



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31st October 2020)

Project reference	24-004
Project title	Conserving critical forest biodiversity in Guinea through sustainable agricultural livelihoods
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Guinea
Lead organisation	Fauna & Flora International
Partner(s)	ADCAP, CFZ
Project leader	Michelle Villeneuve
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	HYR4
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.fauna-flora.org/projects/supporting-effective-management-ziama-man-biosphere-reserve

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).

In the first two quarters of the final year of this project, the emphasis was on ensuring that robust and efficient systems were in place to provide household level support to over 80 families volunteering to abandon rice cultivation in the core zone of the MAB in favour of more sustainable livelihoods options including ginger production, coffee and oil palm agroforestry, and upland rice production.

Output 1: In the final year of the project, the focus has shifted to providing household-level technical support to those wishing to voluntarily cease farming in the core zone of the MAB. The trainings provided to 90 farmers in the first half of the year have used the same modules as those trainings already delivered in Y2-Y3 of the project, but disseminated directly to smaller groups of departing farmers, based on their selected new livelihood options. Thus small groups were trained on upland rice production and rice seed selection, nursery construction and maintenance, seedling production (agroforestry and indigenous shade and timber trees), ginger production, soapmaking, and more.

Output 2: Interest shown by community members in voluntarily giving up illegal cultivation in the MAB has grown significantly in the past six months, likely because the first supported departers have now spend a season outside of the MAB and focused on new livelihoods activities; it is likely that Covid-19 has also affected priorities. FFI, ADCAP, communities and CFZ have all worked together to define the terms of the voluntary departure agreements, and to determine the selection criteria for who should be supported to leave; now that there are more volunteers than time and funds, a selection process with equity and impact in mind has been defined, with input from all stakeholders.

At the time of writing, 88 farmers have been fully transitioned out of the bas-fonds, and there are 150 more who have been identified during a selection process to be the next volunteers to depart. The project has a goal of supporting the departure of at least 228 farmers from the bas-fonds, allowing an equal number of bas-fonds to regenerate to their natural state. We remain on track to achieve this.

Output 3: Ranger patrols have been able to continue unimpeded for the first two quarters of Y4, but all patrol activities were halted for the month of October due to security risks associated

with the presidential elections (October 18th); it is expected that deployments will recommence November 1st 2020.

Patrols between April-September 2020 have demonstrated a clear reduction in human presence and illegal cultivation in targeted areas of the bas-fonds as compared to the same time the year before; 68 individual bas-fonds have been abandoned and are showing signs of recovery. However, evidence of human presence in general, including poaching presence, has been mounting in the MAB as compared to the same period the year before. Anecdotally, this increase in forest presence is considered to be related to increased food insecurity due to movement restrictions associated with Covid-19. Moving forward, FFI and CFZ will work together to understand how historical and current patrol data can be used to better understand whether Covid-19 has been a driver of increased forest presence in the MAB.

Output 4: 68 individual bas-fonds with a combined area of over 80 hectares have been abandoned for at least one season, and are showing recovery via the establishment of pioneer species. Community sensitisation activities promoting knowledge of and interest in the Zياما Management Plan were undertaken by FFI and CFZ.

Covid-19: At the time of writing, fewer than 10 total coronavirus cases have been registered in the Guinea Forestiere region. Indoor gatherings are limited to groups of 20 people by national mandate, and masks and social distancing are required in certain circumstances. In all, the medical impacts of Covid-19 in the project area have been few, but the socioeconomic impacts have been more severe, as market prices are up 16% in Macenta and N'Zerekore since December 2019 ([WFP, 2020](#)). As noted above, there appears to be evidence that Covid-19 has increased human forest presence in Zياما MAB.

In May 2020, FFI Guinea established protocols and processes related to coronavirus that are still observed. Key adaptations include staff being allowed to work from home as needed, masks worn in the office, a maximum of 20 attendees at meetings and workshops (including support staff), and the rental of a larger room for external meetings to allow for social distancing.

In terms of supporting communities in the response to Covid-19, FFI has established handwashing stations in each of the villages we work with, and our trainings have been capped at 20 attendees (including trainers).

Moving forward, the goal is to better understand the impacts that Covid-19 (and associated movement restrictions and price inflations) upon the Zياما communities, and to understand similarities and differences to the socioeconomic impacts of Ebola 2014; the goal is to be able to take lessons from both epidemics, which affected the communities quite differently, and to work with communities to understand the most impactful systems changes that could be made to help communities adapt to an uncertain future, as well as mitigate the risk of future outbreaks of zoonosis.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for Covid-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

n/a

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of Covid-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Covid-19 has made our project activities much more urgent, and created a surge in volunteers who wish to leave the bas-fonds, but can't securely do so without a guarantee of support from FFI. This is not problematic to date, but it is indicative of a potential worsening of the food security situation in Ziama.

Rising costs in the area, likely resulting from supply and demand issues related to movement restrictions, have augmented FFI's costs. This has caused minor difficulties in project implementation, but nothing unsurmountable.

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

Discussed with LTS: No

Formal change request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

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. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

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

no

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 DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report** by email to 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: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**