

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus

Half Year Report

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

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: 30th September 2024

Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	<i>28-010</i>
Project title	Developing rural pathways to community resilience and ecosystem restoration
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Ethiopia
Lead Organisation	Sustainable Natural Resource Management Association
Partner(s)	Forest Research, Swansea University
Project leader	<i>Cheru Tessema</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR4 31st October 2024</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<u><i>Saving Metema forest from the brink of extinction Tree Aid</i></u>

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end of September).

Activities that are planned for the year 2024-25 are.

Activity 2.5: Field and spectral data collection for inventory and condition assessment

- This data collection is part of the research project commissioned to Forest Research and Swansea University to conduct an analysis on how different tapping methods and frequencies affect the health of *Boswellia* trees. The data was collected in July of this year. Originally, the plan was to collect data from five tapping research sites (Gundo, Delello, Agamwuha, and Lemlem Terara x2 sites). However, due to ongoing security challenges in one area (Delello), the data was only collected from four sites.
- The data was collected from 80 *Boswellia* trees and 16 other tree species using two PolyPen devices. Half of the *Boswellia* trees were selected from sites where traditional tapping techniques were applied, and half were from sites where the new Indian tapping techniques were applied. Leaves were collected from three points on each tree - top, middle, and bottom - for measurement.

The data collection focused on three factors/indexes:

1. Reflectance
2. Absorbance

3. Transmittance

For the *Boswellia* trees, selection was based on traditional and Indian tapping techniques. For other trees, selection was based on the dominant species found around each tapping site. In total, 576 measurements were taken from 288 leaves and 96 trees of four different species at three different heights. Details of the collected data are summarized in the following table.

Site	Tapping Tool	No. of trees	No. of leaves	No of Measurement	Tree species
Das Gundo	Traditional	10	30	60	<i>Boswellia papyriferra</i>
	Indian	10	30	60	<i>Boswellia papyriferra</i>
	No tapping techniques (other trees species)	4	12	24	<i>Terminalia laxiflora</i>
Agamwuha	Traditional	10	30	60	<i>Boswellia papyriferra</i>
	Indian	10	30	60	<i>Boswellia papyriferra</i>
	No tapping techniques (other trees species)	4	12	24	<i>Pterocarpus Lucen</i>
Lemlem terara_1	Traditional	10	30	60	<i>Boswellia papyriferra</i>
	Indian	10	30	60	<i>Boswellia papyriferra</i>
	No tapping techniques (other trees species)	4	12	24	<i>Sterculia stiger</i>
Lemlem terara_2	Traditional	10	30	60	<i>Boswellia papyriferra</i>
	Indian	10	30	60	<i>Boswellia papyriferra</i>
	No tapping techniques (other trees species)	4	12	24	<i>Sterculia stiger</i>
Total		96	288	576	

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Activity 2.6: Development of cartographic products using remote sensing to support the development of forest management plans (by Swansea University with Forest Research)

- The required data for conducting the analysis and developing the cartographic products to inform the project management plans has been collected under activity 2.5. The data is currently being analysed by the consultants.

Activity 2.7: Training government and project staff on GIS and remote sensing (by Forest Research remotely).

- Development of the training modules is nearly completed. The actual training will either take place in person or through online facilitation. The training event is planned for the quarter of January to March 2025. This will give the project team more time and will allow us to closely monitor the security situation. If consultants from Swansea University are able to travel to the project area, the training will be conducted face to face. If not, we have an alternative plan to conduct it online.

Activity 2.8: Determination of Frankincense quality variables

- There has been significant progress in the efforts to agree on who will conduct the analysis to determine the quality variables of frankincense. Samples of the frankincense have already been collected and handed over to the consultant from Forest Research. The consultant has successfully contacted and negotiated with the University of Birmingham to conduct the analysis on the resins. Further details regarding the procedures, process of the analysis, and reporting are currently underway.

Activity 4.3: Material support for drying and storage of frankincense;

- This activity is associated with the beginning of the new harvesting season, which will commence in October.

Activity 4.4: Provide beekeeping training to members of 6 beekeeping enterprise members;

- The beekeeping Village Tree Enterprises (VTEs) received technical support through on-the-job training and guidance in the areas of group dynamics. This helped them establish common ground by defining clear roles and responsibilities among their members so they could improve their management of the apiary. Additionally, the

project provided technical support in production and post-harvest handling techniques from experienced experts at the local agriculture office. During this reporting period, the VTEs completed their first harvest. However, due to active armed conflicts during harvesting, data on honey production was only collected from two groups. The Gundo FMC VTE produced 110kg and the Tach Lemlem Terara FMC VTE collected 80kg from 9 and 6 beehives, respectively. The current local selling price for one kilogram of honey is ETB550, equivalent to £4.40. The total value of honey produced collectively was EBT104,500. In December of this year, the project will provide a refresher training on beekeeping for the members of each enterprise group. The training will focus on topics such as apiary site management, modern beehive management, and harvesting and post-harvest handling techniques.

Activity 4.5: Provide beehives and accessories to 6 beekeeping enterprise groups.

- The procurement and distribution of beehives and accessories has been rescheduled for January 2024, following a refresher training session on beekeeping planned as part of activity 4.4 above.

M&E 11: Field monitoring, follow-up & support visits by HO

M&E 12: Joint project monitoring visits by Tree Aid Ethiopia.

The two monitoring activities were combined as a joint annual review and planning session that took place in May 2024 in Gonder town between TAE and the implementing partner SUNARMA. The review meeting brought together the project team based in the field and a team from Addis Ababa representing the head office of SUNARMA and the Program Country Office of TAE.

Additionally, other monitoring activities including regular field monitoring, follow-up, and technical support were conducted by the field-based project team. For example, the project beneficiaries who have received support to promote agroforestry practices through fruit seedlings were assisted in managing the fruit seedlings. The farmers who watered their seedlings during the prolonged dry season saw their fruit seedlings survive and grow very well. The survival rate of fruit trees planted in 2023 was 60%. This was considered a good outcome, considering that fruit production was a new experience in this dry agropastoral area of the country.

Apart from one of the outcome level indicators which is mentioned in the next paragraph below, the challenge does not mainly lie with the project design and objectives, but rather with the context and security situation, which poses a significant obstacle. However, the team is closely monitoring the situation, as it fluctuates frequently and varies from one area to another. Therefore, the team continues to plan their activities based on regular weekly updates and takes action accordingly.

The outcome level indicator for the increase in total household income may remain a challenge, as overall household income is derived from various sources of agricultural production, including NTFPs, crops, and fruits. It is difficult to control the effects of fluctuations in crop and fruit yields and prices, which may still adversely affect overall household income, even if there is positive progress in NTFP income. We may need to make some changes to the indicator statement immediately following this report and raise an RFC if necessary.

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 ongoing conflict between government forces and the local armed group "Fanos" remains a security challenge in the project area, limiting project activities and team visits to communities. As a result, fewer regular field monitoring visits than planned were carried out. Some project sites such as Zewudebadima, Delello, Meshaha, and Gundo FMCs were identified as high-risk areas where only a few visits were made.

To ensure the safety of the project team and beneficiaries, the project adopted a weekly risk analysis and update approach at the field level. Sites were categorized as low-risk, medium-

risk, and high-risk to determine which communities to visit. Therefore, only sites identified as low-risk for that week would be visited.

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
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Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes
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Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes
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Change Request reference if known: [RFC#5 - 28-010 \(Developing Rural Pathways to Community Resilience and Ecosystem Restoration\)](#)

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)

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 2025)?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

4c. If you expect and underspend, then you should 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 to your project 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?

The recent decision by the federal government to devalue the Birr has led to an increase in inflation and significant fluctuations in exchange rates, worsening the cost of living. In order to address this, a new exchange rate has been implemented to offset the currency devaluation and ensure that pay raises are adjusted accordingly in program, administrative, and personnel budgets.

6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report.

There is nothing to respond to the feedback during this half-year report.

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to any additional feedback (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	N/A
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	Yes
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	N/A
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	noted