

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	29-025
Project title	Sweetpotato, a model for food security and long-term conservation of biodiversity
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Kenya, Madagascar, Peru, and Zambia
Lead Organisation	Global Crop Diversity Trust (Crop Trust)
Partner(s)	Fiompiana Fambolena Malagasy Norvéziana (FIFAMANOR) International Potato Center (CIP) Lima and Nairobi The Zambia Agriculture Research Institute (ZARI)
Project leader	Sarada Krishnan
Report date and number	HYR3 – April to September 2024
Project website/blog/social media	Crop Trust Blog , Twitter , Facebook , LinkedIn , Instagram Website

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).

Overall, the project is on schedule and substantially meeting the project milestones. Multiplication of vines continues in both Madagascar and Zambia with a second distribution of clean vines to farmers prior to the end of the project.

Specific activities and progress in this reporting period:

1. CIP

- a. The second and final shipment of landraces from CIP-Nairobi to CIP-Lima in January 2024 was cleared from quarantine in June 2024. Two accessions from Madagascar died due to bacterial contamination however the number of landraces successfully transferred to CIP-Lima (64 landraces) for long-term storage greatly exceeds the project milestone of 30 landraces.
- b. Twenty nine landraces have been selected and are undergoing multiplication in CIP-Lima for cryopreservation.
- c. Repatriated phytosanitary clean landraces continue to be maintained at CIP-Nairobi through the end of the project.

2. FIFAMANOR
 - a. The project is on schedule to repatriate 16 additional phytosanitary clean landraces to Madagascar in October 2024.
 - b. In this period an additional 17,304 vines were distributed to farmers.
 - c. The farmer survey has been translated into Malagasy to facilitate information gathering from farmers.
 - d. Farmer surveys are ongoing.
3. ZARI
 - a. Eleven additional phytosanitary landraces were repatriated to Zambia in June 2024.
 - b. Collection of harvesting and farmer comments is ongoing. Comments thus far have been very favourable with farmers excited by good yields, even in some severe drought areas.

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.

1. Hand carrying of *in vitro* material from Kenya to both Madagascar and Zambia is required to ensure repatriation of healthy, living material to both countries. This was unexpected and needs to be factored into future projects. This caused a slight delay in repatriation as shipment of materials needed to wait until someone was travelling from Kenya to either country. Fortunately, the partners recognized this limitation early in the project and there are no lasting impacts on project deliverables.
2. Due to a strong El Niño year, both Zambia and Madagascar experienced severe droughts complicating vine multiplication, distribution, planting, and harvesting. Although problematic, it is not anticipated that the droughts will have an impact on project deliverables.
3. Endogenous bacterial contamination of *in vitro* material is a constant challenge with sweetpotato from the African continent. This contamination will not impact project deliverables; a methodology exists to eliminate the bacteria from the *in vitro* cultures, but it takes 6+ months and thus in future projects, this cleaning needs to be factored into the timetable.
4. Madagascar is ramping up vine redistribution to farmers following successful multiplication earlier this year and requests a budget reallocation from operating expenses and supplies/services to personnel and travel. This shift is essential to deploy field teams effectively, ensuring timely delivery of plant materials.

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 CR24-017 informed NIRAS about the cyclone in Madagascar, and in our last annual report, Crop Trust discussed the weather challenges and hand-carrying of collected material. We have not mentioned the bacterial contamination of <i>in vitro</i> material before, however this is not anticipated to impact project deliverables. We plan to submit a change request for the FIFAMANOR fund reallocation request.
Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes
Change Request reference if known: CR24-017	

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

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.

To address the reviewer's comment on the annual report regarding safeguarding measures, we conducted a dedicated online training session with our partners on 25 July 2024. This training was specifically designed to reinforce our commitment to safeguarding and equitable participation among the smallholders involved in Madagascar and Zambia. During the session, we covered foundational and project-specific safeguarding principles to ensure that all participants are aware of and adhere to high standards of safety, equity, and inclusion.

The training included a [video on safeguarding measures](#), which provided an overview of best practices, case studies, and guidelines tailored for fieldwork. Additionally, we shared access to [further resources from the Safeguarding Support Hub](#), giving our partners a suite of tools to enhance their understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and procedures.

These resources and discussions have clarified the processes and measures necessary to ensure equitable participation in our project, setting a strong foundation for continued monitoring and support in safeguarding efforts moving forward.

Checklist for submission

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.	Yes
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to <u>BCFs-Report@niras.com</u> .	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.	Yes