

Report on the Seed collection training and establishing a seed collecting network. Financed by Darwin Initiative

Introduction

In May 2024, the DARCC0044 project "Improving Biodiversity Planning Capacity in Guinea" was launched, funded by Darwin Initiative. This project is a collaboration between RBG Kew and in-country partners Herbar National de Guinée, Guinée Ecologie, Centre Forestier Nzérékoré and Centre de Regionale de Recherche Agricole a Sérédou (CRRAS).

Output 2 of the project is focussed on building the capacity of community groups and stakeholders to collaborate and set up seed monitoring and collection networks to enhance sustainable supplies of native seed for reforestation.

Guinea has 275 globally assessed threatened plants, including 80 endemic to Guinea. There is a lack of knowledge about these species at the national level, which limits effective conservation. It is within this framework that we aim to train community groups and other stakeholders to establish seed monitoring and collection networks to improve the sustainable supply of native seeds for reforestation.

Two activities are the focus of this report: organising workshops with local communities to train them in plant identification and seed collection and setting up a seed collection network in Guinée Forestière. These seed collection networks will be established and supported by trainers via WhatsApp groups.

The training followed a timetable of one grouped theory day and one practical day in each community. Owing to the distance of the communities near Pic de Fon from Nzérékoré, a theoretical training day was held at Dandano Centre for these communities, the community groups from Mt Bero and Diéckè assembled at N'zérékoré Centre for their theory day. Following the theory day, a practical session in the forest was scheduled in the following days. Due to logistics, the Dandano forest practical was not held immediately after the training, but took place later, following a field mission.

The training sessions aimed to involve both male and female representatives where possible (see table 1).

List of participants

Villages	Men	Women	Total	Tablet
Gbèlèye	4	1	5	1
Yonson	4	1	5	1
Monitoring ecoguard (CFZ)	1	0	1	0
Laminata	4	1	5	1
Gounagalaye	4	1	5	1
Monitoring ecoguard (CFZ)	2	0	2	0
CFZ	2	0	2	1
Dandano	4	1	5	1
Nawoinsou	4	1	5	1
Siafarala	4	1	5	1
Agent de suivi	1	0	1	1
Kabiéta (GE)	4	1	5	1
Total	38	8	46	10

Course delivery and content

The course content was developed by RBG Kew seed collection expert Xander van der Burgt and project assistant Faya Julien Simbiano. The course was delivered by these two plus Charlotte Couch (project coordinator), Dalles Toupou (CRRAS at Dandano) and Leonce Mamy (CFZ, Nzérékoré). Local partners from CRRAS and CFZ were able to translate into local languages if anything was not understood in French.

A booklet was produced with the details of the course and pictures of the target species for each community group which covered parts 1-4 (see Annex 3). This is in addition to the large posters that are present near to the villages. Parts 5 and 6 were hands-on practical sessions.

Part 1: The different types of seed and how to determine if a seed might be orthodox or recalcitrant

Part 2: How to collect and plant different types of seed

Part 3: How to recognise 14 threatened trees of Guinée Forestière

Part 4: How to recognise 6 Socioeconomic species

Part 5: How to create a WhatsApp account and join a group

Part 6: How to take photographs with a smartphone and upload these onto the WhatsApp group.

Each community group was given a smartphone, and a person was chosen who would be responsible for it, sim cards were added and these numbers added to the WhatsApp group. The WhatsApp group is called “Suivi des espèces végétales menacées et socioéconomiques” (monitoring of threatened and socioeconomic plants). Members who already had smartphones could also add their numbers directly to the WhatsApp group. The group has a total of 20 members from 8 communities plus the course trainers. It was created on 16 September 2024 and is monitored by Faya Julien Simbiano. Currently, the groups also report their activities in the nurseries on the same group as we felt it was too complicated to have 2 separate groups initially.

Results

Though we have not conducted formal before and after assessments for this training, we could see from the field practical that participants had taken on board the information from the theory session. When quizzed about what would make a particular seed orthodox or recalcitrant they were able to recall the criteria and apply their reasoning.

Participants all practised taking photographs of plants with their phones and uploading to the group WhatsApp channel, even the least technologically adept participants managed to succeed (see Annex 1).

In terms of recognising threatened and socioeconomic tree species, many were able to recognise the species once they were pointed out and they compared them to the images in the brochure. The forestry officers were better at distinguishing between species that were similar, many had participated in the Tropical Plant Families Identification course, so had more knowledge of this. However, we are confident that with more



FIGURE 1: PHOTOGRAPHING PLANT WITH SMARTPHONE



FIGURE 2: USING THE BROCHURE TO IDENTIFY PLANTS

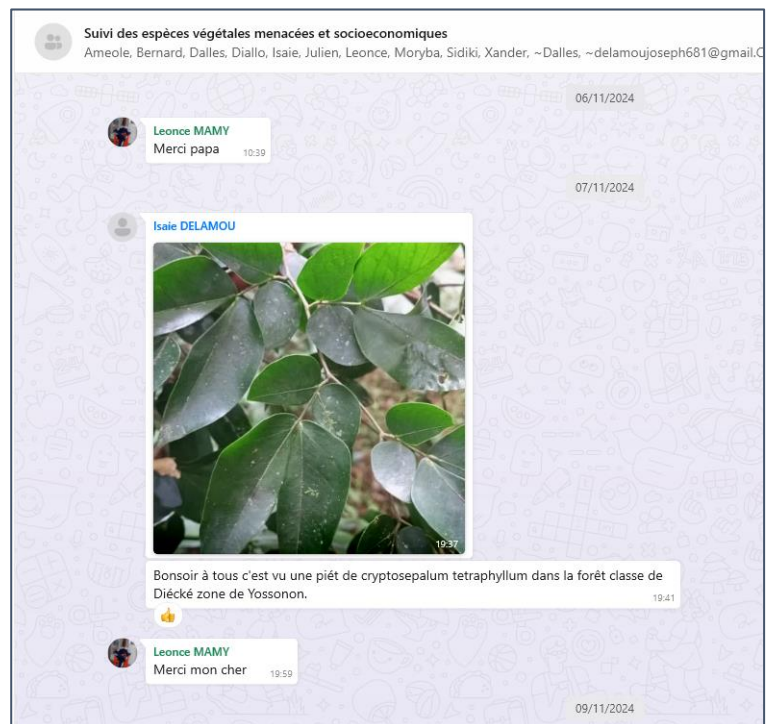
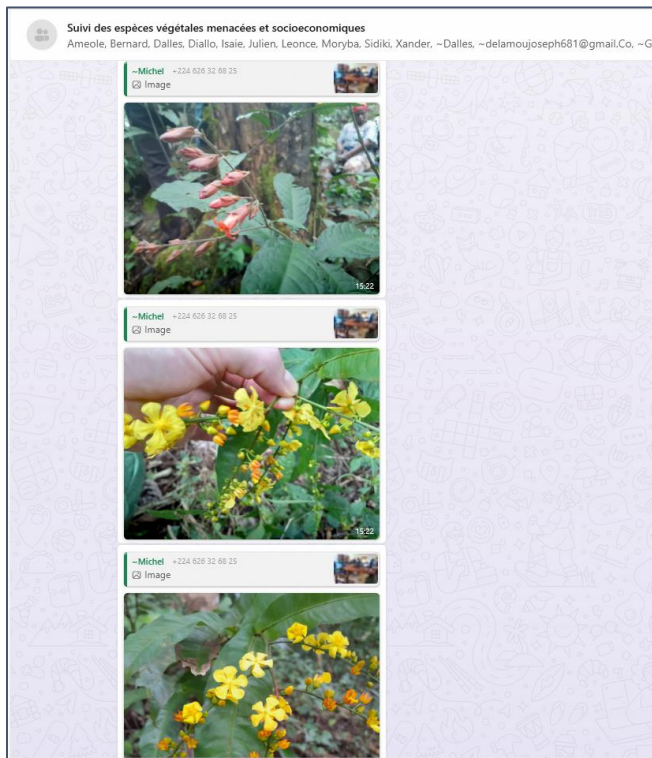
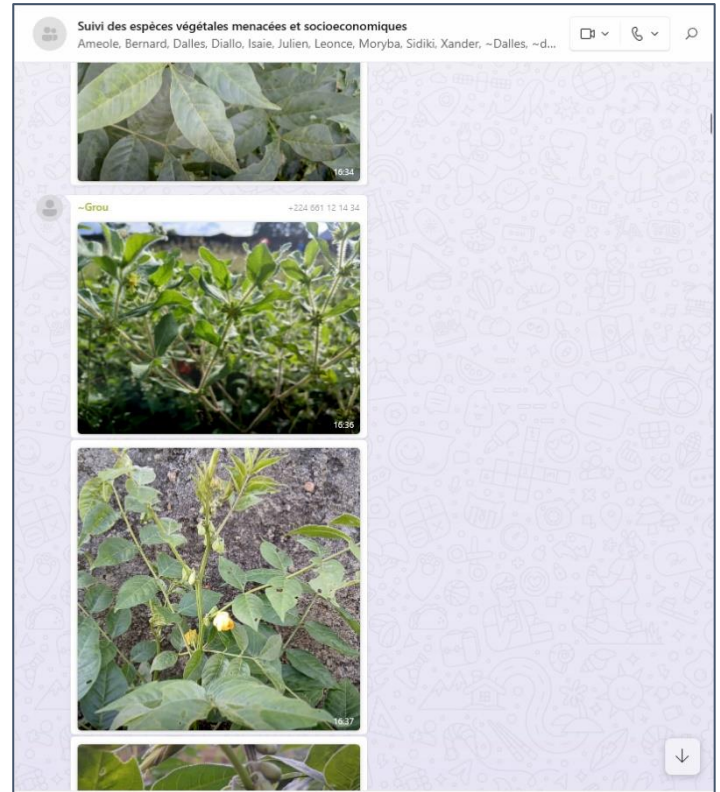
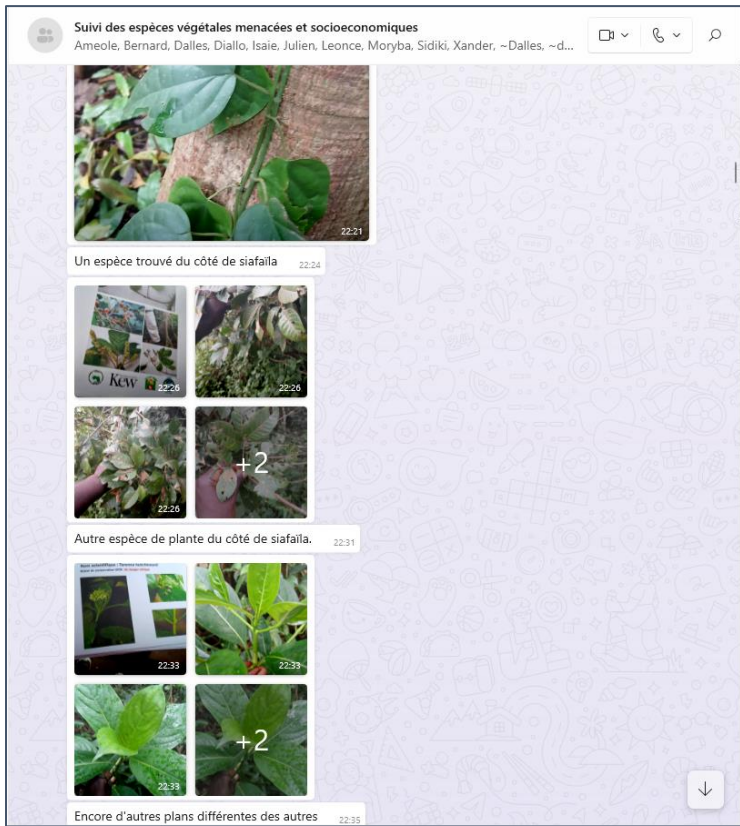
practise many of the community members will be able to recognise the species. Following the course, a field mission was planned in the Mt Bero area and community group members were invited to participate to bolster their training.

Conclusion

This was a good start in training the community groups in seed collection and monitoring. We will continue to train them when we plan field trips, but in the meantime, they are encouraged to put photos of species on the group chat for confirmation or identification. We are confident that the members of the group who participated in the training understand the principles of photographing plants. They are encouraged to go back to their groups and pass on this training, so we will see if this happens and what the quality of photographs is.

Follow up training will be required to maintain the network and encourage members to participate actively.

Annex 1 Images taken by participants and uploaded to the WhatsApp group



Annex 2: Photos of the groups



FIGURE 4: GROUP AT MT BERO



FIGURE 3: GROUP AT DIÉCKÈ



FIGURE 5: GROUP AT DANDANO



Herbier National de Guinée



ECOLOGIE



CENTRE FORESTIER DE N'ZÉREKORE



DARWIN INITIATIVE



MINISTÈRE DE L'AGRICULTURE, DE LA PÊCHE ET DE LA FORÊT

Royal Botanic Gardens
Kew

Annex 3: Training booklet

