



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.

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

Project reference	IWTEX004
Project title	Securing Wildlife Product Stockpiles in 5 West African Countries
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Burkina Faso, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo
Lead Organisation	Elephant Protection Initiative Foundation (EPIF)
Partner(s)	<p>Burkina Faso</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Direction de la Faune et des Ressources Cynégétiques2. Anges Gardiens de la nature (AGN) (Local Partner) <p>Guinea</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Ministère de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable4. Cabinet en Ingénierie Environnementale et de Développement Durable (CIEDD) (Local Partner) <p>Liberia</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Forestry Development Agency (FDA) (Liberia) <p>Sierra Leone</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">6. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, Forestry Division7. Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) (Local Partner) <p>Togo</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">8. Ministère de l'Environnement et des Ressources Forestières, Direction des Ressources Forestières9. Agbo Zegue (Local Partner)
Project leader	Ruth Musgrave (Director of Programmes, EPIF)
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	www.elephantprotectioninitiative.org

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).

Project IWTEX004 was approved in June 2024, with formal acceptance of the grant in August 2024. The project officially commenced on 01 September 2024.

During the initial phase, our government partners in the 5 target countries were notified by letter of the successful grant award and the project's launch, reaffirming the project's aims, strategic objectives, and specific activities. These communications also included a formal request to nominate a Focal Point for the project to assist with project planning, coordination, and implementation. Since notifying the governments, the process of nominating Focal Points has commenced, and the EPIF is now actively collaborating with the Local Partners on workplans and the immediate next steps to commence the initial activities of the project. Preliminary planning calls have been held or are arranged in the coming days with Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Togo and Guinea. For Liberia, EPIF is still awaiting the appointment of a government Focal Point, but is engaging proactively with contacts within the department to expediate this process.

Dates have been proposed to all five countries for initial visits to conduct Baseline Gold Standards assessments and project planning, with the aim being to complete all of these visits before the end of 2024. Currently we are still awaiting confirmation from all governments but continue to engage with our Focal Points to enable visit planning and coordination as soon as possible. Once these visits are conducted, a detailed workplan will be agreed with governments and Local Partners to deliver all project activities within required timelines.

In addition, the relevant Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Offices (FCDOs) for each of the five target countries were informed by letter about the project funding being awarded. The EPIF held a call with the Ambassador to Guinea and have had productive communications with the Embassy in Liberia. We have not yet had responses from the High Commissions in Sierra Leone or Ghana (for Burkina Faso and Togo). We will continue to keep all FCDOs informed at regular intervals as the project progresses and include visits to Embassies / High Commissions during our initial assessment visits in the target countries, which has already been agreed with Guinea and Liberia.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

The tempo of the early phases of the project has been dictated by the speed of response and selection of Focal Points by the government partners. This has taken more than four weeks in most cases. This is not something that the EPIF can directly influence, but have we used persistent communications and engagement with stakeholders to enable the preliminary project activity to commence. As above, in Liberia this has still not been resolved, but it is assessed this is due to a change in senior management within the FDA and should be resolved shortly. In all target countries this early delay might impact our aim of completing all initial assessments visits before the end of 2024, but it is still hoped this will be possible. Any that are not completed will be prioritised in early 2025.

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:

N/A

Change Request reference if known: [N/A](#)

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.

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?

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.

Feedback from Initial Approval Letter: *'It was noted that the mitigating actions for the risk in line 40 of the risk register "All countries – SEAH" could be strengthened by ensuring all staff receive Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) training and that there are regular monitoring of Complaints, Feedback and Response Mechanisms, and that these are included as mitigating actions.'*

Measures to address the above feedback have been included in project planning. We will ensure the training audience receives Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) training as part of this project, by using the disasterready.org free PSEA course that all EPIF employees are mandated to complete already. We will make this a mandatory online pre-course requirement for all participants, staff and partners.

The EPIF has recently reviewed its Complaints, Feedback and Response Mechanism policy and will communicate the available channels for all staff, participants and partners to report any incidents for confidential and sensitive response from our management team. This has been updated in the risk register.

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.	Yes
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	Yes
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.	Yes