



**BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



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

Half Year Report

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2024

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

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

Project reference	IWTEXT007
Project title	Bringing down the gavel on regional wildlife crime corruption
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Malawi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe
Lead Organisation	Lilongwe Wildlife Trust
Partner(s)	Government of Malawi law enforcement agencies, Chancellor College (University of Malawi), University of Southampton
Project leader	Jonathan Vaughan
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	www.lilongwewildlife.org @malawiwildlife

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).

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

Following delays on final approval due to the OSJA assessment, we received our grant paperwork on 10 September, so we have had a limited time to start implementing activities as we were unable to implement any cost-incurring activities ahead of the approval. However, following the in-principle approval, we have been working since 1 August on internal planning and initial briefing meetings with partners to ensure we are able to quickly catch up on the scheduled work plan. From 1 August to date we have completed the following:

- Grant agreement and associated documents submitted.
- Staff briefings and project planning and financial management documents completed
- Procurement processes (quotes and internal approvals) for the capital equipment has been completed and procurement will be concluded in November.
- Engaged with Prof Michelle Newberry at the University of Southampton to initiate plans for the prisoner research early in Year 2.

- LWT staff met with colleagues from the Women's Law Association and Chancellor College to discuss planned activities.
- LWT project lead and project manager met with members of the project board to discuss the project activities in September.
- LWT's Head of Law and Policy and representatives from Malawi Police Service, Directorate of Public Prosecutions and the judiciary attended the regional IWT workshop held in Tanzania in October, supported under PAMS' IWTEX003 project. This was an excellent opportunity for LWT and colleagues to engage with their regional peers and particularly for LWT staff to make contacts with Tanzanian colleagues to work with for activities in Year 2 of this project.
- Discussed and made plans for key project staff to complete online safeguarding course in Q3.
- We were also delighted that an article on LWT and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife's recent court case report and LWT's wider work on research and rehabilitation of pangolins confiscated through the IWT was included on IWTCF's website and in the latest newsletter.

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 delayed start meant that we were unable to proceed with cost-incurring activities until the OSJA was approved in September. However, we have made good progress with planning to date, so remain confident that we can complete all Year 1 plans.

3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with NIRAS:

Yes/ No

Formal Change Request submitted:

Yes/ No

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

Yes/ No

Change Request reference if known: Change request reference CR24-049 on budget changes was approved.

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 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.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes to your project if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

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

We are looking forward to meeting with the Defra/NIRAS team in November.

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.

Letter dated 29 March 2024 was submitted in response to the request for further information in the offer letter. In addition, the following comments were shared from reviewers as recommendations to improve the project:

- What specific methods will be adopted to complete activities? For example, provide further information on prisoner research and why this type of research has been chosen.

The prisoner research follows the methodology used under the IWT064 project and may be amended following lessons learnt. We will use open and closed question surveys with prisoners, questions will be read out by a Chichewa speaker during interviews with prisoners who agree to take part (prior informed consent). This activity begins in Year 2, so further information will be shared in the Yr 1 report following more detailed discussions with the consultant.

- Please elaborate on the exit strategy and sustainability of the approach post-funding

We feel that Q23a does outline the realities of funding for such work in a low-income economy such as Malawi and presents a pragmatic assessment of the need for ongoing donor funding. The institutional relationships and capacity building which will be furthered through this project are referenced, in addition to how results of the regional evaluation can help to steer future work. We would welcome any specific questions or recommendations on how this section should be further elaborated on.

- The proposal outlines an indirect approach to poverty reduction, though this could be strengthened in places.

Noted, we will further explore how indirect approaches can be maximised.

- The logframe should be strengthened: Output 3 reads more like an Outcome statement and should be refined; could use further consideration on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) disaggregation; please reflect on the means of verification identified to ensure these are appropriate and allow you to evidence progress.

We note these recommendations. Since Defra have advised that the logframe and M&E framework have been reviewed by external consultants, we would like to request that changes to the logframe are delayed until after the meeting on 18 November where we understand any recommendations will be shared. We can then complete all proposed amendments at one time and submit a revised logframe in November.

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.

Y

If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	Y
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.	
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	Y
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	Y
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Y