restoration
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Uganda, Kenya, Madagascar, Peru, Brazil, India
Lead partner	BGCI
Partner(s)	Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) World Agroforestry Centre- ICRAF TRAFFIC Ecosia Plan Vivo 1t.org
Project leader	<i>Paul Smith</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.biodiversitystandard.org/

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).

The project is on schedule, and progress has been made against the following outputs and activities as follows:

Output 1.1. Draft GBS certification assessment methodology developed by the end of year 1

Activity 1.1.1. Development of GBS certification methodology components assessment methodology, including online application process, remote sensing review and ground survey methodology, sub-contracted to technical partners by the end of Q1, year 1.

Contracts have been signed with all of the technical partners receiving project funding (SER, ICRAF, TRAFFIC, Ecosia and Plan Vivo. See **Supporting document 1** - Technical partner reports) to support the development of the methodology. In addition, the development of the remote sensing methodology has been sub-contracted to [Space Intelligence](#), a specialist remote sensing company.

Activity 1.1.2. Draft GBS certification assessment methodology developed and published in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish online by the end of Q4, year 1

The draft certification assessment methodology has been created (online form and ground survey form) and translated into French and Spanish. French, Spanish and Portuguese translators have been contracted to be available for the translation of relevant materials throughout year 1.

Output 1.2. Draft methodology tested in real world conditions in at least 6 countries by the end of year 2.

Activity 1.2.1. Agreements signed with at least 12 tree-planting/forest restoration project sites in at least 6 different biodiverse countries by the end of Q4, year 1.

Six biodiversity hub partners have been identified and contracted to the project in six biodiverse countries - Jardim Botânico Arariba (Brazil); Huarango Nature (Peru); Auroville Botanical Garden (India); MBG Madagascar; Tooro Botanical Garden (Uganda), and; Brackenhurst Botanic garden (Kenya). The six biodiversity hubs each have two or more testing sites identified and are actively conducting testing (see **Supporting documents 2a-f** – Hub partner reports). Project partners Ecosia and Plan Vivo have offered some sites for testing. A total of 43 sites have been identified for testing to date (see **Supporting document 3**).

Activity 1.2.2. Online application, remote sensing and ground survey methods tested with at least 12 tree-planting/forest restoration project sites in at least 6 different highly biodiverse countries by the end of Q3, year 2.

Testing of the ground survey methodology has been carried out on five sites so far, with written feedback received from the hub partners for all of these so far (see **Supporting documents 2 and 3**). Further field testing is ongoing currently. In addition, the technical partners reviewed the online application form at a virtual workshop held on 10th October, and substantial changes were recommended to the form – in particular, aligning many of the fields with International Standard Format terminology.

Output 1.3. Methodology refined and finalised by end of year 2.

Activity 1.3.1. Meetings held with project site practitioners and assessors, and verbal and written feedback received by the end of Q3, year 2.

A series of meetings have been held and scheduled with the hubs. Written feedback has been received from four hubs (Peru, Kenya, India and Madagascar) so far on preliminary testing of the ground survey form. A workshop for methodology review has been scheduled for January 16-20th 2023 in Limuru, Kenya. All hub and technical partners will attend this workshop to review results and set priorities for further testing in year 2.

Output 2.1. At least 10 training hubs established in at least 6 biodiverse countries by the end of year 1

Activity 2.1.1. At least 10 GBS hub host entities in at least 6 biodiverse countries identified and equipped with computers, survey and inventory equipment by the end of Q2, year 2

Eight hubs have been identified and funding has been disbursed to six of these so far. Budget for year one has included computers and survey and inventory equipment.

Activity 2.1.2. Potential trainers in each training hub vetted and identified by the end of year 1.

As above. Hub personnel are testing the ground survey methodology currently, and these specialists will be the first trainers.

Output 2.2. Full suite of GBS training materials developed and delivered to training hubs by the end of Q2, year 2

Activity 2.2.1. Data, tools and resources necessary for GBS assessments specific to each training hub collated and used in at least 10 hubs in 6 biodiverse countries by the end of Q2, year 2.

Collaborators from CIFOR-ICRAF have devised a stepwise work plan to collate presence observations for 'useful tree species'. It was decided to focus on useful native tree species given their potential of providing livelihoods to local communities, which were among the criteria for the GBS and the '10 golden rules for reforestation' (e.g., 'Restoring biodiversity will maximize carbon sequestration and help deliver socio-economic benefits'). The data on useful tree species and their native distributions (obtained from GlobalTreeSearch) have been integrated into a new database and app, the GlobalUsefulNativeTrees (GlobUNT) that is available to the public via the shiny app domain of <https://patspo.shinyapps.io/GlobalUsefulTrees/>.

Throughout the project, this App will be further enhanced, especially based on feedback from the national hubs. In collaboration with the national hubs, training materials will also be developed and made available in different languages.

Activity 2.2.2. Training modules in GBS and ER (online and face to face) developed in English, Spanish and French by the end of Q2, year 2.

Development of the training framework and materials has been contracted out to SER. SER has completed a review of potential training and mentoring materials from ERA Members and from SER, including SER's e-learning course and material from SER chapters and thematic groups.

Output 2.5. Climate Resilience Assessment Tool and other spatial seed source and tree-planting guidance tools available online by the end of year 3

Activity 2.5.1. Climate Resilience Assessment Tool calibrated for native tree floras (cf. 2.4.3) available to tree-planting/forest restoration practitioners in at least 6 biodiverse countries by the end of year 3.

The first iteration of the Climate Assessment Tool has been launched and is now available to users [online](#). The tool includes bioclimatic modelling data for all 58,000 of the world's tree species. Users can input their locality (lat/long), the tree species they wish to plant and select a climate change scenario. The Climate Assessment Tool (CAT) provides guidance on the likely suitability of taxa to the predicted future climate scenarios of the selected location. It achieves this by taking datasets of current known occurrences of taxa – such as those observed in the wild, in botanic gardens, and in general cultivation – and compares the current climate of these known occurrences to the predicted climate. By comparing the two climates a suitability score can be generated. It is this predictive modelling which supports informed decision-making on tree species selection.

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.

BGCI will shortly submit a change request for a minor budget readjustment within the existing budget allocation to SER so that more staff time is available for methodology review.

A potentially more serious concern is the devaluation of GBP Sterling, and the knock on effect for hub partners carrying out field testing. For example, the GBP40,875 allocated to JBA was worth BR310,650 in August 2021 when this project was first planned. In September 2022, GBP40,275 was worth BR233,676, a 25% drop in value. We will review the effects of this at the January workshop, and may have to adjust the budgets accordingly for 2023/24. A Change Request will be submitted if this is the case. This will not affect the overall project budget.

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: No

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

Change request reference if known:

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**