

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: 31st October 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	29-004
Project title	Kaya Connect: Restoring the Eastern Africa Coastal Forest Biodiversity Hotspot
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Kenya
Lead Organisation	Botanic Gardens Conservation International - BGCI
Partner(s)	Kenya Forest Service; National Museums of Kenya; Little Environmental Action Foundation; Mandhari Plants & Designs; International Tree Foundation; Kilifi County Government; Kivukoni Indigenous Tree Nursery; Green Heart of Kenya; and Friends of Arabuko Sokoke Forest.
Project leader	Kirsty Shaw
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.bgci.org/our-work/inspiring-and-leading-people/where-we-work/africa/

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).

The project has made significant progress over the last six months as outlined below:

Enhancing seed availability: Seed surveys and phenology monitoring continue to be done by the botanists and seed collectors. All seed collectors have collected over 1000kgs of over 40 species over a 2-month period when most of the species were seeding as revealed by the phenology monitoring reports.

Trainings: Final training needs assessments were conducted for the nursery workers, restoration workers and seed collectors and refresher trainings conducted. A total of 133 people were trained. The training covered nursery management, seed handling, sustainable seed production and propagation protocols development. We are now highly confident in the skills of all the project workers, and we will conduct a skills assessment and impact report in the next few months and show the impact in the final report.

Enhancing seedling availability: The nurseries have continued to maintain the seedlings in their respective nurseries and have also produced new seedlings in this period. Despite the rainfall and water shortage, the nurseries were able to produce approximately 49,609 seedlings of 52 species, and this was majorly because of the water storage facilities provided by the project. However, with the onset of the next rainy seasons, we expect the number to significantly increase in the next few months. Activities such as forest soil fetching, compost making, potting, seed processing and sowing, transplanting, repotting, weeding, watering and nursery maintenance have been continuing nursery operation.

Tree planting: In April, tree planting was done by Friends of Arabuko Sokoke forest for 6,700 indigenous tree seedlings. This was done in collaboration with Community Forest Associations (CFAs) to support them in the distribution process from farmers that had been recruited earlier in the year. The LEAF charity has planted 18,600 trees in ex situ restoration plots at Pwani University including the Botanical Garden and Agroforestry sites within Pwani University, to farmers and in schools. 9,000 seedlings have been planted in Kaya Chonyi and Kaya Mudzimuvya restoration sites; and 4,076 seedlings planted by Gede Tropical Nursery. Through the engagement of other organizations and restoration projects, Plan international, contributed to supporting local communities to conduct spot weeding and aftercare at Kaya Chonyi restoration site, and digging of 6000 holes in readiness for planting in the coming planting season. In total, 38,376 trees were planted in this reporting period.

Education program: Additional learning streams have been added for the students to enhance their restoration and native trees conservation education. This includes soil stewardship that has captured compost-making and changed the perception of students on natural materials like dry and green matter and their use. Painting and art that included labelling trees, creating slogans, making paintings on canvas, and drawing to promote environmental conservation. Education plays and outreaches were also introduced to the students. One notable play, titled Mama Soil, was performed in Kilimo. The play aimed to guide students and the community on the best practices for protecting and restoring soils. Other plays were also performed in other schools such as Keep the Trees Alive, which discourages the exploitation of plant resources for timber and charcoal while reminding people of the importance of trees. Tree aftercare which includes intensive activities like mulching to conserve moisture, fencing to protect the trees from animals and human damage, and the application of compost and animal manure to enrich the soil have been conducted, and drip irrigation methods for the planted seedlings. As a result of all the education and care for the trees in schools, there is an 80% success rate for the planted trees in the schools.

Extended awareness and engagement for the project: A workshop was held in Kilifi for the private sector working in Kaya Kauma sub county and in attendance were the Kauma provincial administration staff led by the deputy county commissioner, and members of the subcounty environment committee. Other organizations in attendance included representatives from the office of the governor, the National museums of Kenya, Kenya Forest Service, and representatives from the private sector, including mining, and quarrying companies. The workshop served the purpose of both awareness and sensitization on the role and contribution of the private sector in landscape restoration as well as presenting opportunities for collaboration for restoration and urging the private sector companies present to contribute to restoration by purchasing native tree seedlings from the project nurseries and planting in restoration sites and with small holder farmers.

Media relations for the project – During the reporting period, we made contacts with one of the biggest media houses in Kenya, the standard media group, who expressed interest in documenting the Kaya Connect project and sharing it in their network under different themes and streaming forms. The first one to air was about 30-minutes long documentary on their culture quest programme that showcased the project partners, government and local communities expressing the importance of the coastal forests, the threats they have undergone, the activities the project is doing to address the challenges and the impacts that have been realized so far. The documentary was aired on mainstream TV (KTN Home), and later uploaded on their YouTube page. The link to the video is [here](#).

Carbon credits: We were accepted into the plan vivo accelerator program that is aimed at building the capacity of organization with carbon projects and assisting them with technical support to get from the PIN to PDD stage. We anticipate getting a lot of assistance for the carbon project through this program, as we have already been assigned two organizations to give the project technical support (Earthshot and Terranomics).

Policy Development: We have been working towards an amendment of the Kilifi County Forest Management Policy, to include more focus on biodiversity and native tree species conservation, which is a significant gap in the existing policy. In this reporting period, we hosted a writeshop in Kilifi with representatives from the county government, and major stakeholders including Nature Kenya, Kenya Forest Service, and National Museums of Kenya, and produced an amended draft of the full policy. This will be followed up in the next months with revisions, public participation and then presentation to the cabinet and county assembly for approval.

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.

Rainfall shortage is one of the key concerns for the project, that might delay planting. We expected significant rains in the March – May/June season, but in some parts of Kilifi, like in Jilore where we have one of our biggest restoration sites, there was very minimal rainfall which was not enough to enable planting of the trees. If we had planted at that time, we would have had very low survival rates. This challenge was also mentioned in the year 2 annual report. We are monitoring the situation closely, and should we miss to get significant rains in this coming season (October to December), we will contact NIRAS with the measure we would recommend taking, to manage the situation and inform of any timeline and budgetary implications on the project.

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: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome*

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?

N/A

6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report. If your project was subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment please use this space to comment on any changes to international human rights risks, and to address any additional mitigations outlined in your offer letters. Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.

N/A. The comments given are supposed to be addressed in the next annual 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.	Addressed
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	Done
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	
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.	