



**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 2025

Please note all projects that were active before 1st October 2025 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, Zimbabwe, Tanzania
Lead Organisation	Lilongwe Wildlife Trust
Partner(s)	Multiple Government of Malawi agencies, Tikky Hywood Foundation, PAMS
Project Leader	Jonathan Vaughan
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2 October 2025
Project website/blog/social media	www.lilongwewildlife.org @lilongwewildlife

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 monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) 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.

Summary of activities planned for Q1 and 2:

- LWT was pleased to be featured in the IWTCF film celebrating 10 years of the Fund. We have shared the film internally, as a [News](#) item on our website and across our socials (e.g. [Twitter/X](#)). Our Conservation Justice team, and the LWT Board were honoured to have our IWTCF work recognised in this way and we would like to thank Defra for including LWT in the celebration of this milestone for the Fund.

- 2.1/2.2 Ongoing, on track as per workplan, arrests/conviction data reported below.
- 2.3 The Review of Wildlife Court Cases report 2017-2025 is due by the end of Year 2. C4ADS have produced a draft report to enable us to check and validate data and comment on the format of the report. The final version will be completed by the end of March and shared with the AR.
- 2.4 Training has been discussed, and in association with a member of the Malawi Law Association AGM organising committee, we are planning to use the opportunity of the AGM, which is attended by almost all Malawian lawyers, to deliver training as part of the agenda.
- 2.5 The annual judiciary meeting was postponed due to the general election; discussions have been initiated with the Judiciary Training Committee and this will be held in November.
- 3.1/3.2 Ongoing
- 4.1 Ongoing
- 4.2 The regional level impact evaluation is not due until the end of the project. However, we decided to produce an initial report by the end of Year 2. C4ADS have shared a draft, and the final report will be shared with the AR.

- 5.1 We delivered two prosecutor case review meetings in the period, one for the Northern/Central region and one for the Eastern/Southern region.
- 5.3 In July we met with a law professor from the University of Malawi who leads the environmental clinic. We discussed how to ensure that we can deliver an informative and engaging teaching module for law students on wildlife crime. Together we have developed a moot trial format, which will be run as a competition across the law school, with three rounds designed to test the students' knowledge and court submission skills. The final round of the competition will be on 14 November. The law student interns will be placed with LWT in Jan-Feb.
- 5.4 This will be further developed following the training session as per 2.4.
- 5.5 This activity is a little behind schedule but will be completed in Q3/4.

We have reviewed our MEL framework for this project as part of an overall organisational review to align with LWT's new strategic plan 2026-2032. The project indicators are still relevant and form an integral part of our organisational reporting on IWT. The assumptions are holding, the primary assumption being the support of government agencies. We continue to work closely with multiple agencies and have renewed/initiated MoUs with several agencies over the past year.

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.

There have been no significant problems. Malawi's general election in September caused a delay to some activities as LWT's office and government offices were closed for the election period and government officials were unable to attend events in the weeks prior to or immediately after the election (e.g. annual judiciary meeting has been postponed to November).

We are pleased to be working closely with the University of Malawi's law school on the moot trial competition. This will be the first time a moot trial has focused on wildlife law at UNIMA and is expected to draw a large audience as well as multiple law student teams. Local media will be invited, so we are hopeful this will be a good public awareness opportunity as well as an innovative approach to teaching future lawyers about wildlife crime and national and international wildlife legislation.

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 / NA

Change Request reference if known: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome*

Guidance for Section 4: The information you provide in this section will be used by Defra to review the financial status of projects. This review will identify projects at random for spot checks on financial management and will include requests for evidence of the actual spend information provided below. Please ensure the figures you provide are as accurate as possible and that you have the evidence to support it. You do not need to provide it now.

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

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 2026)?

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, and not later than 31st December. 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 BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Suspensions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk

No – LTS continue to be very helpful with all administration and reporting support.

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.

We have attached an updated Risk Register. Our award conditions require that we report arrests/convictions in all HR and AR, please see below for the period Apr-Sept 2025:

Wildlife

Arrests: 32 (M:30, F:2) **Convictions (Listed Species):** 36 (M:35, F:1)

Forestry

Arrests: 6 (M: 6) **Convictions:** 11 (M:11)

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.

We were very pleased with the positive feedback and encouragement from the external reviewer of our Year 1 report. These detailed reviews by external experts have provided helpful guidance throughout our IWTFCF projects and we appreciate this as an additional level of support from BCF. There were no responses required.

However, we have taken note of the comments on the outcome indicators. The recommendation for indicator 0.2 to include a measure related to sentencing consistency or severity is perhaps captured by the current indicator 2.2 'By end Yr 2, 60% and by EOP 75% of average sentences for Listed Species are within +/- 18 mths of starting point in Sentencing Guidelines'. This indicator was developed to show a measure of consistency, i.e. how many sentences are around the starting point, but also to measure whether sentences are deterrent (i.e. not more than 18 mths below the starting point) and also fair (i.e. not more than 18 mths above the starting point) unless there are notable aggravating or mitigating factors.

Indicator 0.3 we will consider in more detail and report on in the AR since this exact recommendation would be difficult to measure, but we will consider alternatives.

Checklist for submission

Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, and annexe other requested materials as appropriate.	Yes
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	Yes
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	Yes
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to BCF-Reports@niras.com	
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	