



**BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



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

Half Year Report

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2025

Project reference	IWTEX006
Project title	Disruption and Deterrence: reducing wildlife trafficking between Africa and Asia
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Vietnam
Lead Organisation	Environmental Investigation Agency UK (EIA UK)
Partner(s)	Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
Project leader	Justin Gosling-Programme Lead, Securing Criminal Justice - EIA UK
Report date and number	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	EIA Website/ EIA Facebook EIA Instagram EIA LinkedIn

N.B. Project partners request that information within this report is not publicised without prior consultation.

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).

1.1: WCS is working with national experts from Viet Nam National University – University of Law and Viet Nam Procuratorate University to collect and analyse prosecutions related to wildlife crime. LawTech Global are conducting legal assessments for Cameroon and the Republic of Congo (RoC). A template has been prepared, and analyses should be completed during 2025 Q4.

1.3: WCS developed recommendations to improve the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code, sharing these with the Supreme People's Court, the Ministry of Justice and the Wildlife Support Network, with the aim of aligning administrative sanctions with regulations of the Penal Code, close identified legal gaps and strengthen provisions related to violations on CITES-listed species

1.5: WCS facilitated the signing of a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters (MLAT) between Viet Nam and Angola, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on strengthening cooperation in the field of prosecution and in the fight against transnational organized crime between Viet Nam's Supreme People's Procuracy and Angola's Attorney General's Office. EIA is actively developing inputs to CITES CoP20 and is engaging with UNTOC processes with regards to IWT.

2.1-2.4: EIA is actively engaging with INTERPOL and the WCO to develop these activities with delivery scheduled for Year 3.

2.5: WCS attended monthly meetings of UfW's Transport and Financial Taskforce, Southeast Asia Chapter and shared updates with around 62 participants on activities under this award. WCS and EIA research and analysis teams met in Brazzaville, RoC on the 10th of July to discuss the project activities, coordinate research and share information.

3.2: WCS in RoC carried out a five-year synthesis of wildlife trafficking reports to identify trends and information gaps related to the WCA-SEA trafficking corridor

3.3: [REDACTED] EIA continued to collate and analyse intelligence on wildlife trafficking across project countries, including social media monitoring, remote engagement with key actors, mapping of trafficking networks and routes, and the development of historic intelligence to assess intelligence gaps and objectives going forward.

3.3: [REDACTED] 281 intelligence reports were received, 270 collected by CWT teams and 11 by protected area anti-poaching teams (not

<p>funded from this project). Planning for EIA's field investigation to be undertaken in Year 3 is ongoing, informed by the intelligence collected and analysis of trafficking patterns and key networks.</p> <p>3.4: An analysis of an ivory trafficking network involving Cameroonian and Congolese subjects with links to Cameroon is underway. WCS teams produced 21 actionable intelligence products, eight were sent to protected area management teams in northern ROC for operationalization, [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED] EIA conducted outreach visits to Cameroon and the RoC, engaging with key government agencies and CSOs to strengthen relationships, enhance understanding of enforcement and judicial systems, and establish channels for future intelligence sharing and collaboration to support law enforcement actions.</p> <p>3.5: WCS hosted the Wildlife Support Network quarterly meeting in June with 19 participants representing six local and INGOs and the U.S. Embassy in Viet Nam. WCS provided updates on Viet Nam's legal and institutional reforms, encouraging participants to comment on recommendations being proposed under Activity 1.3. EIA will initiate regular stakeholder coordination calls from early 2026, following the establishment of contacts with relevant CSOs and partners in Cameroon and RoC.</p> <p>4.1-4.4: EIA continues to engage with INTERPOL and WCO to plan collaborative activities and outputs, with implementation scheduled for Year 3. Coordination meetings are ongoing to refine priorities and ensure alignment with both organisations' workstreams. During recent outreach visits to Cameroon and the Republic of the Congo, EIA met with key government agencies, including customs, financial intelligence units and anti-corruption authorities, who will be invited to participate in the planned capacity-building events, which will also complement activities under a separate U.S. government-funded initiative to enhance transnational law enforcement cooperation against wildlife crime. These engagements, along with the upcoming activities, will facilitate the effective sharing of intelligence on WCA-SEA wildlife crime networks with relevant national and international law enforcement agencies in line with Output 4.4.</p> <p>5.1-5.3: EIA has developed a ToR for a consultant to lead development of the academic assessment, which will be supported by legal experts LawTech Global, who will subsequently use the assessment to produce the practical guidance document. Our partners at the University of Hong Kong are currently preparing the SVIS.</p> <p>5.5: Four court hearings in Ouessou and Impfondo, northern RoC were monitored by WCS. Two offenders received five-year suspended sentences linked to trafficking ivory, and one a two-year prison sentence linked to the killing of an elephant and hunting using illegal weapons. [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>5.7: Open-source monitoring of wildlife seizures in Viet Nam continued. The half-year analysis was published on WCS VN's website and social media channels and shared with journalists. Data will be inputted into the Global Environmental Crime Tracker. WCS is working with the Department of Criminal Justice Statistics and Digital Transformation (Department 2) of the Supreme People's Procuracy to improve the automated forms used to collect and report wildlife crime cases. EIA have remained dedicated to adding relevant intelligence to the Global Environmental Crime Tracker, including 332 incidents occurring in the project countries (312 in Cameroon, 22 in Vietnam and 8 in RoC).</p>	
<p>2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.</p>	
<p>Viet Nam has undergone administrative reform and government restructure, where state management, law enforcement and judicial agencies' internal structures were reorganized. It came into effect on July 1st, resulting in the reassignment of government personnel. Time is needed to identify and reconnect with officials linked to activities under this award.</p> <p>ROC's counter-wildlife trafficking team underwent restructuring due to loss of US government funds. This resulted in a retrenchment of several team positions, which has temporarily impacted momentum in field investigations while the team internally adjusts. We expect this impact to be mitigated over the coming months.</p> <p>The project continued to experience challenges due to uncertainty surrounding match-funding from the US State Department, temporarily affecting momentum and continuity at a key stage of planning and implementation, particularly for activities under Output 4. We now expect to retain this funding for its original 2-year duration and are continuing as planned albeit with caution, with no anticipated impact on the achievement of project objectives or the overall workplan.</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:	No

Formal Change Request submitted:	No, but we plan to submit prior to Dec 1.
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	N/A

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)

Actual spend: [REDACTED]

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2026)?

EIA - Yes ☐ **No** ☒ [REDACTED]

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

We expect to submit a Change Request by 1 December 2025.

6. Project risk management

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.

No incidents have occurred during the project and while the risk register has been reviewed, no changes have been made. There are no special conditions for this project.

6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months?

Yes ☐ **No** ☒

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

Suspicious 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.

Exit strategy: Please find attached our draft exit strategy which will be developed throughout the project and finalised at the commencement of the final project year (see Annex 1).

Additional feedback from Stage2 letter:

i)

[REDACTED]

ii)

Matched funding: The Stage 2 letter asked us to submit a revised budget detailing match funding. We have since submitted a revised budget that includes match funding for both EIA and WCS (see Annex 2 for the most recent budget).