Project Title

PROMOTING BENEFICIAN AND VALUE ADDTION FROM GENETIC RESOURCES THROUGH RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

BI-ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

June 2025

Table of Contents

1. SUMMARRY OF PROJECT DESCRIPTION FROM THE PRODOC. 3
2. OVERALL SUMMARY PROGRESS ASSESSMENT 4
2.1. Component 1: 4
2.2. Component 2: 5
2.3. Component 3: 6
3. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDS 8
4. EXPERIENCED DELAYS 8
5. FINANCIAL EXPENDITURE 11
6. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES PROGRESS UPDATE PER INDICATOR 12

1. SUMMARRY OF PROJECT DESCRIPTION FROM THE PRODOC.

The objective of the project is to enhance the capacity for research and development of genetic resources in order to promote value addition and protect traditional knowledge in Botswana. The investment from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) will, in the long run, help reduce threats to biodiversity and genetic resources (GR) in the Panhandle area of the Okavango Delta. Component 1. Strengthening the national framework and institutional capacities for Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) implementation.

To achieve this, the project is implementing a strategy that will enable the country to further domesticate the Nagoya Protocol (NP) on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) for the delivery of Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs). This will be accomplished through three interrelated components:

Component 1: Strengthening the national framework and institutional capacities for the implementation of Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS).

Component 2: Enhancing capacities for research and product development (R&D) based on genetic resources, associated traditional knowledge, and knowledge management.

Component 3: Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

The knowledge and experiences gained from the implementation of this strategy will contribute to the replication and scaling up of best practices in capacity development for ABS, both nationally and internationally. A total of 3,000 people (2,000 women and 1,000 men) will directly benefit from the project. However, three barriers currently impede the achievement of this objective:

I. An incomplete regulatory framework and weak institutional and local capacities for implementing the National Policy on ABS.

II. Limited information on genetic resources, skills, and opportunities for R&D, along with a lack of mechanisms for protecting traditional knowledge.

III. Insufficient mechanisms for sharing knowledge and lessons learned regarding the National Policy on ABS, which limits replication and scaling up efforts.

2. OVERALL SUMMARY PROGRESS ASSESSMENT

This report presents the half-year performance of project implementation for the financial year January to December 2025, as of June 30, 2025. During this period, the Project Management Unit (PMU) planned to work on seven (7) outputs with a budget of $62,898.00. Below are the highlights of the project's performance regarding the planned outputs in the first half of the year:

I. The Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) regulations and associated instruments are still under development. The executive management of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) has committed to finalizing and signing off the regulations for use by September 30, 2025. 2.

II. The procurement process for developing the Bioeconomy Strategy and Action Plan is incomplete due to difficulties in identifying a suitable service provider. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is exploring alternative methods to deliver the Strategy on time using available resources.

III. Other procurements, including the preparation of the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA), training programs, and the community monitoring framework, are still in the vetting process. This has resulted in a two-month delay from the original procurement schedule.

IV. Utilizing internal expertise gained from Phase 1 of the Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) Project, a technical team has begun developing Biocultural Protocols (BCPs) for the communities in the Okavango regarding the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge.

V. The project was successfully introduced to beneficiaries and key stakeholders through various activities, including the Project Inception Meeting, address at Kgotla Meetings, presentations at District Full Council meeting (involving politicians and district leaders), engagement in discussions with the Okavango Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and convening of the Project Steering Committee (PSC).

As of 30th June 2025, the project remained derailed from the approved Annual Work Plan (AWP). This situation is significantly contributed to by notable delays in achieving milestones of the procurement process. Overall, the assessment of the project is rated as unsatisfactory, reflecting bottlenecks in the procurement process.

2.1. Component 1:

<u>Strengthening the national framework and institutional capacities for Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) implementation</u>

a) **The project is finalizing the ABS regulations on Prior Informed Consent (PIC), Mutually Agreed Terms (MAT), and Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) to facilitate the implementation of the ABS.** A technical team has been formed, composed of members from the Department of Environment Protection (DEP), the University of Botswana (Biological Sciences), the Companies and Intellectual Property Authority (CIPA), the Centre for Scientific Research, Indigenous Knowledge, and Innovation (CesrlKi), the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) Legal Department, and the

Attorney General's Chambers. The team's goal is to develop regulations to operationalize the ABS Act of 2022. This team has successfully drafted regulations and related instruments for Prior Informed Consent (PIC), Mutually Agreed Terms (MAT), and Material Transfer Agreements (MTA). These instruments were piloted with traditional healers in the North West who are currently collaborating with a research institution. Instructions for the Attorney General were compiled for inclusion in the draft regulations. The final regulations are expected to be completed by September 2025.

b) **Training programme with a gender focus developed and implemented for advancing the Nagoya Protocol on ABS, including manuals and certified ABS trainers.** The purpose of the training program is to enhance the capacities of key stakeholders involved in implementing the ABS. A technical working session was held by the DEP's Project Management Unit (PMU) to finalize the terms of reference of the planned consultancy. The Team also prepared the Invitation to Tender (ITT) documents, which are currently in the vetting stage of the procurement process. The tender is expected to be announced by August 1, 2025.

c) **National Bioeconomy Strategy developed, promotes bioprospecting and benefit sharing from the economic use of genetic resources:** The procurement of the strategy is currently at the award stage. It is important to note that the procurement process is behind schedule and has faced challenges in awarding the contract due to difficulties in finding a bidder who meets the minimum requirements for the work. To address this, the DEP has formed a Task Team (TT) to review and propose strategies for successfully completing the assignment, with support from collaborating partners. A Concept Note has been developed and approved by management. The purpose of the Concept Note is to engage potential collaborators to secure both financial and technical assistance for the development of the strategy.

d) **Community Monitoring programme established and operationalized:** The Community Monitoring programme is developed to serve as a framework upon which community leaders and trained members of the community will use to monitor ABS agreements and regulations. under guidance of local leaders. A technical working session was held by the DEP's Project Management Unit (PMU) to finalize the terms of reference of the planned consultancy. The Team also prepared the Invitation to Tender (ITT) documents, which are currently in the vetting stage of the procurement process. The tender is expected to be announced by August 1, 2025.

e) **Standards for developing Biocultural Community Protocols (BCPs) agreed upon**: The Protocols will help users of genetic resources understand the importance of customary laws, values, and local decision-making processes. This is particularly relevant regarding the stewardship of their territories and natural resources when accessing traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources. On 27th March 2025, the TRG met and deliberated on the modality to deliver the BCPs. The TRG recommended that the assignment shift from use of consultants, as the first phase of the project has built capacity in developing BCPs. Following the recommendation, the Project Management Unit developed a Concept Note to guide the development of the BCPs. On 15th July 2025, the TRG convened to review and finalize the Concept Note. A Technical Working Team (TWT) was convened to provide expert guidance during the BCPs' development. The TWT is composed of xx females and yy males.

2.2. Component 2:

Enhancing capacities for research and product development (R&D) based on GR, associated TK and knowledge management

a) **Gender Action Plan (GAP), Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), and other SES-related management plans implemented:** During the Inception meeting of the project held on February 18, 2025, the Gender Action Plan (GAP) and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) were presented to the participants, allowing them to review and update the documents. Following the review of the SEP, members of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and the Technical Reference Group (TRG) were nominated in accordance with the project's proposed governance structure. The members of the PSC include the following: The Deputy Permanent Secretary (MET), the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, the Chief of Shakawe Village, the Director of the Department of Environment Protection, representatives from the Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN), the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, the NGO Council, the Department of Forestry and Range Resources, and the Department of Environmental Protection. The PSC consists of 5 females and 4 males.

   The TRG has been established with 17 members, comprising 9 females and 8 males. The TRG includes representatives from the University of Botswana (CesrlKi), BUAN, the Gender Affairs Department (GeAD), UNDP, the University of Botswana (UB), the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP), the Rural Development Ministry (Ministry of Local Government), the Botswana Community Based Organization Network (BOCOBONET), the Kalahari Conservation Society, BirdLife Botswana, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the Human Resources Development Council.

   In conducting activities related to the Social Environmental Standards (SES), the project successfully obtained Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) from the communities directly affected by the project. A total of xx Community Leaders were engaged through Kgotla meetings and agreed to FPIC on behalf of their communities. The administration of FPIC aligns with the implementation of the SES Management Plans, in accordance with the triggered UNDP SES standards 6 and 6.3.

b) **Conducting the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SASA):** The Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) will support the DEP in its efforts to ensure that environmental and social considerations are integrated into policies, plans, and programs at an early stage, rather than only at the individual project level. A technical working session was conducted by the DEP's Project Management Unit (PMU) to finalize the terms of reference for the planned consultancy on SESA. Additionally, the team has prepared the Invitation to Tender (ITT) documents, which are currently undergoing the vetting process as part of procurement. The tender is expected to be announced by August 1, 2025.

2.3. Component 3:

Monitoring and Evaluation Plan Implemented

a) **Convening the Project Inception Meeting:** The Inception meeting took place on February 18, 2025, in Gaborone and was attended by a total of 47 individuals, comprising 25 females and 22 males. The participants included representatives from the government, private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and beneficiaries

from the Okavango Panhandle. Among the beneficiaries were two chiefs from Shakawe and Seronga, a traditional healer, a representative from [1]Matute-a-Mongongo society, Pollers, basket weavers, fishermen, women, youth, and members of the Okavango Community Trust (OCT). The primary purpose of the Inception meeting was to discuss and review the project design, anticipated outcomes, and expectations with stakeholders, as well as to secure their buy-in and promote a sense of ownership.

b) **Convening the Project Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting:** On March 12, 2025, the Project Steering Committee (PSC) held a virtual meeting attended by a total of 12 individuals, comprising 7 females and 5 males. Two (2) members, Business Botswana and the Ministry of Health and Wellness, provided their apologies for not being able to attend. The main purpose of the meeting was to seek the Committee's endorsement for the Annual Work Plan and budget for the year 2025. A total of US$300,000.62 was approved as part of the GEF co-financing, while P 2,800,000 was approved for government co-financing for the implementation year. Additionally, the Committee approved the technical guidance regarding the implementation modalities for the project's outputs.

c) **Convening of the Technical Reference Group:** This meeting was held on March 27, 2025, following a recommendation from the Inception Meeting to establish a Technical Reference Group (TRG) for the project. The meeting was attended by 17 nominated members of the TRG, which included 9 females and 8 males. The purpose of the meeting was to review the project's results framework and the implementation modalities of key activities. The TRG compiled recommendations for implementation, which were to be endorsed by the Project Steering Committee (PSC). These recommendations were incorporated into the finalization of the results framework and the multi-year work plan after endorsement by the PSC.

d) **Convening the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC**): On May 23, 2025, a Technical Advisory Committee was convened in the Okavango District. The meeting was attended by 15 individuals, which included 4 females and 11 males This committee is responsible for overseeing government project implementation at the district level. The Project Management Unit (PMU) recognized the need to collaborate with district technical officers for the successful execution of the project. The meeting served as a platform to introduce the project to the district technical team and familiarize them with its objectives, expected outcomes, and outputs. It also aimed to foster a sense of ownership at the district level. Before this meeting, the Full Council of the Okavango District was addressed regarding the project's objectives and expected outcomes. The Full Council is a gathering of district officials, where politicians plan and assess the implementation of district projects. The goal of this address was to garner political support, secure buy-in, and encourage ownership of the project among council members.

e) **Project Introductions at Community Level**: The introduction of the project at the community level took place between April and June 2025. A total of 20 villages in the Okavango Panhandle were involved through Kgotla meetings, which brought together community or traditional leaders, political leaders, various village committees, and the general public. In total, xx individuals participated, comprising 826 females and 392 males. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the project's objectives and its socio-economic benefits for the targeted communities. Additionally, Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) was obtained from community leaders on behalf of their

[1] A society of women trading on oil from *Schinziophyton rautanenii*

communities. This step was essential for implementing the project's Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), ensuring adherence to UNDP Social and Environmental Standards (SES) standards 6 and 6.3, and facilitating consented community participation.

3. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDS

The Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) identified 12 potential social and environmental risks associated with the project. Out of these, two risks were ranked as substantial, nine as moderate, and one as low. The identified risks are related to the use of genetic resources and traditional knowledge, which may affect cultural heritage and identity. These impacts include concerns regarding the rights, lands, natural resources, and traditional livelihoods of local communities, particularly Indigenous peoples.

To address these concerns, the project is implementing an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP). A survey involving Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) was conducted between June and April 2025, and a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) has been established. However, the committee members for the GRM have yet to be convened for orientation regarding the project. Additionally, the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) is currently under development and is expected to be completed by November 2025.

4. EXPERIENCED DELAYS

The project was fully signed for implementation on 24th October, 2023. The Project Manager and the Project Assistant/Finance were onboarded in December 2024, marking a one-year delay in the project's implementation. However, the project has been in progress for 16 months since the signing date. Here are the current delays being experienced:

a) The DEP is implementing the project under the National Implementation Modality (NIM) modality, which means that the recruitment of the Project Manager and the Project Assistant/Finance had to follow government procedures. This process took 13 months to complete, contributing to the overall delay in implementation. Consequently, the Project Team has effectively only been able to implement the project for six months.

b) Delays in procurement: In the initial phase of the project, the Project Management Unit (PMU) had planned to award a tender for consultancy services to develop the Bioeconomy Strategy and Action Plan, as well as to float three additional tenders for the following services: 1) Development of a training program and certification of trainers, 2) Development of a community monitoring framework and establishment of ABS Community Teams at the project site, and 3) Conducting the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) for the outputs, with upstream risks.

- The award for the Bioeconomy Strategy has stalled because potential service providers proposed service fees that exceed the budget threshold. In response, the DEP, acting as the implementing agency, is exploring alternative ways to deliver the planned strategy within the limited available resources.
- The other three procurement processes have also fallen behind schedule, deviating from the procurement plan by two months. These consultancies were expected to be tendered in June 2025. However, as of July 30, 2025, the Invitation to Tender documents are still under review.

To expedite implementation, the Project Management Unit (PMU) has prioritized two activities: a) conducting field surveys and inventories of genetic resources (GR) and associated traditional knowledge (TK), and b) developing the National Genetic Resources Research and Development Agenda. The inventory of GR and associated TK will be conducted in collaboration with the

University of Botswana, which is currently implementing GEF small grants projects. This collaboration aims to expand the scope of the inventory in the Shaikarawe catchment area, where the university is already doing work. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) is expected to endorse this reprogramming of activities during its July meeting.

SEX DISAGGREGATED DATA PROJECT MEETINGS				
Description	**Location**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Project Inception	Gaborone	22	25	47
Technical Reference Group	Gaborone	8	9	17
Technical Advisory Committee	Gumare	11	4	15
Project Steering Committee	Virtual	5	7	12
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Xakao	19	50	69
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Shaikarawe	19	36	55
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Mogotlho	17	28	45
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Gunotsoga	14	44	58
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Beetsha	30	77	107
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Gani	10	50	60
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Sepopa	23	39	62
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Kauxwi	11	17	28
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Ngarange	22	49	71
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Samuchima	12	48	60
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Etsha 13	22	66	88
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Mohembo West	25	58	83
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Gumare	6	9	15
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Qangwa	29	38	67
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Etsha 1	19	16	35
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Nxamasere	29	48	77
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Etsha 6	14	58	72
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Nokaneng	30	50	80
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Nxaunxau	25	26	51
Panhandle Consultations-Kgotla	Xaxa	16	19	35

TOTAL		**438**	**871**	**1309**

5. FINANCIAL EXPENDITURE

COMPONENTS (Atlas Activity Code)	APPROVED ANNUAL BUDGET (as per ProDoc) FY2025	ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION FROM AWP WITH DURATION FY 2025 (Q1 & Q2)	AUTHORISED AMOUNT FY 2025 (Q1 & Q2) (USD)	ACTUAL PROJECT EXPENDITURE (USD)	% EXPENDITURE
Component 1	104950.00	**Output 1.1.1. Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) regulations on Prior Informed Consent (PIC), Mutually Agreed Terms (MAT), and Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) finalized to facilitate implementation of the ABS.**			0%
		Training, Workshops and Conferences	1500		
		Supplies (Materials and Goods)	325		
		Output 1.1.3. National Bio-economy Strategy developed, promotes bioprospecting and benefit sharing from the economic use of genetic resources.			
		Local Consultant	18000		
		Training, Workshops and Conferences	750		
		Output 1.2.2. Standards for developing Biocultural Community Protocols (BCPs) agreed upon with local communities based on the guidelines for obtaining PIC and MAT.			
		Training, Workshops and Conferences	1000		
		Training, Workshops and Conferences	750		
Component 2	141500.00	-	-	-	0%
Component 3	12750.00	**Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)**			2.31%
		Training, Workshops and Conferences	3000	1720.63[2]	
PMC	41128.00	**Project Management Cost**			21.4%
		Information Technology Equipment	3503		
		Equipment and Furniture	850		
		Supplies	740		

[22] United Nations Treasury - UN Operational Rates of Exchange, effective date 14 February 2025 at 13.774 for BWP 23,700.

		Contractual Services-Implementing Partner	32480	32480	
TOTAL	**300,328.00**		**62898.00**	**34200.63**	**11.39%**

6. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES PROGRESS UPDATE PER INDICATOR