



## Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020)

<b>Project reference</b>	27-004
<b>Project title</b>	Building future resilience for communities and wildlife in Ambondrobe
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Madagascar
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Farming and Fisheries (MAP), Groupe de Semi-Direct de Madagascar (GSDM), Graine de Vie (GdV), Marie Stopes Madagascar (MSM)
<b>Project leader</b>	Chris Ransom (formerly Jeff Dawson)
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)</b>	HYR1 30 October 2020
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	N/A

**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:** Monthly pond heron surveys have taken place as planned since the start of the project in July. At the end of each month, the team surveyed Lac Ambondrobe and non-permanent satellite lakes and, twice a year in February and July, the team survey all the lakes within the four localities of the protected area (Aboalimena, Ankaivo, Belobaka and Andimaky), the farthest being 22km from Lac Ambondrobe. In July, pond herons were recorded on 8 of the 14 lakes. In August and September, the species was recorded in Ambondrobe and non-permanent satellite lakes in Ampialiampotaky and Bemangily. On Lac Ambondrobe itself, the number of pond heron recorded increased from 4 in July to 7 in September and 19 in October. Madagascar side-necked turtle (rere) surveys will go ahead as planned on 5 November 2020. All equipment has been purchased and the traps have been prepared.

Patrolling continues on schedule, with 4 patrol groups active from 4 villages. Each group is undertaking 12 patrols (days) per month meaning we are maintaining our target of 3 patrols per week. Since the use of smartphones and SMART, patrol efficiency and data quality has improved greatly. For instance, the distance covered by patrols has increased from 248km in July to 308km in September. The number of patrol man-hours has also significantly increased in the most recent quarter (918hrs) compared to the previous quarter (644hrs). At the same time the number of infractions reported has decreased in this quarter (140) compared to the previous quarter (175) suggesting that increased patrolling may be having an increased deterrent effect. Despite early successes, additional training is needed for some patrollers to improve their use of SMART Connect. This was planned for the first quarter of the project, but the specialist training team was not able to travel from Antananarivo to site due to COVID-19 related interregional travel restrictions in Madagascar. Patroller training will now take place in November 2020.

During July and August 2020, 8.14 hectares of marsh were planted with phragmites. In total, 72 people from eight villages and camps around Lac Ambondrobe participated in this activity which lasted 22 days, representing a very successful community effort. Invasive water hyacinth had been growing less rapidly in recent months, but we started to see a resurgence in three areas shortly after the project started. Over a total of 15 days, 28 people participated in removing the invasive species from these areas.

Work in the tree nurseries began at the end of September in four sites. Six endemic seed species collected from local communities were used to prepare the nursery pots (seedlings): Dalbergia sp, Commiphora sp, Cordyla madagascariensis, Albizzia lebeck, Terminalia mantaly, Baudouinia rouxevillei.

To date, Aboalimena has 12,000 pots sewn, Ankaivo has 24,000 sewn pots, Belobaka has 6,000 sewn pots and Andimaky has 6,000 pots ready to be sewn.

**Output 2:** Recruitment for two key project roles has unfortunately been delayed due to COVID-19. However, interviews for the role of Agriculture Technician and Social Coordinator took place week commencing 26 October. The successful candidates will be notified at the beginning of November meaning they will be in post for the majority of the main agricultural season and to coincide with the commencement of VSLA and reproductive healthcare activities from the end of November.

During the first few months of the project, we had to engage with Groupe de Semi-Direct de Madagascar (GSDM), who are our partners in delivering Climate Smart Agricultural (CSA) activities, to negotiate a new MoU and budget for the activities they are to be involved in. Despite working with them to develop the original proposal and budget, at the point of developing the MoU, GSDM proposed to increase their costs significantly beyond what was originally discussed. We have therefore remodelled their involvement in our CSA activities so that they will be involved only in the first year of the project to help set up the activities and train Durrell staff. For the remaining years of the project, trained Durrell staff will oversee these activities. GSDM will intervene at two points: (i) the agricultural studies/surveys which will take place from the second week of November 2020 and (ii) the training phase which is planned for the first week of December 2020.

The field team have already started to identify motivated farmers and create FFS groups. These are the groups that will receive Climate Smart Agriculture training. Four FFS groups based in Aboalimena and Belobaka have been set up and FFS groups are in the process of being established in the other villages. All FFS groups will be set up ready to receive training from December. Ahead of the main agricultural season (starting late Nov, Dec) the agro-ecological seeds have been purchased (400 kg of leguminous seeds in total) ready to cover approximately 30 hectares of CSA cultivated crop field.

**Output 3 & 5:** As explained above, COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns have delayed the recruitment process for the Social Coordinator role, but the successful candidate will soon be in place – see Output 2. This person needs to be in place to begin VSLA activities (output 3; feasibility assessment and market value chain research) meaning that these activities are behind schedule. The evaluation of the four local associations (output 5) has not yet started either, for this reason and because COVID-19 restrictions have meant that community meetings have not been permitted. Following training from Durrell's existing Socio-Agronomist, these activities will be the first priority of the new Social Coordinator and we are confident we can be back on schedule by the end of December with no change needed to the overall time frame of the project.

**Output 4:** Durrell and Marie Stopes Madagascar's (MSM) partnership began with our Jersey Overseas Aid funded conservation livelihood programme at three other sites in Madagascar. To launch our new partnership for this project, an amendment to the existing MoU was made to extend the areas of collaboration to include Ambondrobe (this project) and Menabe (concurrent CEPF funded project). This has now been signed by both parties. A first project meeting took place between MSM in Antananarivo and Durrell to officially launch the new Darwin project. It was agreed that the Single Provider Officer (SPO) based in the District of Belo sur Tsiribihina will lead and implement the reproductive healthcare activities in Ambondrobe. It was also agreed that activity planning will take place one month in advance of any planned clinic dates allowing Durrell staff time to inform and sensitize village communities before the SPO attends. The first intervention of MSM is planned for the beginning of December. The baseline health assessment, which is part of the household survey, was planned for September-October but had to be postponed due to coronavirus meeting and travel restrictions. It is now planned for November 2020 – see below.

**Baseline Household Surveys:** The restrictions imposed by COVID-19 in Madagascar have delayed the implementation of the baseline household surveys, which were due to take place in September-October 2020. However, with restrictions now lifted and interregional travel permitted, the baseline survey is scheduled to take place from the third week of November 2020. The three investigators who will collect data on the nine villages are selected and final revisions to the questionnaire templates are being made. Investigator training is planned to take place in mid-November and the data collection in the field will begin shortly after.

**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.**

Regarding reforestation, we proposed initially to set up nurseries in two sites: Aboalimena and Ankaivo. However, the MEDD are now encouraging all communes to participate in reforestation and the mayor of Andimaky commune has asked us to do so. So, we have adapted our reforestation activities to set up nurseries in Belobaka and Ankilizato (Andimaky) also. Both of these sites have a functioning Local Association (VOI). This does not impact our overall budget or timetable but means that reforestation costs will be split over two additional sites with nursery technicians in place for the two new nurseries from November 2020.

The fact that GSDM had raised their costs so significantly in the time since we submitted the stage 2 proposal was an unexpected development. However, we have reached a new agreement and way of working that suits both parties, is within the agreed budget, and will result in a greater degree of training and responsibility being passed to local Durrell staff which is beneficial for project sustainability and for skills development in the Ambondrobe region more widely.

**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.**

Madagascar experienced a strict lockdown from March to September, with measures that prohibited movement between regions and all group meetings. During this time, the implementation of community activities and patroller training under the project was not possible for Durrell staff based in Belo sur Tsiribihina or Antananarivo, or for project partners based in Antananarivo (GSDM and GdV). Government partners and local/regional authorities also had their attentions diverted to dealing with the immediate COVID-19 response activities meaning we are only now able to officially launch the project at this level. Juliette Velosoa will be in Ambondrobe in November to hold these meetings. Travel between regions was reinstated on 26 September. The resumption of activities at the village level began at the beginning of October while respecting the COVID-19 safety measures. As the project only started in July, we are fortunate that the restrictions have not delayed any of our activities significantly, and we anticipate the entire project will be back on schedule by January 2021 without any longer lasting impacts.

**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  No

Formal change request submitted: Yes  No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/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?**

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 DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to [Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk](mailto: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**