

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 2022

Project reference	29-014
Project title	Improving community sustainable natural resource management of Mount Mulanje
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Malawi
Lead partner	Botanic Gardens Conservation International
Partner(s)	Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust (MMCT), WeForest, TRAFFIC – FairWild, Forestry Research Institute of Malawi (FRIM)
Project leader	<i>Alex Hudson</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i>TBC</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).

Grant agreements have been agreed between BGCI and the other main partner institutes – MMCT, WeForest and TRAFFIC - FairWild. A project coordinator was also advertised with Kate Chanthunya employed at MMCT. She has experience in conservation and natural product development from South Africa (having founded Rondavel Soaps - www.rondavelsoaps.co.za) and Malawi.

Output 1

Activity 1.1: A steering committee has been established and met for the first time online over Zoom on 2nd September 2022. This is made up of 16 individuals from 10 institutes (including project partners) and will meet bi-annually to discuss project progress and make expert recommendation. This followed project initiation meetings between the project partners, including at the AETFAT conference (27 June – 1 July 2022) in Zambia, where representatives from WeForest (Ruben Foquet), BGCI (Alex Hudson) and Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust (Ibrahim and Mitole and Raheela Ahmed) met to discuss project activities and risks.

A group visioning exercise across partners for the mountain and discussion on further threats and challenges is to be undertaken in October with a problem tree produced when the project leader from BGCI and manager from WeForest will both be in Malawi.

Activity 1.2: Terms of reference for the market analysis consultant have been written and advertised with applicants requested to produce a plan and budget. So far one organisation, Imani Development Consultants Ltd, has communicated with the project team and is preparing the relevant documents.

Activity 1.4: Renegotiation with traditional authority leaders and the Environmental Affairs Department (ABS National Focal Point) is being undertaken to share information on species

and their uses from the ethnobotanical survey in other Darwin Initiative funded project (26-017). Non-Disclosure Agreements are also being negotiated between partners.

Output 3

Activity 3.6: A public awareness group - led by BGCI and including members from MMCT, WeForest and the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi - is being established to meet monthly to design the public outreach strategy for the second year and onwards, including how the impact on mind-set and behaviour change will be monitored.

Output 5

Activity 5.2: A restoration group has been formed to meet monthly to plan restoration components of the project with representatives from BGCI, WeForest, MMCT, the Forestry Research Institute of Malawi and the National Herbarium and Botanical Garden. This group will be guided by a group terms of references that has been drafted.

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 project was planned to begin in June 2022 but final confirmation and the fund transfer were delayed to July 2022, hence the project has only been active for a quarter. This has caused delays to the appointment of the project coordinator at MMCT as well as the market analysis consultant. This may delay the results of the final market analysis report, but should not impact the budget or overall project timetable so far, as long as work does begin before the end of 2022.

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:

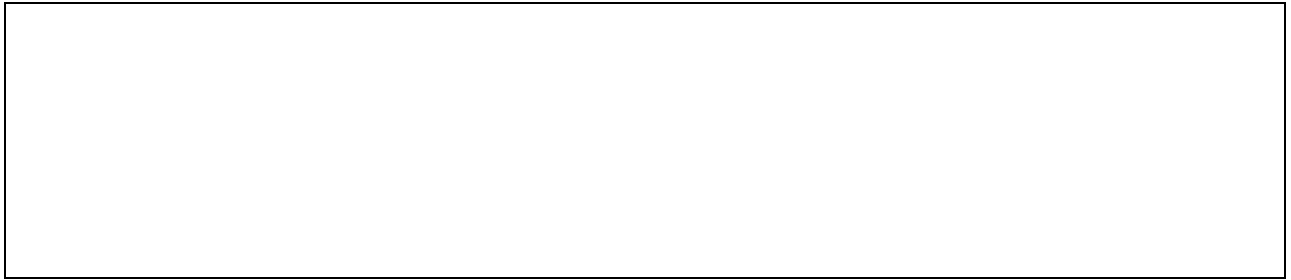
4a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

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?



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**