



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31st October 2021)

Project reference	<i>DPLUS085</i>
Project title	<i>Post-disaster Restoration of Mangroves (PROM)</i>
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	<i>British Virgin Islands (BVI)</i>
Lead organisation	<i>International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)</i>
Partner(s)	<i>Ministry of Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration, BVI</i>
Project leader	<i>Verónica Ruiz</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR3</i>
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.iucn.org/theme/ecosystem-management/our-work/ecosystem-based-approaches-climate-change-adaptation/post-disaster-restoration-mangroves-british-virgin-islands-prom

1. 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).

The below major milestones achieved over the past 6 months 1) have triggered an increased interest in the project beyond the group of stakeholders engaged so far and 2) have accelerated the implementation of the key activities to be conducted by the end of year 3.

- **Trainings (“Train the Trainers”)**

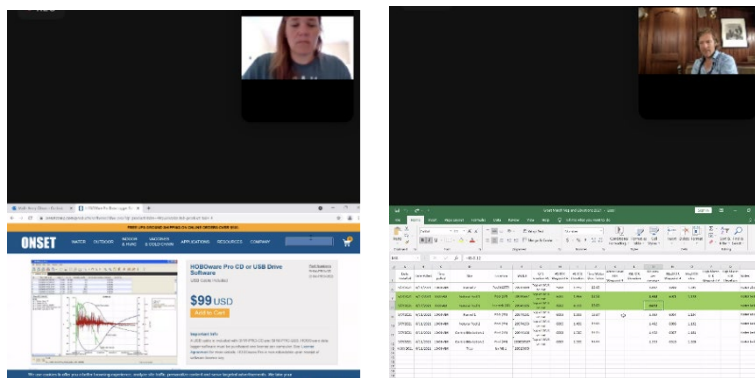
As part of the deliverables under *Activity 3.2. Capacity building in mangrove restoration methodologies for local stakeholders is conducted*, formal face-to-face and virtual trainings on best practices of mangrove restoration have begun. Below are short descriptions of four of the trainings that have taken place.

June 15, 2021: Pore water sample wells (All Islands): Dr. Gregg Moore (UNH) provided instructions on how to construct Pore Water Sample Wells to Susan Zaluski (JVDPS). Materials were provided to HLSCC Mangrove Team and constructed under supervision of Nia Jeffers (HLSCC).

July 2, 2021: Mangrove Seed Collection and Nursery Establishment Training (Anegada): Susan Zaluski (JVDPS) trained Dr. Cassander O’Neil (NPTVI) and one other staff member in seed collection. Materials were provided and Dr. O’Neil and Anegada community member and NPTVI Board Member Gregory Levens also participated in training by helping to assemble the wet nursery. 600 seedlings were collected and put into the new wet nursery.

July 12, 2021: ONSET HOBO Water Level Logger Training: Dr. Gregg Moore and Jenny Gibson (UNH) led a virtual training with Nia Jeffers (HLSCC) and Susan Zaluski (JVDPS/HLSCC).

October 8-9, 2021: Wetland Monitoring (CWC) (Anegada): Susan Zaluski (JVDPS) spent 2 days on site assessment training and waterbird monitoring at wetland sites across Anegada with Anegada community member Rondel Smith Jr.



Above: Left Jenny Gibson (UNH) and Right: Gregg Moore (UNH) host a virtual training.



Above: Left: NPTVI Park Staff learn how to identify ripe red mangrove propagules for harvest; Center: NPTVI Board Member and Staff help assemble wet nursery troughs; and Right: successfully sprouted seedlings put into propagation in July are shown in early October 2021.

- **On-the-ground Restoration Activities**

Restoration is proceeding on all four major islands; however, this six-month period was primarily about harvesting seeds and ensuring that local nurseries were operating at capacity. A satellite wet nursery has been established in Anegada to be managed by NPTVI. Fencing was installed to exclude livestock from eating young seedlings on both Prickly Pear Island (North Sound, Virgin Gorda) and Jost Van Dyke.



Above: NPTVI Staff installs fence at Prickly Pear National Park, Prickly Pear Island (North Sound, Virgin Gorda)

In early October on-the-ground restoration (e.g.) plantings began:

October 2, 2021: Planting at Prickly Pear Island hosted by NPTVI with JVDPS: 136 potted seedlings from the HLSCC Mangrove Nursery (funded by Unite BVI Foundation) were planted. Community volunteers organised by NPTVI from Lion's Club of Valley Sound, VG HLSCC and Bregado Flax Educational Centre assisted in planting, with instructions on planting methods led by HLSCC. Hon. Vincent Wheatley (Minister of Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration) and Hon. Dawn Smith (Attorney General) were also present.

October 17, 2021: Planting at Jost Van Dyke: 485 seedlings were planted with 4 adult volunteers from JVD CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), Foxy's Tamarind Bar (private restaurant) JVD Primary School. 11 students from JVD Primary school grades 5 and 6 and the JVD Rams Soccer team assisted with the planting.



Above: (Left): Community volunteers assist with mangrove planting on Prickly Pear and (Right) the group of planters poses with seedlings provided by the HLSCC mangrove nursery.



Above: (Left) Youth volunteer planting on JVD and (Right): An adult volunteer from JVD with her young son.

- **Regional Workshop and Scientific Symposium Planning**

Planning is underway for a 3-day Regional Workshop and Scientific Symposium to be held in January or February 2022. The tentative objectives of this activity (which are currently under consultation) include: (1) sharing new scientific developments, in both ecosystem assessment and in mangrove nursery and planting techniques specific to Caribbean island contexts; (2) highlighting lessons learned and results of the collaborative restoration work in the British Virgin Islands; and (3) accelerating the uptake, resourcing and implementation of Caribbean mangrove restoration, harnessing the best of science and nature. Anticipated outcomes of this event include:

- Sharing scientific best practices and techniques for mangrove restoration in Caribbean island contexts;
- Promoting new long-term resourcing and financing mechanisms for the protection and restoration of mangrove ecosystems in the Caribbean;
- Building new partnerships among national, regional, and global actors.

Additionally, it has been confirmed that the Honourable Minister Vincent Wheatley (Minister of Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration) will join the UNFCCC COP26 high-level reception “Celebrating Successes of Nature-based Solutions for Adaptation” held at the Nature Zone Pavilion on Monday, November 8, 2021 to provide remarks on BVI mangrove restoration work and the role of mangroves for climate resilience in the Caribbean. The event and the Honourable Minister’s involvement will be further promoted on social media and through other channels as possible.

Also, Ms. Nia Jeffers, who received financial support to pursue her University degree through this project, will be presenting at the GAEA Conservation Network this Thursday, October 28th at 7:00pm (register [here](#)). Ms. Jeffers will be highlighting the work she has done to date including managing the mangrove nursery, innovating better approaches to cultivate high quality mangrove propagules, and planting initiatives with HLSCC and JVDPS under this Darwin Project. She will also include an overview of her thesis research. Ms. Jeffers is currently working on her master’s degree with Dr. Gregg Moore at the University of New Hampshire. The applied research for her thesis is focused on developing best practices to improve mangrove planting success in the BVI and the wider Caribbean region.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for COVID-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

In January 2021, a commission of inquiry was set up by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to “investigate concerns over governance, including specific allegations that point to possible corruption and infiltration by serious organised criminal gangs.” (Wintour, 2021a). The inquiry has “amounted to a judicial review of almost every major decision taken by the BVI cabinet in the last 12-15 years.” (Wintour, 2021b) Due to the overhaul of many politicians and broader political issues taking the spotlight, the momentum behind the introduction of environmental legislation to afford mangroves a higher degree of protection in the BVI asserted by the Minister of Natural Resources the Hon. Vincent Wheatley in April 2021, has been stalled.

The prior identification of existing major gaps in mangrove legislation in the BVI, as well as key opportunities for the creation and policy integration of a comprehensive mangrove management plan cemented in the “Situational and Policy Analysis of Mangroves in the British Virgin Islands: Legislative and Management Parameters for Mangrove Restoration in the British Virgin Islands”, is no longer high on the BVI Government’s priority list and the push to adopt the Environment Bill promoted by the Situational Analysis is on hold once again. The project activity most affected by this situation is *4.1 Drafting of a territory-wide mangrove management plan in consultation with BVI government*. It is currently unclear how exactly this will impact the project budget and timetable and whether this project activity will be completed by project’s end.

Wintour, 2021a: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/18/uk-launches-inquiry-alleged-corruption-british-virgin-islands>

Wintour, 2021b: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/24/bvi-inquiry-hears-claims-systemic-corruption-jury-intimidation>

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of COVID-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Because travel was restricted due to COVID-19 in this reporting period, funds were reallocated from travel and operational costs to support on-ground restoration work. Susan Zaluski of the Jost Van Dyke Preservation Society continued her leadership of the on-ground work, including associated field logistics, coordination with the Government of BVI and local stakeholders, and facilitating community engagement.

In July 2021, the British Virgin Islands experienced its first major COVID-19 outbreak via local transmission. A curfew and heightened social distancing measures were put into place. This limited the JVDPS's ability to host group events. However, because this time frame also coincided with the ripening of seeds, time was spent mainly doing activities that only required a few persons. It is assumed that as the situation with COVID-19 improves, restoration activities will be completed, and project delivery of activity 3.3 *Restoration is executed with local organisations and communities at a number of priority mangrove sites based on the opportunity map as well as field data & local knowledge* will not be too badly impacted.

The continuing COVID-19 travel restrictions will likely impact the format of the planned Regional Workshop and Scientific Symposium. Whether the event will be a fully remote or partially hybrid event is yet to be determined, and thus, the budget of activity 4.4 *PROM results are shared/communicated in international platforms including the UN Community of Ocean Action for Mangroves, the Global Mangrove Alliance (GMA), the Partnership for Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR), and Friends of Ecosystem-based Adaptation (FEBA)* may also be affected.

2c. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: Yes/No

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend:

3b. 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 rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget 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.

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

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If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**