

## Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017)

<b>Project reference</b>	22-007
<b>Project title</b>	Establishing Sustainable Management of the Lake Sofia Catchment, Madagascar
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Madagascar
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Wildfowl & Wetland Trust (WWT)
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Asity Madagascar, Organisation de Soutien pour le Developpement Rural a Madagascar (OSDRM)
<b>Project leader</b>	Robert Shore
<b>Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 2017. HYR3
<b>Project website/blog/social media etc.</b>	N/A

### **1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).**

#### Output 1

Lake Sofia was designated a Ramsar site on 31 May 2017 at the 53rd meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention. As one of Madagascar's Ramsar Wetlands, the Government of Madagascar recognises the importance of the site and promises to ensure that the ecological character of Lake Sofia is maintained.

Training has been given to community associations on the rules, regulations and rights after the recent management transfer of lake resource management. The Lake Management Plan is now being followed, with illegal use monitored and acted upon. Minor offenses result in a warning and several major issues – mainly fires – have resulted in fines. Separate training has been given to support the administration and financial management of the associations. Two of the three associations have bank accounts. Training will be continuing over the remaining six months to ensure the associations have the capacity for effective independent management.

Discussions are ongoing with communities around an intact forest fragment further up the catchment to secure local forest management. Project partners have proposed a reforestation initiative to expand the area, creating direct biodiversity value, increased soil stability, and opportunities for sustainable use and mixed forest crops. As reported in previous feedback to Darwin Initiative, this process has taken longer than anticipated but the project is pleased to have tacit agreement from community groups to incorporate reforestation into the process and we are still optimistic that our output will be met, achieving management agreements with three communities.

Community fora and performance reporting are ongoing.

#### Output 2

The Farmer extension team has been established to support future growth of sustainable farming initiatives around Lake Sofia. Fifteen engaged and motivated farmers from the pilot scheme were selected to receive training and equipment to become project 'Agents'. Each agent has a bike for transport across the catchment, bags and cooking pots. They will be

integrated into project teams over the next full growing season with the aim of being able to lead their own framing groups during the 2018/19 growing season. Currently the Community-based Savings Groups will pay the Agents for their services sharing techniques. There is a high demand to join the sustainable rice farming initiative after successful trials over the last two years.

The project now has 114 farmers signed up to the sustainable rice pilot scheme. Farmers are producing 4.7 tonnes per/ha (Aug 2017) compared to a baseline of 1.5 per/ha. Drought was a problem this year so it is encouraging that yields remained strong. Seedling demand decreased from 45 kilo/ha to 15 kilo/ha which also contributes to increased profitability of sustainable rice farming. High-value perfumed rice has been produced. A private sector company was identified to purchase this product but local farmers have identified more lucrative local markets. The project is pleased with this development as it shows that local groups are taking the initiative to build relationships with the local private sector. 78 farmers were supported in vanilla reproduction in the villages of Andranovaky, Ambondrona, Antilongo, Lohan'i sofia and Antsiradahely.

The period has been the off-season for fishing so little activity has been seen in this area. However, it should be noted that the fishing no-take zone has been reduced on request of one of the three community associations. This opens up a corridor between the preferred community launch-point and the main fishing areas, removing the need to carry boats over land.

### Output 3

A workshop was held with the local Department of Education to discuss roll-out of environmental education in the region. The department of education requested that we widen our reach to a total of nine schools. So far the interactive course has been delivered at seven schools in the catchment. The course material has been accepted as contributing to the standard national curriculum objectives, so can be embedded into daily activities.

The Lake Sofia Logo has been agreed by all project partners and is being added to the newly erected Community Information Points (CIPs) around the lake. Other awareness material has been added to these CIPs and additional awareness events have been held. The CIPs are now also becoming a useful mechanism for sharing information and timelines for the 2018 release of the critically-endangered Madagascar pochard.

Asity have developed a bespoke awareness campaign to focus on the threat of small-scale duck hunting around the margins of the lake. This is generally done by school children in their holidays and not seen as an important livelihood activity.

Habitat restoration is slightly behind schedule, but is planned for the next Quarter with seedlings sourced and areas approved by the community associations. A study tour to successful reforestation projects involved all project partners; lessons learnt have been incorporated into planning.

### Output 4

The final agreed National Wetland Guidance has been translated into French and planning for the National Wetland Conference is underway, with a proposal accepted by the Ministry of Environment. The event will take place around World Wetland Day (2nd Feb), which will be expanded to a two-day programme with a high-level conference on wetland management, training for Ramsar site managers and a public engagement event in Antananarivo.

**2a. 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 up-stream management transfer agreement has been challenging, with a number of influential individuals blocking progress due to fears that they will lose tacit rights to farm

understory crops. The project has explored mechanisms to exclude agricultural use within the agreement but attention is now focusing on management transfer of plots suitable for upcoming reforestation, with community ownership incentive schemes for protecting the saplings. This approach is not expected to have a material budget impact.

The building of the project office was delayed due to difficulties registering a plot of land for development. This issue has now been overcome but it has resulted in a slight delay but no change in budget. We are pushing this project as hard as possible to get all building completed in the current dry season to the new planned schedule.

**2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?**

Discussed with LTS:	Yes (both mentioned in previous reports)
Formal change request submitted:	Yes (project office funding transferred to Y3)
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes

**3a. 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: £

**3b. 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 rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

**4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

None.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document. Additionally, if you were funded under R23 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate document.

**Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at [Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk). The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 22-035 Darwin Half Year Report**