

## 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>	DARNV004
<b>Project title</b>	Introducing research-informed conservation agreements for forest restoration in Anjouan, Comoros
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Comoros
<b>Lead partner</b>	Bangor University
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Dahari, University of Oxford
<b>Project leader</b>	Hugh Doulton
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://www.bangor.ac.uk/conservation-agreements-in-the-comoros">https://www.bangor.ac.uk/conservation-agreements-in-the-comoros</a>

**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.

The project is currently on track to be completed as planned in March 2024. Indicators remain relevant and our assumptions have largely held true. However we have submitted a change request relating to both timetable and indicators, whose reasoning is explained in Question 2.

The research and development phase (Output 2) has largely been concluded. The land tenure report produced by Dr. Said Mahamoudou (Activity 2.3) has been used in planning aspects of the conservation agreements to be established. The 'lieux-dit' or named places in the landscape eligible for enrolment (Activity 2.4) have been identified after an intensive process of visits, interviews and drone flights. The lieux-dits identified have been selected based on presence of adequate quantities of forest which we believe to be at active risk of deforestation within the next five-year period, as well as appropriate land tenure (individual parcels). This also establishes the universe of randomisation for the associated RCT. Individuals possessing land parcels within these selected lieux-dits are to be invited to participate in a public randomisation to allocate pre-enrolled parcels of forested land (Activity 2.5).

The implementation and sustainability strategy (Output 3) is currently being completed and offers to participants are planned for Q3 of Y2. Scheme design and structure (Activity 3.1) has been finalised through a lengthy and comprehensive process of co-development with community members, via further key informant interviews and focus groups, as well as workshops attended by Dahari staff. These are separate from the interviews and focus groups conducted previously (Activities 2.1 and 2.2) as it was felt that more information was required in order to take adequately informed decisions. This has allowed difficult aspects of program design, such as

theft, presence of fruit and cash-crop trees in the areas to be enrolled, enrolment of partial land parcels, and principally payment level and temporal structure, to be thoroughly investigated. These design decisions have recently been approved by the Dahari Trustees.

Offers and randomisation will occur in two principal phases. The first phase, in which 80 individuals will be allocated to treatment and control arms, will be rolled out by end Y2 as specified in the project proposal (Activity 3.2). A second phase of offers and randomisations will be undertaken after the end of this current project, in order to increase the size of the trial to approximately 400-500 individuals and provide adequate power to the experiment. The staggered rollout will also permit modification of the intervention if necessary). Five individual meetings with members of the advisory committee were conducted in Q1 and Q2 of Y2, and a further meeting has been proposed in Q3 for final approval (Activity 3.3).

Extensive trialling and baseline data collection has been undertaken over the past six months (Activity 3.4). Dr. Sol Milne of Wolf Fish Ltd was contracted to travel to the Comoros and capture high-resolution imagery of areas of interest via drone, producing orthomosaic imagery as well as land use classification maps and canopy height maps. A household survey has been developed based upon the theory of planned behaviour as well as standardised metrics relating to food security and poverty. We have applied for, and received, ethical approval for this work, as well as for the RCT as a whole, from the Bangor University ethics committee. The survey has been extensively field-tested and data collection is expected to begin in Q3 of Y2.

Dahari has continued to apply for co-funding and exploring options for the longer-term financing of the conservation agreements program (Activities 3.5 and 3.6). A grant application to the Funds for Innovation for Development has reached Stage 2.

Offers will be completed by the end of Q3. Randomisation is to be conducted in Q4 subsequent to pre-enrollment (Output 4).

Eight members of Dahari staff have been trained in Kobo-based data collection and a further staff member in database management. Six Dahari staff have also received training in drone piloting, two of whom have become highly skilled (Activity 5.1). We are currently recruiting a second Master's student from the University of the Comoros on Anjouan to undertake their thesis research with Dahari from December (Activity 5.2). Lectures at the University of the Comoros are planned for Q4 (Activity 5.3).

An academic article on conservation RCT design and implementation together with Dr. Hollie Booth from Oxford University is currently in development (Activity 5.4). Dr. Edwin Pynegar presented the project at the International Congress for Conservation Biology in Kigali, Rwanda, in July 2023 as part of a specialised impact evaluation symposium (Activity 5.5).

**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 household survey – not included in the original plan – aiming to lay down a socioeconomic baseline required substantial development and trialling time. In addition, upcoming Presidential elections in the Comoros in Q3 make this a sensitive period to be rolling out the scheme. We have therefore submitted a change request to add these activities and remove the six-month survey, given that we will be concluding the 40 agreements during February and March 2024.

**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

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance	No
Change request reference if known: Submitted 24 <sup>th</sup> October	

<p><b>4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)</b></p> <p>Actual spend: £ [REDACTED]</p> <p><b>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)?</b></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Estimated underspend: £</p>
<p><b>4c. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully.</b> Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.</p> <p><b>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.</b></p> <p><b>NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.</b></p>
<p><b>5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</b></p>
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.**

- We have worked to ensure gender equity in program design through targeted focus groups and interviews. However, given gendered division in rural Anjouan over 90% of parcels in the target areas are farmed by men. To support equity in implementation and avoid male control over cash transfers we have decided that both household heads will sign the conservation agreement. We are also planning focused qualitative research to assess gender impacts of the scheme
- We will rerun the training-related surveys for Dahari team members performed in YA at the end of Y2. This will demonstrate impact of learning outcomes. Training activities conducted are mentioned above.
- The Darwin Initiative logo is prominently displayed on the project website (and may always have been).

**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**