

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

Project reference	28-023
Project title	Promoting forest governance for resilient ecosystems and communities in Ségou
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Mali
Lead partner	Tree Aid
Partner(s)	Sahel Eco
Project leader	Tree Aid
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR3 - 01 April to 30 September 2023, Half-year report
Project website/blog	N/A
Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable	
Significant progress was made during the first six months of the year with a number of activities.	
<p>Output 1 Strengthened governance, including greater participation by women, and the transfer of skills in the management of forest resources in four communes (Yasso, Tominian, Benena and Sanekuy) in the Tominian region.</p> <p>Two cooperatives for the management of intercommunal massifs in the communes of Tominian, Bénéna, Yasso and Sanékuy have been set up and trained, and the articles of association and internal regulations have been drawn up and validated. 55 members of management committees, including 15 women from the 2 massifs management cooperatives, 8 VTEs and 4 ecological charcoal production cooperatives, were trained in how to develop functional cooperatives. The process of drawing up forest management plans is well advanced. The consultant has sent the provisional version of the management plans to staff for input on the final version.</p> <p>10 training modules have been translated into local languages (Bamabara and Bomu) and digitised. In addition to the local radio broadcasts, the WhatsApp group was set up to promote the various training modules, and the various modules, translated into local languages and digitised, were made available to beneficiaries on communication media (hard copies, USB keys and Android phones). The training modules were broadcast on Radio Parana from June to July 2023. A forest surveillance procedure manual has been drawn up by the Tominian Water and Forestry Service. It is currently being broadcast on Radio Parana. After orientation of the members of the monitoring committees, the document translated into local languages and digitised was made available to the 40 village relays in the communes of Sanekuy, Yasso, Bénéna and Tominian on communication media (hard copies, USB keys and Android phones).</p> <p>The delimitation of the 2 massifs (Safienso and Sanékuy) took place from July-Aug 2023. Workshops were organised to coordinate the implementation of this activity. 70 points were georeferenced around the Safienso massif, with a traced area of 14,000 ha. In the Sanékuy massif, 140 points have been georeferenced, including 73 for Block 1 at Sanékuy, with a surface area of 15,280 ha, and 67 points for Block 2 (14,430 ha).</p> <p>Output 2: Increased income for eight (8) village tree enterprises (VTEs) (50 members per group = 400 members; 75% women = 300 women) through the economic development of forest resources.</p> <p>Soil and water conservation techniques, enclosure, composting and direct seeding techniques were carried out on 237 ha in the Safienso and Sanekuy massifs. They will contribute to the regeneration of other plant species in the forests.</p> <p>Planting of 64,665 seedlings on 237 ha and 12,848 directly sown seeds on 31 ha. These activities were carried out on 8 sites in the Safienso and Sanekuy massifs. The species planted and sown are: Ceiba pentandra, Acacia</p>	

senegal, Faidherbia albida, Acacia coleii, Adansonia Digitata, Parkia Biglobosa, vitellaria paradoxa, Détarium microcapum, Tamarindus indica and Prosopis Africana. This action has been beneficial for the cooperatives, according to the members. The management of the forests through the establishment of cooperatives and the involvement of all the villages in the restoration work (direct sowing and reforestation, creation of stone cordons) have reduced social tension, fostered social cohesion between the neighbouring villages and strengthened integrated management (involvement of all strata: young people, women, men).

The process of formalising the 4 groups producing ecological charcoal was completed with the delivery of receipts. The members of the management committees were trained in cooperative life. 2851 beneficiaries, including 105 women, were trained in Soil and water conservation techniques. More than 765 ha were covered by Sustainable Land Management technologies (RNA, soil and water conservation techniques) and geo-referenced in six communes (Diora, Fangasso, Koula, Mandiakuy, Mafouné, Lanfiala), including 67 km of stone cordons. 15,567 seedlings were planted individually by 437 growers, including 140 women. The species planted include Adansonia digitata, Parkia biglobosa, Khaya senegalensis, Mangifera indica, Ceiba pentandra, Eucalyptus inclus, Moringa oleifera, Tamarindus indica, Bombax costatum, Punica granatum, Psidium guayava, Anacardium occidentale, Gliricidia gossypium and others. An annual competition was held to reward the communities with the highest rates of adoption of agroforestry practices.

Output 3 Increased income for eight (8) village tree enterprises (VTEs) (50 members per group = 400 members; 75% women = 300 women) through the economic development of forest resources.

A sum of 1,551,000 CFA francs (£2063) of savings has been mobilised by the 413 members. During the month of September 2023, over 475kg of shea butter was produced by four (4) groups. 40 women from VTE groups were trained in techniques for producing improved shea butter to improve quality. In order to facilitate the sale of shea butter and soumbala produced by the VTEs, a Simplified Market Information System (SIM) was developed. 8 representatives of the VTEs, the representative of Radio Parana and the project team were trained in the SIM over a period of 2 days. The SIM will enable groups to:

- To help improve access to markets for women's groups promoting NTFPs in the Tominian Cercle;
- Increase the bargaining power of producers by knowing the prices of NTFP products on the markets;
- Improve transparency on NTFP product markets, by reducing the level of suspicion on the part of producers towards traders and collectors;
- Enable NTFP cooperatives to develop business opportunities (commercial relations, financing and/or exchanges) and generate added value at low cost, adapted to the local context.

The project supported 7 cooperatives to take part in local "Sanke mô" fair in San.

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 problem we had to deal with during this six-month period was insecurity in the project area. We have adapted to this problem by obtaining information from INSO, of which Tree Aid is a member (and able to help guide Sahel Eco using the information), by obtaining feedback from the communities before moving into a village and by ensuring that the project is accepted by the beneficiary communities, who are aware of the problem of the degradation of forest resources in Mali.

The lessons learned this semester are as follows:

- *Improved collaboration between surveillance committees and Water and Forestry officers*
- *Plant production by women: a first experience in the region*
- *Community management of the massifs and the involvement of women in the system*
- *Improved collaboration between surveillance committees and forestry officers*
- *Setting up a market information system (MIS) via radio, WhatsApp group increased income for eight (8) village tree enterprises (VTEs) (50 members per group = 400 members; 75% women = 300 women) through the economic development of forest resources, as provided a sustainable market access opportunity at relatively low cost.*
- *Equipping the 8 groups with Android phones for data collection has supported in facilitating exchange and price setting*

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 <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> 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?	

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.

- Most of the overdue activities were completed during this half-year. Those that have not were linked to the management plan. However, the provisional version of the management plan is being reviewed with the staff in order to take their input into account in the final version. The reasons for the delay in carrying out the activities were linked to problems with the transfer of funds from UK to Sahel Eco and insecurity. These problems have now been resolved.
- As far as insecurity is concerned, we have developed adaptation strategies that revolve around information with INSO, getting information from the communities before moving to a village, and acceptance of the project by the beneficiary communities.

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. 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**