

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	30-001
Project title	Beekeepers Restore the Forests of Afram Plains
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Ghana
Lead partner	Bees for Development UK
Partner(s)	Bees for Development Ghana Ghana National Fire Service Afram Plains Development Organisation Forest Commission of Ghana
Project leader	Dr. Janet Lowore
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	https://beesfordevelopmentghana.org/blog/ https://web.facebook.com/BfDGhana https://www.instagram.com/officialbfdghana/ https://twitter.com/BfDGhana

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).

We have made the following progress over the reporting period.

Output 1: We coordinated mentoring and support to both new and old beekeepers across all communities, working with our Honey Collection Coordinators. Essential beekeeping and harvesting equipment has been procured. We have been broadcasting seasonal advice on the local radio station and community information centres across the project area – feedback has been positive. There is ongoing recording of floral data across project communities with Honey Collection Coordinators and other selected beekeepers participating fully and this will feed into the development of floral calendars for each community. Refresher training on honey harvesting methods has been delayed a bit as result of delayed hive making by new beekeepers and late colonisation of same. This activity will be done in the third quarter of this year.

Output 2: There is continuing improvement and updating of Mobile Honey System. Concerning the processing facilities infrastructure, all outstanding work, including the water supply, has been completed. It is expected that the processing facility will officially be inaugurated in January 2025 even though we are already using it. FDA Licensing of Donkorkrom Honey and Beeswax Trade Centre is ongoing as we have started the process leading to the final certification. We are also working hard to broaden our honey marketing and client database every day. Regarding direct wholesale of honey to packers serving domestic urban markets, bulk sale of beeswax to export

agents, we have had an agreement with honey packer and 3.6 tons of honey has been sent to the said packer.

Output 3: Fire awareness and prevention campaign materials have been developed for dissemination.

Output 4: We established and maintained tree seedlings nurseries to grow selected species that were in low supply at local nurseries. We procured seedlings from the Forestry Commission nursery and other local nurseries and distributed to our beekeepers from 14 communities during the reporting period. The species distributed include *Anarcadium occidentale*, Prekese (*Tetrapluera tetraptera*), Moringa (*Moringa oleifera*), Dawadawa (*Parkia biglobosa*), Mahogany (*Swietenia mahagoni*), Velvet tamarind (*Dialium cochinchinense*), and Yellow mombin (*Spondias mombin*). In all, 3515 seedlings were distributed to beekeepers within the reporting period. Our field staff and beekeepers received silviculture training from Forestry Commission in first quarter. In the second quarter, we started monitoring the growth of the seedlings and encouraged beekeepers to provide after-care. We are now collecting data to estimate survival rate. Though we have not computed the survival rate for all beekeepers who received seedlings, the survival rate varies from beekeeper to beekeeper – from 20% to 96%. We have developed an agreement with Forestry Commission that allows our beekeepers close to the forest reserves to put their hives in those forests.

Output 5: We have constructively engaged with 20 leading charcoal producers in the project area to take up beekeeping as an alternative livelihood activity. The traditional authorities and other opinion leaders have been engaged and are playing a pivotal role to raise awareness of trade-offs between charcoal making and honey production. We can already see that this is yielding positive results in some communities as many people are prioritising tree planting over tree cutting since they now acknowledge the importance of trees in their livelihoods. Engagement with traditional authorities revealed that they do not give permission for people to make charcoal in their areas (even though it occurs).

Output 6: Project news and updates have been published throughout the period on both BfD Ghana and BfD UK website - two articles on the project were published on our website within the reporting period. Several activities and progress posts – made up of photos, videos and texts – have been shared across BfD and BfDG social media handles.

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.

Over the past six months, the project encountered some notable challenges or unexpected developments that impacted the progress of activities. These include:

- **Prolonged Drought During Tree Seedling Distribution:** The most significant challenge during the reporting period was lack of rain. This occurred immediately after the start of tree seedling distribution. This halted the distribution exercise for over two months. The lack of rainfall caused severe stress on the newly planted seedlings, leading to a higher-than-expected mortality rate among the young trees. Whilst some beekeepers saw the need to water their seedlings, despite difficulties, the majority did not, hampering the trees' establishment. This could delay the project's goal of restoring forest cover as more time will be needed. We believe this lack of rain is a manifestation of climate change. There is also a risk of losing community motivation and engagement if the planting process faces continuous setbacks. The team responded to this challenge by encouraging beekeepers to employ water conservation techniques such as watering and mulching to retain soil moisture around seedlings. Some beekeepers delayed planting and created mini nurseries where they could take care of seedling until the rain re-started.
- **Constant Breakdown of the Project Vehicle:** Another notable problem was the constant breakdown of the project's only vehicle (partly due to bad nature of road network in the project area). We rely on this vehicle for most of the project activities including

transporting tree seedlings, beekeeping equipment, and personnel across the Afram Plains. The unreliability of the vehicle has caused logistical delays, affecting timely delivery of materials to beneficiary communities, and leading to missed deadlines for key activities such as monitoring, and seedling distributions.

- **Radio Station Not Working.** The local radio station hosting 'Farmers' Hour' (Time with Bees for Development) broke down again for over a month, affecting the broadcast of the show. However, we resorted to playing back recorded shows on community information centres during the period.

Lesson learnt

We have learnt from the traditional leaders in the area that they do not give permission for people to make charcoal in their areas and so it is not possible to quantify the number of permissions granted or denied hence we have had to review one of our Logical Framework indicators.

The drought period experienced this year underscores the importance of aligning activities like tree planting with favourable climatic conditions and giving advice about water conservation techniques such as watering and mulching at the start of the tree seedling distribution. Future projects may benefit from enhanced climate risk assessments and early-season planning to minimise weather-related disruptions.

The frequent vehicle breakdowns highlight the need for better planning in terms of vehicle needs to take care of such unforeseen occurrences in the future.

Challenges highlight the importance of continuous communication with community stakeholders, as prolonged delays can impact motivation and engagement. Strengthening relationships with community members through regular updates and meetings is key to maintaining support for the project.

Comment on impact of project budget and timelines

There will likely be a need for budget reallocation to cover the purchase of replacement seedlings, additional transportation costs, and potential cost in vehicle repair. This could affect the funds available for other activities, and project indicators such as number of tree seedling distributed, and number of trees planted or survival rate.

The prolonged drought and logistical delays have already caused setbacks that will necessitate an extension of the planting season, but we are not yet certain of the impact on project targets overall. The project team will reassess the activity schedule, will communicate new deadlines to stakeholders and work hard to undertake all project activities within the life of 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: Partly

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes – but covering only some of the points above. Not all.

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

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:

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)?

No

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?

No thank you.

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**