

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	29-025
Project title	Sweetpotato, a model for food-security and long-term conservation of biodiversity
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Germany, Kenya, Madagascar, Peru, Zambia
Lead partner	Global Crop Diversity Trust (Crop Trust)
Partner(s)	Global Crop Diversity Trust, Germany; Fiompiana Fambolena Malagasy Norvéziana (FIFAMANOR) in Madagascar; Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI) in Zambia; International Potato Center (CIP) in Kenya and Peru.
Project leader	Sarada Krishnan
Report date and number	HYR2 – April to September 2023
Project website/blog/social media	Crop Trust 2022 Annual Report , Twitter , Facebook , LinkedIn , Instagram Website

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.

- Over 350 phytosanitary clean in vitro plantlets from 30 landraces were repatriated to Madagascar from CIP-Nairobi, with plants from 28 landraces surviving.
- Over 600 phytosanitary clean *in vitro* plantlets from 23 landraces were repatriated to Zambia with plants from 22 landraces surviving shipment.
- 60 Zambian sweetpotato landraces were received at CIP-Lima in March 2023 from CIP-Nairobi, of which six were included in the repatriation under the Darwin project. Challenges with positive results of the non-quarantine virus, sweet potato feathery mottle virus (SPFMV), caused delay on the clearance of the material through the Peruvian quarantine process.
- Vine multiplication from the repatriated disease-free sweetpotato landraces is ongoing in both Zambia and Madagascar.
- The second shipment from CIP-Nairobi to CIP-Lima containing the remaining landraces is expected prior to the end of 2023.

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.

Challenges faced during this period included:

- Delays in repatriation of disease-free sweetpotato landraces to both partner countries. Despite these delays, distribution of disease-free vines to both countries should be done in the second half of YR2.
- Colder than expected weather hampered early multiplication in both countries.
- Despite delays in repatriation and colder temperatures, Zambia is expected to meet distribution vine numbers but from fewer numbers of landraces, while Madagascar will likely not meet their vine multiplication targets in YR2. Both shortages are anticipated to be made up in YR3 resulting in the project fully meeting its targets.
- Shipment of landraces from CIP-Nairobi to CIP-Lima was challenging due to changes in the way the Peruvian phytosanitary organization operated. Discussions are underway and it is anticipated that future shipments will be more straightforward.
- Drying leaf material in-country yielded subpar quality DNA for DArTseq genotyping. This necessitated a reshipment of leaf material from CIP-Nairobi to CIP-Lima. Good quality DNA has now been reshipped to Diversity Arrays and we anticipate having good genotype data from all sweetpotato landraces by the end of 2023.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: No. The challenges are not anticipated to affect project deliverables

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance: N/A

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: £ [REDACTED]

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:** £ [REDACTED]

Exchange rate of GBP 1: USD 1.2 is used to convert expenditure from USD to GBP for reporting

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 to 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?

We would like to update BCF on the impact of exchange rate fluctuation on the project. In 2022 we submitted a change request to Darwin revising the project budget available in USD because of the issues affecting the global financial markets have negatively impacted the GBP: USD

exchange rate which in turn has affected the funds available for the project activities. The negative impact of the exchange rate movement significantly affected the budget available requiring us to adjust the project activities.

In 2023 the situation has improved, and exchange rate seems to be recovering. The Crop Trust is monitoring the situation and if it is anticipated that exchange rate is likely to continue to improve, we will prepare a revised budget and logframe to readjust the project activities to accommodate the positive exchange rate movement.

In addition to exchange rate movements, we will be submitting a re-budget change request for the estimated under expenditure in year 2 as a result of justifiable change within the project.

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. 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**