

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	29-030
Project title	Using invasive alien trees to support conservation and improve livelihoods
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Madagascar
Lead partner	Missouri Botanical Garden - MBG
Partner(s)	-Regional Directorate of Environment, and Sustainable Development (DREDD) -Regional Directorate of Industrialization, Trade and Consumer Affairs (DRICC) - Federation LOVASOA (LOVASOA)
Project leader	Adolphe LEHAVANA
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 st October 2023 HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	http://mobot.mg/conservation/pointe-a-larree/

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).

This half-year report describes the levels of implementation of each activity planned by specifying the achievements during the semester1 of Year2 (from April 2023 to September 2023):

1.1 Regional and local launch of project: Completed and reported during year 1

1.2 Developing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with technical service partners
Completed and reported during year 1

1.3 Conducting research to develop annual exploitation plans, map priority zones

A research plan was developed in two steps to quantify potential volume of exploitable and non-exploitable stems of Melaleuca:

-Year1: a total area of 61Ha delimited and data suggests that 89,823 exploitable stems of Melaleuca (more than 5cm of diameter) including 9.10 hectares inside of PA and 51.9 Ha located in the peripheral zones (details with map)

Year2: A total of 425 hectare containing an estimate of 1,007,536 exploitable stems (over 5 cm diameter) of which 0.82 hectares inside the PA and 424.88 hectares in the peripheral zones.

1.4 Directing monthly members of the “green charcoal cooperative” for producing charcoal

In progress. Supervision of charcoal burners began from July 2023. To do this, the work first consists of demarcating the charcoal burning areas in order to avoid possible fire risks and monitoring the production process. During the period (April-September 2023), the burning areas close to the wood

extraction location are frequently flooded, we had to move burning area to dry areas while still remaining in the plots identified during Year1. Currently, nine charcoal burners from one village are active and the others are awaiting operating permits.

1.5 Daily patrols within Protected Area. In progress: two types of forest patrols have been implemented:
- Daily patrol by 11 forest rangers: mainly within the reserve to detect infractions such as illegal logging of native species. A total of 605 of daily patrols were carried out by the Rangers under the supervision of an MBG technician who shuttles between the forest areas. In total, 24 living plants were cut from the NAP including trees and shrubs. Only one author has been identified but his exact residence is not known. Apparently, these woods were cut for other uses (house building), and not for charcoal burning because no charcoal kiln has been identified around.
-Community patrol. This type of patrol was carried out by grassroots communities especially in buffer zone, outside the AP in which 146 people participated, including 61 women and 85 men (562man-days). A total of 106 woods were illegally cut. Two offenders were caught.

1.6 Verbalisation of infractions

For the two offenders apprehended by the local communities, the Dina (collective agreement) was applied because the places of the offenses are outside the protected area. A total of a fine of Ar 115,000 (£23) was paid to local community accounts.

1.7 Mobilisation of local community for tree planting and removing Melaleuca

Ongoing : tree planting effort was continued during the period, but the planting area is outside of area invaded by Melaleuca. A total of 10,900 seedlings of 27 native species were planted covering an approximate area of 3Ha.

1.8 Three monthly transect for participatory monitoring cutting of native trees

Ongoing: during six months, 24 participatory transects were carried out by four associations (June and September), grouped within the LOVASOA Federation with the participation of 63 people including 16 women and 47 men. These transects were carried out both in the protected area and in the buffer zones, managed by the local community associations in order to detect recent cuts of less than three months. As result: 11 recent cuts in the protected area and seven cuts in the buffer zones.

1.9 Mobilisation of female members for removing Melaleuca

A total of 9.33 hectares of Malaleuca-infested area were cleared within the PA with the participation of 36 women and 56 men. It was expected that this activity would involve only women, but it was too tiring for them to remove the large trees of this species. Finally, we decided to involve men to help them.

1.10 Three-monthly monitoring for compliance with Melaleuca exploitation contracts.

In April 2023, a monitoring mission was conducted by the forest service (DREDD). Monitoring concerns: a) progress of Melaleuca removal and b) compliance with the clauses included in the cutting authorization. Overall, they noted progress in the project but with a delay when taking into account planned implementation period. In addition, operating clauses are globally well respected (with detailed technical report). At the end of this monitoring, recommendations were made with a view to improving the results of the project.

2.1 Study trip by PM and President of GCC to Indonesia to identify best practice for the production of charcoal from Melaleuca

Not implemented and to be caught up during the next semestrial period.

2.2 Purchase tools for conversion of Melaleuca into charcoal

To improve the performance of charcoal production, equipment were provided to the charcoal producers according to the list given by the charcoal expert, including metal flues. A total of 20 sheets of metal flues were purchased. In addition, 3000 pieces of green charcoal packaging bags labelled as a “green product”were produced using a special brand. An electric sewing machine with a generator were acquired too to facilitate the packaging of products.

2.3 Training workshops for members of GCC in best practice for the conversion of Melaleuca into charcoal

This activity was completed and reported in Year1

2.4 Coaching the charcoal producers and GCC in best practice

From July 2023 when the charcoal makers began production, daily monitoring was carried out by the MBG team so that they complied with the technical processes and also with the green charcoal production contract clauses with the forestry service. Furthermore, assistance was given for possible blockages in the production process such as the case of rising water in the cooking area.

3.1 Conducting diagnostic to identify SWOT of the GCC

This activity was completed and reported in year 1

3.2 Developing marketing strategy and business plan of GCC

Data collection and field surveys were completed. Currently, data analysis in process for marketing strategy and business plan.

3.3 Coaching graduates

In progress: In July 2023, four young graduates, two of whom specialized in commerce and two in accounting, were recruited. They are in charge of developing the business plan and marketing strategy under the supervision of technicians from the DRICC and MBG. The development of these two documents is expected to be completed in January 2024.

3.4 Workshop for validation of business plan, manual of procedure and internal rule of the cooperative

Ongoing and expected to be held in February 2024.

3.5 Training the Leaders of the Cooperative with six topics

Two of the six topics training themes have been completed and reported in year 1 and the four other themes will be implemented during following semestrial period.

In addition, in August 2023, two of Cooperative Leaders participated in the exchange of experiences with a cooperative operating in cocoa production in northern region of Madagascar. The themes of discussion particularly concern the governance and management of the cooperative.

3.6 Purchase charcoal by GCC

A total of 85 bags (approximately 1.7 tones) of green charcoal were produced by Cooperative members including 53 bags as joint production et 32 individual productions. Joint production sessions were organized with the aim of assimilating technical charcoal production processes using Improved technique using MATI techniques. Among the 85 bags produced, 46 bags were sold with a total joint revenue of Ar575,000 (£115). All individual productions have already been collected by the cooperative and each bag of charcoal has been paid at Ar8000 (£1.6). Thanks to the start-up funds that allowing cooperative to pay service provided by members in charcoal producing. This funds will be used as revolving funds.

3.7 Rents two sale's point (Sainte Marie and Soanierana Ivongo)

No progress and to be installer during second semester of Year2.

3.8 Recruitment of sale managers and skipper

A skipper was recruited but the sales managers were not recruited yet.

3.9 Construction of warehouse and extension of existing warehouse

Two warehouses were completely built. Extension of the existing warehouse was reported during year 1. A second and new warehouse was recently built located close to sea allowing transportation of products by sea to surrounding towns. The new warehouse with a dimension of 30m², includes two rooms of which one is available to store products and the other will be used as an office of the cooperative.

3.10 Purchases a motorboat and equipment

Motorboat purchased and reported during year 1.

3.11 Validation of charcoal products by DREDD

DREDD delivered three operating permits of which one for MBG to extract wood of Melaleuca from AP and two of them for local community Associations managing the buffer zones. In addition, a supply contract has been established (pending validation by forest administration) between community Associations and cooperative SAMY ANTSIKA.

3.12 Delivery of agreement for transportation charcoal product

Four notebooks (give way) containing 25 sheets for each have been delivered by forest administration to allow cooperative selling their products.

3.13 Implementation of marketing strategy

In progress. Data collection and field surveys were implemented and graduates are in process of analysing results. Despite this, the team started collecting customer requests and advertising the product.

3.14 Conducting surveys to assess consumer needs

No progress.

3.15 Coaching GCC for implantation of business plan

No progress. This will probably be implemented in Year3.

3.16 Conducting monthly technical monitoring and three-monthly monitoring

No progress

3.17 All partners and local authorities conduct half-yearly participatory monitoring of the project progress

No progress and expected to be started on December 2023

3.18 Developing collaboration with businesses for shipment and sale

An informal collaboration has been established with the biochar production project at Ivoloina Park, managed by Madagascar Fauna and Flora Group. During the period, we received an order for 20 bags of green charcoal. Currently, their project is in the experimental phase and if the tests are conclusive, the collaboration will be potential for the future.

4.1 Creation of website for the project

No progress and will be started on December 2023

4.2 Bimonthly updating of Project' progress on social media

During the period, two publications were made on social media (Facebook) to inform the public about the project. This mainly concerns the launch of the sale of green charcoal. Comments were received and the team carefully analyzed each comment to improve the project.

4.3 Monthly broadcasting on local radio

No progress and expected to be started on December 2023

4.4 Organising annually a festival of biodiversity

To raise awareness around Pointe à Larrée Reserve, a biodiversity festival was organized in June 2023, under the leadership of the COBA federation "LOVASOA". The theme of the year was "Good resource management is a key driver of livelihoods improvement ". Overall, the festival was a success with the participation of 1200 people, including adults, youth and children. During the festival, several activities were implemented, including, question-and-answer sessions, traditional dance, poetry, and speeches from the authorities. An important place was given to the Melaleuca green charcoal project: awareness on the product, inauguration of the new building for warehouse and motorboat and adhesion of the communities to the cooperative.

4.5 Participation in regional and national events

Three representatives of three partners (Lovasoia, MBG, DRICC) participated in International Day of Cooperative, held at Itasy Region from 19 to 26 July 2023 which was entitled "Cooperatives for sustainable development". A total of 50 Cooperatives from different Regions of Madagascar were present. During event, Samy Antsika Cooperative exhibited samples of green charcoal and other activities using posters, leaflets of Cooperative. At the end of the event, a certificate of recognition for full participation was dedicated to the SAMY ANTSIKA cooperative.

4.6. Workshop at the end of the project

No progress

4.7 Site visit after workshop

No progress

4.8 Publication of peer-reviewed article

No progress

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.

Two main challenges were encountered during last six months resulting in delays in the implementation of some activities:

- Invaded areas by Melaleuca have been frequently flooded from April to August 2023. Consequently, it was impossible to dig out Melaleuca population in flooded areas for five months and we were obliged to stop activity of Melaleuca removal.
- 2023 is electoral campaign for presidential election. So far, it is difficult to mobilize partner as well as local authorities to implement activities such as monitoring.

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
Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance	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. 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**