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## Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Evidence: Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the “Project Reporting Information Note”:  
(<https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk/resources/information-notes/>)

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 20 pages** in length, excluding annexes)

**Submission Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

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### ● IWT Challenge Fund (IWTCF) Project Information

Project reference	IWTEV019
Project title	Safeguarding southern Africa's succulents through analysing demand and supply networks
Country/ies	South Africa and Republic of Korea
Lead Organisation	University of Cape Town
Project partner(s)	University of Alabama, University of Sungkonghoe
IWTCF grant value	100,000 GBP
Start/end dates of project	1 August 2024 – 31 March 2026
Reporting period (e.g. April 2024-Mar 2025) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	1 August 2024 – 31 March 2025 Annual Report 1
Project Leader name	Annette Hübschle
Project website/blog/social media	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/company/global-risk-governance-programme/?viewAsMember=true">https://www.linkedin.com/company/global-risk-governance-programme/?viewAsMember=true</a>
Report author(s) and date	Annette Hübschle, Jared Margulies, Juneseo Hwang

### 1. Project summary

*Safeguarding southern Africa's succulents through analysing demand and supply networks* is an evidence-focused project that addresses the sharp rise in illegal trade in wild-harvested succulents from South Africa to East Asia, particularly South Korea. The project combines sociological and criminological research with consumer and community engagement to fill critical knowledge gaps in existing interventions.

The project targets the illegal international trade in ornamental succulents, particularly species such as *Conophytum*, *Lithops*, *Tylecodon*, and *Avonia*, which are increasingly threatened with functional extinction due to overharvesting. This trade is driven by global demand and facilitated by illicit supply networks (ISNs) that exploit socio-economic vulnerabilities in South Africa's arid zones, especially in the Northern and Western Cape regions. These regions are home to deeply impoverished communities where illegal plant harvesting has become a source of income amid limited economic alternatives.

In South Korea, the project investigates consumer preferences and motivations to better understand demand-side drivers. This work includes a large-scale survey and in-depth interviews, which aim to inform future demand reduction strategies and sustainable alternatives. On the supply side, qualitative fieldwork and focus groups in South Africa are being conducted to uncover the structure of ISNs and the socio-economic dynamics that drive participation in the trade.

The project ultimately seeks to co-design an innovative, evidence-based alternative livelihoods intervention. This intervention will explore opportunities to build a legal and regulated succulent economy that benefits Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, especially women and girls, while contributing to the conservation of threatened plant species.

This research is being conducted in close collaboration with key stakeholders including the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), and the National Task Team on Succulent Flora. Findings will also contribute to the work of the IUCN Succulent Plant Illegal Trade Task Force and are expected to inform future programmatic interventions funded through the IWT Challenge Fund and/or other funders.

The project focuses on two core geographies: the Northern and Western Cape in South Africa, where supply-side dynamics are studied in community and enforcement contexts, and South Korea, a significant consumer and transit hub for succulents, where demand-side motivations are analysed. A map of the target regions in South Africa is attached.

## **2. Project stakeholders/partners**

This project was developed in direct response to a request from SANBI and South Africa's National Task Team on Succulent Flora, aligning with the National Response Strategy and Action Plan to address the illegal trade in South African succulents. The partnership structure was intentionally built to reflect this national demand, ensuring that South African institutions and communities are central to both the research and eventual intervention design.

### **Primary Partners and Their Roles:**

- **University of Cape Town (UCT)** serves as the lead institution, providing strategic oversight, project coordination, and financial management. UCT's Environmental and Planetary Futures research group, led by Dr. Annette Hübschle, manages the South African fieldwork, mapping the supply chain and overall Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework. UCT also ensures compliance with ethics, data protection, and safeguarding protocols.
- **University of Alabama** brings extensive expertise on illicit succulent trade and global plant markets through Dr. Jared Margulies. UA supports qualitative research design and contributes in-kind resources such as survey software (Qualtrics), encrypted cloud storage, and academic time.
- **Sungkonghoe University** in South Korea leads on consumer-side research, with Dr. Juneseo Hwang responsible for survey dissemination and interviews. His local networks and linguistic fluency are crucial for engaging Korean stakeholders and collectors.

### **Development of Partnerships Over Year 1:**

- The partnership with SANBI with bi-annual engagement meetings to share updates, gather feedback, and plan for future collaboration, including the co-design of a legal

livelihoods model. SANBI staff have actively participated in project review meetings and co-hosted the March 2025 project initiation workshop. We also have joint WhatsApp groups for sharing updates and new developments.

- All research tools (e.g., focus group protocols, interview guides) have been reviewed collaboratively with input from SANBI and community representatives and gone through ethics approval by UCT's Law Research Ethics Committee (REC). The Law REC has certified the research as low risk and approved data collection. These processes have ensured culturally relevant and ethically sound implementation.
- Project planning, MEL, and decision-making are jointly conducted through monthly virtual meetings across all institutions.

### **Involvement of Other Stakeholders:**

- While not formal partners, the British High Commission in Pretoria and British Embassy in Seoul were briefed during the planning stage and have been kept informed about progress, in line with FCDO reporting requirements. Ms Phunzo Mudau, Climate Change and Biodiversity Officer at the British High Commission in Pretoria, attended the Initiation Workshop on 11 March 2025 and opened the Workshop.
- In South Africa, community gatekeepers and local leaders in the Northern and Western Cape have played an essential role in identifying participants for interviews and focus groups. Community engagement protocols were co-developed to ensure respectful and inclusive participation, especially from women and youth.
- Technical experts from SANBI, the IUCN Succulent Plant Illegal Trade Task Force, South African National Parks authority and the Directorate of Priority Crime Investigation (South Africa's organised crime unit) have contributed input during tool development and inception meetings, strengthening technical quality and policy relevance.
- In Korea, potential collaboration with the National Institute of Biological Resources (NIBR), the country's Scientific Authority, has been actively pursued, particularly in relation to restructuring governance to monitor and address illegal plant trade. Additionally, the research team and SANBI are in contact with the Gyeonggi-do Agricultural Research & Extension Services (GARES), which operates a facility that propagates succulents. This collaboration would help diversify demand and reduce reliance on illegally imported succulents. The conditions regarding the involvement of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea to South Africa are expected to become clearer after the upcoming presidential election in South Korea in June 2025.

### **Strengths, Lessons, and Challenges:**

- **Strengths:** Deep trust among partners; co-developed survey protocols; and strong uptake by South African policy actors, who view this project as critical for informing next steps in succulent conservation.
- **Challenges:** Cross-country coordination has required careful time-zone planning and occasional delays due to ethical review timelines across institutions. These have been mitigated by proactive communication and flexible scheduling.
- **Lessons Learned:** Early and ongoing involvement of local communities significantly improved research buy-in and reduced resistance in sensitive discussions around illicit harvesting.

### **3. Project progress**

#### **3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities**

##### ***Output 1: Increased empirical evidence on consumption and drivers of illegal succulent trade in South Korea***

###### **Activity 1.1 – Conduct 20 qualitative interviews in South Korea with stakeholders in the succulent trade**

Progress toward this activity is underway. Due to delays with the ethical clearance process at UCT, one in-depth interview was conducted in South Korea by Dr. Juneseo Hwang. The interviews in South Korea will provide valuable insights into market segmentation, species preferences, and trader-consumer dynamics. All interviews will be transcribed, anonymised, and securely stored. Recruitment for the remaining interviews is ongoing and expected to be completed by the end of Q3 2025.

###### **Activity 1.2 – Conduct online survey in South Korea targeting 500 consumers**

The online consumer survey tool has been designed in collaboration with South Korean partners to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness, and attendees at the initiation workshop held at Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens in March 2025. The survey is scheduled for full rollout in Q3 2025 via platforms such as Naver and KakaoTalk. Recruitment strategies aim to ensure gender balance and inclusion of novice and experienced collectors.

###### **Activity 1.3 – Organise two stakeholder meetings in South Korea**

These stakeholder meetings are planned for Y2.

##### ***Output 2: Increased empirical evidence on supply drivers of illegal succulent trade in South Africa***

###### **Activity 2.1 – Organise project initiation workshop**

This workshop was held in Cape Town in March 2025 and hosted by SANBI in partnership with the project team. It brought together over 23 participants, including representatives from DFFE, the National Task Team, South African National Parks (SANParks), and project researchers. The workshop included thematic discussions on project implementation, consumer survey development.

###### **Activity 2.2 – Conduct 20 interviews with illicit succulent harvesters**

To date, 12 qualitative interviews have been completed with individuals involved in or impacted by the illegal harvesting of succulents, particularly in Namaqualand and the Richtersveld. These include a gender-diverse set of participants, with half of the interviews conducted with women. Interviews have explored motivations for involvement in IWT, economic precarity, and changing community norms. Interviews have been anonymised and securely stored in accordance with ethical guidelines.

###### **Activity 2.3 – Conduct six focus groups in rural communities**

Two focus groups have been held in the Northern Cape (including in Garies and Leliesfontein), engaging over x participants—one targeting women and family members of harvesters and one focus group with harvesters. A further focus group was held in Prince Albert to gauge alternative livelihood strategies in Western Cape contexts. These sessions revealed critical insights into the gendered dynamics of the trade and interest in alternative livelihood models. The remaining three focus groups are planned for Q3–Q4 2025.

###### **Activity 2.4 – Conduct 10 interviews with conservation and law enforcement officials**

Five interviews have been conducted with DFFE conservation officials, local rangers, and police officers to understand enforcement challenges and inter-agency collaboration on succulent-related IWT. These findings are currently being integrated with data from community interviews to identify systemic gaps in enforcement and communication. Our research assistant Polycarp Ondieki is also conducting a policy and legal analysis.

### **Activity 2.5 – Biannual stakeholder feedback sessions**

The first formal feedback session took place in December 2024. This meeting was used to share emerging insights from fieldwork and to co-refine the design of the livelihoods intervention. Stakeholders expressed strong support for a participatory model of engagement and stressed the need for economic alternatives rooted in local ecological knowledge.

### **Activity 2.6 – Community dissemination and co-design meetings**

Preparations for these sessions are underway and linked to the completion of the focus groups. These will occur in tandem with the second round of community engagement to ensure continuity and local ownership of the intervention design process.

## ***Output 3: Research outputs developed and shared with target audiences***

### **Activity 3.4 – Project initiation event in South Africa**

As noted under Activity 2.1, this event was successfully held in March 2025. In addition to its function as a project launch, it served to align expectations, roles, and timelines among diverse stakeholders.

### **Activities 3.1–3.3 & 3.5**

These activities—focused on publication, policy briefs, and the final intervention report—are scheduled for Year 2. Preparatory work has commenced, including the identification of publication targets.

## **3.2 Progress towards project Outputs**

### ***Output 1: Increased empirical evidence on consumption and drivers of illegal succulent trade in South Korea***

Baseline data at project inception indicated limited empirical knowledge about the specific consumer profiles, motivations, and behaviours driving the demand for illegally harvested South African succulents in South Korea. No comprehensive survey or qualitative study had been conducted on Korean demand for wild succulents, and little was known about the role of transit countries or informal trade networks.

To date, preliminary data collection has included a literature review, online ethnographic scoping, and six qualitative interviews with succulent collectors and small-scale traders. These activities have generated significant initial insights, indicating that South African succulents have become increasingly popular in Korea since the COVID-19 pandemic. Emotional motivations—such as seeking companionship or comfort—were identified as major drivers of purchasing decisions, particularly during periods of social isolation. Additionally, breeding succulents for resale through online platforms has emerged as a modest source of supplementary income for some collectors.

Preliminary findings also suggest that Thailand and China may act as transshipment hubs for illegal succulents entering South Korea, a hypothesis that will be further examined through interviews and the forthcoming consumer survey. Furthermore, legal and regulatory frameworks in South Korea appear to focus more heavily on animal species than plants, creating regulatory blind spots for ornamental plant trafficking. This has led to fragmented enforcement efforts and limited inter-agency coordination around plant trade controls.

Indicators for Output 1 include:

- 1.1: At least 500 consumer surveys completed (in progress, survey tool developed; full rollout scheduled for Q2 & Q3 2025).
- 1.2: Twenty qualitative interviews with consumers and traders (one completed to date).
- 1.1.4: Stakeholder input incorporated in research design.

We are on track to meet the Output 1 indicators by the end of the project period. We remain confident in completing this component within the planned time frame.

## ***Output 2: Increased empirical evidence on supply drivers of illegal succulent trade in South Africa***

At baseline, there was no publicly available systematic evidence on the socio-economic drivers of illegal succulent harvesting in the Northern and Western Cape regions of South Africa, nor on the internal structure of illicit supply networks or the perspectives of communities most affected by this trade. Law enforcement responses were primarily reactive, and knowledge of supply chains remained anecdotal.

Since project inception, significant progress has been made toward achieving this Output. Five in-depth interviews have been conducted with individuals involved in succulent harvesting and trade, alongside two focus group discussions with women and family members of harvesters. These have highlighted a complex interplay of poverty, lack of viable livelihood options, and intergenerational knowledge around plant collection. The majority of participants emphasized economic desperation and food insecurity—exacerbated by the pandemic—as key motivators for engaging in plant harvesting.

Preliminary mapping of trade routes through interview data suggests that plants are often transported from the Northern Cape to Gauteng before leaving the country, sometimes through informal courier networks, trucks or private vehicles. In parallel, five interviews with conservation and law enforcement officials have revealed capacity constraints, fragmented jurisdictional authority, and low prioritisation of plant-related IWT within environmental crime units. These findings are contributing to a detailed understanding of institutional blind spots and enforcement bottlenecks.

Indicators for Output 2 include:

- 2.1: One trade route identified and documented (preliminary mapping completed through interviews; further triangulation ongoing).
- 2.2: Twenty interviews with harvesters (twelve completed).
- 2.3: Six focus groups with impacted communities (three completed).
- 2.4: Ten interviews with officials (five completed).
- 2.5: Three state institutions, two communities and one NGO engaged in ongoing feedback processes (initial sessions held).

All Output 2 activities are on track for completion by the end of the project. Early and continuous engagement with community gatekeepers and SANBI staff has facilitated recruitment and allowed for safe and ethical fieldwork despite the sensitivities involved. The integration of gender-disaggregated data in interviews and focus groups ensures that both direct and indirect impacts of the illegal trade are being captured.

### **3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome**

**Outcome:** *An innovative, evidence-based alternative livelihoods intervention in South Africa that incorporates learning from ISN analysis between South Africa and South Korea, patterns of illicit consumer behaviour and demand for illegally harvested succulents in South Korea.*

At baseline, no existing intervention directly addressed the dual supply and demand dimensions of the illegal succulent trade between South Africa and East Asia. There was limited understanding of ISNs, little empirical data on consumer demand in South Korea, and no framework in place for co-designed, community-based alternative livelihoods tailored to the succulent poaching context.

Progress toward this outcome is advancing in line with the approved indicators of success. The key preliminary building blocks of the intervention—namely, the generation of empirical data on illicit trade networks, consumer behaviour, and community-level drivers—are being steadily developed and triangulated. Findings from the South African fieldwork (Output 2) are already shaping early ideas around potential livelihood pathways, particularly those that recognise and build upon existing local knowledge of succulent propagation and sustainable harvesting.

The March 2025 project initiation workshop, co-hosted by SANBI and attended by 23 stakeholders, marked a major step toward Outcome realisation. It included targeted sessions on co-designing intervention principles, gender-responsive planning, and co-designing the consumer survey. The strong interest expressed by stakeholders—including the National Task Team, the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI) and South African National Parks—in co-developing an alternative livelihoods intervention reinforces the relevance and achievability of the Outcome. This was further evidenced during the first biannual feedback session held in December 2024, where SANBI endorsed the direction of the research and emphasised the importance of translating findings into scalable, community-centred economic strategies (see Annex B.5).

The Outcome indicators and their associated progress are as follows:

- **0.1:** *Alternative livelihoods intervention developed by March 2026 (IWTCF-D26)*
  - The draft outline of the intervention is in development, drawing on fieldwork and stakeholder inputs. A formal draft report is scheduled for delivery by December 2025.
  - Current progress suggests this indicator is achievable within the project timeframe.
- **0.2:** *Three national/local institutions with improved capacity and capability (IWTCF-D03)*
  - SANBI, DFFE, and the National Task Team have participated in planning, review, and knowledge exchange events, improving institutional understanding of poverty–IWT linkages and community-responsive planning approaches. Ongoing engagement is documented in meeting minutes and stakeholder feedback.
- **0.3:** *All research data captured, anonymised, and securely stored (IWTCF-D26)*
  - A central, encrypted database hosted by UCT is actively maintained. Data management protocols are fully compliant with ethical and safeguarding standards.

The indicators remain appropriate and well-aligned to measure progress toward the intended outcome. Based on current progress, it is likely that the Outcome will be achieved by the end of the project, provided that key research activities (e.g., survey completion, focus groups, final interviews) continue as planned in Year 2.

No changes to the Outcome indicators are proposed at this time. Should delays arise in the finalisation of survey data or policy briefs, contingency planning is in place to adjust internal timelines without compromising deliverables.

### 3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Monitoring of critical assumptions remains central to the adaptive delivery of this project. The key Outcome and Output-level assumptions identified in the logframe have held true to date, and continued monitoring mechanisms are in place to assess their relevance and validity as the project progresses.

#### **Assumption 1: Consumer-side research will help stop illicit harvesting of vulnerable plants through anticipatory cultivation of species likely to be impacted by trade.**

This assumption remains valid. Early interview data from South African harvesters confirms that a significant proportion of plant harvesting is being driven by perceived consumer demand for rare and novel species. This demand—understood to originate largely from Asia—is shaping harvesting behaviour and targeting patterns. The project team anticipates that once consumer-side preferences and trends are more clearly established through the forthcoming survey in South Korea, it will be possible to make informed recommendations for anticipatory cultivation and legal propagation strategies. The assumption continues to underpin the intervention logic linking consumer insights to upstream supply-side responses.

#### **Assumption 2: Enhanced knowledge on characteristics and drivers of illegal succulent trade between South Africa and South Korea will help policy makers and stakeholders identify gaps in the two countries' existing systems to tackle illegal succulent trade while supporting a legal sustainable option.**

This assumption is also holding true. Preliminary findings from South Korea indicate that the illegal plant trade is not yet a significant focus of wildlife enforcement frameworks. There is low institutional awareness of plant-focused IWT and fragmented inter-agency coordination. These findings underscore the need for further dissemination of research findings and targeted engagement with Korean policymakers and civil society to build support for sustainable trade mechanisms. The assumption continues to guide Output 1 activities and future policy-oriented outputs.

**Assumption 3: Illegal succulent harvesters and consumers display an appetite for legal and sustainable alternatives.**

This assumption remains valid based on interviews and focus group discussions with harvesters and community members in the Northern Cape. Participants expressed concern about the risks of illegal harvesting—including criminal penalties, environmental degradation, and reputational harm—and showed interest in exploring legal cultivation or nursery-based alternatives if appropriate support and infrastructure were made available. This finding reinforces the project’s pathway to change, which hinges on providing viable and desirable alternatives that are socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable.

**Assumption 4: Results from our research intervention will allow us to submit a Main Project application to IWT Challenge Fund Round 12.**

This assumption remains valid. Data collection and stakeholder engagement are proceeding in line with the approved timeline, and key outputs needed to inform the design of a Main Project intervention are expected to be completed in time for the 2025 Round 12 application window unless the UK government ceases ODA funding (<https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk/news/2025/03/27/uk-prime-minister-s-oda-announcement/>). Planning for this submission is already underway within the core research team.

**Overall assessment of pathway to change:**

The expected pathway to change—that knowledge generation will raise awareness, shift attitudes, and inform the design of a credible alternative livelihoods model—continues to hold true. Early stakeholder feedback, particularly from SANBI, the National Task Team, and community representatives, has confirmed that the project’s framing and activities align with both policy priorities and lived experiences on the ground. Ongoing triangulation of supply-side and demand-side data is expected to further strengthen the intervention design and ensure it is fit for purpose. No major deviations from the project’s Theory of Change have occurred, and the MEL framework remains sufficient for tracking both assumptions and risks.

## **4. Thematic focus**

This project contributes directly to two core themes of the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund:

- (a) Reducing demand for IWT products, and
- (b) Developing sustainable livelihoods for people directly affected by IWT.

From inception, the project was designed to explore both demand- and supply-side dynamics of the illegal trade in South African succulent flora. In doing so, it aims to generate the evidence base needed to inform both consumer-focused interventions in South Korea and alternative livelihoods strategies for rural communities in the Northern and Western Cape regions of South Africa.

### **Theme A – Reducing Demand for IWT Products**

Progress this year has centred on mapping illicit supply chains and initiating qualitative research with Korean collectors and traders. Preliminary findings indicate that succulents from South Africa continue to be in high demand, with motivations ranging from aesthetic appeal to psychological companionship and online market speculation. Importantly, these findings suggest that demand-side drivers are nuanced and influenced by factors beyond rarity or prestige, pointing to opportunities for tailored, behaviourally informed demand reduction strategies.



## Theme B – Developing Sustainable Livelihoods

On the supply side, the project has successfully built strong rapport with local communities in the Northern Cape, especially women and family members of known or suspected harvesters. Through interviews and focus groups, participants have expressed deep interest in alternatives to illicit harvesting, particularly cultivation and restoration-based activities that could generate income while preserving biodiversity.

A major achievement this year was the successful stakeholder engagement and project initiation workshop hosted by SANBI in March 2025. Thematic alignment has remained consistent throughout Year 1, and no adjustments to the thematic foci are required at this stage. The project continues to generate strong evidence of its contribution to both IWTCF themes, with early impacts evident in stakeholder engagement, policy influence, and academic and public discourse. With full rollout of the Korean survey and finalisation of community-based data in Year 2, the project is well-positioned to deliver a scalable, evidence-based model linking demand-side awareness with supply-side alternatives.

### 5. Impact on species in focus

This project targets four key succulent genera that have been heavily affected by illegal wildlife trade: *Conophytum*, *Lithops*, *Tylecodon*, and *Avonia*. These species are endemic to South Africa's Succulent Karoo biome and face escalating threats due to poaching for international ornamental plant markets. At the time of application, all four genera were recognised by SANBI and CITES authorities as being at high risk of overexploitation, with limited information available on the structure of demand and market flows—particularly from East Asia.

As an evidence-focused project, the primary contribution to species protection thus far has been the systematic collection and analysis of data to understand the underlying market drivers and trade dynamics that place pressure on these species. Through online ethnography, including the analysis of Korean-language YouTube content, blog posts, and marketplace listings, as well as interviews with collectors and traders in South Korea, the project has identified a growing interest in South African succulents among Korean hobbyists. Early findings suggest that *Conophytum* species, in particular, are perceived as rare and desirable due to their small size, unique appearance, and limited growing conditions. Korean consumers often associate these plants with exclusivity and connoisseurship, driving demand beyond legal cultivation channels. Meanwhile, *Lithops* and *Tylecodon* appear in online listings more frequently, indicating their broader appeal and possible mass-scale trade.

These findings support the progress of Indicator IWTCF-B06, which tracks the identification of at least one illegal trade route for these species. Interviews with harvesters in the Northern Cape, alongside observations from law enforcement officials, have helped triangulate data on possible transit pathways through Gauteng and informal export to East Asian markets, often via third countries such as Thailand or China.

The project has also contributed to Indicator IWTCF-D03, by enhancing awareness and institutional understanding of species-specific threats among key national stakeholders in South Africa. The National Task Team, SANBI, and DFFE have been regularly briefed through biannual feedback meetings and the March 2025 project initiation workshop. These sessions have facilitated knowledge exchange on both the scientific status and socio-economic dimensions of succulent poaching and have created opportunities for these institutions to consider species-specific responses in future enforcement and conservation strategies.

While direct conservation impacts are not expected within the scope of this evidence project, the data gathered lays essential groundwork for targeted interventions. This includes informing anticipatory cultivation strategies, refining species-specific enforcement priorities, and shaping future sustainable trade initiatives that could relieve pressure on wild populations of *Conophytum*, *Lithops*, *Avonia*, and *Tylecodon*.

No changes have been made to the species focus since the application, and the project remains well aligned with the original objective of generating actionable insights that will support conservation and livelihoods interventions in subsequent phases.

## **6. Project support for multidimensional poverty reduction**

This project is grounded in the recognition that illegal succulent harvesting in South Africa is a response to deeply rooted poverty, inequality, and marginalisation. It aligns with the IWT Challenge Fund's emphasis on multidimensional understandings of poverty and contributes directly to the thematic area of sustainable livelihoods, while also addressing demand reduction.

### **1. Target Communities and Project Relevance**

The primary beneficiaries of this project are rural communities in the Northern Cape and, to a lesser extent, the Western Cape, where socio-economic inequality is stark and economic alternatives are limited. Many residents in these areas face chronic unemployment, food insecurity, and limited access to public services. These conditions are exacerbated by spatial and racial legacies of apartheid, continued disinvestment, and climate vulnerability. Some individuals—particularly younger men and impoverished households—have turned to illegal succulent harvesting as a survival strategy, exposing themselves to criminal risk and ecological harm.

By generating evidence on the socio-economic drivers of poaching and actively involving these communities in research design and programming, this project contributes to long-term poverty reduction strategies that are both just and locally relevant.

### **2. Locally Led, Gender-Responsive Engagement**

The project has adopted a participatory approach that centres the experiences of those directly and indirectly affected by IWT. Focus groups and interviews have prioritised women's voices—particularly those of family members of harvesters—and created space to understand the differentiated impacts of succulent poaching. These engagements have revealed a strong appetite for sustainable alternatives rooted in local ecological knowledge, such as legal cultivation, eco-tourism, and small-scale propagation businesses.

As recommended in the *IWT and Poverty Information Note*, the project has avoided narrow definitions of poverty and instead recognised the importance of dignity, voice, and empowerment. This is reflected in the co-design of community engagement protocols and upcoming research engagements, which seek to shift relationships of confrontational conservation toward inclusive environmental justice.

### **3. Pathways to Poverty Reduction**

While the current phase focuses on evidence generation, the project lays essential groundwork for measurable, direct poverty impacts in a potential Main Project phase. The pathway to change involves:

- **Short-term, indirect impacts**, such as improved community inclusion, raised awareness about legal risks, and early identification of viable alternatives (Indicators IWTCF-D03, IWTCF-B06).
- **Medium-term outcomes**, including increased capacity among SANBI, DFFE, and community stakeholders to engage in equitable conservation planning.
- **Long-term impacts**, expected to include improved household income, safer livelihood options, and stronger community governance through the implementation of the forthcoming alternative livelihoods intervention.

### **4. Global Public Good and Knowledge Contributions**

Although South Africa is an Upper Middle-Income Country, this project contributes significantly to the global public good by advancing a replicable, socio-ecological grounded model of IWT response for plant species. The knowledge generated will be applicable to other biodiversity-rich regions experiencing similar pressures, including in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) facing comparable demand-side dynamics.

In support of this, the project team has published key findings to date in both open scholarly and public forums:

- Hübschle, A. & Margulies, J. (2024). *The need for a socioecological harm reduction approach to reduce illegal wildlife trade*. *Conservation Biology*, 38(5):e14335. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.14335>
- Hübschle, A. & Margulies, J. (2025). *South Africa's rare succulent plants are threatened by illegal trade – how to stop it*. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/south-africas-rare-succulent-plants-are-threatened-by-illegal-trade-how-to-stop-it-244670>

These outputs have helped inform policy discourse and public understanding of the links between environmental harm and socio-economic injustice, contributing to global IWT response frameworks that account for local livelihoods.

## 5. Notable Achievements This Year

- Deepened engagement with vulnerable communities in the Northern Cape and Western Cape (Annex B.2 & B.3).
- Initiation of co-design processes for sustainable livelihood models, with strong gender focus.
- Enhanced institutional awareness and capacity among key South African stakeholders.
- Thought leadership publications advancing global understanding of harm reduction and poverty linkages in IWT contexts.

In sum, this project contributes to poverty reduction through a locally grounded, evidence-driven approach that embraces complexity and empowers communities to shape conservation futures on their own terms.

## 7. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

GESI Scale	Description	Put X where you think your project is on the scale
<b>Not yet sensitive</b>	The GESI context may have been considered but the project isn't quite meeting the requirements of a 'sensitive' approach	
<b>Sensitive</b>	The GESI context has been considered and project activities take this into account in their design and implementation. The project addresses basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	x
<b>Empowering</b>	The project has all the characteristics of a 'sensitive' approach whilst also increasing equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups	
<b>Transformative</b>	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	

The project has actively considered the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) context in both design and implementation, ensuring that research and stakeholder engagement meaningfully include women, youth, and other marginalised community members affected by the illegal succulent trade. While we are not "Empowering" in terms of asset transfer or systemic change (not feasible for an Evidence

grant), we meet all core criteria of a sensitive project and have laid the groundwork for greater ambition in subsequent phases.

### **Rights (Legal and Customary)**

Our qualitative research tools include prompts on both statutory and customary access to succulents and land, helping to reveal how informal harvesting overlaps with traditional practices and livelihood needs. We have engaged gatekeepers and community leaders in ways that acknowledge customary knowledge and power structures, while also advocating for inclusive participation.

### **Practice (Attitudes, Customs & Beliefs)**

We have incorporated an intersectional understanding of how cultural norms shape access to income from succulent harvesting. For instance, women are often indirectly affected—managing the risks and impacts of harvesting done by male relatives—yet are seldom acknowledged in enforcement or development planning. Focus groups have specifically addressed these differentiated impacts and aspirations for alternative livelihoods.

### **Environment (Stressors & Vulnerability)**

The project directly links socio-economic vulnerability to participation in the illegal wildlife trade. Many communities in the Northern Cape live with high unemployment, food insecurity, and environmental degradation. Our fieldwork has focused on capturing these stressors through a lens of structural precarity, rather than individual decision-making alone.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Our research has investigated the gendered division of labour in both legal and illegal succulent trade activities. Findings suggest men tend to harvest and sell plants, while women manage household consequences, including food provision and risk mitigation. This has informed our preliminary design of gender-responsive alternative livelihood strategies.

### **Representation**

We have ensured women are well represented in community consultations and focus groups, with approximately 50% of participants identifying as female. Sessions were conducted at times and in formats that accommodated caregiving responsibilities. In addition, community feedback is part of our research design.

### **Resources**

While the current project does not include direct asset transfers, the groundwork for future sustainable livelihood models explicitly considers women's access to land, training, and markets. Anticipatory cultivation strategies are being explored in part to create safer and more stable alternatives to risky harvesting practices.

### **Social Inclusion Across Intersectional Identities**

We acknowledge that poverty, race, age, and geographical remoteness interact to shape community vulnerability. While gender has been a primary axis of inclusion, our approach also recognises intersectional barriers faced by Indigenous people, youth, and the unemployed. In future phases, we aim to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities and deepen our understanding of gender diversity, as currently our analysis focuses primarily on CIS-gendered dynamics.

### **Lessons Learned and Challenges**

A key challenge has been overcoming entrenched gender roles and building trust in communities where men dominate harvesting networks and women have limited mobility or say in household decision-

making. We addressed this by involving respected female community leaders in participant recruitment and feedback loops, which improved women’s willingness to speak and share experiences. Another learning has been that women express greater interest in sustainable cultivation, suggesting potential for gender-differentiated livelihood pathways.

## **8. Monitoring and evaluation**

The original Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan remains valid and continues to guide the systematic tracking of project Outputs, Activities, and the overall Outcome. The evidence grant structure is supported by a clear and straightforward set of quantitative and qualitative indicators, which are being used to assess progress against the project’s intended results.

### **Systems and Processes**

Monitoring is coordinated by the lead partner, the University of Cape Town (UCT), through a shared MEL framework that is accessible to all partners. UCT is responsible for maintaining the central evidence repository, ensuring compliance with ethics protocols, and preparing indicator tracking sheets. Regular virtual check-ins are held with the University of Alabama and Sungkonghoe University to align on M&E progress, share data updates, and review milestones.

All data is stored securely using encrypted cloud storage provided by the University of Cape Town. Quantitative data (e.g., number of interviews conducted, stakeholder meetings held, participants engaged) is logged and updated monthly against the indicators listed in Appendix 3. Qualitative data is analysed thematically, and emerging insights are documented in internal memos that feed into planning, communications, and reporting.

### **Demonstrating Contribution to Outcomes**

To assess how project Outputs and Activities contribute to the Outcome, the M&E system uses a theory-informed, contribution-based logic model. Evidence generated from fieldwork is triangulated through stakeholder feedback loops, workshop deliberations, and community feedback and validation sessions. This helps confirm that activities—such as interviews, focus groups, and engagement meetings—are not only being completed but are producing actionable insights that inform the design of the future livelihoods intervention (Outcome indicator IWTCF-D26).

For example, feedback from SANBI and DFFE (captured during the March 2025 workshop) has validated the relevance of early findings for shaping conservation policy and local interventions. Similarly, focus group discussions in rural communities have revealed interest in the proposed legal trade models and cultivation strategies, thereby confirming the project’s direction and reinforcing its outcome logic.

### **Indicators and Measurement Approaches**

- **Quantitative indicators** include counts of interviews, surveys, focus groups, and engagement meetings (e.g., Indicators IWTCF-B06, IWTCF-D03).
- **Qualitative indicators**, such as increased awareness or institutional capacity, are assessed through recorded stakeholder feedback and meeting minutes. These are supported by direct quotes, thematic memos, and observations shared across partners.

### **Partner Roles and Knowledge Sharing**

The M&E responsibilities are shared across all three institutional partners:

- **UCT** leads M&E coordination and reporting, ensuring ethical compliance and safeguarding.
- **University of Alabama** contributes to analysis and writing.
- **Sungskonghoe University** is responsible for implementing M&E activities related to South Korean fieldwork, including survey monitoring and analysis of stakeholder engagement.

Information sharing is facilitated via monthly project calls, shared document repositories (hosted on a secure cloud platform), and biannual partner updates. Internal reflection sessions are used to assess progress against indicators and to make adaptive adjustments.

## **Areas for Improvement**

While the current M&E system is functioning well, one identified area for improvement is the formalisation of community-level feedback mechanisms. Although informal feedback has been collected during interviews and focus groups, we aim to pilot short participatory evaluation exercises during the next round of community engagement to further embed accountability and co-learning.

## **9. Lessons learnt**

Although the project is still in its early implementation phase, several important lessons have emerged that inform both current delivery and future planning. These lessons span administrative coordination, field engagement, technical approaches, and the integration of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and conflict sensitivity considerations into intervention design.

### **1. Importance of Conflict Sensitivity in Livelihood Design**

One of the most significant lessons learned is the critical need for conflict sensitivity when designing alternative livelihood interventions in contexts marked by poverty, inequality, and resource competition. In some communities, involvement in succulent harvesting is tied to informal power structures, kinship networks, and survival strategies. Introducing alternative livelihoods may shift access to economic opportunities, inadvertently creating or reinforcing socio-economic tensions. This finding reinforces the need to:

- Engage community leaders and marginalised groups throughout intervention design; and
- Embed principles of equity and inclusivity into any proposed economic alternatives.

This lesson will be applied during the co-design phase by ensuring diverse and inclusive participation and integrating local conflict mitigation strategies. At this stage, no formal Change Request is planned, but implementation approaches will be refined to reflect this insight.

### **2. Adaptive Fieldwork Planning Improves Responsiveness**

Fieldwork has revealed that flexibility in scheduling and methodology—particularly for interviews and focus groups—enhances participation and data quality. For instance, allowing participants to choose meeting times, locations, and language preferences increased comfort levels, especially among women and young adults.

Future research activities will continue to incorporate flexible, participant-led approaches, especially as the project enters more sensitive phases involving discussions of illegal activity, poverty, and household survival strategies.

### **3. Interdisciplinary Collaboration is Resource-Intensive but Valuable**

The interdisciplinary structure of the project—combining criminology, environmental governance, ethnobotany, and Korean market research—has proven to be both a strength and a challenge. While this approach has produced richer insights and allowed for triangulation across supply and demand sides, it has also required significant time investment in coordination across multiple time zones.

The project team will continue to invest in shared learning spaces, including internal synthesis meetings and joint writing processes. These ensure that partners are aligned and that findings are contextualised across disciplines and regions.

### **4. Participatory MEL is Resource-Intensive but Builds Trust**

Building trust through participatory Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) activities—such as community feedback sessions and reflexive dialogues with local stakeholders—has helped validate early findings and strengthened the legitimacy of the project in the eyes of communities and officials. However, these processes are time-consuming and require skilled facilitation.

Going forward, we will maintain a commitment to participatory MEL while streamlining reporting templates and allocating additional facilitation capacity during Year 2. This lesson will inform planning for a potential Main Project phase, in which locally grounded MEL will be critical.

## 5. Recommendations to Other Practitioners

- **Do not underestimate the complexity of plant-focused IWT.** It is often treated as a secondary issue compared to animal-focused IWT, yet it intersects with poverty, conservation, and transnational crime in unique ways.
- **Engage early with community gatekeepers** and diverse household representatives. Local credibility is essential when researching sensitive or illicit activities.
- **Build in time for adaptive planning**, particularly in transnational, multi-lingual projects with field sites in vastly different socio-political environments.
- **Conflict and gender sensitivity must be built into livelihood programming from the outset**, not added as an afterthought.

These lessons are already shaping our Year 2 approach, particularly in terms of community co-design and partner coordination. While no formal Change Request is anticipated at this time, minor adjustments to scheduling and facilitation protocols will reflect this learning.

## 10. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

Not applicable

## 11. Risk Management

No new risks have arisen over the past 12 months that were not previously accounted for in the original project design and risk mitigation strategy. The risk register developed during the inception phase—covering fieldwork challenges, stakeholder disengagement, ethical sensitivities related to interviewing individuals involved in illegal activity, and cross-country coordination issues—has remained relevant and sufficient for guiding implementation.

As such, the project has not made any significant adaptations to its design in response to emerging risks. All activities have proceeded within the parameters and safeguards outlined in the original application and M&E framework. Ongoing risk monitoring remains embedded in monthly partner coordination meetings and stakeholder feedback loops. These mechanisms have proven adequate for identifying and mitigating operational or reputational risks at an early stage.

Should any unforeseen risks materialise during the next reporting period—particularly in relation to community co-design of livelihood interventions or the rollout of the consumer survey in South Korea—the project team is well-positioned to respond through adaptive management practices and consultation with funders.

## 12. Scalability and durability

As an evidence-focused grant, the primary contribution of this project lies in generating foundational knowledge that can inform the design of durable and scalable interventions to address the illegal succulent trade. Nonetheless, early signals suggest strong potential for both uptake and sustainability should this work transition into a Main Project phase or inspire parallel efforts in other contexts.

## Stakeholder Awareness and Early Engagement

Project stakeholders have learned about the initiative through targeted engagement in South Africa and South Korea. This includes:

- Formal stakeholder workshop in Cape Town (March 2025) and online meetings in Seoul (January 2025), which introduced the project's objectives, research scope, and anticipated benefits to key institutional partners, including SANBI, DFFE, the National Task Team, and Korean regulatory authorities.
- Field-based interviews and focus groups in the Northern Cape, which have initiated dialogues with rural community members. Agreement to participate in these research activities is a promising early indicator of local interest and trust, particularly as many of these discussions touch on sensitive economic and legal matters.

Initial responses from interviewees—including expressions of interest in legal cultivation and concerns over enforcement risks—suggest that community members are open to exploring sustainable, regulated alternatives to illicit harvesting. While preliminary, this qualitative feedback provides evidence that the potential benefits of future interventions (e.g., income, safety, legality, environmental stewardship) are being recognised and may outweigh the costs of transition, particularly if appropriate support is provided.

### **Aligning Incentives of Key Institutions**

The project has made deliberate efforts to align the incentives of critical adopters and influencers. This includes:

- Maintaining active communication with the UK High Commission in South Africa, which has expressed interest in the broader implications of market-based interventions for conservation and livelihoods.
- Engaging both the CITES Scientific and Management Authorities in South Korea, who were consulted during the research tool design phase and invited to project updates. Their involvement ensures that findings feed into regulatory considerations and inter-agency cooperation on plant trade governance.
- Partnering with SANBI and DFFE to ensure that the project aligns with South Africa's National Strategy and Action Plan on Succulent Flora, thereby reinforcing national priorities.

This strategic alignment builds a foundation for institutional ownership of future interventions and increases the likelihood that any recommended policies or practices are adopted and maintained.

### **Behaviour and Norm Change (Early Evidence)**

Although attitudinal and behavioural change is not an explicit outcome of this phase, early evidence suggests growing awareness among South African community participants of the risks and limits of illegal harvesting.

### **Exit Plan and Legacy**

In the original exit plan, we committed to ensuring that the outputs, outcomes, and impacts of this project would endure by:

- Publishing open-access research outputs to support other countries and conservation efforts facing similar plant trade challenges.
- Developing policy-relevant recommendations for both supply- and demand-side actors, informed by empirical evidence and stakeholder consultation.
- Laying the groundwork for a scalable intervention in South Africa, with potential replication across Southern and East Africa.

Progress has already been made on these fronts, including:

- Dissemination of findings through academic and public-facing platforms (e.g., Conservation Biology and The Conversation) that highlight the link between illegal trade, inequality, and governance gaps.
- Planning for co-designed knowledge exchange in Year 2 that will shape the basis of a Main Project proposal, to be submitted to IWTCF Round 12.

### **Looking Ahead**

Given the high demand for wild plants in global markets and the limited livelihood alternatives in plant-rich regions, the scalability of a successful intervention model is substantial. Countries such as Namibia, Angola, Tanzania and Kenya are also experiencing similar dynamics and could benefit from the insights



generated here. While the long-term durability of potential interventions cannot yet be assessed, this project is establishing the empirical and relational infrastructure necessary to support that ambition.

In summary, the sustainability and legacy of this project lie in its ability to inform targeted, scalable, and just interventions in the future. The groundwork laid through this evidence grant will contribute to a broader transformation in how illegal plant trade is addressed—from criminalisation alone to inclusive, community-driven solutions.

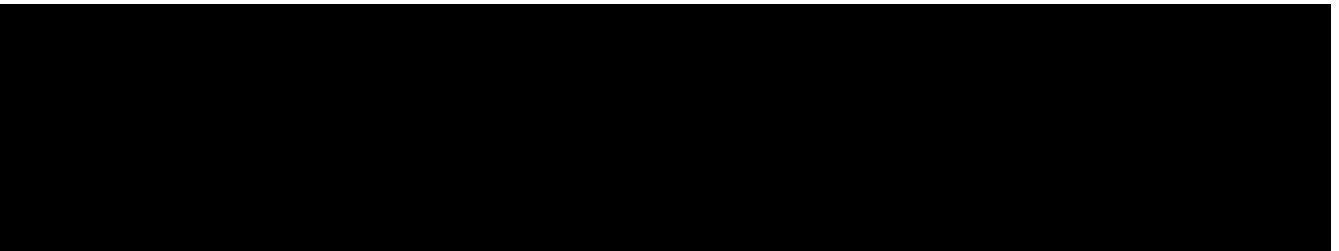
### **13. IWT Challenge Fund identity**

The project has made deliberate efforts to publicise the IWT Challenge Fund (IWTCF) as the principal source of support and to recognise the UK Government’s contribution to this work. This has been done through a combination of media engagement, public communications, and stakeholder-facing events.

#### **Public Acknowledgement and Media Coverage**

Initial insights from the project were published in *The Conversation* article, “*South Africa’s rare succulent plants are threatened by illegal trade – how to stop it*” (Hübschle & Margulies, 2025), which clearly acknowledged IWTCF funding. This article reached a broad audience and helped raise awareness of both the issue and the fund’s support for evidence-based, socially inclusive approaches to conservation. The article is being adapted for dissemination through IWTCF channels in consultation with the Fund’s media team.

In addition, the article and project milestones have been actively shared via social media, including:



#### **Recognition at Stakeholder Engagements**

At the March 2025 stakeholder initiation workshop in Cape Town, the IWT Challenge Fund was prominently recognised as the lead funder. All meeting materials, workshop slides, and event signage included the IWTCF logo, and the UK Government’s support was formally acknowledged during opening remarks. A representative of the UK High Commission in South Africa was present and opened the event, further underscoring the UK Government’s investment in addressing IWT in the region.

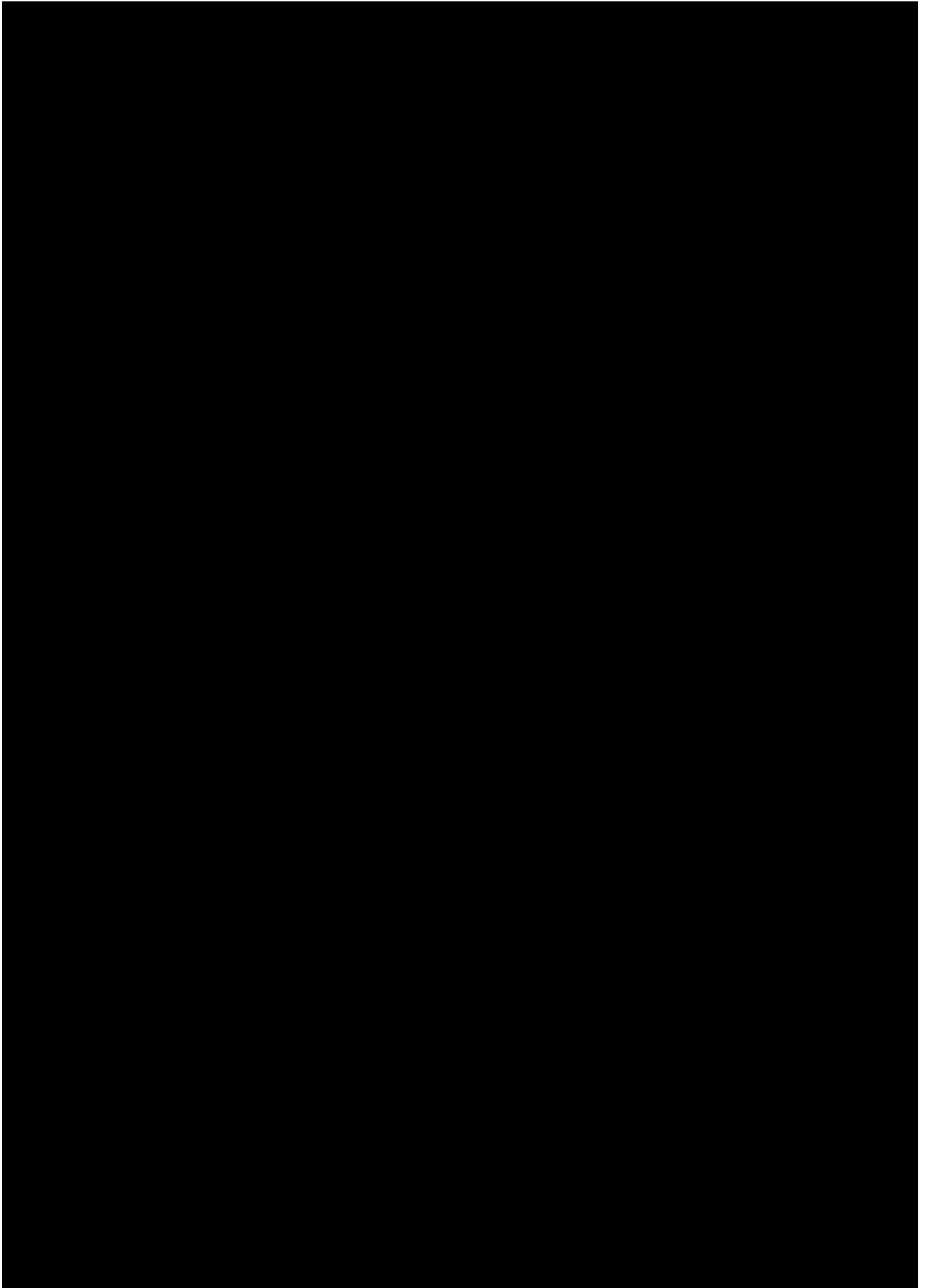
#### **Project Identity and Visibility**

The IWTCF-funded project has been implemented as a distinct and clearly branded initiative, not a subcomponent of a larger programme. This has helped maintain visibility of the fund and its strategic focus. While the research complements ongoing academic work by project partners, all activities, outputs, and communications under this grant are explicitly attributed to IWTCF support.

#### **Understanding and Awareness in Host Countries**

Awareness of the IWT Challenge Fund is growing among stakeholders in South Africa, particularly within government institutions such as SANBI, DFFE, and the National Task Team on Succulent Flora. The project has made concerted efforts to build and maintain a distinct IWTCF identity and to communicate the UK Government’s role as a key enabler of innovative, evidence-based responses to illegal plant trade. These efforts will continue and intensify as the project moves toward the publication and dissemination of final research outputs.

## 14. Safeguarding





## 15. Project expenditure

**Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (April 2024–March 2025)**

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2024/25 Grant (£)	2024/25 Total actual IWTCF Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)				
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items (see below)				
Others (see below)				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46 222</b>	<b>46 222</b>		

**Table 2: Project mobilised or matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)**

	Secured to date	Expected by end of project	Sources
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project (£)			Lead Institution, University of Cape Town
Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project (£)			

## 16. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

Over the past year, the project has made steady progress toward its outputs and has also benefited from important refinements to its design and implementation strategies.

No major operational difficulties were encountered, but there were minor delays in ethics approvals and disbursement of funds, which slightly impacted the original fieldwork timeline. These have been addressed through flexible scheduling, proactive communication, and internal adjustments to activity sequencing.

We are grateful for the constructive engagement of stakeholders in both South Africa and South Korea, and for the ongoing support of the IWT Challenge Fund team. At this time, we have no concerns to raise but would welcome continued opportunities to engage with the Fund on post-evidence grant pathways, particularly regarding funding modalities and expectations for Main Project proposals that aim to implement community-driven livelihood alternatives.

Should the Fund be able to provide further guidance on transition planning from Evidence to Main Project phases, especially regarding scale, timing, and partnership structuring, it would greatly support our strategic planning for Year 2.

## 17. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements or progress of your project so far (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes.

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds to edit and use the following for various promotional purposes (please leave this line in to indicate your agreement to use any material you provide here).

The *Safeguarding Succulents* project has made remarkable early progress in addressing one of the lesser-known but rapidly growing forms of illegal wildlife trade: the illegal harvesting and trafficking of South Africa's rare and endemic succulent flora. With a dual focus on understanding illicit supply chains in South Africa and demand dynamics in South Korea, the project has positioned itself as a global thought leader on plant-focused conservation crime.

A key achievement this year was the successful implementation of cross-continental, interdisciplinary research that links illicit supply networks (ISNs) with consumer demand in ways rarely done before. Early findings from interviews and focus groups in South Africa show that poaching is closely tied to structural poverty, inequality, and gendered vulnerabilities. Meanwhile, insights from South Korea suggest that consumer motivations for buying wild succulents are often emotional, aesthetic, or speculative—opening new avenues for targeted demand management strategies.

Another outstanding milestone was the well-attended **project initiation workshop in Cape Town (March 2025)**, co-hosted with SANBI and attended by more than 20 stakeholders, including conservationists, government officials, and representatives from the UK High Commission. This event not only helped align priorities across institutions but also initiated co-design processes for future sustainable livelihood interventions—grounded in the lived experiences and aspirations of affected communities.

The project has also contributed to international discourse, with team members publishing key findings in both academic and public platforms, including *Conservation Biology* and *The Conversation*. These outputs have amplified the project's relevance and helped draw attention to plant trafficking as a pressing conservation and social justice issue.

Our safeguarding approach has been strengthened through enhanced informed consent processes, tailored community engagement protocols, and a strong commitment to gender-responsive research. These measures ensure that the project remains inclusive, ethical, and sensitive to the socio-political dynamics in which it operates.

We are proud to be setting the stage for a transformative intervention that links biodiversity protection with poverty reduction and global accountability.

**Image, Video or Graphic Information:**

Due to the sensitivity of the communities and trade routes involved, we are unable to provide identifying photographs. However, we welcome collaboration with the BCFs Comms team to create an alternative, anonymised visual or infographic that conveys the essence of the project's work.

● **Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against Indicators of Success for Financial Year 2024-2025**

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
<b>Outcome</b> An innovative, evidence-based alternative livelihoods intervention in South Africa that incorporates learning from ISN analysis between South Africa and South Korea, patterns of illicit consumer behaviour and demand for illegally harvested succulents in South Korea.		
<b>Outcome indicator 0.1</b> Alternative livelihoods intervention developed for tackling IWT for SANBI, National Task Team and other stakeholders by March 2026. (IWTCF-D26)	Draft outline under development, informed by interviews, focus groups, and March 2025 stakeholder workshop. Findings shaping intervention logic.	Co-design meetings with communities and SANBI (Q3-Q4 2025); draft report by December 2025.
<b>Outcome indicator 0.2</b> Three local/national organisations (National Task Team, SANBI, DFFE) with improved capability and capacity as a result of the project by March 2026. (IWTCF-D03)	SANBI, SANParks, and National Task Team engaged through initiation workshop and biannual feedback sessions. Demonstrated increased understanding of socio-economic drivers of succulent IWT.	Continued institutional engagement through feedback loops; further capacity-building dialogue in Q3/Q4.
<b>Output 1</b> Increased empirical evidence on consumption and drivers of illegal succulent trade in South Korea.		
<b>Output indicator 1.1</b> 500 consumers targeted via survey (50% women) by Dec 2025 (IWTCF-07)	Survey tool co-developed	Launch full survey Q2–Q3 2025; track gender balance.
<b>Output indicator 1.2</b> 20 qualitative interviews with consumers/traders (50% women) by Dec 2025	1 interview completed; recruitment in progress	Complete remaining 19 interviews by Q4 2025; ensure gender representation.
<b>Output indicator 1.1.1</b> Survey tool developed by March 2025	Achieved.	Final deployment in Q2 2025.
<b>Output indicator 1.1.2</b> Survey results finalised by Dec 2025	In progress.	Complete rollout and analysis by Dec 2025.
<b>Output indicator 1.1.4</b> Stakeholder input received (from project partners)	Korean and South African inputs incorporated into tool design.	Continue consultation during analysis and policy b
<b>Output 2.</b> Increased empirical evidence on supply drivers of illegal succulent trade in South Africa		
<b>Output indicator 2.1</b> At least one trade route identified by Feb 2026 (IWTCF-B06)	Preliminary mapping complete from interviews with harvesters and officials.	Validate and document trade route in final report.
<b>Output indicator 2.2.</b> 20 interviews with harvesters in Northern Cape (50% by Month 15)	12 interviews completed	Conduct final 8 interviews by Q3 2025.
<b>Output indicator 2.3</b> 6 focus groups completed by Oct 2025 (50% women participants)	3 conducted to date, including women-only sessions.	Complete remaining 3 by October 2025.

<b>Output indicator 2.4</b> 10 interviews with officials by Oct 2025 (50% women)	5 interviews conducted.	Complete remaining 5 by Q3 2025.
<b>Output indicator 2.5</b> 3 institutions, 2 communities, 1 NGO show enhanced awareness by March 2026 (IWTCF-B24)	Engagement with SANBI, DFFE, National Task Team, Socio-Tech NGO and 2 communities.	Sustain stakeholder engagement through feedback and co-design sessions
<b>Output 3.</b> Research outputs developed and shared with target audiences (governments, researchers, and civil social organisations).		
<b>Output indicator 3.1</b> One peer-reviewed article submitted (IWTCF-D12)	Hübschle & Margulies (2024) published in <i>Conservation Biology</i> .	Plan second article based on survey findings
<b>Output indicator 3.2</b> Two policy briefs (English + Korean) by March 2026 (IWTCF-D13)	Outline development initiated.	Draft briefs in Q4 2025 for review and dissemination.
<b>Output indicator 3.3</b> One international hybrid workshop hosted by Dec 2025 (IWTCF-D20)	Planning initiated; Sungkonghoe University to host.	Likely to change workshop date to Q4
<b>Output indicator 3.4</b> At least five decision-makers attend initiation event by March 2025 (IWTCF-D21)	23 policy-makers, conservationists and NGO representatives attended the March 2025 workshop, including UK High Commission.	Ensure similar outreach for international workshop
<b>Output indicator 3.5</b> Report on alternative livelihoods intervention by March 2026	Draft structure being developed.	Deliver first draft by Dec 2025; circulate for stakeholder review.



- **Annex 2: Project's full current Indicators of Success as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)**

[illegible]

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
	capability and capacity as a result of the project by March 2026. <b>(IWTCF-D03)</b>		
<b>Outputs:</b> <b>1. Increased empirical evidence on consumption and drivers of illegal succulent trade in South Korea.</b>	<p>1.1 Five hundred consumers targeted in South Korea via survey to understand consumer drivers of trade demand (50% women) by December 2025. <b>(IWTCF-07)</b></p> <p>1.2 20 Qualitative interviews conducted with succulent traders and consumers in South Korea. 20 interviews in total by December 2025 (50% of interviews with women).</p>	<p>1.1.1 Survey tool developed by March 2025.</p> <p>1.1.2 Survey tool implemented, and results finalized by December 2025.</p> <p>1.1.3 Monthly meetings to review progress with project team.</p> <p>1.1.4 Feedback and input received from project stakeholders.</p> <p>1.2.1 Transcripts/field notes digitally captured, anonymized and securely stored in digital database.</p>	
<b>2. Increased empirical evidence on supply drivers of illegal succulent trade in South Africa</b>	<p>2.1 At least one trade route of illegal supply of succulents identified by February 2026. <b>(IWTCF-B06)</b></p> <p>2.2 Twenty qualitative interviews with illicit succulent harvesters in Northern Cape region. 10 interviews by April 2025. 20 in total by Month 15.</p> <p>2.3 Six focus groups with impacted communities in rural settlements in the Northern Cape. Three focus groups completed by April 2025. Six focus groups in total by October</p>	<p>2.1.1 Trade route mapped and described in final report.</p> <p>2.2.1 Transcripts or field notes of interviews digitally captured, anonymized and securely stored in digital database.</p> <p>2.3.1 Transcripts or field notes digitally captured, anonymized and securely stored in digital database.</p>	

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
	<p>2025. 50% of focus group participants are women.</p> <p>2.4 Ten interviews with conservation and law enforcement officials in southern Africa by October 2025. 50% of interview partners are women.</p> <p>2.5 Upon completion of the project by March, three state institutions (National Task Team, SANBI and DFFE), 2 local and Indigenous communities and 1 NGO (Socio-Tech) with enhanced awareness and understanding of poverty associated with illegal succulent trade. <b>(IWTCF-B24)</b></p>	<p>2.4.1 Transcripts or field notes digitally captured, anonymized and securely stored in digital database.</p> <p>2.5.1 Minutes of bi-annual feedback sessions with National Task Team, SANBI and other stakeholders.</p> <p>2.5.2 Minutes of dissemination and co-design session after research engagements with affected communities.</p>	
<b>3. Research outputs developed and shared with target audiences (governments, researchers, and civil social organisations).</b>	<p>3.1 One paper published in a peer-reviewed journal <b>(IWTCF-D12)</b></p> <p>3.2 Two policy briefs produced in collaboration with project partners by March 2026 (one in English and one in Korean). <b>(IWTCF-D13)</b></p> <p>3.3 One International hybrid workshop hosted by project partner on strengthening global cooperation to tackle illegal succulent trade by December 2025 (Target: 80 attendees, 50% women). <b>(IWTCF-D20)</b></p> <p>3.4 At least five decision-makers attending project initiation event in</p>	<p>3.1 journal confirmation email.</p> <p>3.2 Copies of policy briefs (disaggregated by language).</p> <p>3.3 Zoom analytics report and workshop attendance register (disaggregated by gender and country level).</p> <p>3.4 List of attendants and analytics reports (disaggregated by country level and type of events).</p> <p>3.5 Copy of report on alternative livelihoods intervention.</p>	

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
	<p>South Africa (50% women) by March 2026. <b>(IWTCTF-D21)</b></p> <p>3.5 One report on alternative livelihoods intervention produced by end of March 2026.</p>		
<p><b>Activities</b> (each activity is numbered according to the output that it will contribute towards, for example 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are contributing to Output 1. Each activity should start on a new line and be no more than approximately 25 words.)</p> <p>1.1 Conduct 20 qualitative research with stakeholders in South Korea to identify major characteristics of illegal succulent trade between the two countries in Years 1-2</p> <p>1.2 Conduct online survey in South Korea to identify consumer drivers of importing illegal succulent products from South Africa.</p> <p>1.3 Organise 2 meetings with project partners and stakeholders to review research findings associated with illegal succulent trade in South Korea (one per annum)</p> <p>2.1 Organise project initiation workshop hosted by SANBI with project partners and stakeholders by end of March 2025.</p> <p>2.2 Conduct 20 in-depth interviews with succulent harvesters in South Africa and analyse gendered impacts of illegal succulent trade and poverty</p> <p>2.3 Conduct six focus groups with impacted communities especially the wives and mothers of illegal harvesters in the Northern Cape.</p> <p>2.4 Conduct 10 interview with conservation and law enforcement officials</p>			

- **Annex 3 Standard Indicators**

- **Table 1 Project Standard Indicators**

Please see the Standard Indicator guidance for more information on how to report in this section, including appropriate disaggregation.

<b>IWTCF Indicator number</b>	<b>Name of indicator</b>	<b>If this links directly to a project indicator(s), please note the indicator number here</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Disaggregation</b>	<b>Year 1 Total</b>	<b>Year 2 Total</b>	<b>Total to date</b>	<b>Total planned during the project</b>
IWTCF-D03	Number of local or national organisations with enhanced capability and capacity to address IWT issues	0.2	Organisations	South Africa; Type: Government	3		3	3
IWTCF-D12	Number of peer-reviewed publications produced	3.1	Publications	Global	1		1	2
IWTCF-D26	Number of research outputs or data repositories created and made accessible	0.1.4	Outputs	South Africa; Type: Repository	1 (Secure database and anonymised transcripts)	0	1	1

- **Table 2 Publications**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Type</b> (e.g. journals, best practice manual, blog post, online videos, podcasts, CDs)	<b>Detail</b> (authors, year)	<b>Gender of Lead Author</b>	<b>Nationality of Lead Author</b>	<b>Publishers</b> (name, city)	<b>Available from</b> (e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online)
The need for a socioecological harm reduction approach to	Journal article	Hübschle, A. & Margulies, J.	Female	South African	Conservation Biology	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.14335">https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.14335</a>

<b>Title</b>	<b>Type</b> (e.g. journals, best practice manual, blog post, online videos, podcasts, CDs)	<b>Detail</b> (authors, year)	<b>Gender of Lead Author</b>	<b>Nationality of Lead Author</b>	<b>Publishers</b> (name, city)	<b>Available from</b> (e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online)
reduce illegal wildlife trade						
South Africa's rare succulent plants are threatened by illegal trade – how to stop it	Blog post – science communication	Hübschle, A. & Margulies, J.	female	South African	The Conversation	<a href="https://theconversation.com/south-africas-rare-succulent-plants-are-threatened-by-illegal-trade-how-to-stop-it-244670">https://theconversation.com/south-africas-rare-succulent-plants-are-threatened-by-illegal-trade-how-to-stop-it-244670</a>

- **Checklist for submission**

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the <b>correct template</b> (checking fund, scheme, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and <b>deleted the blue guidance text</b> before submission?	yes
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If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 17)?	no
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	yes
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	yes
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