



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

Half Year Report

Project reference	IWTX004
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 Cynégétiques 2. 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 Durable 4. 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 Division 7. 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 Forestières 9. Agbo Zegue (Local Partner)
Project Leader	Ruth Musgrave (Director of Programmes, EPIF)
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2 (Half Year report - Year 2) April 2025-September 2025
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).

In the first half of year 2, strong progress has been made towards the completion of planned activities and objectives.

For Output 1:

1.2 Procedures for the management of wildlife product storerooms have been developed and validated across all five countries. This has been undertaken through workshops to develop the procedures; drafting the documents and followed by national validation workshops. In Togo and Burkina Faso, two workshops were conducted to develop a legal decree (Arrête) for the formalisation of the procedure. Whilst in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the procedures

need signing by the Director. The procedures are in the process of being printed in each country in advance of the training courses.

- 1.3 Central storerooms in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Liberia are either completed or near completion. There is a slightly delay in Togo, as the Ministry's new compound and building under the custody of the Ministry of Interior has not yet handed over to the Ministry of environment.

For the field storerooms, in Liberia, the improvements to the field sites have been approved and will commence in October. In Guinea and Togo, site visits will be undertaken in October to confirm needs at each site before launching the improvements. There are on-going issues in Sierra Leone selecting sites (see below for detail).

- 1.4 The training courses on the procedures and SMS will take place in Quarter 4 of the project, this is due to international travel to the CITES CoP by our Government focal points in November, limiting when the training can occur. Whilst this is behind on our scheduled workplan, the activities will still be completed, and will ensure all storerooms are finished for the procedures to be implemented.

1.5 For Output 2:

For the fate of the items in Government custody –two meetings have been conducted in Burkina Faso and Togo to include the recommendations for the fate of the wildlife products within a by-law (Arrete). In Guinea, the fate of the wildlife products will be discussed in a workshop scheduled in Quarter 3.

For Liberia, a discussion is planned with the FDA in October to establish if they are interested in relaunching the new wildlife law which is still pending approval.

For Sierra Leone – no progress has been made to date.

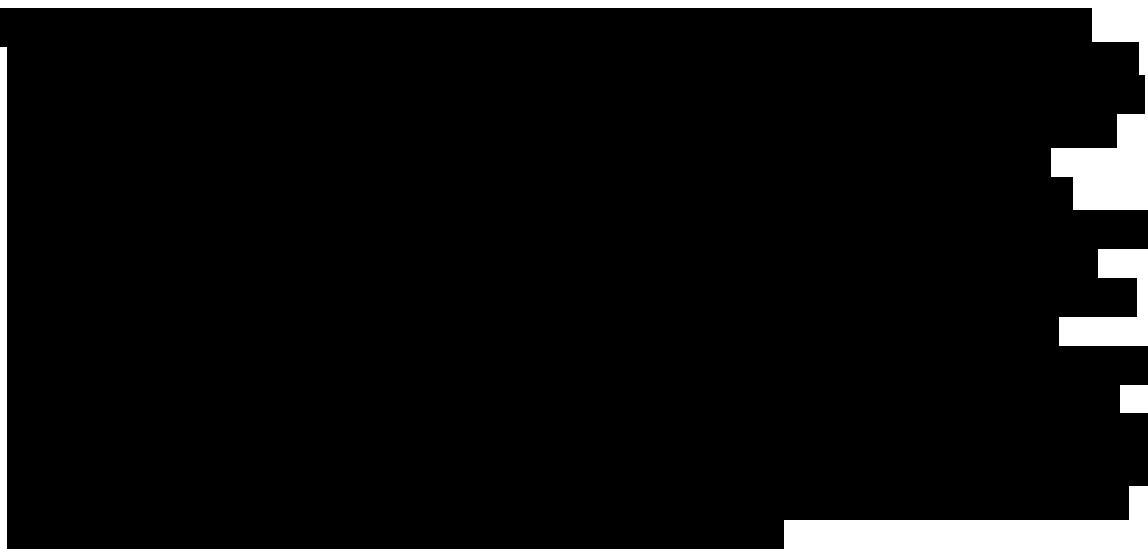
The assumptions all remain true. The indicators are still relevant.

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.

During the first half of year two of the project, there have been a couple of aspects worthy of note which is impacting project implementation.

1. In Guinea, Mr Kolie, the main point of contact and manager of our partner organisation CIEDD died unexpectedly from a cardiac arrest in September. This has resulted in a pause of activities for bereavement and subsequently the need for CIEDD to restructure and complete administrative formalities including changing bank account signatories as he was the co-signatory. This should not impact budget or timetable of project activities across the year.

2.



3. There has been a suite of international meetings in the lead up to the CITES Conference of Parties in November, the IUCN Conservation Congress in October and other meetings. This has meant key government staff involved in the project have been

<p>unavailable due to international travel, or competing activities, which has slowed progress down. We are working around this, through ensuring the technical, administrative and logistical aspects are completely ready so the project is able to progress activities as soon as possible. In addition, during planning meetings with the Directors, we have endeavoured to get approval for a series of activities at once to maximise their attention on the project.</p>	
<p>3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?</p>	
Discussed with NIRAS:	YES
Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	NA
Change Request reference if known:	

<p>4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)</p> <p>Actual spend: ■■■■■■</p>	
<p>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 2026)?</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Estimated underspend: ■■■■■■</p>	
<p>4c. If you expect an 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.</p> <p>Due to progress in Sierra Leone, underspend anticipated in some areas and higher costs than budgeted in some areas, we are reviewing budgets and expect that we will request to realign some budget to increase the mentoring activities planned in Year 3. A formal change request to follow, once we have confirmed exact amounts.</p>	
<p>5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</p> <p>Suspensions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk</p>	
<p>6. Project risk management</p> <p>6a. If your project has an Overseas Security and Justice assessment, please provide an update on any related risks, and any special conditions in your award paperwork if relevant for your project.</p>	
<p>6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	

If yes, please provide further information, ensuring no sensitive data is included within responses.

Suspensions or allegations related to safeguarding concerns should be reported to ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk

7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent Annual Report. As a reminder, all projects that were scored as 'Not Yet Sensitive' in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment of their latest Annual Report should demonstrate how they are meeting the minimum GESI-Sensitive standard.

Following on from the Year 1 annual report review, and feedback on the GESI aspect of the project, we have been working to strengthen GESI within the activities undertaken in the project.

The EPIF had a call with BCF to understand how we can strengthen GESI within our project implementation, this included trying to identify where the gender imbalance can be reduced in project activities, and if not possible how to explain within the reporting how/why there is a gender imbalance.

A GESI project analysis is in progress and highlighting areas where the project can be more GESI sensitive. Overall, the project activities involve existing government wildlife and enforcement staff, and within the five target countries, there are more men working in the wildlife department at the head office and the national park or regional office level than women which results in a gender imbalance in project activities. This imbalance is slowly being addressed in the Government as a whole as more women are attending the wildlife schools and applying for jobs in the wildlife department. However, the role of storeroom managers and supervisors still tend to be men due to the security risk associated with them and the physical requirements of the role (moving large items around). The project is working to ensure all the SoPs are GESI sensitive, which will enable the new recruits to take these roles as they move up the ranks within Government.