



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

Project reference	24 – 009
Project title	Landscape approach to enhance biodiversity and livelihoods in the Comoros
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Comoro Islands
Lead organisation	Bangor University, UK
Partner(s)	Dahari, ICRAF, IUCN
Project leader	Dr Fergus Sinclair
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	www.daharicomores.org/en www.twitter.com/DahariComores www.facebook.com/DahariComores

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).

Output 1 Watershed management: The forest and landcover maps of Anjouan have now been completed. These are the most accurate and detailed maps ever produced for the Comoros and will be a critical tool to assist landscape management planning and evaluation in the years ahead. In the short-term these will be combined with biodiversity, water and socio-economic layers to identify priority intervention areas in the highlands. A strategic planning process has been initiated to learn the lessons from the water catchment management engagement over the last three years as well as the other components of this Darwin project in order to identify the best way forwards for the restoration of these upland hotspots.

Reforestation efforts have continued to improve and expand, with participatory evaluations of last year's campaign undertaken to improve delivery. 24 000 seedlings have been planted in community tree nurseries in the Moya forest area this year. Participatory spring and rainfall monitoring continue in four sub-catchments.

Output 2 Agroforestry: In the first six months of this year Dr Emilie-Smith Dumont has supported the Dahari team to develop and test a new participatory tree selection tool with 31 groups of farmers in target watersheds comprising 160 individuals (50% women). This tool complements the agroforestry manual to support technicians in the field by providing a visual interface to promote exchange and learning about tree diversity. The results showed farmers' preferences for trees that would provide nutrition, water conservation, soil fertility, fodder and income benefits. The team will continue to roll out the methodology in the first quarter of 2021 as they prepare for the next tree planting campaign.

Output 3 Climate-smart agriculture: The work undertaken during the first three years of the project to reshape Dahari's agricultural program and develop a sustainable scaling strategy has borne fruit this year with new EU funding. Despite the fieldwork constraints associated with the pandemic restrictions, Dahari has succeeded in providing technical support and training to 1800 farmers so far this year. Dahari continues to refine and adapt this approach and is now

looking at ways to better integrate the agricultural support to environmental actions and outcomes.

Output 4 Biodiversity conservation: Discussions are being finalised to put a further two Livingstone fruit bat roost sites under protection by the end of Q3, taking the total to seven and thus covering all roost sites in the Moya forest area. A plan to expand the PES scheme around each roost site has been developed with Bat Conservation International and will be used to engage expert advisors to support the programme in the future. Strategic reflections are also underway on the potential to expand the scheme to other ecosystem services as part of the water catchment management approach, and to finance the scheme in the long-term through integrating the export of agroforestry cash crops like vanilla and pepper.

Output 5 Advocacy and communications: The report from the IUCN-led advocacy workshop in Q4 of last year was shared via email with the participants, but there has been insufficient follow-up from both the IUCN and key actors in the Comoros towards either furthering IUCN's engagement in-country or in working towards forest landscape management commitments.

Meetings with key actors in Moroni were put on hold due to the pandemic but resumed in July. Various online and in-person meetings have been held with UNDP representatives linked to the Protected Areas Programme, and Dahari took part in a planning workshop. However, there remains a lack of clarity over program boundaries and responsibilities and how collaboration will move forwards. Communication events have had to be put on hold due to the pandemic.

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.

The follow up from the IUCN and especially key governmental actors in the Comoros has not been sufficient and this will limit the impact of the projects' advocacy component on the national forest landscape restoration commitments. Undertaking this work has nonetheless been worthwhile because it highlighted the challenges of working in the Comoros' political space and generated important lessons about key actors and policy engagement in the future.

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.

Dahari took a proactive approach to the Covid-19 pandemic, heavily reducing field activities in March and allowing expatriates who wished to return to their home countries. The Comoros turned out to be one of the least affected countries in the world, and restrictions on field activities were gradually reduced and finally removed at the start of September. Two expat recruitments have been successfully undertaken to replace those who left, with one further expat involved in the project continuing to work remotely. International travel for the partners and advisors has not been possible this last semester.

This context has slowed down progress with fieldwork in the last year of the project and reduced the level of international expert input given that all support and backstopping has had to be provided remotely. Nonetheless the activities have advanced on all fronts and – unless a wave hits the Comoros in the next few months - the pandemic is not currently expected to have major impacts on final results. The international traveling context over the coming months remains uncertain and some adaptive management may need to be put in place regarding the monitoring and evaluation activities to be undertaken in the last quarter of the project.

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 N/A

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**