

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

Project reference	26-023
Project title	Bridging agriculture and environment: Southern African crop-wild-relative regional network
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia
Lead organisation	Bioversity International
Partner(s)	University of Birmingham (UoB); Southern African Developing Community (SADC) Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC), Lusaka, Zambia; Malawi Plant Genetic Resources Centre (MPGRC), Lilongwe, Malawi; National Plant Genetic Resources Centre (NPGRC) Tropical Pesticides Research Institute (TPRI), Arusha, Tanzania; Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI), Lusaka, Zambia.
Project leader	Mohammad Ehsan Dullo
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	31 October 2020, HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	http://www.cropwildrelatives.org/sadc-cwr-net/

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).

Activity 1 – Establishment of regional SADC CWR network

- A draft white paper for network establishment has been developed and presented to the SADC technical committee at its Curators' meeting in September 2020.
- With regard to the Access Benefit Sharing (ABS) of *in situ* conserved materials, we have secured support from the secretariats of the CBD (Nagoya Protocol) and ITPRGFA to jointly organise ABS workshop; a survey instrument has been prepared to gather data on the existing guidelines used in providing *in situ* CWR material and benefit sharing mechanisms of PGRFA.

Activity 2 – Enhanced SADC *in situ* CWR conservation Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia

- Partner countries have held multi-stakeholder meetings and in Malawi and Zambia, four and three priority protected area sites, respectively, have been nominated to be part of the CWR network.
- All countries have completed their checklist and inventory list; Malawi and Zambia have prioritised the CWR for *in situ* conservation.
- Preparation of National Strategy and Action Plan (NSAP) has been initiated in Malawi; Zambia is validating its revised NSAP with multi stakeholder committee.
- In Malawi, Parks and Wildlife and Forestry departments have provided management plans and stakeholders are assessing them to accommodate CWR *in situ* conservation.
- UoB has finalised the draft of peer review paper 'Integrating diversity and climate change analyses in conservation planning of crop wild relatives in Southern Africa' for publication.

Activity 3 – Enhanced SADC *ex situ* CWR conservation

- Quotations for upgrading of the SPGRC genebank with an electronic temperature monitoring alarm system have been received from three companies and are currently being examined.
- A collection mission was conducted in the districts of Salima and Nkhotakota in Malawi and 13 seed samples of CWR taxa were collected for storage in their national genebank.

Activity 4 – Enhanced SADC CWR use in crop improvement

- To encourage use of the conserved CWR materials from national genebanks, a strategy for increasing distribution of CWR accessions has been discussed among project partners and SPGRC to produce brochures and distribute to breeders to promote use of genebank materials. In Malawi, trait information on their CWR collections are being compiled to share with breeders. Initial assessment of data available for predictive characterisation of farmers' traits was done by UoB and Bioversity staff and the way forward was discussed.

Activity 5 – Enhanced farmers benefits from CWR conservation and use

- This activity has been delayed due to Covid-19, but a literature review of potential benefit-sharing mechanisms was undertaken and 30 key variables were identified for the assessment of actual/potential CWR breeding programme costs and benefits.

Activity 6 – Capacity building

- A new online training programme on the conservation and use of CWR in the SADC region was developed and five zoom sessions have been held with 31 participants from 13 SADC countries and four other countries.

Management and coordination

New Letters of Agreements were entered with the project partners. Since April 2020, four coordination meetings were held to review and monitor progress on activities, which were captured the project's Monitoring and Evaluation tool.

Communication and visibility

The project's webpage has been updated with an additional section called [Latest News](#), where regular short stories will be shared on project activities. Two such stories have been shared on the activities done in terms of technical backstopping in Tanzania on conservation planning and the results of the SWOT analysis conducted among breeders on use and conservation of CWR.

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.

We faced a problem in disbursing money to Malawi due to invalid banking details. This is being resolved. Despite this, our partner MPGRC was able to pre-finance the activities during this period and keep abreast of their work. Communication with the country partners continues to be a challenge, especially in Tanzania, which often undermines our coordination meetings. However, notes of meetings are shared with partners and the project coordinator reached out to partners through WhatsApp to discuss their progress individually.

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.

In Malawi and Zambia, limited field work and collecting missions could be undertaken because of Covid-19 pandemic. In both countries, the field in-depth studies could not capture the full diversity of CWRs in the field. It will be necessary to return to these sites in early 2021. Partners will require additional funding to carry out these field activities. Travel budget will be re-organised to allow them to undertake the field trips such that the overall project travel budget will not be affected. Under activities 4 and 5, the farmer's workshop in Malawi and Tanzania planned for April and May 2020, could not be undertaken and it was not possible to validate the potential benefit sharing mechanisms with farmers. Also, due pandemic, it will not be possible

to reach the target of 1500 farmer as planned as limited number of farmers can gathered at field visit.

The pandemic will affect several workshops (Training, ABS workshop, Steering Committee and Annual meeting (combined)). For training workshop, we decided to develop an online training programme which will run from May 2020 to March 2021 and be composed of a preparatory phase, series of small-groups training sessions and post training support. While this will save on international travel funds, it will require more time for trainers to run the training programme in this way. It is proposed to re-direct the travel budget for this workshop to staff time and change request will be prepared for this. For the ABS workshop, we have contacted secretariats of CBD and Plant's Treaty to co-organise the workshop with us and we decided to postpone it to year 3 to allow more time to organise this important workshop. We will be holding the steering committee virtually in October 2020 and the savings on travel budget will be redirected to support national partners' field works.

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:	Yes
Formal change request submitted:	Not yet, but change request in preparation
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 other issues to raise.

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**