



**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

Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

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

Project reference	IWTEV019
Project title	Safeguarding southern Africa's succulents through analysing demand and supply networks
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	South Africa and South Korea
Lead Organisation	University of Cape Town
Partner(s)	University of Alabama and Sungkonghoe University
Project leader	Annette Hübschle
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	N/A

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).

Our progress has been steady and there will be some delays to project activities due to the late start of the project, signature of subaward agreements and receipt of funds. Since launching in August 2024, foundational activities have been prioritized to ensure long-term project success. Key achievements from August to September include:

1. Recruitment and induction of research and admin assistant:

- We successfully recruited a research and administrative assistant Mr. Polycarp Ondieki, a PhD candidate in the Public Law Department at the University of Cape Town. PI Annette Hübschle inducted Polycarp to the project. Sungkonghoe University also recruited Mr Junha Yang as a research assistant, who is a 4th-year undergraduate student at its sociology department.

2. Permits and Approvals:

- We started the process of applying for institutional research permissions for park and law enforcement authorities in South Africa, including to CapeNature, South African National Parks, the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation and the South African Police Service.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We also commenced with the research ethics approval process at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and a parallel institutional review board process at the University of Alabama. Sungkonghoe University will enter into a reciprocity agreement with UCT. <p>3. Project Infrastructure Setup:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communication channels and data management systems have been established, enabling effective coordination, secure data storage, and efficient information flow. This foundational setup supports collaboration across countries and ensures data security and accessibility. <p>4. Development of South African research instruments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We have developed the research instruments for unstructured interviews with conservation experts and law enforcement officials and focus group discussions in South Africa. The instruments form part of the research ethics application at UCT. <p>5. Survey Tool Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development of a survey tool is underway to analyse consumer demand for succulents in South Korea, a core activity in the first 12 months. Progress is on schedule with expected deployment in line with the project's timespan. <p>6. Stakeholder Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initial stakeholder engagement session were held in South Africa, introducing the project and securing collaborative arrangements that will facilitate future phases. These engagements have been instrumental in establishing cooperation with SANBI, DFFE, and conservation partners, who will provide ongoing support for the project. Furthermore, potential stakeholders in South Korea are being identified. <p>7. Initiation Workshop Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planning for the project initiation workshop is underway, with key stakeholders confirmed. This event will set the stage for project visibility, alignment, and involvement from partners across government, conservation, and community sectors. We plan to codesign elements of the consumer surveys with our South African partners (especially colleagues from the South African Department for Forestry, Fishery and the Environment). Initially planned for June 2024, the project initiation workshop has been moved to 11 March 2025 to accommodate the summer vacation closure of government and conservation offices over most of December and January. <p>Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Systems: Our M&E framework, including indicators and milestones outlined in the logframe, remains appropriate. Progress is on track to meet output-level indicators, such as stakeholder engagement, survey tool development, and foundational approvals. No significant changes to our M&E indicators are needed, and the project assumptions—especially concerning stakeholder support and community engagement—continue to hold true. We will make some minor changes to the logframe and workplan (e.g. changing date of the initiation workshop). We will make the appropriate change requests once the subawardees have signed their agreements.</p> <p>This foundational progress sets the groundwork for upcoming data collection, community interactions, and early analyses, moving us steadily towards our project objectives.</p>	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delay in Signing subaward agreements: The subaward agreements were drafted and submitted to the respective Research Offices. We are awaiting the signed agreements. 2. Delayed Initial Funding Disbursement: A delay in tracking the first tranche of funding impacted our ability to initiate certain project activities as scheduled, especially those requiring upfront costs like the initiation workshop and some community engagement activities.
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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 (tracking the first tranche)

Formal Change Request submitted:

No

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

not applicable

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*

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?

No.

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.

In line with the feedback received with the confirmation of funding, we have addressed several specific requirements to ensure alignment with IWTCF standards:

1. Safeguarding and SEAH Requirements:

- We have developed a safeguarding framework and included a safeguarding log to track and respond to any incidents of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) as required. This log will record any incidents or complaints raised, maintaining strict confidentiality and accessibility only to designated safeguarding officers.
- Policies on SEAH and Health, Safety, and Security (HSS) risks are now integrated into our project's risk management plan, with clear reporting mechanisms and mitigation strategies for field research settings.

2. Response to Reviewer Comments and Project Adjustments:

- Based on additional reviewer comments, we clarified the demand reduction focus, survey design, and other assumptions. For instance, adjustments to the survey protocol in South Korea address potential biases in responses related to illegal activities. Techniques like the Unmatched Count Technique (UCT) will help draw out more accurate estimates of sensitive behaviours .
- The project risk register and response framework are regularly updated, ensuring that SEAH and HSS considerations are reviewed and monitored throughout the project's duration.

3. M&E System Review:

- Our monitoring and evaluation system has been revised to incorporate new measures, including a survey to assess how project outputs may strengthen organizational capacity for SANBI and other partners, as suggested by the reviewers. This additional M&E component will gauge the impact of shared research findings on stakeholder readiness and knowledge.

4. Changes to Timeline and Project Length:

- To address the condensed project timeframe (18 months instead of 23 months), we have prioritized activities to ensure timely completion. We will be submitting change requests next week but plan to deliver all outputs as per the initial proposal with slightly later timelines.

5. Policy and Training Documentation:

- UCT's policies on safeguarding, whistleblowing, and responsible conduct have been made accessible to all project team members.

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.	yes
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	yes
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.	n.a.
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?	yes
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	yes

Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	
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