



**Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects
Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus**

Half Year Report

Project reference	IWT133
Project title	Supporting Conservation and Sustainable Trade of Threatened Timber Tree Species
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Gabon, Ghana, Madagascar
Lead Organisation	Botanic Gardens Conservation International
Partner(s)	Missouri Botanical Garden - Gabon Programme; IUCN SSC Madagascar Plant Specialist Group (including staff from The University of Antananarivo and Missouri Botanical Garden Madagascar Programme); CSIR FORIG–Forest Research Institute Ghana
Project Leader	<i>Megan Barstow</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.bgci.org/our-work/projects-and-case-studies/sustainable-trade-of-threatened-timber-species/

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).

Progress towards indicator D11

With the final submission of responses from the stakeholder interviews we have been able to make progress towards designing the third and final stage of the data collection protocol (DCP). Following consultations internally and with our partners, it was agreed that we would identify the most applicable field methods needed to fill in identified gaps (from Stages 1 and 2 of the DCP). This may be an adaptation of existing field collection methods or addition of steps from existing methods to internal processes. This replaces the development of a new field methodology and avoids the risk of duplicating work.

To prepare for Stage 3, we completed analysis of the stakeholder interview responses. This required compiling the country level data from written responses into a manageable data set. Responses were checked, and partners led follow up calls to fill in any missing or unclear responses to ensure the final data set was accurate and inclusive of all respondent experiences. Once the initial data was compiled at the country and respondent level, responses were then extracted for further analysis into a response matrix under each of the interview questions. From here themes and trends in the data were identified and written up into a report of conclusions. The conclusions explored similarities and differences in data at the country and respondent group level and aided in the identification of remaining data gaps for NDF's and Red List assessments. This method of identification of data gaps and interview result analysis forms the final section of Stage 2 of the DCP.

Some of the major gaps identified during Stage 2 included - (i) standard methods for taking and recording population information needed for conservation metrics, (ii) gathering of life history/biological risk information (e.g. mortality, recruitment, regeneration), (iii) data storage, management and knowledge sharing. We have now begun research to identify existing field methods that could be used or adapted to support filling in these data gaps and inform Stage 3 of the DCP.

During this time, our partner, Missouri Botanic Garden, working in Gabon, has been liaising with one of their interview respondents to obtain a data set of a completed forest inventory for one forest concession in the country.

There is scope to enquire after other similar data sets such through

contacts at the Forest Stewardship Council. This data will provide insight for how to map and use inventory data for IUCN Red List assessments and CITES NDF. This process will be used to produce guidance as part of the final DCP products.

Additionally, the Madagascar Plant Specialist Group, have run an interview workshop with conservation and sustainable use specialists in Antananarivo. The workshop hosted in September invited 26 additional respondents (10 male/ 16 female) who answered the interviews questions. This workshop provided an overview of the current state of available data on taxonomy, species-level data collection, distribution, biological risks, population, species and area management, trade, and conservation for Madagascar's precious woods within these organisations. It also provided an opportunity to identify future directions for improving data gaps for the project. Using the analysis methods prepared for the project (Stage 2 of the DCP), the partners have prepared analysis of the responses which can be used both as a case study in the final project report and to provide extra evidence and information of remaining data needs.

The Forest Research Institute Ghana (FORIG) have undertaken three field missions in May, June and August to provide final response information for the stakeholder interviews. FORIG have provided feedback across project documentation and provided initial insight into the data gaps and experiences of carrying out stakeholder interviews, that can be taken forward into project planning and considerations for the DCP design and final project products (Indicator 0.1).

Progress towards indicator D02

In the first half of Y2 we have been able to prepare a training plan based on the outcomes of Stage 1 and 2. The course structure outlines core modules and additional modules. The core modules will be primarily based on how to use the three stages of the DCP, identify gaps and direction on how each stage feeds into one another. The additional modules will be used to address specific gaps found through the stakeholder interviews, such as increasing basic tree identification knowledge, planning for data succession and communities training.

As interview training was delivered in Y1, we have identified ways in which this training can be tailored based on feedback from interviewers. We have also identified some places where parts of the stakeholder interview schedule are unclear and need clarification before the end of the project. This is thanks to the Steering Committee providing feedback during our regular meetings. This project is behind schedule concerning the delivery of training (see response to Q2).

Progress towards indicator B16

Results from the stakeholder interview, analysis and conclusions have been consolidated to gather initial recommendations for IUCN and CITES. As per the workplan, further elaboration and finalisation of these is on track to occur in the final year of the project. Meetings have been hosted with the IUCN Species Survival Commission Global Tree Specialist Group, who shared ideas on project outputs that can be integrated into IUCN Red List guidance.

Progress towards indicator D10

The responses to the interview questions provided new information for the focal species of the project. This will be consolidated and incorporated into relevant conservation databases as per the workplan in 2026 (Activities 2.2.1 and 2.3.1).

Monitoring and Evaluation

The interview analysis phase has been used to inform, evidence and re-visit our project outputs and develop a brief description and contents for what the final data collection protocol and project report will include so that preparation of these materials can begin alongside the delivery of the training courses. We have hosted two Steering Committee meetings over the last two quarters, we have also had one-to-one calls with each of the partners in May, July and September to present the project developments, share updates and record opinions and ideas to take forward into the analysis reports, training modules and output planning. For example, field insight from Madagascar and Ghana community interviews showed communities had significant interest in supporting conservation and sustainable use of timber but lacked the skills and knowledge to do so. This has led to the introduction of a communities module into the training plan, which will include content on species extinction, conservation and population monitoring basics.

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.

Delays in delivery of stakeholder interviews

In our annual report (AR1) we noted an expected delay in receiving results for the stakeholder interviews (Activity 1.1.2) due to have been received in May, with analysis to be completed in June and July. Instead, the delay has shifted the project putting us one quarter behind schedule. Additional delays were also encountered with some data sharing delayed by partners to June and further final corrections to the data not addressed until August despite insistence on the need for delivery. Ghana faced some setbacks and learning curves as students conducted field-based interviews and did not suitably record the interviewee's responses, or follow-up on questions to participant responses. Therefore, these interviews had to be rescheduled and informed with additional phone-call interviews to input on missed information.

Given these delays, the data collection and analysis were completed at the end of August, and therefore we could not begin planning the training (Activity 3.1.1) or Stage 3 of the data collection protocol until Stage 2 completion (Activity 1.1.3). We have now established new timelines for the project, which will be shared as an updated workplan with NIRAS in November. The workplan will show a delay in training until Y2 Q4 and a push back of potential fieldwork to Y3 Q1/Q2. Despite these changes, many of the remaining project activities can occur in parallel with each other such as preparing the written report (led by BGCI) (Activity 3.4.1) while field work missions are carried out (led by the partners) (Output 2).

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:	

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)

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 2026)?

[REDACTED]

4c. If you expect an 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.

[REDACTED]

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

Suspicions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk

There are no issues to be raised.

6. Project risk management**6a. If your project has an Overseas Security and Justice assessment, please provide an update on any related risks, and any special conditions in your award paperwork if relevant for your project.**

Political Instability is a noted risk in our risk register. Since AR1, Madagascar has been experiencing increased power outage problems and a public uprising took place around the last week of September (September 25th), making it very difficult to move around the city of Antananarivo and very difficult to

communicate online. We will monitor the situation with our partners in Madagascar and consult with them regarding project activities and solutions to possible delays or limitations given this situation.

No further risks have been identified.

6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Suspicions or allegations related to safeguarding concerns should be reported to
ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk

[REDACTED]

7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent Annual Report. As a reminder, all projects that were scored as 'Not Yet Sensitive' in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment of their latest Annual Report should demonstrate how they are meeting the minimum GESI-Sensitive standard.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]