



**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: 31st October 2023**

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|------------------------------------|---|
| Project reference                  | 28-009  |
| Project title                      | Enabling youths to lead conservation in eastern Madagascar  |
| Country(ies)/territory(ies)        | Madagascar  |
| Lead partner                       | Madagasikara Voakajy  |
| Partner(s)                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Association Mitsinjo (Mitsinjo)</li> <li>– Money for Madagascar (MfM)</li> <li>– Label CBD Consulting (LCBD)</li> <li>– Délégation de la Jeunesse Moramanga (DeJJS)</li> <li>– Circonscription de l’Agriculture, de l’Elevage Moramanga (CIRAE)</li> <li>– Circonscription de l’Environnement et des Forets Moramanga (CIREF)</li> </ul> |
| Project leader                     | <i>Voahirana Claudia Randriamamonjy</i>   |
| Report date and number (e.g. HYR1) | <i>HYR3, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023</i>  |
| Project website/blog/social media  | <a href="http://www.madagasikara-voakajy.org">www.madagasikara-voakajy.org</a><br><a href="https://www.facebook.com/madagasikaravoakajy">https://www.facebook.com/madagasikaravoakajy</a>   |

**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).**

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

This project tackles a key driver of Madagascar's accelerated biodiversity loss: the growing population's need to clear forests for agriculture. Around three Reserves in eastern Madagascar, we will equip 200 youths with the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to increase yields through sustainable farming, adopt aromatic and medicinal plants in their farming systems and market their products with ethical enterprises. Youths will share their knowledge, skills, and experience in their communities and will engage all members in lemur conservation stewardship.

Our key achievements to date are as follows:

- 21 youth groups, with a total of 233 members, have been established and are functioning.
- All youth groups have already practiced sustainable farming techniques on their 31 demonstration plots.
- 70% of young people have already adopted improved farming techniques on their own land
- Provision of necessary support, such as seeds, agricultural equipment and labour, is being rolled out gradually according to pre-identified need.
- Aromatic and medicinal plant samples have already been analysed to find out if they correspond to the needs of the 04 potential buyers identified.
- Young people have received training on the creation and management of cooperatives, which has helped significantly in the creation of 05 functional cooperatives for the conservation of lemurs and sustainable development at community level.

For this reporting period, progress against each output is as follows:

**Output 1: 200 youths take steps to move towards sustainable farming techniques in Analamazaotra, Ankeniheny and Mangabe, including composting, agroforestry and crop diversification**

**From May to September 2023:**

- 8 field trips were undertaken by MV to achieve the objectives with the 17 youth teams and 4 cooperatives concerned.
- 10 field trips were carried out by Mitsinjo to ensure that progress was being made with the 4 youth teams and one cooperative in Andasibe.

During each field trip, the teams reinforced messages on the importance of community life and highlighted key learning points from training already received by the youth teams. These included: the advantages of living in association; creating cooperatives; the importance of uniting for the development of the community and the biodiversity conservation. The youth groups were able to appreciate how being in a group allows one to acquire new skills, to participate in local development, and to learn to live in society. The activity reports that had already been produced by the youth groups were collected and fed into MV and Mitsinjo databases to ensure quality recording and MEL. In addition, all 21 focal points also received capacity building on group management and reporting

**From May to June 2023:** The 31 demonstration plots of the 21 youth groups were monitored to collect yield data, adjust the production plans and give advice to the young people. The agricultural practices selected by the young people are as follows: beekeeping, fish farming, pig farming, field pea production, bean production, green bean production, fruit tree planting, irrigated rice production, market gardening, cassava production, peanut production, corn production and potato cultivation. During follow-ups, we always ensure the sustainability of the techniques adopted. We ensure that the principles of agroforestry are respected at the level of demonstration plots and individuals, and that composts are always used to improve soil fertility. These sustainable farming activities have already generated money for the groups according to financial and cash management monitoring. This money will allow the groups to purchase materials necessary for the association, to perpetuate the adoption of sustainable techniques

through the purchase of improved seeds and the remuneration of surplus labour. The rest will serve as a reserve fund for future needs.

The plots of young people ready to adopt sustainable agricultural practices on their own land were identified and then demarcated to guide them. The adoption of new sustainable practices by other young people will be a gradual process because capacity to adopt depends on the crop calendar and the availability of arable land. Each group has received a share of their agreed support (i.e. seeds, agricultural equipment and labour) according to the stage in the annual cropping calendar and the needs expressed. A database allows the support status of each group to be tracked.

**From June 6 to 12, 2023**, the Regional Director of Fisheries and the Blue Economy Alaotra-Mangoro visited the fish farming project of the youth group in Ambodigavo (Commune of Lakato). He took the opportunity to share the vision of the Ministry and guide young on the activities to do to improve the fish farming sector according to the local context. He even provided a report on areas for improvement in the fish farming sector and prospects. The Director mentioned in the report that young people should follow the advice given on site to obtain high yields such as reducing the density of carp. He also mentioned the in-depth study on the hot water source beneficial for carp while minimizing land clearing.

**In August and September 2023**, the team began monitoring the adoption of individual sustainable farming techniques by the young people, in order to populate the databases and to be able to give them relevant recommendations. All production plans were reviewed and updated. The youth groups in PK33, PK32, PK21 and Amparalalana also received support, training and supervision on the creation of solar dryers for drying fruits and vegetables according to market needs identified within the framework of agricultural cooperatives.

**In September 2023**, the demand from young people in Lakato, Ambodigavo and Mahafiaina for Agricultural training in Collaboration with the Moramanga Agriculture and Livestock District (CIRAE) was also met. The chosen sectors of focus are coffee and citrus fruit cultivation.

### **Output 2: Production of aromatic and medicinal plants becomes part of youths' farming system**

**From June 23 to 25, 2023**, as part of the training of cooperative members and participation in the Tsenabe Miray agricultural fair in Moramanga, the Label CBD team was able to explore interest in integrating aromatic and medicinal plants into their activities with representatives of the 05 cooperatives in Moramanga. Samples of *Centella asiatica*, *Desmodium ascendens* and *Siegesbeckia orientalis* collected by the young people following the standards were exhibited at the fair. This is to show potential buyers that they have these products to order and sell. And samples are available for buyers to see the quality

In addition, the feasibility study for the production of *Ravensara* cuttings was carried out in July 2023 in two areas in PK40 and Andapa (Municipality of Mangarivotra). The field trip consisted of identifying two trees for each study area, collecting and then distilling leaves. In total, four (4) essential oil samples were produced and then analysed to determine their respective chemotypes. Based on the samples received of dried leaves of aromatic and medicinal plants, 5 youth groups are interested in the production of dried leaves of *Centella asiatica*, 2 for *Desmodium adscendens* and 2 for *Siegesbeckia orientalis*.

The land for the aromatic and medicinal plant nursery has all been secured while awaiting the results of research into market opportunities and which plants would be most appropriate for adoption in each village. 06 nurseries are already operational in the Mangabe Protected Area. The 04 youth teams in Andasibe have already been able to set up nurseries to multiply the *Tambourissa trichophylla* to insert them into the practice of young people.

### **Output 3: Youth-led cooperatives are established to drive social and economic development and biodiversity stewardship in the villages**

**In May and June 2023**, the members of the cooperative bringing together young people in the PK Axis benefited from an introduction to the handling of agricultural products. During the training sessions, the following topics were covered:

- Good hygiene, cleanliness and safety practices
- Product conservation objectives and techniques: cold, heat, reduction of humidity and chemical levels
- Processing fruit and vegetables, peanut preservation and production of cassava and sweet potato flour
- Packaging honey in glass jars
- Storage of collected materials and processed products

This cooperative was also trained in packaging and presentation of their products during exhibitions: sorting of products before packaging, placing in jars, labelling and stand presentation

**On June 7 to 8, 2023**, a discussion was held between the Youth Project Coordinator and the team of the Regional Directorate of Industry, Commerce and Consumption (DIRCC) in Ambatondrazaka for the preparation of training for members and the legal recognition of the 05 cooperatives. The completed cooperatives' files, required for the legalisation process, were brought to Ambatondrazaka to facilitate further action.

**On June 21 and 22, 2023**, 05 members per cooperative were trained by the DIRCC team and the staff of MV on the creation and registration of cooperatives, as well as key issues and points to remember for the good conduct of a cooperative. The staff from CIRAE and the Delegation of Youth Moramanga helped too. Theories on sales technique and financial management were shared with the cooperative members at the end of the training. To practice their skills, the 25 members of the cooperatives immediately participated in the Tsenabe Miray agricultural fair to exhibit their products, familiarise themselves with sales and to prospect for customers as well as better understand the market, under the supervision of all the project partners. Agricultural products such as peanuts, corn, beans and salads were put on sale alongside finished products such as cassava and sweet potato powders and packaged boxed honey.

**On June 23, 2023**, the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumption visited the stands in person, along with the national manager of cooperatives. The young people were then able to express their needs and make themselves known. Participation in this small fair allowed the cooperatives to revise their business plans based on the market realities. Furthermore, participants in the exhibition were able to publicise their activities and products, share profits from the sale of these and create customer – supplier relationships. 10% of the sale price was directly used for lemur conservation activities. It should be noted that the feedback, discussions and exchanges between different cooperatives during the fair were really enriching for their development.

**In September 2023**, the registration certificates of the cooperatives were obtained, and the 05 youth cooperatives are now legal entities under the law in Madagascar. This legal recognition has given cooperative members increased confidence, for example, when the cooperative in Andasibe became legal; the young people immediately developed their business plan and training in processing agricultural products.

Throughout the month, reminder sessions about the key elements for success as a cooperative were carried out for the 05 youth cooperatives. Meetings of the boards of directors per cooperative were also held to establish and clarify the business plan for each cooperative. The main sectors of cooperatives are generally oriented towards processed and preserved products due to high added values and ease of transport. The main sectors are as follows depending on the cooperatives: honey, gluten-free flour, dried fruits, chili, peanut oil, beans and crafts. A database on these cooperatives is functional to ensure monitoring and evaluation.

**Output 4: Three private enterprises, engaged in sustainability, commit to sourcing products from the youth-led cooperatives and support their development as a business and biodiversity steward entity in the villages**

Supporting the 05 youth cooperatives for their first participation in the regional fair, which took place in Moramanga from June 23 to 25, 2023 allowed them to identify potential buyers and begin negotiations to reach a contract. This has the advantage of guaranteeing young people outlets for their products and, consequently, of ensuring a stable and sustainable source of income through development of contracts. As far as possible, negotiations took into account, the realities on the ground such as, transport conditions, distance to travel for collection and local price. Around 700 people visited the stand and the members of cooperatives were able to identify 7 potential individual buyers whose contacts have already been exchanged for further information and/ or appointments for contract signing.

Thanks to this fair, the company Madagascar Consulting Ingredients (MCI) gave each cooperative a draft contract to sign for the pepper plantation after the negotiations. The cooperative at Axis PK level immediately organized a general meeting in August 2023 to discuss it. Thus, 73 ares were identified, demarcated and characterized for the production of peppers intended for MCI.

**In August 2023**, the AROMASOURCE company discussed its interest in supplying raw materials to young people for further cultivation from January 2024. Geranium (*Pelargonium graveolens*), black pepper (*Piper nigrum*), ginger (*Zingiber officinalis*), vetiver (*Vetiveria zizanioides*) and tagetes. (*Tagetes minuta* or *Tagetes bipinata*) were of particular interest. The information has been transferred to the cooperatives so that they can analyse whether it is feasible.

To facilitate customer prospecting and market research, a database with contact information relating to the sectors chosen by the cooperatives is being populated and the approach and/or appointment making will be started very soon.

**Output 5: Youths engage other community members in sustainable farming, cooperatives and biodiversity stewardship**

**From May-June 2023 to August-September 2023**, youth activities in the 21 target villages were monitored and evaluated within the framework of farming, conservation and development activities. For each field trip, the team collected data on practices and the adoption of agricultural techniques by the community, on conservation activities (reforestation, patrols and awareness rising) and mini-development projects carried out by young people. The MV team even participated in mass awareness rising on lemurs, collective patrols and reforestation organized by young people in the 17 target villages in and around the Mangabe Protected Area. Training and reminders about the best ways to ensure the smooth running and success of these activities were carried out based on the evaluation. Data and information on youth engagement and the approaches adopted are grouped into a functional database to help measure the impact of the project.

**In August 2023**, the cooperative in Andasibe received training in environmental education to ensure that information on lemur conservation goes down well with the community.

Video interviews were done for all the young members of the 04 cooperatives except the cooperative in Andasibe which is currently planning to do it. The interview consists of asking young people's perceptions of the effect and impact of the project so that they can be analysed.

The questions asked are as follows:

- What are the impacts of the youth project on your livelihood?
- What are the impacts of the youth project on environmental protection?
- What are the impacts of the youth project on the development of your village?
- What are the impacts of the youth project on you (private or personal)?

**In August 2023**, the Fotsife PK21 youth group was able to set up a school garden in collaboration with the local Public Primary School to provide support to students during the lean period and to reduce the burden on parents in teaching children. Support in terms of labour and seeds was provided to ensure the planting of market garden produce, papaya and rice on an area of 8 Ares (0.08 hectares)

Other activities include the monitoring of the project and important visits:

- In August 2023, a meeting between Madagasikara Voakajy, MfM and Mitsinjo was held to respond to Darwin's feedback during the year 02 annual report, clarify and adjust Safeguarding policies as well as impact indicators.
- On the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2023, a meeting between MFM, MV, Label CBD and Mitsinjo was also held to closely monitor the progress of the project and the impact. So, we are now correcting the database and clarifying the indicators, trying to relate our activities and results on lemurs, increasing Darwin visibility on the ground and our websites. The organisation of data collected on young people and focal points as well as their activities was carried out thanks to exchanges and working sessions between the team.

**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.**

Madagascar is currently in an electoral year, and all the ministries are preparing the election directly or indirectly. Thus, it is difficult to involve certain partners, especially the Directors and the department heads, because the youth project is not at all their priority for this year. We were still able to resolve this problem thanks to advance planning and timely communication.

The treasurer of the cooperative in Andasibe was murdered by her lover on April 18, 2023, leaving a void among young people. And it was on May 26, 2023 that an election to replace her was carried out during the cooperative's general meeting.

The price of products from aromatic and medicinal plants has a considerable influence on the motivation of young people regarding their production because buyers ready to respect sustainable collection standards have low purchase prices compared to other itinerant collectors.<sup>1</sup> We continue to look for buyers who satisfy the cooperatives in terms of price and sustainable collection.

The difficulty encountered also lies in the delivery of samples of products from aromatic and medicinal plants by the youth groups. Sample production often takes longer than expected and so the sample arrives after the companies' collection deadline. To resolve this problem, we must speed up the process and strengthen communication with young people.

Acts of vandalism, such as the destruction of the bean cultivation demonstration plot of the youth group at PK32 by strangers, demotivate the young people. We continue to encourage young people and strengthen monitoring in this case and file complaints with the competent authorities.

The activities of the youth groups, especially patrols, disrupt the tactics and activities of those who are cutting down trees and poaching wildlife. They know that what they are doing is not authorised and is prohibited by law. So, they don't like patrols because this always results in a report to be sent to the authorities as well as potential arrest. Thus, threats and abusive complaints against nature defenders, especially young people, continue to increase locally. To overcome this problem, we always encourage the young people to increase the number of

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<sup>1</sup> The Ravina Company is interested in sustainable collection but they no longer want to increase prices despite negotiations. Their limit is 9,000Ar/kg for well-sorted centella. However, intermediate collectors pay 10,000 Ar/kg for unsorted centella but they don't really say the names of the companies that send them. But they only say that these companies do not collect on site but wait for the products in Antananarivo with a minimum quantity per deliver.

people on patrols and to always remain vigilant. We also closely monitor matters concerning young people and coach them so that they do not become demotivated. We also instil in young people that our sacrifices today are also intended for our next generations.

The condition of the roads linking Moramanga and the sites continues to deteriorate. The travel time is becoming longer and longer and is very tiring, which affects the schedule and reduces the will of certain partners from the Ministry. This is significant because their involvement is really important to help MV give recommendations to the young people. In addition, these partners can also bring innovation. If they often, fail to visit, due to bad roads, the young people risk missing a lot of potential project benefits. The partners of the ministries are the team of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Youth Delegation, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Fisheries.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: Yes/No

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

Change request reference if known:

**4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)**

Actual spend: ██████████

**4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2024)?**

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: £

**4c. 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.**

**NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.**

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

No.

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, 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.

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with NIRAS 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**