

## Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects 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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022**

<b>Project reference</b>	28-008
<b>Project title</b>	Restoring the Alaotra Ramsar Watershed - The Breadbasket of Madagascar
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Madagascar
<b>Lead partner</b>	Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Alaotra Rano Soa, DREDD, DRAE, Graine de Vie
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Fidy Ralainasolo</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>HYR1 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<i><a href="https://www.durrell.org/conservation/">https://www.durrell.org/conservation/</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/durrellwildlife">https://twitter.com/durrellwildlife</a></i>

**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: 12 community nurseries, together producing c.100,000 saplings annually to enable 120Ha reforestation annually within priority zones by project end.***

- 1.1 Fifteen (15) watersheds on the eastern side of the lake have been delineated. A workshop is still to be held in March 2023 with local authorities in the northern and western part of the lake to collect data and produce maps of priority areas for reforestation and marshland restoration. Five (05) village meetings were held to present the project and raise awareness with local communities in preparation for the 2022-2023 reforestation campaign. The restoration plan is still to be drafted, but all data is collected. Twelve (12) committees were set up to allow local community associations to organise participation in the creation of nurseries. A local by-law document has been produced with the community to protect the planted area from fire and livestock disturbance.
- 1.2 Five (05) community nurseries have been installed in Vohitraivo, Vohibola, Vohimenabe, Vohimenakely and Analanomby (one nursery on shared land), and Morarano, producing at least 165,000 seedlings to enable reforestation of 150 Ha.
- 1.3 Five (05) training sessions on nursery set-up and maintenance were conducted with the 14 nursery technicians during the nursery set-up phase.
- 1.4 Five (5) monitoring and evaluation assessments of the nurseries were carried out to inform nursery maintenance and improvements in seedling production.
- 1.5 Tree planting will be carried out in December 2022.
- 1.6 Four (04) patrol officers have been put in place to periodically monitor the reforested area, and five (05) patrols were carried out during the dry season. Cleaning and hoeing will be carried out in November and replanting in December-January. The production of signs will be carried out annually after reforestation. 1855m of firewalls have been created in sensitive areas of the reforested zone.

**Output 2: 5km of channels in priority areas are cleared annually of invasive water hyacinth and 75Ha of reed-phragmites are planted by project end, to restore habitat, improve water quality, and increase access to the lake for fishing and ecotourism.**

2.1 Completed

2.2 On 22 September 2022, 3.97 hectares of marshland (9.5% of Y2 objective) were planted in Analanomby, in collaboration with 103 villagers, local authorities and in the presence of the Deputy of the Rural commune of Vohimena, the Chief of Fokontany of Analanomby and the Chief of the forest of Amparafaravola. The plantation will continue until the end of December 2022.

2.3 2.85 kilometres of canals were cleaned of water hyacinth, including: 2.1 km of tourist circuit canal in Bandro Park, with 10 members of local communities; 0.5 km of patrol canals in Vohimenabe, with 25 fishermen and CFLs; and 0.25 km of patrol canals in Vohimenakely with CFLs and VOIs. 14.07 hectares of lakes occupied by invasive plants were cleaned by members of the local fishermen's association of Andilana sud. The number of participants during the cleaning work varied between 41 and 96 people, (78.2% of the objective for Y2). 3000 kg of organic compost were made from invasive plants removed from the satellite lakes; this activity was carried out in collaboration with members of two FFS groups in Andilana sud.

**Output 3: Local associations (COBAs) within Alaotra Rano Soa (ARS) are effectively managing 40% of the marsh area with c.300 people representing all 33 associations receiving training by end of project.**

3.2 After assessing training capacities and needs in all 33 COBAs during year 1 of the project, COBA members received a training session on community life, business planning, gender, and conflict management by the Durrell training team, the ARS and the District Chiefs of Amparafaravola and Ambatondrazaka. There are 244 participants in 32 COBAs in the four areas of the ARS. During each training, the trainer conducts a pre-training and post-training evaluation to analyse the effectiveness of the training provided to COBA members.

3.4 Two (02) land identification meetings for the construction of the two remaining ARS offices are outstanding - some proposals have already been made to ARS members.

3.6 The fisheries monitoring strategy was carried out during Y1 and the action plan is being implemented with the federations and DRPEB. A coordination meeting was held to plan activities and revitalise the federation. The meeting was held with the 9 representatives of fishers around Lac Alaotra PA, four of whom are women working in the post-capture sectors.

3.7 Four (04) zones of the LRA held a coordination meeting every month, with 10 to 15 members participating in each zone. The main agenda of these meetings were: the identification of land for reforestation, the two LRA offices, the problem caused by the conversion of marshland into rice fields, and the census of fishermen. The annual GA/evaluation of each zone will take place December – January, and data is currently being collected from each activity sector in preparation. The presidents of the marshland federations held a meeting to compile the monthly VOI reports for the SG of ARS so that the latter could coordinate the activities. Over the last six years, the 6 meetings have focused on the major problem for VOIs, which is land grabbing, as well as the beginning of fire season in the marshland.

3.8 Two (02) missions were carried out by the DRPEB team, one of which was to raise awareness and formalise the registration of fishermen. Four (04) associations are registered as formal associations. The second mission consisted of monitoring and controlling illegal fishing gear. In this case, the team collected a large net (Harato lay) of 250 metres in length in collaboration with the Analanomby patrols. The provision of fishing equipment has not yet taken place as we are currently in the process of identifying beneficiaries in the fishing villages.

3.9 The evaluation meeting on the Co-management of ARS has not yet taken place due to the non-appointment of the DREDD, given that the latter plays a principal role in this meeting.

3.10 Fourteen (14) reports and/or complaints written by local associations were registered and forwarded to the Forestry Department and the DREDD team. The verdict of an old case of land clearing followed by rice plantation came out on 30 September 2022. As a result, the 12 perpetrators were sentenced to one year's imprisonment with a fine of 4 million ariary for each offender. 105 Patrollers (or 109.4%) around the Lac Alaotra Protected Area received training on the use of SMART mobile, including 4 presidents of marshland federations, 19 presidents of local associations and 82 CFLs.

**Output 4: Approximately 2500 people across 12 villages are supported to derive greater benefits from their agricultural and natural products whilst utilising natural resources more sustainably.**

- 4.1 Implementation of the off-season started in April and is still ongoing in 3 villages (Ambohidavakely, Ambaibofo and Ambatofotsy). Eight (08) FFS groups have been created (91 beneficiaries, of which 50.5% are women). For the 2022 - 2023 high season crop, twelve (12) villages were trained on agricultural activities along with the revitalization of committees and the creation of new ones. 43 FFS groups were created.
- 4.2 Three (3) groups were formed (cultivation techniques, pest control, composting techniques and climate-smart agriculture). Four (4) new lead farmers were identified.
- 4.3 Three (3) FFS groups received supplies (bean, cucumber, onion) and materials (bucket, watering can and sprayers).
- 4.4 The evaluation of the 2021-2022 season was carried out in nine (09) villages out of twelve (12). The evaluation of the remaining three (03) villages will be postponed to November. Sixteen (16) FFSs composed of 309 beneficiaries were also evaluated. The performance survey is underway.
- 4.5 From March-September, eight (08) other villages among the twelve (12) have been sensitized on the VSLA concept. Six (06) new VSLA groups have been created up to September 2022 (Ambatofotsy: two (02) groups with thirty (30) members; Ambohidavakely: two (02) groups with 30 members; Ambaibofo: two (02) groups with 20 members). Until the end of September, the eighty (80) members from the six (06) newly created VSLA groups were trained on the eight (8) VSLA modules and received the necessary equipment for the activity. During the last six months, nine (09) village agents were identified. The identification of the other three (03) agents will be carried out very soon.
- 4.6 Weekly data collection was carried out in twelve (12) VSLA groups up to the 30 September.
- 4.7 Four (04) women's basketry groups were created during the same period. Two (02) groups are located in Ambohidavakely and the other two groups are located in Ambaibofo.
- 4.8.1 & 4.8.3: At the beginning of August, two (02) members representing the Vohibola FFS and the Ambohidavakely basketry groups participated in the Fier Mada, in Antananarivo.
- 4.9 The in-depth analysis of each value chain is complete, and the report (in French) is attached (Annex1).

**Output 5: Understanding of carbon sequestration capacity of Lake Alaotra's watershed, including lake and marsh, is improved to inform development of external investment opportunities for sustainable habitat restoration**

Preliminary discussions with a blue carbon expert from the Institute of Zoology (IoZ), UK, have taken place, with plans for two MSc students (one from UK, one from Madagascar) to undertake the carbon stock assessment. We plan for this to take place in mid-2023 (we will submit a change request to move these funds to Y3).

**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.**

- Basketry and FFS groups were not able to participate in regional trade fairs, as none were organised by local authorities. Therefore, we plan to participate in fairs outside the region.
- Low participation of beneficiaries in technical training during the 2022 off-season was due to community activities (family celebrations). Therefore, in the future, we will bring forward any training to April and off-season targeted farming activities to March.
- The donation of land by DREDD for the construction of the Tanambe area office has been legally problematic, and the procedure remains difficult, as the office must be located in the administrative centre of the area (in town). Some steps have been implemented with donors, such as DREDD, the regional council, and DRAE, but the construction has not yet taken place. Once this process is concluded, the construction should start in November.
- Rodents have been eating seedling stems in the reforested area, which affects their survival rate, and has led to an intensification of replanting work in the reforested area.

- There continues to be a risk of revenge provoked by offenders against community patrollers as a result of joint operations carried out by the OPJ (Officier de Police Judiciaire or agent verbalisateur de délit) of DREDD;
- The number of OPJ of DREDD Alaotra Mangoro is insufficient to meet the needs of the forestry cases. As a result, there is still a delay in processing complaints.
- Intervention by politicians on illegal activities in the PA encourages criminals to continue.
- The introduction of land agents by marsh clearers who carry out land surveys within the PA is making it difficult for VOIs to monitor their territory.
- During COVID-19 restrictions we sometimes had limited time in the field. But thanks to the strong involvement of local people in the project (well-trained organising and monitoring committees), the community was able to continue activities based on discussions and instructions by phone.

**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: No

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

Change request reference if known:

**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?**

Comments in response to Annual Report:

**Direct planting:** The current survival rate of the direct-planted seedlings is around 45%, lower than at the time of the annual report. The direct seeding technique encounters increased risks created by low annual precipitation rate and the invasion of rodents, which is avoided by hardening trees within the community nurseries. We will replenish the lost seedlings (and have already identified the species consumed by rats – we will sow species not targeted so this rate will increase).

The direct seeding technique is done in climates with high rainfall such as the eastern part of Madagascar, and this method was selected in Y1 due to late approval of the project. One adaptive species on our site is the *Trachyllubium verticillum* (survival rate up to 65%) but others need hardening in the nursery.

A key component of the community-led nursery approach is that it creates both employment, community buy-in and an opportunity for utility species to be grown alongside the native species. The training delivered to nursery technicians is part of Durrell's approach to create

capacity-building opportunities where possible and provide opportunities to generate income from conservation.

**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](mailto: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**