



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

Project reference	25-026
Project title	Securing healthy baobab populations through efficient fruit harvesting and use
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Madagascar
Lead organisation	Madagasikara Voakajy
Partner(s)	Label CBD Consulting (LCBD) Direction Régionale de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable Menabe (DREDD) Fauna & Flora International (FFI)
Project leader	<i>Julie Hanta Razafimanahaka</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	<i>HYR3</i>
Project website/blog/social media	www.madagasikara-voakajy.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).

During the reporting period, we focused our efforts on three main areas: (i) lobbying to the government to lift the ban for the baobab fruit harvesting, transport and trade, (ii) improving communities' capacity to manage the baobab resources sustainably, and (iii) establishing and maintaining a nursery at each community.

The lobbying to the government consisted of developing a draft of non-detrimental finding document for *Adansonia grandidieri* following the workshop held during the baobab congress held in December 2019. This document was shared and discussed with the Ministry of Environment (MEDD) over five key meetings held in March (n=1), June (n=3) and August (n=1). Since the meeting in August 2020, the MEDD started the administrative process to remove the baobabs from the banned products. We are expecting the new note to be published by November 2020.

To improve communities' capacity to manage the baobab resources sustainably, we organized six training sessions in June and August 2020. The first training session focused on the use of management plans validated locally in November 2019 and reminding the newly elected leaders for each community organization of their roles, with trainers from DREDD. The second session aimed to train community members to assess baobab fruit production in their territory using established plots and methods from MV team since 2015. For this training, we developed a manual on how to measure the baobab fruit availability to each community prior to the assessment held by the community and to be compared with those by MV team. This manual was shared and tested with community members in September 2020. As result the estimation for Andohaviana and Bepeha community are very close to those of MV team, but the

Betankilotra community tend to overestimate the fruit available compared to those by MV team (summary of both estimations on Appendix 02).

To prevent low survival from direct sowing method for baobab plantation, we established a nursery for *A. grandidieri* at each community territory in April 2020. Sowing of these installed nurseries was held on May 2020 in order to have stronger seedling at the plantation period, these saplings will better resist the drought. For each nursery, we recruited person to take care of seedlings before its planting on rainy season (January). Each nursery contains 500 seedling of *A. grandidieri*.

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 major constraint encountered over the last 6 months was the restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Malagasy government issued a lockdown rule at the end of March 2020 and it was not lifted until July 2020. As a result, we could not hold all the meetings needed to lift the baobab harvesting ban. As a result, although we know the process is ongoing, we do not yet have all the relevant paperwork. When discussing with the communities, we always have to highlight that we do all the assessment and training, but the trade will happen only IF the ban is lifted.

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.

As a result of the Covid-19, the project team restricted the field visits to the minimum and was not able to continue the process to sign the management contracts for the community-based organizations. In addition, field visits of the FFI-based team planned the third quarter of this year will have to be postponed to the next financial year. This will affect the project budget and timetable.

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
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Formal change request submitted:	No
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Received confirmation of change acceptance	No
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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?

Following the discussion with the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development staff, this project should focus only on local and national trade of the baobab fruits, especially the powder, not the seeds or oil. This decision was taken based on the fact that all exports should be justified by a Non-Detriment Finding document that the Scientific Authority is still working on, and considering the nutritional benefits of the baobab fruits that all Malagasy people should be encouraged to consume. This might limit the amount of monetary benefits the communities will get from the trade. All data from this project will feed into the non-detriment finding analysis that the scientific authority will carry out.

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**