



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31st October 2021)

Project reference	27-004
Project title	Building future resilience for communities and wildlife in Ambondrobe
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Madagascar
Lead organisation	Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
Partner(s)	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)
Project leader	Chris Ransom (formerly Jeff Dawson)
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 October 2021, HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	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).

Outcome monitoring activities.

0.1 Completed Y1. Next activity due in Y3.

0.2 Monthly monitoring surveys were conducted at Lake Ambondrobe with five to 25 individual pond herons identified monthly. In July, the second bi-annual survey of 2021 was conducted across the entire Ambondrobe Ramsar site with Madagascar pond heron recorded at eight of the 12 wetlands visited. The highest abundance was recorded at Ambondrobe lake, where seven individuals were seen, with one to three individuals being observed at the other lakes.

Preparation work for next seasons surveying of the Madagascar side-necked turtle (Rere) has been undertaken with 184 nest covers constructed, survey equipment purchased, and meetings held with local community nest monitors in four villages around Ambondrobe. Two local people responsible for nest monitoring were identified within each village who were trained in the nest information to be collected. This meeting was also an opportunity to remind local people about laws and local conventions surrounding Rere and what to do if someone accidentally catches one. Three juvenile Rere's were brought to Durrell following accidental capture by fishermen which were measured and marked prior to release at the site of capture.

0.3 This activity is due to take place during Q4.

Output 1. Improved community engagement reduces negative impacts on and is actively restoring lake and forest habitat by 2023.

1.1: From April-September 211 patrol days (841 person days) covering 1,149 km were undertaken. This is below the targeted average number of patrol days per month (35 actual vs 54 target) primarily due to issues with absence in June and August and an equipment failure. We are currently deploying additional technical support to address ongoing training needs of the community patrollers (see section 2a).

1.2: Monthly meetings between the field teams and patroller groups continue to be held in each village. Frequent reports of illegal cutting of rosewood were raised as a concern during July and August meetings in Aboalimena. In response patrols were redirected to the border of the management transfer area of Aboalimena and boundary of Belo Commune on Tsiribihina to target the location of logging in the forest. This information was also escalated to the level of DREDD Menabe (Regional Ministry of Environment) and following discussions with the Regional Director, the DREDD's enforcement team will execute a mission to Ambondrobe in October 2021.

1.3: Analysis of SMART patrol data continues as planned. Monthly reports have been produced and are submitted with this report.

1.4: Reports covering Jan-Mar and Apr-Jun of 2021 have been distributed to regional partners (DREDD, CEEF, District and Municipalities) and reporting for Jul-Sep (Q2 of the project timetable) is currently underway.

1.5: The ongoing training in the use of SMART OSM tracker and SMART mobile has led to improvements in patroller capacity. However additional training remains a priority as some patrollers are still reliant upon the presence of a patrol leader to complete the patrols and to ensure accurate patrol results are submitted. There have also been challenges in the uploading and sharing of data with Durrell staff. Durrell's data team are scheduled to deliver 22 days of training in the use of the smartphone software to Ambondrobe patrollers in October 2021.

1.6: Meetings have been held in the six villages surrounding the lake to plan marsh restoration activities which is due to be carried out from October 2021.

1.7: Water hyacinth removal is planned from October 2021 onwards.

1.8: Three new nurseries were set up in collaboration with Graine de Vie in the villages of Aboalimena, Ankaivo and Belobaka. Three nurserymen were selected and trained by Graine de Vie in setting up and maintaining the nurseries. A total of 30,000 nursery pots of native species including *Commiphora sp*, *Cordyla madagascariensis*, *Boudouinia rouxvillei* and fruit trees, including papaya and mango were set up.

1.9: The annual tree planting is due to take place during February 2022.

1.10: Monitoring of the reforestation area was undertaken in collaboration with DREDD Menabe in June 2021. The results of the survival rates per site were 59.23% for Aboalimena, 81.66% for Ankaivo and 84.66% for Belobaka villages.

Output 2. Provision of Climate Smart Agriculture training through Farmer Field Schools leads to increased crop yields, improving income generation and food security for over 300 households whilst reducing harmful environmental impacts by 2023.

2.1 & 2.2 : Completed

2.3: An initial workplan/action plan for the implementation of CSA techniques was developed in Y1. In August 2021, a follow-up and evaluation mission on the practice of CSA techniques was organised in collaboration with project partners GSDM in 5 villages. Based on the results of these evaluations the action plans for the implementation of CSA practices were reviewed and updated.

2.4: During this last project period, an additional three FFS groups engaging 84 new members (including 35 women) were created and structured into farmer field schools.

2.5 & 2.6: The 84 newly engaged FFS members have been trained on CSA techniques and have been provided with agricultural inputs (seeds and tubers) and materials (tools).

2.7: In the next quarter, school vegetable gardens will be established in target schools.

2.8: Crop yield assessments for the Y1 agricultural season have been undertaken in three villages. The representative of DRAE (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock) at District level participated in the field assessment of crop yields (including rice crop, black-eyes peas, mung beans) and 34.4 ha have been cultivated utilising CSA techniques.

Output 3. Sustainable financial tools and market-based opportunities are developed for 9 fokontany and reach at least 270 individual members (60% of which are women) by 2023.

3.1 – 3.3 Completed during Y1.

3.4: Five new VSLA groups with 85 members (including 68 women) have been set up in three villages. These groups were provided with VSLA toolkits and were trained on VSLA modules.

3.5: Following the training, weekly meetings were organised for these VSLA groups to follow-up and to monitor group activities. These five new VSLA groups have already started to authorise loans.

3.6: To date, the VSLA approach is operational in five villages.

3.7: Five representatives of FFS groups (including 3 women) participated in the Menabe sustainable agriculture forum and were able to exhibit their crop products at the event.

3.8: The identification and analysis of value chains in Ambondrobe will be planned during Q4 2021.

Output 4. All households across 9 fokontany in Ambondrobe have access to reproductive health support by 2023 to make choices concerning family planning and household wellbeing.

4.1 & 4.3: Completed in 2020

4.2: 24 community village information meetings were undertaken by the community health agents in the nine villages to engage the community in the family planning initiatives.

4.4: Two visits were made by MSM staff in collaboration with the community health agents in the nine villages. In total, 125 women have benefited from family planning services in the nine villages (109 implants and 16 intra-uterine device).

4.5: A refresher training session was organised for 17 community health agents (including 7 women) working around Ambondrobe village.

4.6: Two reports relating to the two visits of the family planning services the nine villages were produced by MSM.

Output 5. Local governance capacity and community cohesion is increased across 4 local associations (193 community members) through the provision of capacity building, improved local association infrastructure and social events.

5.1 Completed Y1

5.2: Following the VOI skills and competencies assessment, three training curricula have been developed.

5.3: In total, 45 leaders from the four VOIs have been trained on the three training modules.

5.5: In June 2021, four protocols were developed with community villages from Aboalimena, Ankaivo, Belobaka, Andimaky villages for the construction of VOI offices.

5.6: A local contractor to construct the association offices has been identified and the construction budgets were developed. The contract with the builder will be finalised in October 2021.

5.7: The VOI's offices construction and the purchase of materials will begin in October 2021.

5.8: Four coordination meetings have been organised for the VOIs.

5.9: Football competitions are scheduled to take place in October 2021.

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.

In recent months, security issues in the area have intensified with bandit (Dahalo) attacks becoming more frequent and violent in the villages. This makes it challenging to implement project activities (including meetings, training events, VSLA activities etc.) without exposing staff and community members to risk. Following Dahalo attacks in July this year, there have been revenge attacks and a destabilisation of inter-village and inter-fokontany community relations. This situation reduces the number of communities participating and committing to different activities, particularly those which require travelling. To address this situation, we have begun organising some activities and training at village level to reduce travel requirements, however, this has slowed down the rollout of certain activities and increased costs.

As mentioned in Section 1, the number of patrols delivered falls below the expected level during this period. This was due to an absence of one of the patrol leaders combined with a lack of capacity within the remaining team members to collect data using SMART OSM Tracker and SMART mobile. There was also an issue with equipment failure coupled with challenges associated with the collection, uploading and sharing of patrol data with Durrell's data team. To address these problems Durrell's SMART Technician is committed to deliver an additional 22 days of training in October 2021 to both patrollers and two Ambondrobe technicians. We will also be increasing the number of people we engage as patrollers to establish a 'bank' of trained patrollers to fill in for any unplanned absences. A key lesson is that training needs to be delivered regularly (and follow up training delivered regularly) to ensure that turnover in patrollers does not lead to a loss in patrol oversight and that training progress is not lost.

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 was hit by a second wave of the Covid-19 outbreak and was under national lockdown from the end of March 2021 to the end of May 2021. This affected our staff directly (through some absences) and their ability to deliver project activities on time.

To deal with the national health emergency the number of participants during meetings or gatherings has been limited to less than 50 people (for instance the case of village patrol evaluation meetings).

Travels between regions and at national level were also prohibited during this time and this limited the supports/visits done by Durrell staffs and project partners (such as GSDM) at central level during the pandemic. Travel has resumed since May 2021.

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	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 **X** Estimated underspend:

We will be submitting a change request shortly after this report is submitted in to avoid a significant 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**