

## Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

*Note: 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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023**

<b>Project reference</b>	IWTEV009
<b>Project title</b>	Gathering evidence to address illegal trade in African fish maws
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Senegal, Republic of Congo, Madagascar, and Hong Kong (match-funding)
<b>Lead partner</b>	TRAFFIC International
<b>Partner(s)</b>	
<b>Project leader</b>	Simone Louw
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	31 October 2023 - HYR1
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	

### **Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable**

#### **Output 1. Country-specific reports detailing improved knowledge and understanding of fish maw trade dynamics, including recommendations to address illegal catch, for Madagascar, the Republic of Congo, and Senegal**

**Output 1.1** For this component, we have undertaken customs data analysis for the period (2015-2022) for the three target source countries using declared export data for fish maws. This data was sourced from UN Comtrade and compared with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) import data sourced from the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department. The detailed analysis indicates that imports of fish maws from Senegal have increased significantly since 2020, bringing the country to the top source of marine maws in Africa. Hong Kong SAR imported a total of 216 tonnes from Senegal over the period, however, Senegal showed a significant discrepancy in their declared exports to Hong Kong, reporting a total of 16 tonnes for the same period. For the Republic of Congo, which is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest source of maws in Africa, Hong Kong SAR imported a total of 100 tonnes of fish maws between 2015 and 2022. Despite consistent imports during this period, the Republic of Congo only declared one export of fish maws to Hong Kong SAR in 2021, totalling 2 tonnes. For Madagascar, the imports of fish maws have been steadily increasing over the years, particularly in 2020, when there was a major increase in import volumes, despite it being the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Output 1.2** The market surveys in each target country were delayed due to time constraints with other activities. The first half of the project focused on Output 2 (see below). For the Madagascar physical market surveys, we have made progress in identifying potential students from the Institute of Marine Sciences (IHSM) as research assistants and a PhD student as a consultant to conduct the semi-structured interviews at local landing sites. ToRs are being developed for the research with recruitment to take place before the end of 2023. The actual

surveys are expected to take place in Q4 of year one, and Q1 of year two for all three target countries.

**Output 1.3** Online monitoring is planned to place in Q4 of year one, between January and March 2024 being the time before and after Chinese New Year when demand for, and sales of fish maws are expected to increase.

**Output 2. Improved knowledge and understanding of consumer market dynamics in Hong Kong and consumer preferences for fish maws sourced from African countries.**

*(Match-funding component)*

**Output 2.1** Market surveys were completed in Hong Kong SAR in September 2023. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with traders, wholesalers, and dried seafood shop owners located on 'Des Voeux Road', an area with a concentration of retail shops selling a range of dried seafood products. In an attempt to obtain information on the fish species from Africa supplying the maw trade, fish maw samples described as coming from Africa were collected in the market. These were identified by their Cantonese labels and verified by the shop owners. DNA analysis was conducted on the samples by Stellenbosch University which determined the samples to come from Asian Sea Bass and not species originating from South Africa as described on the labels.

**Output 2.2** In addition to physical market surveys, two e-commerce platforms, namely, Taobao and Jingdong, were monitored for an hour each day over a period of two weeks for online sales of fish maws originating from African countries to gain a better understanding of the market dynamics and key countries. There was very little data found for online fish maw sales and local experts advised that many of the consumers purchasing fish maws were from the older generation who prefer buying maws from the market rather than online. Additionally, a comprehensive analysis of the international trade in dried fish maws (HS code: 03057210) imported from all African countries for the period 2015-2022 was completed. The draft report for this component of the study is currently under review. The results of the study and recommendations will be shared with key stakeholders, namely the Agriculture, Fisheries, and Conservation Department of Hong Kong (AFCD), customs, and the Hong Kong Sustainable Seafood Coalition (HKSSC), through a virtual meeting.

**Output 3. Improved awareness and understanding of issues around the trade in fish maw – including illegal catch and sustainability – for policy, resource management, and enforcement officials in Madagascar, the Republic of Congo, and Senegal**

TRAFFIC was involved in meetings with United States Homeland Security officials including officials based in Senegal, where information on the fish maw trade and the potential risks associated with the trade and species in the region were shared. Additionally, information has been shared with the Environmental Investigations Agency (EIA) which has offices based in Senegal, with the potential of assisting with the on-ground research in the country. TRAFFIC has discussed the project with the Ministry of Fisheries in Madagascar and will be sharing results and outcomes throughout the project to ensure support of the recommendations to come from the project.

For the most part, Output 3 will be addressed in quarter two of the project in 2024, once all the market surveys have been completed, the fish species harvested for their swim bladders in each target country have been identified, and the management dynamics of related fisheries have been assessed.

**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.**

The first half of the project mainly involved work on Output 2 which forms part of the match-funding component of this project, and which needed to be expended by 31 October 2023, resulting in low initial spend on the project. Spending is expected to increase significantly as the physical market surveys are undertaken in the three target countries.

Recruitment of consultants and research assistants for the surveys in the target countries will take place in November and December of 2023, with the surveys taking place between January and April 2024. This will impact the timetable as these activities will shift a couple of months later and additionally impact the budget as the physical market surveys make up a substantial part of the budget.

**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: **Change request to follow November 2023**

**4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)**

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 2024)?**

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: £ [REDACTED]

**4c. 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 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 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

**If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.**

**All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.**

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

Please send your **completed report by email** to [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com). The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**