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	DARCC006 Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity
Project title	Strengthening collaborative tree seed supply systems for restoration in Asia
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Philippines
Lead Organisation	Bioversity International
Partner(s)	Bangladesh Forest Department Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), India National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), Indonesia University of the Philippines Los Banos (UPLB) Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh (RBGE)
Project leader	Riina Jalonen
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024, HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.apforgen.org/initiatives/strengthening-seed-supply

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).

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.

In Y3, project activities continue in India and Indonesia. They were already completed in Y2 in the Philippines (desk studies and field work) and Bangladesh (desk studies only). Opportunities to further promote the adoption of the project results continue to be explored in the Philippines. In Indonesia, the project activities were scaled to a new province, Banten (Java), thanks to high interest from local government units.

Progress by Outcome indicators:

0.1: National or sub-national maps and databases on the availability of seed sources for native species

India: Recruitment of a web developer was initiated to include the seed zone maps, species distribution maps and seed sources of state forest departments on the Environment Information, Awareness, Capacity Building and Livelihood Programme (EIACP) website of the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB) and the Forest Seed Science and Technology mobile app. The website and the app will also include information on seed suppliers. EIACP is a unit directly under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, meaning that the information gets wider publicity.

Philippines: The project results were included on the new data portal of the Mindanao Forest Tree Seed Center (MFTSC), which was completed and available online in June to July, 2024. However, it turned out that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), while appreciating the concept of the portal, preferred to establish a centralised information system instead. It was agreed with MFTSC that the portal will be moved to be hosted by the College of Forestry & Natural Resources, University of the Philippines Los Banos, and kept up to date in close collaboration with MFTSC. Technical details are currently being worked out.

Indonesia: The national tree seed information system developed through the project is still in the process of being adopted by the Indonesian government. Letter of Agreement with the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is being prepared to integrate the system in existing information systems at the Ministry. The country team was invited to present the project's seed zone maps and the tree seed information system at a workshop by the Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) of the Environment and Forestry Service of the Banten province in August 2024. Workshop participants included the Director of Forest Tree Seed, MoEF, and the Head of Banten Environment and Forestry Service, who expressed their support for adopting the project results.

0.2: Number of FLR implementers with improved seed sourcing strategies

Training targets were already exceeded in Y2, but given the high demand for trainings, further training events were held in Y3 as follows:

India: A training workshop with FLR implementers (44 participants) was organised in August 2024 to sensitise them on the need for sourcing quality native tree seed and from local communities and smallholders.

Indonesia: Seed Quality Certification attended by 35 seed supply actors including forestry extension workers and forest farmer group members was held in Serang, Banten on August 13, 2024. The training and other project activities were featured in a local newspaper: https://distrikbantennews.com/2024/08/14/brin-gelar-pelatihan-sertifikasi-mutu-benih-tanaman-hutan-untuk-dukung-rehabilitasi-hutan-dan-lahan-berkelanjutan-di-banten/ (in Bahasa Indonesia)

At project level, a joint approach was agreed upon to assess the impacts of the trainings on the participants' capacities, and will be implemented in Q3 and Q4 of Y3.

0.3: Number of new seed sources identified by species, seed zone and land tenure

India: IFGTB was tasked by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department to establish seed production systems for priority native species. Activities were initiated in August 2024.

Indonesia: Six new community-owned seed sources were identified in Banten for *Aquilaria malaccensis* (CITES-listed), *Magnolia sumatrana*, and *Ochroma grandiflorum*. According to Indonesian regulations, these sources need to undergo further registration and inspection to be registered as certified seed sources by the government, which will be supported in Q3 and Q4. Registration may take time and may not be completed before the end of the project, as already anticipated in the project proposal.

Philippines: As a follow up to the project, we are exploring funding sources for detailed population surveys of native species in the seed sources which were identified in the forest area managed by indigenous peoples under Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) in the Mindanao Region, to confirm and help communicate the conservation value of these customary lands. A

story of the indigenous conservation efforts was published on the Alliance website on Indigenous People's Day 8 August 2024: https://alliancebioversityciat.org/stories/philippines-tribal-leader-guards-forest-stronghold

0.4. Number of forest-dependent men and women identified as potential seed suppliers and receiving seed funding and skills training

India: Local nurseries producing native trees in Tamil Nadu are being identified, with site visits to 10 such sites and capacity strengthening in seed collection and seedling production scheduled for Q3 of Year 3.

Indonesia: Six forest farmer groups in Banten received seed funding (ranging from £125 to £320) to support seed collection and nursery activities. This included climbing equipment and safety belt for climbing trees, and nursery equipment/materials such as polybags, paranet, seedling transportation equipment, hoses, water pumps and water tanks, depending on the groups and their expressed needs.

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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.

In all 3 countries, we faced some challenges with the adoption of the information systems by government agencies. Having them adopted by govt agencies (rather than hosted by the research institutions which developed them) was in fact not a target in the project, but opportunities were explored in each country given the good interest for the project by the agencies. Generally, the agencies prefer centralised, nationwide systems, which is understandable, but were not feasible to establish under this project. Digital information systems did not exist in any of the countries prior to the project. The systems now developed serve as models for national systems and help demonstrate the benefits of such systems for planning and implementing ecosystem restoration. The changes in hosting plans did not affect project timetables or budgets. The partnering research institutions will absorb the costs of hosting as part of their regular activities, as also anticipated at the beginning of the project.

In Indonesia, due to local government demand, the project's training and community support activities are being scaled to a new province, Banten. The province has established a Technical Implementation Unit for Forest Tree Seed and Certification (UPTD) under the Banten Environment and Forestry Service, but its infrastructure and human resources are still lacking.

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3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with NIRAS:	No
Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	N/A

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 X** ☐

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.

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5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

No.

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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.

Comments on the feedback on the annual report:
1) *Actions to fast-track implementation*: In India, the trainings that had to be cancelled in March 2024 due to elections have been completed, with one combined training event for the FLR implementers conducted in August 2024, fulfilling the commitments.
2) *Contingency strategies*: Project team is having regular meetings to ensure smooth progress of the activities. We were able to hold in-person meetings with all country coordinators in August and September 2024, in conjunction with activities of other projects. Challenges in implementation in India in Y2 were related to the very late receipt of funds (Y2 Q3) due to reasons beyond our control, as detailed in Y2 annual report, which left little flexibility for scheduling and implementing activities. Problems with funds transfer have been overcome, allowing smooth implementation planning with a whole-year horizon.
3) *Any Challenges collaborating with local authorities and FLR implementers*: none to report, apart from the challenges in the adoption of the information systems (Question 2). Collaboration has been generally smooth with stakeholders demonstrating good interest and buy in for project activities.

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.	
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?	Yes
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