

Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the “Project Reporting Information Note”:
(<https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk/resources/information-notes/>).

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum** of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes)

Submission Deadline: 30th April 2022

IWT Challenge Fund Project Information

Project reference	IWT091	
Project title	Control poaching and IWT by strengthening community guardianship in Chitwan	
Country/ies	NEPAL	
Lead partner	National Trust for Nature Conservation	
Project partner(s)	Kalika Community Forest, Kankali Community Forest, Kalika and Rapti Municipalities and German Nepal Friendship Association	
IWTFCF grant value		
Start/end dates of project	April 2020 – March 2023	
Reporting period (e.g. April 2021-Mar 2022) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	September 2021 – April 2022	
Project Leader name	Dr. Naresh Subedi	
Project website/blog/social media		
Report author(s) and date	NTNC , 2022 Contributors: Aashish Gurung, Dr. Babu Ram Lamichhane, Rishi Subedi and Dr. Naresh Subedi	

1. Project summary

The project aims to reduce the rhino poaching threats and uplift the socio-economic status of *Chepang* tribal communities living in the northern hills of Chitwan valley. Wildlife crime syndicates often take advantage of poor economic status and jungle skills of *Chepang communities* and mobilise them in poaching. Various conservation programs in Chitwan valley have never reached these communities. With enhanced law enforcement, those involved in poaching previously have been arrested. In some families, parents are arrested and the children deprived of care, health and education. This increased resentment of these communities towards conservation. Through awareness programs, education of children, livelihood and income generation activities, it is possible to reverse the situation. Based on our experience in buffer zones and other corridor forests, community ownership of wildlife can be built by increasing awareness and livelihood support. Through this project we also intend to transform the previous wildlife poachers to wildlife protectors.

The project has been implemented in Saipam Bansghari in Kalika Municipality (Ward no 11), and Kalikhola and Swamitar settlements in Rapti municipality (Ward no. 10) (Figure 1 below). These settlements are situated on the Churia hills in northern part of Chitwan valley (~ 10 km north of Chitwan National Park). There are ~200 households with majority belonging to Chepang tribe (>100) along with few Tamang ethnic group and Kami (lower Hindu cast, so called untouchables). They are socio-economically marginalised. Wildlife crime syndicates take benefits of poor economic status and jungle skills of Chepang youths and mobilized them in killing rhinos in Chitwan valley. Thus, these three small settlements are ill-famed for their involvement in rhino poaching. Wildlife authorities and police have reached these settlements many times to arrest those involved in poaching. All the current efforts are carried out from the law-enforcement side (arresting and putting them in jail). No activities were conducted before to change the root cause – the community education and livelihood opportunities. Thus, we initiated this project to engage Chepang youths in alternative livelihood and educate kids in these settlements.

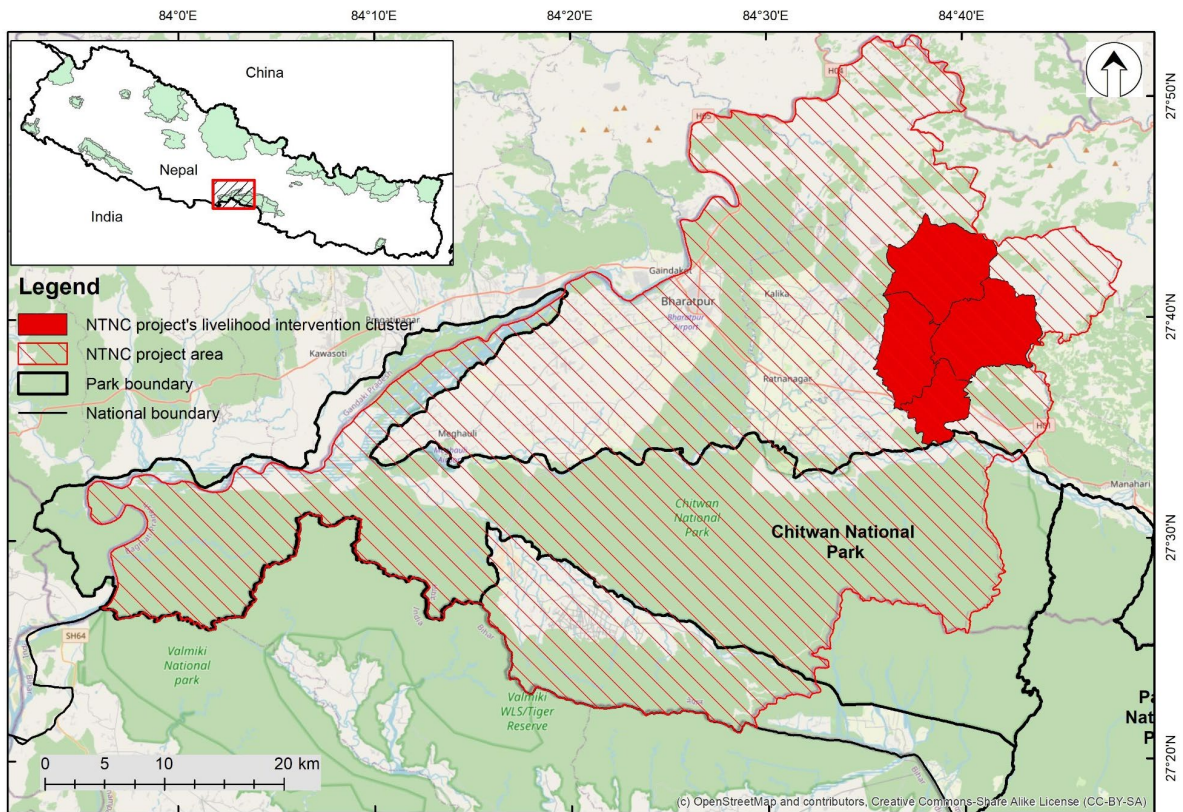


Figure 1. Project location. The livelihood intervention was focused in the red filled area.

2. Project partnerships

This project implementation has been led by NTNC (previously known as KMTNC), which has been working in collaboration with Nepal's Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation since its establishment in 1982. NTNC focuses on science based wildlife management and participatory wildlife conservation. NTNC works closely with the local communities for developing ownership for biodiversity conservation and enhancing their capacity. Similarly, it also provides technical expertise in wildlife research and monitoring other technical support for the park management. NTNC carries out its activities in close collaboration with the national park authorities, local government and community institutions. This project has further enhanced the relation between the partner organizations as it attempts to address the issue of poaching and illegal wildlife trade at the root level i.e. to uplift the livelihood of local people and decrease their dependency on forests and activities related to IWT. The project was implemented in close coordination with the Chitwan National Park (CNP) and Divisional Forest Office Chitwan. The CNP office keeps a detailed record of wildlife (especially rhino and tiger) poaching in and around CNP including our project area. The park also helped in identifying key people from the villages in the project area who were the target groups of our project. The park has also been helping in widespread delivery of conservation education sessions and legal provisions for wildlife conservation. Similarly, the Divisional Forest Office, Chitwan provided technical support for the CBAPU formation and mobilization. The local government bodies - Rapti and Kalika municipalities and the local community organisations (Community Forest User Groups, Community Based Anti-Poaching Units) also collaborated in this project through their participation as well as technical and financial contributions where possible. The Kalika municipality provided additional support for the livelihood (██████████ for goat farming). The community forest user groups also leveraged additional support for wildlife conservation and livelihood activities (cow farming, goat farming, vegetable farming etc.). In collaboration with the Chitwan National Park, Divisional Forest Office Chitwan, Rapti Municipality, Kalika Municipality, Kalika and other community forest user group and other local community, NTNC successfully completed the first year of the project. This collaboration will be continued for next two years of the project too.

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

Output 1: Communities stopped poaching and supported in wildlife conservation as a result of diversified livelihoods opportunities

1.1. Engage IWT affected families in vegetable farming

The project provided vegetable farming support to sixty-one IWT affected households (HHs) (31 HHs from Pakhadibas of Kalika CFUG and 30 HHs from Amritdharapani CFUG). Before providing the support a training on vegetable farming was conducted in March 2022 for the households (a member of the household participated in the training). The training involved sessions such as identification of different vegetable species that are suitable for the locality, vegetable species and their favourable seasons, methods of farming vegetables off- season, identification and treatment of various diseases, controlling pest infestations, and so on. After the training, vegetable seed was provided to the farmers from this project. The vegetables included Tomato, Capsicum, Pumpkin, Cucumber, and other species that readily grow in the project area and are on regular demand in the local market. This activity is expected to help the farmers of local communities to earn more benefits from vegetable farming through increased vegetable production and capacity to produce off-season vegetable species. The farmers have started growing the vegetable in this summer season. Details of the supported households and photos are presented in Annex.

1.2. Support skill-based training for the local youths

Skill based training on 'Electrician and House-wiring' was provided to 15 local youths from Kalika, Kankali, Baghdevi and Amritdharapani CFUG area in Rapti municipality ward no 10. The community forests supported in identifying the appropriate candidate from the village to participate in the training. The 3-months (390 hours) long was started from January 2022 and completed in March 2022. All of

the participants have completed their training in Narayani Polytechnic Institute at Bharatpur which is under the jurisdiction of Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT). The trainees will soon undergo an evaluation process called skill-test in order to obtain a certificate for serving as an electrician. We will follow up and report their status in the following year. The individuals were also supported with tools and equipment necessary for their job.

Similarly, one-month training for light vehicle driving (car, jeep and pickup) was provided to 10 local individuals in December of 2021 and 15 individuals in February of 2022. This training was conducted by the local driving institute. Appropriate candidates of the local youths interested to learn driving and use it as means of their livelihood were selected in consultation with Kalika CFUG.

The proposed activities to support skill-based training in this project were designed to reduce the forest dependency of the local communities. After completing the activities as per the project agreement in the first year, some surplus amount remained in the budget. Thus, we utilised the budget by supporting the communities in the two other activities, carpet weaving and plumber training as follow.

Carpet weaving training: A one-month long training for carpet weaving has been provided to twenty women from Kalika CFUG. The training was organized by a female run carpet enterprise called '*B.M. Handicraft*' which is based at Padampur village of Kalika Municipality. This enterprise was established with the support from previous projects including the USAID Hariyo Ban Program through NTNC. It is now a self-sustaining body that provides opportunities for local women. With those learnings from the past, the training was conducted in coordination with the Kalika CF and B.M. Handicraft. The training provided necessary skills for the participants to process raw wool into fine threads at domestic level. The threads are then used to weave beautiful carpets which have high demand and selling price in the market. The necessary raw materials, tools and equipment were supported from this project. All the supported women completed the training and they are involved in the carpet weaving enterprise with the opportunity to earn by utilising their leisure time at home.

Plumber Training: Similar to electricians training, this project provided partial support for plumbing training to fifteen youths from Kalika, Baghdevi, Kankali and Amritdharapani CFUG. The three-months long training was also provided through collaboration with Narayani Polytechnic Institute starting from 8th of March 2022. The trainees will be provided with a certificate to work as a plumber after they pass the skill test at the end of the training. Details of the training participants and some photos of the training activities is presented in Annex.

1.3. Nature guide training

NTNC-BCC provided a training course on Basic Nature Guide for 34 local youths consisting of 28 male and 6 female participants in collaboration with Chitwan National Park. Out of 34 participants, cost for 15 participants from the project area including 10 males and 5 females were covered by this project. The training was conducted from 2nd to 11th of March 2022. The participants were accommodated at BCC premises. The training covered various aspects of the biodiversity conservation– importance, status and challenges of conservation; taxonomy and identification techniques of major flora and fauna; animal behaviour and their basic biology; Protected Area management; acts, rules and regulations related to wildlife conservation; different habitat types, vegetation and invasive plants; wildlife safety measures, roles of Nature Guides – ethics, hospitality, responsibility and so on. The training included some theoretical sessions and large part of field practices. After the completion of the training course the trainees went through theoretical and practical assessment. Only those trainees with specific achievement during the assessment were provided with certificates. Out of 34, 22 passed the assessment and received the certificate, others will get opportunity for re-assessment after a month. They will have to submit the certificate in the National Park Office at Kasara to obtain a valid license to work as a Nature Guide. Participant list, training details and photos are presented in Annex.

1.4. Goat farming

Goats are attractive source of income in Nepal as there is high demand of goat meat. From this project we supported 55 goats to 30 HHs to provide income generating opportunity. Five male Boer goats (bucks) especially selected from goat development centre, Lamjung were distributed to Kalika CFUG in January 2022. The goats were provided to five households (one each) and they act as seed animals for the village. Similarly, fifty goats of improved breed were distributed to Saipam village, Kalika Municipality-11 (two goats per each of the selected households) in February 2022. A detailed health assessment was carried out before distributing the goats. Medicines for common diseases and necessary minerals for nutrition were also provided through the project. Each of those households were provided with partial support for construction of predator proof corral (CGI metal sheets, nails, etc.) while Kalika CFUG provided necessary raw materials like wooden planks. The household members were encouraged to provide the necessary manual labour in order to develop a sense of ownership.

Livestock support to communities can be made more effective if they are provided with healthy animals and if they have knowledge about how to rear and manage their livestock in order to increase their products. After consulting with respective Municipalities and community groups, we also conducted three units of orientation training on Livestock Farming and Management were conducted for the farmers who received the cow and goat farming support. Seventy individuals participated in the training conducted on 25th November, 12th and 13th December of 2021 in Kalika CF at Rapti Municipality-10. The trainings focused on importance of balanced nutrition, how to provide balanced nutrition, importance of clean sheds with proper sanitation, general health monitoring, identification of common diseases like Foot & Mouth disease, Rabies and Milk fever and how to prevent/treat them. List of supported households and picture of the goat distribution is provided in Annex.

1.5. Cow farming

Twenty-eight HHs were supported with cows of improved breed in Rapti Municipality – eighteen cows at Kalika CFUG, Rapti Municipality-10 on 20th of December 2021 and ten cows at Amritdharapani CFUG on 26th of February 2022. A detailed health assessment of all the distributed cows were conducted prior to distribution. Medicines and necessary minerals were also provided to the households. With livestock management training support and veterinarian services, the HHs are expected to be able to generate additional income to support their livelihoods while decreasing their dependency on the forest. The progress of these HHs will be regularly monitored by NTNC-BCC.

After two months of the cow distribution to the farmers, we conducted one-day Livestock (Veterinary) Health Camp through this project to the communities around Swamitar in Rapti Municipality-10 on 12th of March 2022 with technical support from the Agriculture and Forestry University at Rampur and the Veterinary Department of Rapti Municipality. Since most of the livestock husbandry practices in rural Nepal lack good hygiene and sanitation, we realized that it is necessary to conduct such an event targeting the households we provided the livestock farming support. The health camp focused mainly on general health assessment, deworming, nutritional treatment and addressing the issue of reproductive problems. Reproductive health of a livestock directly impacts the overall production of the animal thus affecting the economic value. This project supported only 28 families, but the health camp successfully provided veterinarian support for 158 HHs. The health camp assessed and treated 114 buffaloes, 148 cows, 1405 goats, 24 dogs, 123 pigs and 919 poultry during the camp. List of farmers receiving cow support and picture of the formal event in presence of Mayor of the Kalika Municipality is provided in Annex.

1.6. Establish one cooperative with at least 50% of women members

This activity is not started as it is planned for the second year of the project.

Output 2: Increased community awareness on social and economic consequences of the poaching

2.1. Community education sessions

We conducted a total of 20 sessions of conservation awareness programs (4 different communities and 16 different schools/colleges) through this project. There were 103 participants at community level and 734 students from different schools. A total of 837 individuals were reached through this awareness program. The awareness program included interactive sessions focusing on the importance of biodiversity, opportunities and challenges of biodiversity conservation, their roles and responsibilities, human wildlife conflict, etc.

2.2. Scholarship for children from IWT affected families

From this project we supported 75 students with a scholarship program in the first year. Students studying in 8th, 9th and 10th grade of Rastriya Secondary School in Swamitar whose families were affected by IWT were selected for the program. The scholarships were distributed on 6th and 13th of March 2022 in the presence of Mr. Amar Lama (then Chairman of Rapti Municipality-10), Mr. Madhav Giri (the Chairman of Kalika CFUG), Mr. Bharat Lal Chepang (then Chairman of Rastriya Secondary School Management Committee) Mr. Asman Tamang (then School Principal) and a journalist from Kantipur News. For the long-term scholarship scheme, we have also established a revolving fund of NPR. 2,000,000 in collaboration with Kalika CFUG. The annual interest will be provided as a scholarship amount for hardworking students of economically marginalized families based on their academic performance in coming years too.

2.3. Installing Hoarding boards about wildlife conservation, penalties against IWT at strategic locations

This activity is not started as it is planned for the second year of the project.

2.4. Publishing a booklet (1000 booklets published and distributed to IWT affected communities, local school libraries, municipal offices, Divisional Forest Offices, Chitwan and Parsa National Parks and nature guides)

This activity is not started as it is planned for the second year of the project.

2.5. Developing and broadcasting a documentary covering the story of those involved in the poaching in the past and adopted sustainable livelihood

This activity is not started as it is planned for the second year of the project.

Output 3: Poaching threats reduced through active community participation

3.1. CBAPUs equipped (GPS, camera, field gears – field jacket, cap, water bottle, torch, field boot)

Community Based Anti-Poaching Unit (CBAPU) is an innovative concept in Nepal to engage local youths in management and protection of wildlife in community forests around National Parks. They play an important role in controlling poaching through various anti-poaching activities including regular patrols, surveillance and information sharing. They also provide vital support in other conservation activities such as human-wildlife conflict management and raising awareness in communities. The CBAPU members were trained on different aspects of biodiversity conservation and illegal activities control. They were also trained on using GPS, digital cameras and other equipment for forest patrolling. Each CBAPU (n=10) were provided with GPS receivers, digital cameras and necessary field gears (details provided in Annex). With the supported equipment and modern technologies, the CBAPUs will be able to collect and document data gathered during the regular patrols in a systematic way. The field gears will provide comfort and safety for the patrolling team.

3.2. Four training events (30 members/event) for three days conducted and CBAPU mobilized

As part of the CBAPU strengthening, three training events were successfully conducted for 91 CBAPU members from 15 different community groups, including training of trainers (TOT) for 35 and orientation training for 53 from this project. First event was conducted in September 2021 where 58 individuals from 8 CBAPUs attended the training. The second event was conducted in February 2022 (15 participants from 13 communities) and third event in March 2022 (20 participants from 7 community groups). The trainings were conducted at NTNC-BCC covering both the theoretical lectures, practical sessions and field visits. The training course focused mainly on topics such as biodiversity conservation and its importance; rules and regulations for biodiversity conservation; major wildlife species of Nepal – their status, identification techniques and behaviours; wildlife safety measure; wildlife rescue and human wildlife conflict management; and role of CBAPU in wildlife conservation and HWC management. The sessions included interactive activities such as group works, presentations on key topics and refreshing games with themes to raise knowledge and awareness on conservation. The participants of the TOT also conducted 13 different conservation awareness events on Human wildlife coexistence in their respective communities. Summary of the training events is provided in Annex.

Apart from formal trainings proposed in our project document, we have also provided practical sessions on two different occasions for the CBAPU members from Kankali, Kalika and Kumroj CF on Monitoring wildlife using Camera traps. In Kalika and Kankali area in Rapti and Khairahani Municipality respectively, we received information of possible tiger presence near villages while in Kumroj area a man was killed by a tiger. On both occasions we mobilized the CBAPU members under supervision of NTNC technicians to install cameras and monitor the tiger movement using camera traps. The CBAPU members eagerly participated in both the events. They were trained about how to handle automatic trail cameras, where to install the cameras and how to retrieve and store the gathered data. With their support the man-killing tiger was located and rescued after a week. The suspected tiger in the Kalika and Kankali was confirmed as leopard through camera traps.

3.3. Pilot GSM enabled surveillance camera (20 cameras) in coordination with CBAPUs

We purchased GSM enabled surveillance cameras for piloting in the community areas for illegal activities control. We purposed to purchase 20 cameras but we found a camera model which is cheaper than the proposed budget. Thus, we were able to purchase 35 cameras from the first year budget. We are in discussion with three different CFUGs (and CBAPU under them) to install the cameras. As March - May season has a high risk of fire, we plan to install after May to prevent any possible camera loss.

3.4. Support 30 Community Forest User Groups (including Buffer Zone) for controlling IWT activities (mobilize 2 forest guards/community forest)

Forest guards from six CFUGs are being mobilised for regular patrols in their respective CFs. A total of 32 members are regularly being mobilized with the support from this project. They help to deter any wildlife related illegal activities and provide crucial information if there are any. They also help to convey conservation messages in their communities. These individuals also provide valuable support during various wildlife monitoring surveys and wildlife rescue operations. During the first year of the project period, members of Kalika CFUG also helped in the rescue and release of an Indian Pangolin which is one of the most illegally traded wildlife species in the world. They also conduct the patrols in close coordination with the CBAPU members that were trained and equipped through this project (3.1 and 3.2).

3.2 Progress towards project Outputs

Despite the challenges brought on by COVID-19 and short time frame (November 2021 to March 2022) for project implementation, we have completed most of the project activities of the first year as per our project agreement. We have achieved our target number of HHs for livelihood support and conservation awareness activities with some surplus.

Output 1. Communities discouraged for poaching and supported in wildlife conservation as a result of diversified livelihoods opportunities

Prior to the implementation of this project, the average baseline income of the 190 HHs in our project area was around NPR. [REDACTED] (US\$ [REDACTED]) per annum while previously no youths were ever supported with any skill-based training leading them to rely on forest and its products for subsistence. This project

has already supported more than our target (209 HHs) for various livelihood development activities and various skill-based training in an attempt to help increase their annual income.

We provided vegetable farming support for 61 HHs (target n=34 in first year) along with necessary training and equipment support. We also provided livestock farming support to 58 HHs (target n=50 HHs): one cow each for 28 HHs, 2 goats each for 25 HHs and 1 goat buck each for 5 HHs). We also delivered livestock farming and management training while providing an extensive livestock health camp for domestic animals in the project area. Since we were only able to provide livelihood support late in the first year, the necessary monitoring data are not yet available. We will gather necessary information in the second year and provide the information on the differences our project has made in the annual income of the HHs.

Similarly, we have involved 55 youths (target n=40) in skill-based training: driver, electrician and nature guide training. We have also partially supported additional 35 youths with carpet weaving (20 women) and plumber training (15) through this project.

The output indicators were measured and compared by calculating the number of HHs and individuals supported before and after the project was implemented. As this is the first year of the intervention, we have not assessed the change in the household income yet. In the following years, we will measure the household income after the livelihood intervention of this year.

Output 2. Increased community awareness on social and economic consequences of the poaching/IWT

Exceeding the proposed target for the number of community members and students for our community awareness activities we have already reached out to 837 individuals (target n=390).

During our conservation education sessions, we were able to sensitize 734 students (target n=240) and 103 community members (target n=80). The participants included 47 % female members (target n=40%). The project also supported 75 students (target n=70) from IWT affected families with academic scholarship. Prior to the project agreement, only 15 students were supported with such scholarship through various other partner organizations. We were also able to establish a revolving fund of NPR. [REDACTED] in collaboration with Kalika CFUG to provide a sustainable scholarship program in the long term.

The output indicators were measured and compared by calculating the number of HHs and individuals supported before and after the project was implemented.

Output 3. Poaching threats reduced through active community participation

We have strengthened, trained and mobilized 91 members from 20 CBAPUs in the first year through this project with an aim to encourage community participation for reducing IWT in our project area. In order to help develop systematic patrolling and scientific documentation, 91 members (target n=60) from 15 CBAPUs (target n=10) were equipped with GPS, digital cameras and field gears. We have completed three training events (target n=2) for them. This project has also provided mobilization support for regular patrols to 10 CBAPUs. So far, 120 CBAPU members have participated in patrolling their forest areas to check any IWT related activities. We also collect reports from these Units to monitor their efforts, record any illegal activities they encounter during patrols and also document any interventions conducted by the Units. In order to keep better records, we have planned to improvise the data entry and recording system by developing a database and mobile application. We have also already discussed and agreed with three different communities (Baghmara, Kalika and Kankali) for using the GSM enabled camera traps for piloting the remote surveillance system. With the availability of cheaper cameras (Bushnell: Cellucore TM 20 Low Glow Cellular Trail Camera) than we had initially proposed, we purchased 35 units of these cameras.

3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

Outcome: Indigenous Chepang and Tamang communities practicing sustainable livelihood measures and discouraged in IWT, zero poaching for rhinos and tigers maintained in Chitwan and poaching /IWT threats of other wildlife reduced

We expect that the livelihood support we provided this year will have an impact on household income in coming years. We set target of 40% increase by the third year of the project with baseline income at US\$ [REDACTED]/year/HH in 2020. The increase in the household income per year will be surveyed and

documented by the end of third year and will be included in the final report. Any major changes in livelihood and HH income will also be included in the second annual report. A detailed HH survey of the project area will suffice as the indicator for measuring the progress and success of these activities. We have already observed the households receiving the support are engaged in these alternative livelihood activities and some started to get income (esp. cow farming).

We have also set targets to maintain zero poaching of tigers and rhinos while reducing the poaching of other species by 60% by the end of the project. As a baseline according to the Park records, 3 rhinos and 22 other wildlife species were poached in the year 2020/21. We will collect the data from Park records during the project period and compare them with the baseline data by the end of the project year to measure the success of the project activities. Till date there have been no records of rhino and tiger poaching and only a few (~5) cases of other illegal activities reported in the park.

We have also committed to help increase the population of tiger, rhino and gharial by 10% by the end of the project with the implementation of this project. Before the project period, there were 93 tigers, 605 rhinos and 219 gharials in and around CNP. The rhino population survey of 2021 shows an increase of the rhino population by 12% (694 rhinos). The fieldwork for the National tiger survey was just completed in the March of 2022 and the result will be published after data analysis. We expect an increase in tiger population as well. The National survey reports will provide a reliable means to verify the claims to the increase in population of our target species.

At the completion of the project, we had expected to be able to make 95% of HHs, i.e. 180 HHs understand the prevailing wildlife conservation policies and social impacts through conservation awareness activities. By the end of the first year, we have already managed to reach out to 103 community members with our conservation education and awareness activities. The registration list of participants and questionnaire survey will provide ample evidence of successful implementation of the activities.

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Our assumptions were correct and the communities were very cooperative while implementation of the project. here were no major issues while implementation of this project.

Assumption 1: None

Comments: None

3.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on illegal wildlife trade and poverty reduction

- **Impact:**

Guardianship of the local communities enhanced to conserve the rare assemblage of large mammals in and around Chitwan national park in Nepal.

- **Impact on illegal wildlife trade:**

In the first year of the project, we have already supported 15 CBAPUs with field gears and equipment, provided necessary field-based training for 91 CBAPU members and supported the mobilization of these 15 CBAPUs for their regular patrols in their community forest areas. As a result, the communities are now better equipped and trained for increasing the effectiveness of their wildlife conservation activities. Since the start of the project to date, there have been no major activities related to illegal wildlife trade which can be partially contributed to our project activities. We have also conducted activities and delivered sessions to enhance conservation awareness among 734 students and 103 community members to make them realise the importance of biodiversity and the benefits of their conservation. These sessions and activities also makes them aware about the legal consequences of illegal wildlife trade so the communities are further discouraged to get involved in such activities.

Also the activities supporting human development and well-being also has a positive impact on illegal wildlife trade because self-sustaining and educated communities are rarely involved in such illegal activities.

- **Impact on human development and well-being:**

This project has supported 209 HHs in the first year with alternate income generating opportunities through activities such as - livestock farming, vegetable farming and various skill-based trainings. These HHs will now have additional income to support their livelihoods. Furthermore, 75 students from IWT affected HHs are also being supported with academic scholarship to morph their understanding towards wildlife conservation while alleviating literacy. Higher literacy will open up a variety of opportunities for the families to uplift their socio-economic status. The scholarship scheme will also reduce the financial burden on the HHs so they can invest their efforts on the well-being of their families. These activities not only contribute to human development and well-being, but also support wildlife conservation. As the communities become educated and self-sufficient, their reliability on the forest will decrease which will in turn provide the wildlife to flourish in their undisturbed habitats.

4. Thematic focus

1.1 Developing sustainable livelihoods to benefit people directly affected by IWT

Our project has already supported 209 HHs with various income generating activities which include: vegetable farming, livestock farming and skill-based trainings. This project also supported the IWT affected HHs with necessary trainings, services and materials required for sustaining the activities in the initial phase. As the HHs start to make income from the farm products, they will be able to invest for more production leading to a self-sustaining community. For example: we have supported 30 HHs with a healthy higher breed of goat. We have also provided the families with necessary trainings on livestock husbandry and management. In collaboration with the respective Municipality, our veterinarians have done a complete health check-up and supplied the farmers with necessary supplements vitamins and minerals. They are monitoring the livestock health regularly. As time passes, the goats will produce kids which will be cross-bred with goats from other farmers to avoid inbreeding. We will also establish a cooperative for all these individuals to help them in sales of their products in the local and regional market. With commercial sale of their products like milk, butter and meat through the established cooperatives will help them get a good monetary value. From the generated income, they can invest in more goats or in other businesses. Thus, they can steadily increase their income through livestock farming and develop a sustainable livelihood.

The individuals who received skill-based trainings will obviously be self-sustained as they will start working as electricians and drivers. As they will keep working, they will further enhance their skills with experience creating more opportunities for themselves. With the uplifting of these HHs, it will ultimately lead to a prosperous community with sustainable livelihood.

1.2 Strengthening law enforcement

This project also focuses on enhancing the awareness level of local people towards wildlife conservation while making them realize the consequences of activities related to IWT. We focused especially on students because they are the generation that can contribute to wildlife conservation in the future. We have also distributed different wildlife conservation posters, documents and booklets among the communities in our project area. We will be installing hoarding boards with conservation messages in strategic locations (where the communities are prone to activities related to IWT). We will also develop and produce a conservation documentary that will be broadcasted on local to national media. Such activities will definitely increase the awareness of communities towards wildlife conservation while making them realize the legal consequences.

The project also provided field-based trainings with necessary tools and equipment (GPS, digital camera, field gears) for members of community based anti-poaching units who are involved in wildlife monitoring and patrolling of their community forests. The field-based trainings enhance their knowledge on wildlife behaviour, safety measures, monitoring techniques and data documentation. The field gears like boots, jackets, torch lights and water bottles will also ensure their well-being while increasing the efficiency of their work. They can accurately identify and closely monitor the wildlife in their locality while being safe themselves. The GPS devices and digital cameras will help the community groups to keep a scientific record and evidence for any IWT related activities as well as wildlife monitoring.

Thus, this project will definitely contribute to strengthening our law enforcement against IWT related activities especially in the project area.

Evidence:

The data that we will gather during the social survey in the final year will serve to verify our claims for sustainable livelihood development. The periodic patrol reports submitted from different CBAPUs are documented, digitized and attached with this report (Annex) Furthermore, the CBAPU of Kalika rescued a Chinese Pangolin from village area and released in their forest (Annex).

5. Impact on species in focus

Although our project has just completed the first of its three years in the face of COVID-19 challenges, the status of one of our target species has already exceeded our goals.

The population status from National surveys of the species in focus:

Greater One-horned Rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*)

Population in CNP in 2015 = 605 individuals

Population in CNP in 2021 = 694 individuals

Royal Bengal Tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*)

Population in CNP in 2018 = 93 individuals

Population in CNP in 2022 = under analysis

Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*)

Population in CNP in 2020 = 219 individuals

Population in CNP in recent = Not surveyed

6. Project support to poverty reduction

1.3 Expected beneficiaries

The project targets Chepang communities living at the northern part of Chitwan valley of Nepal. Chepang is one of the indigenous tribes of Nepal who are well-known for their life in harmony with nature. Most of them are socio-economically marginalised. Wildlife crime syndicates have often taken advantage of their poor economic status and jungle skills, and mobilised them for killing rhinos in Chitwan National Park and the adjoining forests. Often one or more members from most Chepang families in our project area are charged (and/or even jailed) for poaching wildlife including rhinos and tigers. As a result those families, especially the children, suffer the most as they are often left out and even neglected from basic needs such as education, health and job opportunities. This can lead the future generation of Chepangs to resort back to activities related to IWT. This project aims to rescue them from this vicious cycle while morphing them from hunters to protectors of the wildlife through various activities to uplift their livelihood and socio-economic status. Our project also provides them with conservation education to raise their awareness level. The project also awarded scholarships to students from Chepang and other underprivileged indigenous communities to complete their school and get higher qualifications. Higher education will open up new opportunities for these communities while ensuring their direct and indirect contribution for wildlife conservation.

1.4 Direct poverty impacts from this project

As the IWT affected families are supported with livelihood opportunities and their children with opportunities for higher education, it will have a direct positive impact on their socio-economic status. The livelihood supports will increase their income capacity while the better education will open several opportunities to improve their status. This will not only uplift the families but also contribute to a prosperous community that intimately understands the values of wildlife conservation.

1.5 Notable achievements this year

This project has successfully awarded annual academic scholarships for 75 students from IWT affected families in our project area. We have also established a revolving fund of NPR. [REDACTED] in

collaboration with Kalika CF to ensure a sustainable scholarship program for a long term. Similarly, 28 households which received support for cow farming are already earning a good amount of money selling milk.

7. Consideration of gender equality issues

1.6 Evidence that the project is working to address gender inequality

The project is working to promote wildlife conservation and socio-economic development with an attempt to reduce IWT related activities while encouraging gender inequality. Our project activities specially encourage active participation and involvement of the female members of the communities. From income generating activities and conservation education to community-based conservation, the project gives a special recognition of the female members.

1.7 Direct gender equality impacts from this project

Women participation in the livelihood activities was 40% and conservation education/awareness was 47%. There was relatively lower representation in the community based anti-poaching units (25%). We have involved 26 women in various skill-based trainings, 40 female students were awarded academic scholarships and 38 female participants in our conservation education activities while 23 women from different CBAPUs were engaged in controlling wildlife crime as we had mentioned in our project agreement. The activities in the project encouraged female members in participating in different conservation and livelihood activities.

1.8 Notable achievements this year

We have committed to involve 214 women from the project area in different activities of our project by the end of third year. In the first year of this project 316 female members have actively participated in our project activities.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

The project activities are monitored by NTNC as a lead organization implementing this project. We used the log frame of the project as the basis for monitoring and evaluation. We have conducted multiple monitoring visits to the site and also reviewed the documents obtained from the project partners and government authorities. Most of our project activities consist of livelihood support (goat, cow) or trainings, workshops and meetings with partner organisations and related stakeholders. The monitoring of the trainings was done by assessing the field reports and necessary documents submitted by the community groups. The meetings and workshops held by the communities were monitored by NTNC's staff and also checked their documents such as minutes, photographs and video clips (where available). The project activities also include equipment supports, livestock support and vegetable supports for the target households. We will continue to monitor the usage of the equipment through the data recorded and documented by the community groups. The data will be summarised and attached in our annual reports in the next year.

9. Lessons learnt

This was the first year of the project and the project was launched quite late (i.e. November 2021) and we carried out the activities within a five months' time frame. We put our full effort to complete the activities. We worked closely with the communities and local government bodies which facilitated the project implementation. NTNC's continuous engagement with communities was also supportive for this project. The communities, especially the Chepang people also accepted this project very well. Community consultations and partnership for project implementation is important. In the second year, we have a larger volume of budget and longer time frame to implement the project. We will continue the partnerships with the communities and local government bodies.

10. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

None

11. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

None

12. Sustainability and legacy

This project was implemented in collaboration with different stakeholders including the Rapti and Kalika Municipality, Divisional Forest Office Chitwan, Chitwan National Park and Community Forests. Since the beginning of the project we involved different stakeholders and asked them to leverage the matching funds wherever possible. It will develop ownership for the project activities among the stakeholders and the legacy of the project continues. With the support from different project partners the achievements of the project will be sustainable. Moreover, NTNC will continue to seek the external support for these communities from the funding agencies even after completion of this project.

13. IWT Challenge Fund identity

13.1 Efforts to publicise the IWT Challenge Fund and its UK Government sponsors

As a donor organisation, IWT Challenge Fund was acknowledged (with its logo) in each and every reports, banners and all publications. While conducting training/workshops, we also acknowledged verbally the support of IWT Challenge Fund and UK Government. We also called the media personnel where possible during the project implementation to publicise the project activities. We have also updated our activities through social media through NTNC-BCC's such as Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/NTNCBCC>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/ntncbcc>) accounts.

13.2 Recognition of UK Government's contribution

UK Government is acknowledged for the support in project activities and all publications

13.3 Project recognition and identity

This project is recognized as a distinct project with the clear identity. This is the first project of this scale in the project area targeting the marginalised Chepang, Tamang and Dalit communities.

13.4 Understanding of the IWT Challenge Fund within the host country

The people in the wildlife sector and all stakeholders in project implementation areas are now familiar with the IWT Challenge Fund.

14. Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

14.1 Extent of COVID-19 impact

Although the third wave of COVID-19 (Omicron) in Nepal affected in implementation of some of our project activities, we have managed to complete almost all of our proposed activities for the first year. Majority of our first year activities were thus implemented in the final quarter. As most of our activities involved direct coordination with community members (e.g. trainings, awareness sessions), it was challenging to conduct them while maintaining the COVID-19 protocols set by the Government of Nepal and the Health Ministry. Sometimes, we have to reduce the number of participants for training and workshops than it was proposed initially to comply with the large gatherings restrictions.

14.2 Response to COVID-19 impact

We improvised our work-plan and postponed some of the activities which needs gathering of more than 10 people to the end of the first year. Fortunately, the effect of third wave remained for over a month (January/February) and infection rate decreased. We strictly maintained the protocols provided by the Government of Nepal against COVID-19 such as keeping social distance, wearing a mask, use of proper sanitizer and using open areas and well ventilated rooms for mass gathering. Since all of our staff were vaccinated, we also encouraged the community members for vaccination to check the spread of the virus among communities.

14.3 Longer-term delays

Based on the current scenario, we do not expect any longer term delays in our project.

14.4 Assuring the health and safety of project staff and beneficiaries

Regarding the health and safety of everyone involved in the project activities, we strictly maintained the protocols from the Nepal government and Health Ministry. Face masks, social distancing and frequent scrubbing with sanitizers were regularly maintained. We facilitated prompt vaccination against COVID-19 for all our staff and also highly encouraged our stakeholders and communities to get vaccinated to support the prevention of rapidly increasing infection rates.

15. Safeguarding

NTNC follows the social and environmental safeguards strictly and the guidelines are in place (<https://ntnc.org.np/index.php/compliance-and-ethics>). We also informed our community partners to follow these safeguards while conducting our activities. This project has no direct law enforcement component and we have not observed and not obtained any complaints regarding the human-rights violations during our project implementation.

16. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (April 2021-March 2022)

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2021/22 Grant (£)	2021/22 Total actual IWT Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)	██████	██████	██████	
Consultancy costs	██████	██████	██████	
Overhead Costs	██████	██████	██████	
Travel and subsistence	██████	██████	██████	
Operating Costs	██████	██████	██████	
Capital items (see below)	██████	██████	██████	
Others (see below)				
TOTAL	██████	██████	██████	

17. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project during the reporting period (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes

We agree for the IWT Secretariat to publish the content of this section.

For the first time since the national park established, the Chepang communities from the Rapti Municipality ward no 10 (Kalikhola and Swamitar) and Kalika Municipality Ward no 11 (Saipam, Bansghari) received the livelihood support and scholarship for the children as part of conservation program. The communities expressed their interest to adopting an alternate livelihood and support for the wildlife. Some of them are already earning well with the alternate livelihood (cow farming). The local government (Kalika municipality) also leveraged additional support of ██████ for the goat farming. Other organisations (Nepal German Friendship Association and Kinderhilfe Nepal) also leveraged additional funding for the school education (facilities improvement) in those villages.



Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the correct template (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and deleted the blue guidance text before submission?	
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk putting the project number in the subject line.	
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the subject line.	
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	
Do you have hard copies of material you need to submit with the report? If so, please make this clear in the covering email and ensure all material is marked with the project number. However, we would expect that most material will now be electronic.	
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	