



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

**Challenge
Projects**



**Biodiversity
Funds**



**Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus
Half Year Report**

Note: If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2022

Project reference	28-001
Project title	Building wetland resilience in Madagascar; Community-based conservation of Lake Tseny
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Madagascar
Lead partner	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) Madagasikara Voakajy (Mavoa)
Partner(s)	Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (DWCT)
Project leader	Harison Andriambelo, Country Coordinator, WWT Madagascar
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	October 2022, 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).

Our main achievement has been the finalisation of the formal requests for community management transfer agreements (known as ‘VOIs’ in Malagasy) for four community groups with over 450 members, though this number seems set to grow. At the request of the communities themselves, one of the groups represents all lake users from the surrounding ten villages, while the other three represent members of village clusters that wish to protect catchment forest. The lake VOI includes a no-take zone where the lakeside forest restoration will take place. The VOI transfer agreements were actually signed on 7 October, at a large ‘town hall’ event that was attended by representatives of all communities and presided over by the regional departments of environment and of fisheries. The senior project supervisor from WWT was also able to attend from the UK.

Other significant progress includes the completion of household and fisher baseline surveys, habitat mapping and planning for upcoming biodiversity surveys. The potential for nominating the lake as a Ramsar site has been discussed with the regional authorities, the national Ramsar focal point and the main project partner, Mavoa, and there is general agreement to move ahead with collating the evidence for the biological justification but that the communities themselves should agree that they wish to proceed with the nomination; in which case, it should be discussed and potentially included within the site management plan, on which consultations will take place in early 2023.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

The main lesson was that there are some vested interests in local government positions that have been reluctant to support the establishment of the VOIs, possibly because they are involved in facilitating migrant fishers to use the lake in contravention of fishing restrictions – something that the VOIs are specifically aiming to control. Nonetheless, we have been able to complete the consultations and approval process for all four VOI applications by the end of the reporting period, and the three management transfer contracts were signed on 7 October.

It was not possible for the WWT Project Manager to visit Madagascar until recently, but all Covid-related restrictions were dropped by the Madagascar government in September 2022, which fitted well with the end of the dry season, when site visits are most productive as travel is relatively easy and local communities are generally available for consultations. This has allowed the project supervisor from WWT to provide closer management support to the project team, and to revise the monitoring plan for the project. There have been no other changes or challenges due to Covid.

3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS-LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS: Yes/No

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

Change request reference if known: n/a

4a. 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: £

4b. 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 re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget 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.**

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

We would like to note here that we think a project extension may be required, with no change to the overall budget. If so, we will submit a change request before the end of 2022. Secondly, please find attached (Annex 1 & 2) the missing responses from our first six-monthly report.

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response 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 NIRAS-LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**