

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects

Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

Note: 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 2022

Project reference	IWT089
Project title	Building effective responses to illegal wildlife trade across Central Asia
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan
Lead partner	Fauna & Flora International (FFI)
Partner(s)	TRAFFIC International, Institute of Zoology (National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan), Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity Kazakhstan (ACBK), The Institute of Zoology and Parasitology (Biological Division of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan), State Customs Service (Kyrgyz Republic), Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision (Kyrgyz Republic)
Project leader	<i>Matthew Lowton</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	
<p>1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).</p> <p><u>O1: LE response to IWT in Central Asia is informed by data and intelligence shared between agencies and range states</u></p> <p>Activity 1.1: The workshop in Bishkek was followed by the workshop organised jointly with our partners – the Institute of Zoology and EkoMaktab and took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on May 31st, 2022. The workshop was attended by 28 people from 13 organisations, including law enforcement agencies, national CITES authorities, local and international organisations. Another national workshop took place in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on June 3rd, 2022. 16 people (15 men, 1 woman) from such organisations as Customs services, National Academy of Science, Drugs Control Agency, Forestry Agency, Committee for the Environmental Protection, Ministry of Internal Affairs and GIZ participated in the discussion of the ongoing work and practices on combatting illegal wildlife trade in the country. In all three national workshops attendees were also offered to answer the same Likert questionnaire, according to which IWT is not included in the present curricula of their training academies, and communication between agencies or countries on IWT issues is very weak. Three national workshops covered a total of 87 people from 30 relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations. The regional meeting which is planned to be held in Spring 2023 preliminary in Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan. Activity 1.2: In July 2022, TRAFFIC and the partner organisations sent out questionnaires and data templates for the collection of IWT trade from each of the target countries for the development of the IWT national reports. As of the end of September 2022, several governmental organisations in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have already submitted data. In Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, the</p>	

project partners are working with governmental organizations to receive data and information by the end of October 2022. **Activity 1.4:** FFI had several meetings with the representatives of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Technical Supervision (MNRETS) and other agencies to indicate the possibility and willingness to support the creation of the inter-agency agreement by facilitating communication and hiring a lawyer. Due to delays and lack of initiative from the MNRETS' side, FFI is at the moment exploring the possibility to push forward this activity through the work with the technical group in the country. **Activity 1.5:** The first steps for facilitation of bilateral agreement were undertaken during the meeting "Service dogs in the fight against illegal trade in wildlife" which took place in Almaty, Kazakhstan on May 24th -25th, 2022. This meeting was organised by the Kyrgyz NGO Ilbirs Foundation jointly with our key partner in Kazakhstan ACBK and FFI participation. The law enforcement officers from Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan presented their approaches to training dogs, needs and ongoing work in each country, raised the importance of cross-border cooperation in IWT between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and explored the opportunities for such.

O2: Greater priority given to addressing IWT at national and regional level

Activity 2.1: In Uzbekistan, the working group was formed from the State Committee of Ecology and Environmental Protection; local NGO EkoMaktab- FFI's partner under the INL project; Institute of Botany, Institute of Zoology, General Prosecutor's Office; State Customs Committee; Committee of the State Border Protection; National Central Bureau Interpol – Tashkent; and Tashkent Zoo. The first meeting of this interagency working group was held in Tashkent on August 16th, 2022, attended by 25 people. The meetings for working groups in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are planned to be held in the coming months. **Activity 2.2:** The results of the national workshop in Tashkent, Uzbekistan were covered in the official Telegram channel of the Academy of Science of the Republic of Uzbekistan (O'zbekiston Respublikasi Fanlar akademiyasining rasmiy telegram kanali), with more than 700 followers; on the official website of the State Committee on Ecology and Environment Protection <https://www.uznature.uz/ru/site/news?id=2685>; as well as on the national media Nuz.uz and Янги Узбекистон. **Activity 2.3:** On May 24, in Almaty, ACBK with FFI had a meeting with a representative of the Central Asian Regional Information Coordination Centre for combatting illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their procurers (CARICC) which covers Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and a few other countries. CARICC expressed their interest in collaboration around wildlife trade. At the end of October, FFI is also planning to meet UNODC office in Bishkek which informed us that one of their projects includes wildlife trade. TRAFFIC was also approached by the representatives of the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) and invited to their upcoming workshop.

O3: At least 150 LEOs based along critical trade routes and hotspots have improved capacity to detect and respond effectively to IWT

Activity 3.1: The ToR for the international expert who would lead on development and delivery of modules on wildlife trade was developed and advertised in September 2022. The position of international consultant was offered to Gohar Petrossian who is an Associate Professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. The national consultant in Kazakhstan was also introduced to Gohar and is working closely with ACBK on identifying the needs and the best approach to the delivery of the modules to the LEAs academies. In Kyrgyzstan, FFI has identified Evgenii Mashenko – the Head of the Canine Training Department of the Specialised Customs. **Activity 3.2:** The training is planned for January- March 2023. In Kyrgyzstan, FFI is discussing the format and the best approach to delivering the training. **Activity 3.4:** The SMART workshop that is co-funded by the INL project will take place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan from the 26th to the 28th of October, 2022. This workshop is an introduction and presentation of SMART for the protected areas in Uzbekistan- South Ustyurt National Park, Saigachy Complex Landscape Reserve. The regional workshop under the IWTCF project is now planned shortly after the Tashkent SMART workshop, on November 22-24, 2023 in Almaty, Kazakhstan and will have Tajik, Kyrgyz, Kazakh and Uzbek representation. **Activity 3.5:** After meetings with the Head of the Canine Training Department – Evgenii Mashenko and the head of the Specialised Customs, FFI together with the Customs came to a decision that purchasing two working dogs and improving the dog training facility will be more beneficial and urgent for the

dog handlers training dogs on wildlife and derivatives. The process of procurement of sniffer dogs for Specialised customs will start after signing the MoU with the Customs Service, which is expected to be completed in near future. Work is ongoing to procure sniffer dog teams and provide training in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

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 consequences of the war in Ukraine, protests and restructuring in Kazakhstan, border conflicts between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, severe unrest in Karakalpakstan and the Gorno-Badakhshan with heavy Government response and pressure on civil society by the government in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan has caused the delay in delivering of some activities requiring an adaptive management response with the difficulty in contacting certain agencies and ministries and requiring the movement of certain activities, such as regional workshop, which was postponed till Spring 2023.

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

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS: Yes No

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes No

Change request reference if known: CR22 - 008

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

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

4b. If yes, then you need to 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 if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

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