



Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31 October 2016)

Project Ref No	Project 23-004 ref 3339
Project Title	Ex-situ conservation of threatened plants from the Ivoloina-lfontsy valleys, Madagascar
Country(ies)/Territory(ies)	Madagascar
Lead Organisation	Madagascar Fauna and Flora Group (MFG)
Partner(s)	Missouri Botanical Garden and Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Project Leader	Karen Freeman
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	HYR1
Project website/ Twitter/ Blog/ Instagram etc	Twitter: @c_birkinshaw; @MadaFaunaFlora; Facebook: @MadagascarFaunaGroup
Funder (DFID/Defra)	Defra

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: Training and capacity building provided to enable four young Malagasy men/women to organise field trips, conduct botanical inventories, and collect high quality seed samples for ex-situ conservation

Activity 1.1: Project Leader, Director of Field Botany and Field Botany Manager select four trainees (most former graduates of ISSEDD) (Q1)

In June we sought candidates for this training opportunity by placing advertisements in the Malagasy newspaper *Midi* and by placing recruitment posters at the Universities of Antananarivo and the University of Toamasina (ISSEDD). In total 12 applications had been received by the closing date: 6 from females and 6 from males. We decided to interview all these candidates. The first series of interviews for the Toamasina-based candidates was held on 21 June and the second series of interviews for candidates based in Antananarivo was held on 24 June. Following the interviews we selected two young females (Rajaijaona Benjamina and Rasoanindriana Maheninsoa Harisandy) and two young males (Rakotonirina Arsene Giovanni and Syde Remi Anthony).

Activity 1.2: The Project Leader and Director of Field Botany obtain the required seed collection permits (Q1)

In September aerial images were analysed to identify forest fragments remaining in the Ivoloina and lfontsy river valleys. In September too, on the basis of this analysis, we wrote and submitted a research proposal to the Malagasy government requesting permission to collect vouchered seed samples of Malagasy plants from these forests. We expect to obtain the research permit in October 2016.

1.3: Director of Field Botany and Field Botany Manager organises 12-month training course (3-month formal training and 9 months coaching with experienced field botanists) (Q1-4)

In July 2016 the Director of Field Botany and Field Botany Manager conceptualised a 3-month training course for the four trainee field botanists. Simultaneously, a building within the Parc

Ivoloina was renovated and wired for electricity so that it could accommodate the trainees during the training. This building was also used for classroom sessions. Nearby this building a simple shelter was constructed to hold two driers for herbarium specimens. In July 2016 the Project Leader, the Director of Field Botany and the Field Botany Manager, through the generous help of the staff at Missouri Botanical Garden, USA, placed an order for the IT and field equipment required for this project. This equipment is expected to arrive in Madagascar in October. To facilitate the training prior to the arrival of this equipment we were able to borrow some equipment from MBG's program in Madagascar. The training of the four field botanists began on 25 July and will finish in October. The training includes a diverse range of modules, some delivered by the project team and some by visiting experts. The trainees were evaluated after the first six weeks of training and will be evaluated again in October at the end of the training.

Output 2: Training and capacity building provided to enable six young Malagasy men/women the skills necessary to propagate and nurture native Malagasy plants

2.1: Project Leader and Manager of Conservation Horticulture select six trainees (Q1)

Before the training in Conservation Horticulture could begin it was necessary to select and recruit a Manager of Conservation Horticulture. To do this, on 6 June 2016, we placed an advert in the Malagasy newspaper *Midi* but by the closing date for applications we had received only two potential candidates (both male). On 24 June 2016 the Project Leader, the Project Manager and the Director of Field Botany interviewed these candidates but were not satisfied that either of them fulfilled the required profile for the post. Thus the Director of Field Botany contacted various professional horticulturalists operating in Madagascar to ask if they had any candidates to suggest. Fortunately one of these contacts proposed a candidate (Mamisoa Alexandre) who on interview proved to be both suitable and available and was therefore recruited to the post of Manager of Conservation Horticulture. The first task for the newly appointed Manager of Conservation Horticulture was to seek candidates for the proposed training. This was done by placing an advert once again in *Midi* and by placing recruitment posters at the Universities of Antananarivo and the University of Toamasina (ISSEDD). In total 46 applications had been received by the closing date for applications: 14 from females and 32 from males. The applications were analysed by the Project Leader, the Director of Field Botany and the Manager of Conservation Horticulture and 14 candidates (5 female and 9 male) selected for interview. These candidates were interviewed by the three project members at the end of September. Following the interviews we selected two young females (Malasoahina Micaëla and Mandimbiosa Lalaina Nina) and four young males (Joelimanana Théodore Antonio Platini, Razafimandimy Nelson, Rajaonarivelo David).

2.2: Manager of Conservation Horticulture expands and improves the nursery at Parc Ivoloina (Q1)

On 21 June 2016 the Project Leader, the Director of Field Botany and the Project Manager examined the existing nursery at Parc Ivoloina and discussed the improvements necessary if it were to be a model of its type. Several improvements were identified including: terracing, increasing light by removing adjacent trees, creating raised beds and constructing a shade house. It was also decided that a second nursery would be likely necessary and we therefore identified the location for the installation of this structure. In September the Manager of Conservation Horticulture with the assistance of local labourers began to implement these improvements.

As of September 30th we had not begun to implement activities related to Outputs 3 and 4 because these are related to fieldwork that had to be delayed due to the late receipt of the first payment (see below).

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.

We have encountered three problems during the last six months. Firstly, due to the unplanned departure of the original Project Leader from Madagascar Fauna and Flora Group we were obliged to change Project Leader just before the planned outset of the project. This combined with the late notifications of the grant awards led us to request a one month delayed start to the project (the rescheduled start date was 11th May 2016). The change in Project Leader and delayed start were both approved by the LTS administration.

Secondly, the first payment of the grant had to be sent to a bank account in the USA and was not received there until mid-July. Although we advanced funds so as not to delay the training part of the project unduly we were not able to advance the large sum required for the purchase of equipment which has led to a delay in the start of the fieldwork component of this project. We have not reported this problem to LTS because we believe that we can accommodate the lost time within our current planning.

Finally, the post-BREXIT vote devaluation of the pound against the dollar caused the equipment which we purchased in the USA to cost significantly more than anticipated in the proposed budget. However, probably, we will be able to accommodate these extra costs within the 10% permitted overspend for the equipment budget line. If this is not the case we will need to submit a rebudget change request.

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

Formal change request submitted: Yes (Change of Project Leader and delayed start of 1 month)

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.

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. 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**