



**BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



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

Half Year Report

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

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: 31st October 2024

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	IWTEV009
Project title	Gathering evidence to address illegal trade in African fish maws
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	The Republic of Congo, Senegal, Madagascar, and Hong Kong (matched funding)
Lead Organisation	TRAFFIC International
Partner(s)	
Project leader	Simone Louw
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	23/10/2024 (HYR2)
Project website/blog/social media	

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).

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. Involved trade data analysis of reported customs data for the three target countries (Senegal, the Republic of Congo, and Madagascar) 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 from the Hong Kong SAR Bureau of Statistics. This output's results were completed for 2015-2023 and will be updated for 2024 in early January 2025 once countries have updated their export and import records. The results of the trade data comparisons provide useful insight into the reported discrepancies for the fish maw trade, highlighting a lack of reporting and under-declaration of the fish maw trade from the three African source countries. The trade comparisons also provide significant insight into the fish maw trade profile for each country – such as key destination markets, transit countries, volumes, value, and the main transport modes for trading fish maws.

Output 1.2. There were delays in implementing the market surveys in each of the target countries. This was due to several reasons, notably in identifying local consultants in each country that are suitable for the project, and more recently, the project manager was on

extended sick leave for three months between April and June 2024 due to the loss of her child. This caused delays in consultations and finalizing agreements. As such, TRAFFIC submitted a change request for a project extension until March 2025. The project extension was officially granted in September 2024. The market surveys in Senegal will be implemented in November 2024 with a consultant from Cameroon and in collaboration with members of CONIPAS, which is the interprofessional council of artisanal fisheries in Senegal. The consultations with WCS in the Republic of Congo and IHSM (Institute of Marine Sciences) in Madagascar are still ongoing as we are trying to reach an agreement on certain aspects of the implementation of the surveys. TRAFFIC is working to engage the local consultants to ensure the surveys will be completed before the end of December 2024.

Output 1.3. The e-commerce monitoring component was completed for the project. TRAFFIC undertook a 3-month survey, from January 2024 until March 2024, which fell on the dates before, during, and after the Chinese New Year. This was decided as research suggests that the highest volume of sales takes place leading up to the major festivals when consumers purchase these high-value products for the celebrations.

Output 2: Improved knowledge and understanding of consumer market dynamics in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and consumer preferences for fish maws sourced from African countries.

This component of the project was completed, and the report was finalized and shared in the first Annual Report.

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 held an online presentation for members of the AFRICA-TWIX network in March 2024. The webinar included members of law enforcement from Central African countries, including the Republic of Congo and Senegal. The purpose of the webinar was to raise awareness of the fish maw trade for law enforcement and show evidence of the emerging fish maw trade in Central Africa.

For the most part, output 3, will be addressed between January and March 2025 through a series of online webinars with members of customs, fisheries management, and law enforcement to raise awareness of the fish maw trade and its associated issues.

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.

There were several unexpected developments over the last 6 months which caused delays in implementing the project. As mentioned, the project was on extended sick leave for three months which impacted activities, particularly, regarding the oversight of local consultant agreements in each target country. These challenges were addressed with NIRAS and we were granted a project extension for an additional 6 months until March 2025.

We have had some challenges in engaging with the local consultants, particularly relating to the timelines for implementing activities. There are generally delays in communication due to the organisations' workload and current projects which impacts the progress of contractual agreements being signed. Additionally, all three countries are predominantly French-speaking, which also contributes to communication issues as we usually have to have multiple meetings to reach an understanding on certain topics. We have however overcome these challenges through the support of French speaking TRAFFIC staff and the consultant who is undertaking the research in Senegal. We have learnt many lessons from this experience, particularly on

how to engage with organisations in other countries where we do not have an office and the need to start those relationships very early in the project development stage.

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: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome* (reference N0294)

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)

Actual spend:

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 2025)?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Estimated underspend:

4c. If you expect and 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.

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 to your project 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?

N/A

6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report. If your project was subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment please use this space to comment on any changes to international human rights risks, and to address any additional mitigations outlined in your offer letters. Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.

N/A

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to any additional feedback (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	N/A
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	N/A
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	Yes
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	