

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	DARCC028
Project title	Strengthening conservation capacity for endangered Cycad species
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nigeria
Lead partner	Crescendo
Partner(s)	WAECINIT
Project leader	<i>Frédéric de Lacoste</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	12/10/2023 HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	www.crescendo-africa.org

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.

Output 1

The activities within output 1 under the project implementation timetable relates to increasing the capability and capacity of local communities to identify and conserve *Encephalartos Barteri* ssp *Allochrous* in situ. The following outlines progress towards the agreed activities:

1.1 **Challenges and perspectives in *E.barteri* ssp *allochrous* conservation training taking place in Gilling in July 2023.**

A training course led by a WAECINIT team member was held in July 2023 in Gilling, attended by 15 participants (mostly women) from the Gilling communities. This exceeded the target number of participants within the original log-frame (10 people). A translation in Hausa was provided throughout the training to make the material accessible to all participants.

1.2 **Recruitment and training of MSc student by WAECINIT on *E.barteri* ssp *allochrous* identification and habitat assessment.**

WAECINIT have recruited an MSc student from the University of Jos. Sukat Dawang is now spending her time training in *E.barteri* ssp *allochrous* identification, seed banking and habitat assessment.

1.3 Best-practice on semi-structured interviews and community participatory mapping developed

The first workshop was conducted in May 2023 by Crescendo PD to develop best-practice on community engagement. This will continue to be developed throughout the year for all activities. The progress made above have put the project team in a very good position to deliver activities under this output for the upcoming 6 months. Materials for the first engagement with the communities is being developed and aim to finish in November.

1.4 Project staff and MSc student engage with and conduct semi-structure interviews

Semi-structure questionnaires are ready to use for the community visit. The visit was previously planned to start by the end of September. However, we decide to delay the survey until the beginning of November. The rainy season was so strong in September that many communities were inaccessible as the roads turned into rivers, making surveying impossible.

Output 2

The activities within output 2 under the project implementation timetable relates to increasing the capability and capacity of local communities to conserve and develop *Encephalartos Barteri ssp Allochrous ex situ*. The following outlines progress towards the agreed activities:

2.1 Ten individuals training provided by WAECINIT on specificities of seed collection of E. barteri ssp allochrous and nursery management.

The training course led by WAECINIT took place during the 1st week of June. The training was well received by all the participants. Trainees were shown how to collect *E. barteri ssp Allochrous* at the right stage of seed maturity, had training on the best techniques for cleaning seeds and learnt about different types of strategies for their conservation.

2.2 Delivery of training on E. barteri ssp allochrous ex situ conservation by trained staff members.

Field-based training with trained staff members were conducted in August 2023. Checking of ripeness and collecting methods were shown to the main collecting staff, and drying and conservation techniques were also shown.

2.3 Setting up community-based nursery in Putshit and training staff nursery

A new nursery has opened in the village of Dighirkung in the Putshit area. Community land has been made available for the project. The land was fenced off, a solar well was installed and the new nursery was born! The Crescendo Project Manager trained the new nursery staff in good management practices at the end of August.

2.4 Locality survey of E. barteri ssp allochrous populations for seed collection activity

Surveys were conducted between June and August to locate populations of *E. barteri ssp Allochrous* for the seed collecting expeditions later in the year (Q3-Q4).

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.

Nigeria has been in an economic crisis since July. The local currency (naira) has been devaluated, and fuel prices have more than doubled.

Crescendo is in the process of finding local solutions to try and finance the shortfall that this will have on the overall project budget to ensure that the key objectives can still be met.

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. 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**