

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: 31st October 2023

Project reference	<i>IWTEV010</i>
Project title	Behaviour change approaches to address belief-based use of vultures
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal
Lead partner	BirdLife International
Partner(s)	L'Association Nature-Communautés-Développement (NCD), Organization for the Defense and Development of Wetlands (OZDH) and West African Bird Study Association WABSA
Project leader	<i>Fadzai Matsvimbo</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>31 October 2023, HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media	

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).

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the [resources page](#) of the relevant fund website.

The project start went smoothly, with an inception meeting conducted with partners in June 2023. The meeting sought to provide clarity to partners on what the project can deliver and how it can be done. A consultant Alan Hesse has been contracted to conduct the Social Marketing (SM) training, design and support its implementation by the project partners. The first phase of the SM training (virtual) took place across 7 days (14 hours total) with an attendance of all three Partner organisations varying from 22 to 30 people per day during the sessions.

Assumptions

Largely the five assumptions indicated in the project application still hold true. As expected, traditional healers are still willing to engage. The first phase of the Social Marketing training conducted in July 2023 covered the following topics Concept Model development, Stakeholder analysis, Theory of Change, Results Chain, Qualitative Research and Audience segmentation. The Stakeholder Analysis and the Audience segmentation is part of the process of making sure that the targets of surveys, are correctly defined by all the partners in respect of their sites. In the first case, the target audience was the traditional healers for the Social Marketing. Through the training, it was now clarified that the customers would be the target of social marketing campaigns, as the target needs to be at least 100 people. By taking this first step, this is already the first part of making sure that survey participants are selected correctly.

Adoption of plant-based alternatives is likely to happen as based on similar work by other BirdLife partners in Nigeria, Zimbabwe and more recently in Tanzania. Nigeria probably represents the closest relevant example being part of West Africa, unlike Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The selected potential alternative is based on the similarity of what vulture parts are used for in the different parts of Africa. BirdLife International ran a social media campaign in September during International Vulture Awareness Day and this became a trending topic on Twitter in Kenya, which demonstrates that with well-designed communication vultures can be looked upon favourably.

Response to reviewers feedback on stage 2 application:

- *The IWTAG noted that the project may still be overambitious given its relatively short timeframe;*

Whilst the project is ambitious, it is building upon the experience of the project partners from having done similar work in the past including a recently concluded project, 'Emergency conservation actions to prevent further killings of Critically Endangered vultures for belief-based use related trade in West African countries.' What has also become clear is that the Social Marketing should not end with this project but rather be supported for at least another three to four years to have long lasting impacts. The project team is also supported by Fadzai Matsvimbo and Lovelater Sebele in the BirdLife International Secretariat who have experience in similar work in Zimbabwe. Challenges that have arisen as a result of this ambitious undertaking are detailed in the next section.

- *It is unclear how alternative livelihoods have been considered and subsequently what livelihood opportunities will be offered;*

One alternative option will be explored in Gambia with traders and hunters on Guinea fowl farming (Activity 3.4). At the other sites, information on possible livelihood interventions will be collected as part of the interviews and focus group discussions rolled out to prepare the Social Marketing plan.

- *while the cover letter responds to feedback on the poverty benefits of the project, this could be better integrated through-out the proposal and long-term benefits better explained;*
- *the exact target groups for surveys, focus groups, interviews and consultations could be clearer.*

For surveys- customers who make use of the services of traditional healers, will be administered to selected communities. As the customers are the target audience, the focus group discussions and interviews will target them as well. However, what should be emphasized as part of developing the Social Marketing strategy is that the partners will improve on these aspects based on the results of their qualitative research.

- *further information on what the surveys will entail that would enable design of social marketing strategies would be beneficial to include. It is also slightly unclear why surveys will be completed on an app but also in focus groups;*

Surveys will entail collecting data on socio-demographics of the target audience as well as knowledge, attitudes and practices related to vultures. The surveys will be completed on an app to enable quick gathering of data, prevent losses and enable feedback from the consultant, in real time as the team is collecting data in the field.

- *while gender equality has been considered in the design of the project, further work is required to strengthen how gender will be considered in the delivery of the project;*

Gender disaggregated data will be gathered and audience for the SM strategy will be segmented according to any gender norms differences highlighted by the surveys.

- *further clarification is needed on the evidence of previous success in Nigeria;*

The *Plant-based alternatives to vulture use for Traditional Medicine Practitioners* guide is an example of successful intervention in identification of alternatives. The production of this publication by Chief S. O Soyoye, Life President of Aniyikaiye Traditional Healers Association of Nigeria and Ojelade Hoseph Oldiran, Principal Forest Superintendent was supported by Nigeria Conservation Foundation.

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.

Whilst not unexpected, working across partners using different languages proved to be a challenge. Translation of project documents takes significant amounts of time. In Senegal the partner is Francophone, whilst the partner in Guinea-Bissau is Lusophone and the Gambia team, is Anglophone. During formal training in July, professional translators had to be employed to be able to have simultaneous attendance of the partners. Without engaging translators, trainings will take more time than anticipated and be more costly as the consultant is paid a daily rate. The costs of translations were not included in the project budget and so far, we had to seek cofinance to conduct the planned activities.

Another notable challenge has been that although enthusiastic about using the social marketing approach and trainings, Partners have competing priorities that they have to address and the allocated funding per Partner is relatively limited for them to dedicate the necessary amount of time in planning for the social marketing research and campaign. This could have been mitigated by piloting this approach in one out of three Partner countries with which we worked on a previous IUCN SOS Emergency response grant after 2,000 hooded vultures were killed and their parts traded for belief-based use. Since all three Partners had very interesting results and were all keen on continuing this work, we were overambitious in thinking that all the work could be conducted at minimal cost. The repercussions of limited funding available per Partner

(and for coordination) and time to avail to this project, as well as not being used to doing such analyses before completing field work were the unreadiness and slowness of Partners to complete all the assignments that would lead to properly planning the first set of quantitative surveys. This has caused delays in running the first set of surveys and having the second follow up training session on qualitative analysis methodology. It is now anticipated that quantitative surveys will be run in early 2024 and the second series of online trainings will be held at the end of November 2023. Time has been dedicated by the BLI team to explain the importance of investing in planning in order to achieve the project outcomes.

3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with NIRAS: No

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

Change request reference if known:

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: £

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?

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. 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**