

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.

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| Project reference | <i>This should be the project reference provided in your offer paperwork and not your application number</i> DAREX001 |
| Project title | Developing a Global Biodiversity Standard certification for tree-planting and restoration |
| Country(ies)/territory(ies) | Uganda, Kenya, Madagascar, Peru, Brazil, India |
| Lead Organisation | Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) |
| Partner(s) | Society for Ecological Restoration (SER), World Agroforestry Centre – ICRAF, TRAFFIC, Ecosia, The Plan Vivo Foundation (PVF), 1t.org, Jardim Botânico Araribá, Huarango Nature, Auroville Botanical Gardens, Missouri Botanical Gardens Madagascar, Brackenhurst Botanic Gardens, Tooro Botanical Gardens. |
| Project leader | Paul Smith |
| Report date and number (e.g. HYR1) | HYR3 |
| Project website/blog/social media | https://www.biodiversitystandard.org/ |

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.

Over the past six months, significant progress has been made towards the outputs of the project.

Output 1: The Global Biodiversity Standard (TGBS) methodology completed and applications available to tree-planting and forest restoration practitioners online in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French by the end of year 2.

The Global Biodiversity Standard (TGBS) methodology was developed in the first two years of the project. The manual that outlines the full methodology was published online in the last six months and is available for download here: <https://www.biodiversitystandard.org/our-method/>. The manual has been translated into French, Portuguese and Spanish and is undergoing final design edits before publication. We are also translating the manual into Mandarin.

Output 2: At least 10 training hubs established, ≥200 people trained and comprehensive data tools and resources available in at least 6 highly biodiverse countries by the end of year 3.

TGBS hubs have been established in 12 biodiverse countries (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Hong Kong (China), India, Jordan, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru and Uganda). There has been additional interest from organisations in Australia, France, Indonesia, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Korea and the United States to establish TGBS hubs. This will be explored over the next year. So far, 116 people (70 male, 46 female) have been trained in the TGBS methodology to become certified assessors. Whilst there is currently an imbalance in the genders, this is planned to be reversed by the end of Y3. Progress has also been made to finalise the TGBS web-based app, which is available at: <https://application.biodiversitystandard.org/>. This platform allows applicants, assessors and reviewers to manage their applications. A mobile app has also been finalised and is available for download from the [Google Play Store](#) and iOS [App Store](#).

Output 3: A self-sustaining business model and plan for scaling up TGBS to at least 10 biodiverse countries worldwide developed by the end of year 3.

The business model options paper that was developed in year 2 of the project has been published and has been tentatively applied for the first set of 4 commercial assessments. Testing of this model will identify key areas for improvement before a final business model is established. Work has been developed with *pro bono* support from Slaughter and May to establish a new legal entity for The Global Biodiversity Standard, and with *pro bono* support from Clyde and Co to trademark the TGBS brand and logo in the UK, EU and USA. This work is supported by the One Million Hours legal *pro bono* programme.

Over the past six months, the Communications and Public Relations plan has also been drafted. This has included the implementation of 2 webinars about the publication of the TGBS manual and a case study of a pilot test in Kenya. These are available for viewing here: <https://www.biodiversitystandard.org/news-and-events/>. A [press release](#) was also published about the manual, with news coverage in journals such as [carbon pulse](#). Furthermore, work has been done to showcase support for the Standard with an [open letter](#) to declare support signed by >140 organisations and individuals. This includes actors, such as Waitrose, ETH Zurich, University of São Paulo and University of Cambridge. TGBS will also be launched at COP16 in Cali in October, with presence at two side events and an exhibition booth. A press release and social media pack are under development and will be circulated to interested parties ahead of the launch.

Output 4: TGBS certification applied for and achieved by at least 250 tree-planting/ forest restoration projects by project end.

TGBS certification has been promoted widely through various channels over the past six months. Over 100 key stakeholders have been identified and contacted relating to the standard, with meetings taking place with key organisations such as the Science-Based Targets Network, DEFRA, and other ministries of the environment in Madagascar, Brazil and Malaysia. TGBS certification has also been applied for, with four agreements for assessments signed and 9 additional sites pending confirmation. Since this output is not intended to start

until quarter 3 of year 3, this indicates a strong interest in TGBS. Further work will be done to gather support through meetings at COP16 in Colombia.

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.

There has been some delay in the publication of the translations of The Global Biodiversity Standard manual. This is because the translation is longer than originally planned at 184 pages and uses technical language that is challenging to translate. This has slightly affected the budget with some remote sensing consultancy having to be reallocated to translation consultancy costs, but this is not expected to impact the overall outcome 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:

No

Formal Change Request submitted:

No

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

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: £ [REDACTED]

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)?

No Estimated underspend: £ N/A

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?

None

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.

A need for better gender balance in training events was identified in the annual report. This is being addressed by increasing female representation in training events.

Checklist for submission

| For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1st April 2024) | |
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| 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. | N/A |
| If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ? | N/A |
| 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 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? | 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 |