



**Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects**  
**Half Year Report**  
(due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021)

<b>Project reference</b>	28-023
<b>Project title</b>	Promoting forest governance for resilient ecosystems and communities in Segou
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Mali
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Tree Aid
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Sahel Eco
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Amadou Tangara</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2021, (HYR1)
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<i>www.treeaid.org</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).**

The project start date has been revised to November 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 due to further checks by FCDO on the security situation in the project area. The security situation, whilst challenging due to the presence of non-state armed groups in the Segou region, was deemed acceptable to start the project.

**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.**

N/A

**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.**

Agreed new start and end dates (Nov-21 to Oct-24) and budget revision.

**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

Formal change request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance      Yes

**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?**

We were asked to provide responses on some questions in the half year report, and do so now:

*1. more details about how the communities will get their products to market and the rationale for tree planting and use of land would have been welcome - please comment in your first half year report (HYR);*

Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) are marketed in the villages and at the many weekly fairs. The most important fairs in the cercle are those of Tominian, Fangasso, Benena and Mandiakuy. The project will also support the installation of two sales points/boutiques for NTFPs in areas with a high concentration of people to facilitate the marketing of products. The project will also support village tree enterprise (VTE) groups to participate in national and international fairs (SIAGRI, FINAGRI, Quinzaine de l'Environnement, and other trade events) to facilitate the creation of commercial relationships with buyers of the products.

Tree planting is a common practice in the Tominian circle. They involve both local and exotic species. These tree plantations help to renew the ageing NTFP-providing stands.

*2. it would have been helpful to have information about other aspects of biodiversity in the project area. The proposal also covers water and other environmental aspects that need to be improved if dryland/forest areas are to be restored (HYR);*

The vegetation in the cercle of Tominian is of the savannah tree or shrub type. The large trees that are frequently found here are: Vitellaria paradoxa (shea), Adansonia digitata (baobab), Parkia biglobosa (dwarf), Lannea microcarpa (resin), Sclerocarya birrea (plum). To these can be added the combretaceous and acacia trees. Some tall grasses such as Andropogon gayanus and Penicetum sp are in the process of disappearing, giving way to certain increasingly invasive species, such as certain Caesalpinaceae like Cassia Tora.

The fauna on the other hand is very poor but one can nevertheless find in the forests: guinea fowl, hares, hyenas, monkeys, jackals, partridges, squirrels and in the aquatic zones: manatees and numerous species of birds (ducks, turtle doves, partridges...).

The circle is now facing an advanced degradation of biodiversity resources due to rapid agricultural expansion, overgrazing, logging and unsustainable hunting. The situation has been aggravated by low rainfall, increased bushfires and loss of soil fertility which is degrading. As a result, the diversity of trees and grasses has been severely reduced and wildlife populations have declined, including birds, insects and soil microorganisms. According to the results of forest inventories carried out in the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso and Ségou in 2014, the rate of loss of forest area between 1987 and 2014 in the cercle of Tominian is 19%. At the same time, the predominantly agricultural areas increased by more than 48%.

The project approach focuses on trees as a means to help tackle this degradation but also incorporates other activities. This includes training for 3000 farmers on Soil and Water Conservation (SWC) techniques

to adopt on their farms along with agroforestry – targeting 6,500 hectares of degraded agricultural land. Equipment will be distributed to aid in this work. Furthermore, SWC activities will be carried out in the forest areas too. Competitions will be run annually to encourage adoption of the practices.

**3. the Village Tree Enterprises (VTE) component remains vague (HYR);**

The Village Tree Enterprise (VTE) focuses on the entrepreneurial organization and capacity building at the village level to improve local processing and marketing and marketing of NTFPs. The Market Analysis and Development (MA&D) approach is used to promote the VTE. The MA&D is a methodology developed by FAO to assist local entrepreneurs in developing income-generating enterprises while conserving tree and forest resources. It enables poor rural households to assess potential returns and risks associated with different strategies for the development of enterprises based on tree and forest products. After a preliminary planning, the MA&D process is conducted in three phases:

- identification of potential enterprise through inventory of existing resources and products, recognition of products that are already providing income for local people and elimination of non-viable products and financial objectives by local people interested in developing enterprises.
- Selection of the most promising products, identification of potential markets and discussion of means to commercialize the products.
- Preparation of an enterprise strategy and business plan and training

**4. it is not clear who will be delivering the FAO market assessment methodology (HYR);**

The Market Analysis and Development (MA&D) approach will be led by Tree Aid staff in collaboration with Sahel Eco field staff.

**5. the logframe could be clearer:**

**a. activities 2.5 (access road) and 2.8-2.11 (work with charcoal and coal producers, loggers) are not mentioned in the Output statement, nor explained anywhere;**

The logframe has been updated to include reference to these activities and outputs – this is being submitted as a formal change request. The roads are a means to an end; as having easy access into the forest helps improve the accessibility and reduce the likelihood of bush fires, which are often started in order to clear bush and make it safer and easier to access parts of the forest.

**b. tree species targets are identified in the narrative, but not quantified in the logframe**

This activity is planned: Activity: 2.1.1 Support for the installation of two (02) community nurseries for 2 women's groups (wire fencing, solar water point, equipment, pots and seeds) for the production of 100,000 seedlings to be used for reforestation of plots and the replanting of the two forest massifs

The logframe already includes reference to the species that will be planted. Beyond that we prefer not to put specific targets of numbers and species as the project will work with local communities to define the species and numbers of each that should be planted.

**Q: In terms of negative impacts, whether you measure impacts on for example, increased levels of domestic violence within the household.**

A: We have a 'Safeguarding' module included in the RHoMIS socio-economic baseline and endline. This provides opportunity for households to report safeguarding issues, and confirms contact details for the reporting of safeguarding concerns.

We also conduct Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to provide opportunity for beneficiary feedback. These consist of 'all women' and 'all men' groups. Domains for discussion include perceived positive and negative impact of project interventions.

*Q: Not 100% clear on how you decided to set the targets for women across project objectives? Could you share more detail on this?*

A: Below we list the project indicators which specifically include targets for women:

Output One: Strengthened governance, including increased women's participation, and the transfer of competences in the management of forest resources in four communes (Yasso, Tominian, Benena and Sanekuy) in Tominian circle.

Output Indicator 1.2. Establishment of two community level management structures (cooperatives); One per forest; Estimated 500 members per coop (40% women).

This target is based on the results of a previous Tree Aid project in Mali (MB2; Strengthening forest management to protect biodiversity and alleviate poverty in Mali; funded by the Darwin Initiative; 2017 – 2020). The two cooperatives in that project (Farakuna and Hirosin) had a combined male:female ratio of 53%:47%)

Output Indicator 1.4. Establish two monitoring brigades (100 members per brigade, 50% women) one for each forest area, by the end of year 2 (year 1:1, year 2:2)

This target is based on the results of a previous Tree Aid project in Mali (MB2; Strengthening forest management to protect biodiversity and alleviate poverty in Mali; funded by the Darwin Initiative; 2017 – 2020). In this project monitoring brigades were set up involving 281 members (82 women; 29%). The project team in-country believe that increasing women's membership of monitoring brigades will make them more effective and sustainable, and increases women's involvement in managing natural resources.

Output 3: 3. Increased income for eight (8) Village Tree Enterprises (VTEs) (50 members per group = 400 members; 75% women= 300)

This target is based on the results of a previous Tree Aid project in Mali (MB2; Strengthening forest management to protect biodiversity and alleviate poverty in Mali; funded by the Darwin Initiative; 2017 – 2020). In this project 600 beneficiaries benefited from being part of a VTE group, and of these 400 (66%) were women.

*Q: I also wondered whether you measure how women's involvement in these projects is benefitting the family conditions? I think this would be very interesting.*

A: In this current strategic period (2017-2022), across all our projects, we have reached 265,967 beneficiaries, of which 68% are women. Our organisational theory of change places the involvement and empowerment of women as a key component in the delivery of project outcomes such as increased household income, increased household dietary diversity, and increased Kcal consumption.

As part of our household survey, questions are asked to the respondents on gender equity in terms of decision-making, influence on household spending and other social roles. We have seen an improvement in these for households from which women have participated in other projects, and would hope to see the same again.

**We hope that these responses will provide the necessary confidence and clarity around the project approaches.**

**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**