

## 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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023**

<b>Project reference</b>	30-015
<b>Project title</b>	Protecting Biodiversity by improving community wellbeing in Southeast Madagascar
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Madagascar
<b>Lead partner</b>	Health In Harmony (HIH)
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Madagascar Biodiversity Center (MBC)
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Sakib Burza</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>HYR1</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<i>healthinharmony.org</i>

**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.

Beginning April 1, 2023, the project titled *Protecting Biodiversity by improving community wellbeing in Southeast Madagascar*, led by Health In Harmony, has begun implementation of four out of five outputs, in line with the schedule laid out in the implementation timetable. Output 4, supporting the creation of successful, self-sustaining cricket farms in 7 village communities, has not yet begun. It is slated to begin in Q1 of Year 2 and is still on schedule with this timeline.

**Output 1: Reforest 30 ha (36,000 seedlings) over 2 years**

1.1: From April 1 - September 30, 2023, HIH collected 653 ecopots as non-cash payments. These pots were used in the reforestation of seven hectares of Manombo Rainforest. HIH also collected 44 agroforestry seedlings from community members.

1.2: During the reporting period, eleven seedling nurseries were maintained by eleven nursery managers (4 men and 7 women), storing reforestation and agroforestry seedlings within eleven villages.

1.3: In reforestation activities, seedlings are planted in holes that are 40cm x 40cm x 40cm. During the reporting period, a total of 7,497 seeds and seedlings were planted in reforestation using Muvuca, Assisted Natural Regeneration, and Conventional Planting techniques. Seedling survival rate will be determined 18-24 months after planting.

1.4: Photo-monitoring of reforestation activities were implemented regularly.

1.5: During the reporting period, Forest Guardians and community members have collectively maintained 5.5 kilometers of biodiversity-protecting fire breaks and have created 6 kilometers of new fire breaks.

Output 2: Cricket frass fertilizer (CFF) trials developed and conducted in reforestation, agroforestry, and agriculture test plots (4 species in each plot), and evaluated for potential long-term production in cricket farms in communities

2.1: MBC has identified a research team and a quantitative lead and has signed MOUs/RCA's with the team. A study protocol has been drafted. This protocol is currently being implemented in a pilot trial of CFF on *Brassica rapa* (petsy). This trial will be completed in November 2023 and then will be replicated on other species used in reforestation and agroforestry.

2.2: Plot sites have been identified for the pilot experiment, local community members have been contracted and plant species have been identified: *Brassica rapa* (petsy) for agriculture plots and *Intsia bijuga* (Ipil) for reforestation plots.

2.3: Experimental fields have been cleaned and prepared and the pH of the soil has been adjusted to enhance results with local communities.

2.4: Measurements of growth have commenced and data is being collected.

2.5: Not started; will begin in Q3 of Year 2.

Output 3: 31 total communities test and choose acceptable cricket powder based nutritional supplements for potential long-term production in cricket farms in communities

3.1: A scientific team has been identified and research protocols have been drafted.

3.2: In collaboration with MBC, HIH has identified three types of cricket powder preparation (crackers, porridge, and sprinkle) which were developed by MBC to use in the study.

3.3: Delayed; must complete ethical approval process before data collection starts. Expected in Q4.

3.4: Not started; will begin in Q4 of Year 1.

Output 5: Implementation of 10 ha of agroforestry on community land, training 2,000 community members in agroforestry techniques

5.1: During the reporting period 271 community members were trained in agroforestry techniques, 62% of which were women.

5.2: 271 Community members from six villages converted eight hectares of degraded land into agroforestry during the reporting period.

5.3: The first community-led monitoring of agroforestry plantings occurred on July 1, 2023.

5.4: Not started; will begin in Q3 of Year.

5.5: Community-led agroforestry enrichment plantings were held in August and September 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.**

The frass study is being piloted to ensure that the approach is robust and the communities are being trained appropriately. Different combinations of Frass and other fertilisers are being used in the pilot, which will then be expanded into the larger scale study. This will allow the study protocol to be refined where necessary to ensure success in the larger study.

Activities 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 have been completed in the pilot, with data (activity 2.4) being collected on an ongoing basis to prepare for analysis. Once this pilot is concluded, it will be expanded into the main study by adding more sites. Activity 2.4 takes place throughout Year 1

and 2, so this slight delay will not substantially impact the timeline, deliverables, or budget associated with Output 2.

Activity 3.3 and 3.4 are also experiencing a slight delay. During the reporting period, a scientific team was identified, and a protocol for the acceptability study was drafted (activity 3.1). This protocol needs to be reviewed and approved by the ethical review board before observations and data collection can begin. This review is underway, meaning activity 3.3 can begin in earnest in Q4 of Year 1, and subsequent data analysis (activity 3.4) will begin soon after in Q4. This timeline delay will not impact the deliverables or budget associated with Output 3, as the acceptability study will be complete by the end of the project.

[REDACTED]

Please advise which, if any of these developments described above merit a change request form or separate email notification.

**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: £ [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: £

**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?**

None

**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](mailto: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**

