

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 2023

Project reference	IWT095
Project title	Mongolia's New Ecological Police: Global Standards and Community Engagement
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Mongolia
Lead partner	Zoological Society of London (ZSL)
Partner(s)	Ecological Police Department of National Police Administration of Mongolia, University of Internal Affairs of Mongolia, local NGO – Professional Union of Detector Dogs (PUDD), UK Border Force (UKBF) Customs agency, City of London Police Forensics Science Services (CoLP) and Veterans for Wildlife capacity building charity, Union of Conservation Communities, local NGO, Environment and Tourism Department, Arkhangai Province Government, Bulgan soum Government
Project leader	Tungalag Ulambayar
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	www.zsl.org/mongolia

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).

Output 1. The newly established Ecological Police Department (EPD) staff are well-equipped and highly trained, and utilizing global best practices in forensic intelligence gathering, SMART and intelligence sharing to enable long-term effective inter-agency efforts to reduce and prosecute IWT crime in Mongolia.

Activity 1.1: Continuing the work carried out in year one, a National consultant was hired to finalize the “capacity needs assessment” of EPD and produce a report in Mongolian, which will be reviewed by EPD. The key priority areas for EPD training, identified by international experts will be included in the final report.

Activity 1.2-1.5 completed.

Activity 1.6: The project started developing the SMART handbook for the Ecological Police Officers. This initiative was the result of feedback provided by the police during SMART training and subsequent application of SMART in the field. As a result, SMART tool can be used for recording incidences, gathering evidence and reporting. The handbook development is led by the projects’ SMART expert and UIA professors. This practical handbook will serve as a guideline for the EPD to work in protected areas and during patrolling exercises. The UIA will also be able to use the handbook as part of the “Eco-Police” curricula, currently under approval.

Activity 1.7 is ongoing and ZSL Mongolia updates the Coordination Council on Crime Prevention (CCCP) on a bi-annual basis.

Output 2. Reduction of poaching at key identified peri-urban source sites and of IWT products at urban hotspots (markets, transport hubs) is achieved through highly trained, up-scaled EPD detector dog units (DDU), working in partnership with the Professional Union of Detector Dogs (PUDD) to promote DDU standards that increase efficiency in tackling environmental and IWT-related crimes.

Activity 2.1-2.3 was completed.

Activity 2.4: The fourth K9 patrol was carried out in UB from 2-14 October, 2023. Police officers from the Ecological Police and K9 unit of the Police and Internal Troops Training Division jointly carried out entry point checks and road patrolling in 6 locations in Ulaanbaatar. This time SMART app was utilised in patrols. Altogether 26 police officers and 4 K9s participated in the patrol and detected 221 violations, of which 16 violations related to IWT breached Animal Law and Criminal Law. These were registered by the police, and 20.400.000 MNT fine was recommended as a sanction to the Environmental Department of UB.

- 1 incidence of transporting white tailed gazelle meat
- 1 incidence of transporting wolf meat and skin
- 11 incidence of transporting 20 marmots
- 1 incidence of transporting 45 deer horns
- 1 incidence of transporting 14 fish without permission
- 1 incidence of transporting 250 kg cedar nut without permission

In addition, 2 incidences of transporting 4 m³ timber without permission were reported.

Activity 2.5 was completed.

Output 3. A scalable model of effective integrated law enforcement demonstrated through an Ecological Police Department and Community partnership supporting community natural resource governance institutions in pilot Arkhangai communities.

Activity 3.1: A regular meeting of the Community Stewardship Support Group (CSSG) was organized on September 6, 2023 to discuss progress in the implementation of the groups' annual Work Plan. The meeting was chaired by the senior investigator of the Arkhangai Ecological Police and 13 members of CSSG participated along with 6 members of the support group including the governor of Bulgan soum, rangers and inspectors of the Arkhangai Department for Environment and Tourism.

Activity 3.2: Biodiversity monitoring

At the Khoid Mogoin Gol Teel LPA, seven volunteer rangers carried out bird monitoring in May and August, 2023 to study the birds' nesting and breeding success. The first monitoring was conducted to determine the nesting of birds of prey at the beginning of the breeding season and the second monitoring was conducted at the end of the breeding season. The results:

- In total 47 nests were identified including 14 active nests and 33 non-active nests. The active nests with eggs and chicks include 5 for steppe eagle, 2 for saker falcon, 6 for cinereous vulture, and 1 for the bearded vulture. A total of 8 pair nests were successful and its nestling success was 77%. The rest of pair's nest were unsuccessful, (possibly as a result of the impact of human and livestock, and harsh weather conditions etc). The breeding success of birds of prey at KHMGT-LPA is 68% including saker falcon's 6 chicks of 2 nests, steppe eagle's 3 chicks of 2 nests, cinereous vulture's 4 chicks of with 4 nests, and bearded vulture's 1 chick of 1 nest. The nestling success of steppe eagle is 40% and its breeding success is 30% in KHMGT-LPA. The saker falcon usually nestles on cliffs and rocky high mountain, thus it could be protected and is at less risk from human and livestock compared to the steppe eagle. In May, 2 nests with 6 chicks were found and they successfully fledged in early August, and its nestling success was 100%.
- A survey on globally and regionally threatened species listed in the IUCN red list found a total of 6 chicks from 6 nests of cinereous vulture in May, its 4 chicks were successful fledged in August. The cinereous vulture's nestling and breeding success are 67%. In addition, one bearded vulture's nest with one chick was found; its nestling and breeding success were assessed 100%.

A biologist conducted marmot biological monitoring with 3 volunteer rangers. The count of survey Mongolian marmot (*Marmota sibirica*) population in the Khoid Mogoin Gol Teel (KMGT) LPA resulted in a successful determination of $n=745\pm 70$ individuals. Notably, Teh Haraih CBO territory exhibited the highest marmot count at $n=281\pm 13$, followed by Jarantai CBO with $n=116\pm 9$. The distribution of marmots within the region demonstrates a significant correlation with proximity to the center, highlighting the influence of

human impact and accessibility on population growth. The age and gender distribution within the marmot population indicates a stable and consistent growth pattern. Juveniles constitute 20%, 2-year-old individuals account for 25%, 3-year-olds make up 9%, and adults represent 36% of the overall population. As of 2023, the marmot population in the area remains stable. However, a notable increase in human impact is observed in the central Sum area of Arkhangai province, particularly in Gurviin Davaa (-14) and the territory of Mogoinkhon community (-13), where hunting pressure persists.

Activity 3.3: EPD-coordinated community SMART patrols were conducted from September 9 to September 25, 2023 comprising of patrols in LPA and check point controls.

A twenty-three-person team (including environmental rangers, specialists from Khangai Mountain Range SPA, forest specialist, state inspectors and ecological police officers) conducted patrols in 3 routes and check point controls in 2 locations. The joint patrol was timely to detect and deter illegal harvesting of cedar nuts and poaching.

During the patrol, 178 citizens were checked at the inspection point, and they were given warnings and legal information about the cedar tree and its degradation. 59 people who collected cedar nuts were charged with infringement, 2148kg cedar nut was seized, compensation of 1652.7 thousand MNT was estimated according to the ecological and economic assessment and a fine of 5100.0 thousand MNT was imposed. From April 1 to September 30, a dedicated cadre of 23 community volunteer rangers diligently conducted patrols spanning a cumulative distance of 947km within the jurisdiction of KMGT LPA. The patrol spanned 56 days, during which the rangers detected, intervened, and reported a total of 18 environmental offenses including marmot hunting, illegal logging and illegal gathering of cedar nut, leveraging the advanced SMART system for accurate documentation.

The heightened incidence of environmental offenses in proximity to the central region of the province is attributed to the substantial population density and increased vehicular traffic in that locale. The efforts of our volunteer rangers play a crucial role in mitigating these offenses and preserving the ecological integrity of our province.

Activity 3.4:

In this half year, total of 19 CBO meetings were held with 290 participants (M:153, F:137). In April, 2023 . In April, 16 CBOs held their meetings where labor redistribution and conservation activities were discussed. Project team provided 12 phones with the new version of SMART app to voluntary rangers of 12 CBOs and provided petrol incentives to rangers who worked from Jan-March 2023.

The Bulgan soum governor attended and informed participants about transferring the natural resource management to CBOs and proposed to develop a joint work plan for conservation and restoration. The funding will come from VSLA Social fund but also from the Bulgan soum development fund supported by the livestock head tax and ecosystem service fee.

In August , 2023 the project team from Ulaanbaatar travelled to LPA and attended CSBO meeting of the Bayan-Undur and Gurvyn Davaa and also conducted ecological training using 'Nomadic Trunk" and provided information on "Community based conservation" and "Eco-herder".

In September 25, the project team worked with Maanit CBO to provide advice on the organization of the meeting while also delivering "Nomadic Trunk" training.

21 CBOs received training from project team in Arkangai and UB. A total of 319 participants (M: 169, F:150) received Nomadic Trunk training, a series of participatory exercises designed to raise awareness about wildlife in Khangai region. In addition, Tavan mod, Urd mogoi and Jirkh ar bulan CBOs received training from an ornithologist from Saraana conservation on bird species in LPA, their importance in the ecosystem, how to do monitoring and conservation. In April 2023, as part of their prevention work CSCG members while visiting CBO meetings, held talks with herders on Forest management, and prevention from environmental crimes. The average improvement in knowledge was around 38% (Bayan-Undur 16% and Gurvyn Davaa 60%). Overall participants found the training effective due to the nature of participatory approach (85% responded positively).

Overall, training evaluation of "Nomadic trunk" show that participant's knowledge improved by 38-45% and 59-85% of participants viewed training as participatory and effective.

Activity 3.5:

From 20 April- 2 May, 2023 16 CBOs had VSLA meetings. The project team provided advice on complying with rules and recording the data in the books.

Jirkh and Urd mogoi CBOs organized their first VSLA meeting by selling first shares and forming a social fund. All CBOs developed a plan for conservation activities such as waste disposal cleaning, road repairing, forest thinning, fencing head of springs, fencing for pastureland, vegetable growing, growing forage using dung in the winter camp, fencing for the livestock vaccination, and environmental patrols for illegal activities such as premature harvesting of cedar nuts.

From 23-24 August, 2023 project team participated in VSLA meeting of Gurvyn Davaa and Bayan-Undur CBO, the CBOs spent around 180-250k for petrol to clean waste and animal carcasses.

In June and July 2023, Maanit CBO repaired a bridge and road that run through CBOs territory.

In May and June 2023, Bulgan Shine Sor cooperative purchased 2.5 tons of yak combed wool and 726kg of goat cashmere and supplied it to Bayalag Ulzii LLC. From the production total sales profit was 4,720,050tonnes. Green fodder was planted on 6ha of land for the purpose of preparing supplementary animal feed, and 36tonnes of green fodder were harvested in September-October 2023. Also, the cooperative participated in the tender for the preparation and supply of meat for school and kindergarden of Bulgan sum in the 2023-2024 academic year. The cooperative currently has a total of 29 members, of which 9 are women and 20 are men. The working capital of the cooperative consists of the following sources: Share capital of members: 12,248,000 MNT, the risk fund is 655,250 MNT and Environment funds are 327625 MNT respectively.

Among the UCC's 592 members, 450 or 76% joined VSLAs, and 142 members contribute to the CBO fund in accordance with the Fund rules. As of September 2023, CBOs have 83 million MNT in the loan fund, and during the last 6 months, 86 herders or 19% of the total members received loans of 65 million MNT. The social funds have 11.8 million MNT, and about 3.2 million MNT has been spent on direct support to 59 members, 1.4 million MNT was used for environment protection activities.

Activity 3.6 completed.

Output 4. Mongolian public recognise EPD as the leading IWT-focal agency, with public-generated intelligence on IWT activity being reported directly to the EPD, stimulated through a national awareness campaign leveraging ZSL's successful IWT awareness raising campaigns and partnerships in Mongolia.

Activity 4.1 The project worked with the EPD and CSSG to develop 50 social posters to raise the public's awareness. The posters promoted legal definitions and sanctions in Mongolian legislation regarding IWT and poaching, the role of EPD and rangers in environmental law enforcement. The posters were shared on ZSL Mongolia Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ZSL.org>), Arkhangai Environment and Tourism Department page (<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=691348879719320&set=a.416461803874697>), Khangai Mountain SPA FB page (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100072348073966>) and shared by Mongolian Rangers Association (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/166642758479495>)

The project continue working with 2 local TV channels in Arkhangai to develop 4 podcasts to promote the work of CSSG, and run informative videos describing CITES and IUCN species.

The project continued supporting EPD-led public awareness campaign focusing on protection of IWT and commissioned the development of a video "Everyone can be a ranger" campaign that gathered 612k views, 7.2k likes and 161 comments (as of Oct 1, 2023).

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 main partner of the project, Ecological Police Department had a change of management in 2023 and the project team made introductory meetings including signing of new MoU and updating joint workplan.

The EPD assessment report needed to be finalized as it had the following shortcomings:

- Data analysis could not be completed, as the questionnaire used for evaluating the Ecological Police personnel was not designed for law enforcement but rather for environmental protection professionals. (Durrell conservation standards)
- Personal competency questionnaires collected from 100 police officers was filled incorrectly and did not provide conclusive results.

It was decided to hire National consultant to support finalization of the assessment focusing on human resource capability, identifying training needs and finalizing the report that can ultimately be shared with EPD and CPCC.

Khoid Mogoin Gol Teel LPA was expanded by 105,000ha and 11 new CBOs established totalling 21 CBOs. This means that more CBOs share land and overgrazing remains a predominant problem. , CBOs are free to use grazing land but some CBOs let their livestock graze in neighboring CBOs in winter/spring camp saved for next year's pasture. This creates a conflict between CBOs as no laws regulate grazing land. Therefore, the Union of Conservation Communities (UCC) are working with Bulgan district governor's office to come up with solution, either by drafting regulation or update the existing mechanism for rangeland management. UCC continue to educate and refresh traditional customs of herders to respect each other's rights and share resources.

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

Discussed with NIRAS:	No
Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance	No
Change request reference if known: n.a	

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)

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 2024)?

Yes **No** Estimated underspend: £

4c. 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.

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?

No issues to raise.

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with NIRAS through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**