

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)

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IWT Challenge Fund Project Information

Project reference	IWT099
Project title	Securing Chitwan-Sindhuli Green Corridor: strengthening community stewardship and law enforcement
Country/ies	Nepal
Lead partner	Zoological Society of London
Project partner(s)	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), South Asian Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN), Himalayan Nature (HN), Mithila Wildlife Trust (MWT)
IWTFCF grant value	£548,287
Start/end dates of project	April 2021 – March 2024
Reporting period (e.g. April 2021-Mar 2022) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	April 2021 – March 2022
Project Leader name	Monica Wrobel/Bhagawan Raj Dahal
Project website/blog/social media	
Report author(s) and date	Muna Thapa (ZSL Nepal), Pradip Sedain (HN), Sita Poudel (MWT), Bhagawan Raj Dahal (ZSL Nepal), Hem Sagar Baral (ZSL Nepal) and Catherine Martin (ZSL London office) 31 May 2022

1. Project summary

Bordering India and China, Nepal serves as both a source and transit country for wildlife trafficking (*Annex 4.1.1*). Illegal wildlife trade (IWT) in protected species is widespread (in 67% districts of Nepal) and increasing (*Annex 4.1.2*). This project is working with four of the 26 mammal species protected by the National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act 1973, namely: Chinese Pangolin - *Manis pentadactyla* (Critically Endangered, declining, CITES Appendix I), Indian Pangolin - *Manis crassicaudata* (Endangered, declining, CITES Appendix I), Bengal Tiger - *Panthera tigris tigris* (Endangered, declining, CITES Appendix I) and Greater one-horned Rhino

- *Rhinoceros unicornis* (Vulnerable, increasing, CITES Appendix I). As pangolins are the world's most trafficked wild mammals (*Annex 4.1.3*) and the second-most seized wildlife product in Nepal (*Annex 4.1.2*), this project focuses particularly on pangolin conservation. Therefore, the project is targeting two communities residing in fringe areas of pangolin habitat within the Chitwan-Sindhuli green corridor namely: Shree Chetna buffer zone community forest user group (BZCFUG) within the buffer zone of Parsa National Park (PNP) in Makwanpur-Bagmati Province; and Bhatighari Chure community forest user group (CFUG) outside the protected area (PA) in Dhanusa- Madhesh Province. More than 80% of community members (a total of 376 households) are dependent on forest resources, and their average wellbeing index score is less than 0.52. The project's focus is on strengthening law enforcement agencies and improving national and transboundary cooperation to disrupt IWT, while also, at the supply end, increasing the communities' awareness of and engagement in pangolin conservation and reducing their reliance on natural resources in pangolin habitat through sustainable livelihood schemes in the Chitwan-Sindhuli green corridor, all with the aim of contributing to a reduction in pangolin trafficking and IWT.

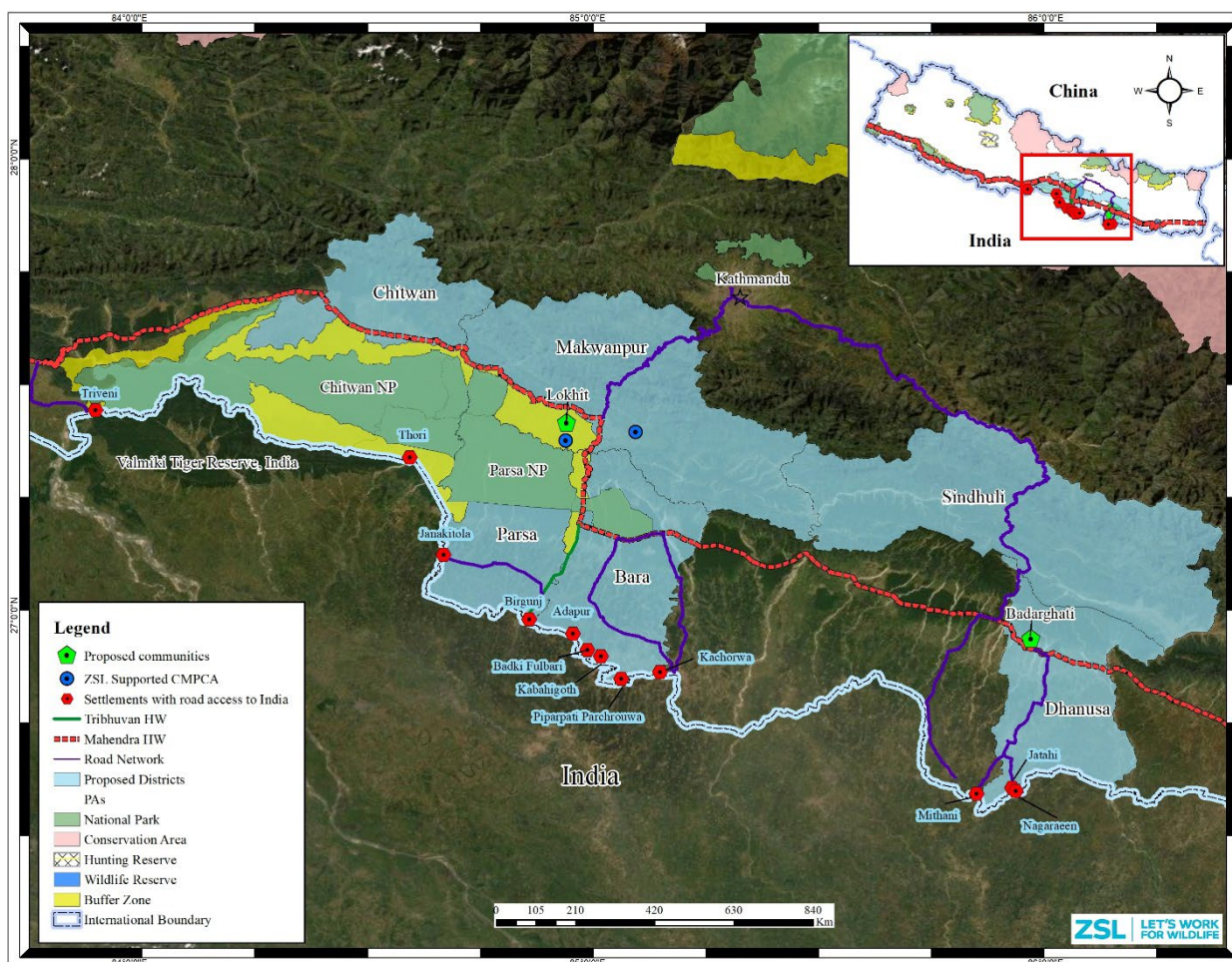


Figure 1: Map showing project sites within Chitwan-Sindhuli green corridor

2. Project partnerships

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) is the main government partner for ZSL's Nepal office. DNPWC and ZSL Nepal have a project coordination committee (PCC) to facilitate the design and implementation of all projects. The PCC is chaired by the Deputy Director General, with section heads from DNPWC and representation from a senior ZSL Nepal staffs as member. In the course of past joint projects, ZSL Nepal has fostered a strong partnership with DNPWC. With DNPWC as a guiding partner, ZSL Nepal has partnered with the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN), Himalayan Nature (HN) and Mithila Wildlife Trust (MWT) for this project. The partners were selected based on the organisations' government-authorized roles in different aspect of conservation (DNPWC for PA management and SAWEN for curbing wildlife), and on field presence and experience (HN and MWT).

The project concept was shared among all partners and the project was designed with their inputs (information, data, and feedback). Once the project funding was secured, the finalised project proposal was shared with the PCC (*Annex 4.2.1*) and then with implementing partners. SAWEN is implementing outputs 1 and 2. HN is implementing Outputs 3 and 4 with communities at the first target project site, inside the buffer zone of PNP in Bagmati Province. MWT is also implementing Outputs 3 and 4, at the second target site with communities outside the PA in Madhesh Province. To facilitate project implementation inside the buffer zone of the protected area, a project management unit (PMU) has been formed, including representatives from NTNC, HN, MWT and ZSL and chaired by the Chief Conservation Officer of PNP (*Annex 4.2.1*). Outside the PA, MWT briefed the Divisional Forest Office (DFO) at Dhanusa on the project's objectives and received approval to implement the project (*Annex 4.2.3 and 4.2.4*).

The partnership with SAWEN has created platforms and opportunities for ZSL to share the project's findings and lessons among wildlife enforcement agencies across south Asia. Similarly, implementing partners like MWT with a strong field presence have helped the project to have a positive influence over the communities, CFUGs, forest authorities (DFO Dhanusa) and decision makers (local and provincial government bodies and line agencies) (*Annex 4.7.1, 4.7.2, 4.7.3*). Having strong partners at both central and local level enabled the project to engage government bodies and their line agencies at all three tiers: federal, provincial, and local. (*Annex 4.2.1, 4.2.4, 4.3.1, 4.4.1, 4.7.1 and 4.7.3*)

Apart from formal partners, the Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN) in Chitwan-Sindhuli corridor supported the project in identifying pangolin hotspots and the drivers of IWT. ZSL Nepal office has continued updating the British Embassy and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) office on the project through annual reports and semi-annual formal letters to the embassy.

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

Output 1: Intelligence-sharing and collaboration between national and transboundary law enforcement agencies to combat IWT is deepened, enabled through capacity building and technology improvement, resulting in actions taken along suspected trade routes and border points.

As outlined in the application, work under Output 1 in the first year focused on strengthening the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB); all other activities are planned for the second and third years.

Activity 1.3 Strengthen support to the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)

In partnership with SAWEN, the WCCB secretariat and district cells were supported to maintain the wildlife crime data management information system (WCD-MIS). As part of this support, 76 forest/protected area officials (17 female) from 17 DFOs and three PA administrations, and a DNPWC staff member, received orientation and capacity-building training on using WCD-MIS through six events in Bagmati and Province 1 (*Annex 4.3.1 and 4.3.2*). Three of these events were held for three offices at their respective sites in Dolakha and Sindhupalchowk districts, and three were held regionally for 18 offices in Bagmati and Province 1. During the orientation, participants were capacitated to enter data into WCD-MIS (*Annex 4.3.2*). The WCCB secretariat was also supported with a laptop and printer for the smooth operation of WCD-MIS. Additionally, a medical kit was purchased for operational health and safety.

Output 2: Priority illegal wildlife trade routes through Nepal are identified, with law enforcement (LE) agencies' enhanced understanding of wildlife crime hotspots and strengthened capacity, enabling the disruption of transnational wildlife crime.

The activities under Output 2 focus on identifying knowledge gaps in IWT trade routes and seizure trends of pangolin and other wildlife derivatives; developing a map of IWT trade routes; sharing the findings with national and transboundary government counterparts; and developing the IWT strategic plan to disrupt the wildlife crime syndicates. Most of the activities planned for the first year have been completed in partnership with SAWEN, except finalizing the IWT trade routes.

Activity 2.1 Understand the knowledge gaps regarding trading routes and seizure trends

WCCB initiated the process of identifying IWT and trade route knowledge gaps by calling a meeting of WCCB cells at central (secretariat) level on 22 December 2021. In the meeting, the WCCB focal person from DNPWC and representatives from the Department of Forests and Soil Conservation (DoFSC), Nepal Army, Armed Police Force (APF), Crime Investigation Bureau (CIB) of the Nepal Police, WWF Nepal and NTNC, along with ZSL Nepal and SAWEN, gathered and discussed the status of WCD-MIS and the need for active operationalization. In total, 14 officials (3 female) participated in the meeting. The team also decided to conduct an IWT survey and develop a wildlife trade route map. (*Annex 4.4.1 and 4.4.2*). The decision was further approved in a high-level officials' meeting by the Director General of DNPWC and 13 other officials, including from the Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE), DoFSC, DNPWC, CIB of the Nepal Police and APF. In this meeting, officials also discussed current IWT and human-wildlife conflict (HWC) challenges, gaps and issues (*Annex 4.4.3*)

Activity 2.2 Identify and map the trading routes through Nepal

To conduct the IWT survey, SAWEN and WCCB central cell members developed a set of questionnaires and sent them to DFO and APF offices – a total of 77 district offices and 15 Nepali Army units deployed in protected areas (PAs). A draft report and trade route map have been prepared based on analyses of the information received from law enforcement agencies (*Annex 4.5.1*). The IWT survey report along with the IWT trade route map will be presented to the national-level workshop in the second year for finalising.

Activity 2.3 Share and validate the study findings at central level

The initial findings of the IWT survey were shared through two workshops conducted between i) SAWEN and WCCB central cell and ii) SAWEN and WCCB district cell in Bagmati province. During these workshops, discussions were conducted on additional potential trade routes. In total, 71 WCCB members and SAWEN representatives (11 female) attended the workshop (*Annex 4.6.1 and 4.6.2*)

Activity 2.4 Share and validate the study findings at site level

Two site-level stakeholder workshops were conducted in Madhesh Province to share about the project and about wildlife crime and trade routes in Nepal. In total, 126 participants (17 female) joined from the Provincial Parliament, Provincial Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forests and Environment (MoITFE), DFO, Provincial Forest Directorate (PFD), Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce & Industries (FNCCI), SAWEN, MWT, FECOFUN, CFUGs, Community-Based Anti-Poaching Units (CBAPUs), and cooperative working committee (*Annex 4.7.1, 4.7.2, 4.7.3, 4.7.4*). During the workshop, participants voiced a need for the project and committed their support to successful project implementation. They also expressed their appreciation to the project partners for transparently sharing the project's objectives and activities.

Output 3: Two Community-Managed Pangolin Conservation Areas (CMPCAs) established within the Chitwan-Sindhuli corridor promote participatory pangolin conservation and protect pangolins and other traded species, reducing IWT its source.

Output 3 encompasses community engagement activities, including establishing, institutionalizing, and strengthening two Community-Managed Pangolin Conservation Areas (CMPCA) and CBAPU, building collaboration between community and law enforcement authorities and creating awareness around pangolin conservation. All of the activities planned for year one have been completed, except the formal declaration of CMPCAs to take place in year 2.

Activity 3.1: Identify potential site for CMPCAs

In total, nine community consultations (8 in the PA buffer zone and 1 outside the PA) were conducted with nine CFUGs and 83 participants (27 female; 51 indigenous and disadvantaged community members) to identify the potential sites for CMPCAs (*Annex 4.8.1 and 4.8.2*). After rigorous consultation, Shree Chetana BZCF within the buffer zone of PNP in Makawanpur district of Bagmati province, and Bhatighari Chure CF outside the PA in Dhanusa district of Madhesh province, were selected as project intervention sites based on their socioeconomic status, reliance on forest resources for livelihood sustainability, and, most importantly, the

presence of pangolin in their community forests, as well as community willingness to participate in biodiversity conservation.

Following the community consultation, a landscape-level stakeholder workshop was conducted with 24 participants (1 female; 15 indigenous and disadvantaged groups) from DFO, CFUGs and FECCOFUN on 17th January 2022 (*Annex 4.8.3 and 4.8.4*). In the workshop, the need for pangolin conservation and the importance of CMPCAs was highlighted. The participants were positive and committed to pangolin conservation and curbing IWT. They also provided their input, which will help formulate effective pangolin conservation strategy (*Annex 4.8.3*).

Similarly, a site-level stakeholder workshop was also conducted by Shree Chetana BZCFUG on 8 March 2022 to share, among site level stakeholders, the need for pangolin conservation and their plan to develop a CMPCA. In total, 30 people (9 female; 9 indigenous and disadvantaged) attended the workshop (*Annex 4.8.5 and 4.8.6*). These community consultations have been very important to garner support and build ownership among the community, relevant authorities, and other local stakeholders.

Activity 3.2: Establish and institutionalize two CMPCAs

After selection of the project intervention sites, four preparatory meetings (two in each site) were conducted in both CFUGs to better understand the concept of CMPCA, the operational model, and the roles and responsibilities of communities and local stakeholders. In Shree Chetana BZCFUG, 26 executive, general, and project team members participated (12 female; 11 indigenous and disadvantaged) (*Annex 4.9.1 and 4.9.2*). In Bhatighari Chure CFUG, 56 executive, general, and project team members participated (44 Female; 55 indigenous and disadvantaged) (*Annex 4.9.4 and 4.9.5*). Recognizing the significance of the CMPCA, the community forest executive committees have decided to establish the CMPCAs within their forests and endorsed them in coordination and collaboration with other conservation partners. Furthermore, they have decided to revise their operational plan to incorporate pangolin conservation activities in coordination with the relevant authorities (viz. PNP and DFO Dhanusa) for sustainable pangolin conservation in the community forests. In line with this, the participatory resource management plan has been drafted by the CMPCAs with input from the respective concerned authorities – PNP for Shree Chetana BZCFUG and DFO Dhanusa for Bhatighari Chure. The CMPCAs are planning to conduct formal declaration events with stakeholders and relevant authorities in the coming year.

Activity 3.4: Facilitate bi-annual meetings between CMPCAs

A site-level meeting was organized among CMPCAs from four community forests (Situ BZCF and Shree Chetana BZCF from the buffer zone of PNP, and Chuchchekhola CF and Bhatighari Chure Chure CF from outside the protected area) and PNP on 23 March 2022. The CMPCAs from Chuchchekhola CF and Situ BZCF were formed by ZSL through previous projects. In this meeting, all CMPCAs agreed to cooperate with each other and share their learnings on pangolin conservation in future meetings (*Annex 4.10.1 and 4.10.2*).

Activity 3.5: Establish Community Based Anti-Poaching Unit (CBAPUs)

Two CBAPUs have been established in the two project sites, with a total of 20 members (10 members in each). Of these members, 9 are female and 12 belong to indigenous and disadvantaged groups. In Shree Chetana BZCF, the group was formed on 9 March 2022 with the participation of 22 community members (5 female; 8 indigenous and disadvantaged). The community in Shree Chetana preferred naming their group the Community-Based Pangolin Conservation Unit (CBPCU) (*Annex 4.11.1*). In Bhatighari Chure CF, the group was formed on 18 February 2022 in the presence of 33 community members (24 female; 31 indigenous and disadvantaged) (*Annex 4.11.2 and 4.11.3*). The main objective of the formation of the CBAPUs is to mobilize local youths and community members to voluntarily curb IWT, discourage participation in such illegal wildlife activities, support biodiversity conservation and, most importantly, play a key role for effective law enforcement by supporting the relevant agencies.

Bhatighari Chure CFUG and CBAPU have conducted two meetings to discuss community forest issues, the need for regular monitoring, and the commitment to work jointly on pangolin conservation (*Annex 4.11.2*).

Activity 3.6: Train CBAPU members on patrolling techniques and monitoring of pangolin habitat

Two training events of four days each were organized for 47 community members (20 CBAPU members and 27 CFUG members) to capacitate them on the roles and responsibilities of the CBAPU, pangolin behaviour and conservation issues, forest patrolling techniques, and existing wildlife rules, regulations, and acts. Of the total participants, 14 were female and 37 belonged to indigenous and disadvantaged groups (*Annex 4.12.1, 4.12.2 and 4.12.3*). After the training, CBAPU members in Bhatighari Chure community forest conducted an initial patrolling (*Annex 4.12.5*) of their community forest area in the format provided (*Annex 4.12.4*).

Activity 3.7: Provide essential field gear and equipment to CBAPU members

As the CBAPUs are voluntary groups, they are not well equipped for forest monitoring. Therefore, the project will support them with field gear required for forest monitoring and patrolling. This year, field gear sets, including digital cameras, GPS, binoculars, first aid kits, water bottles, shoes, jackets, t-shirts, and hats, have been procured (*Annex 4.13.1*). The field gear will be handed over to CBAPUs in the next implementing period.

Activity 3.10: Raise awareness among CMPCA members and wider communities on pangolin conservation

Two drop-in centres have been established in two schools, namely Shree Primary School (Shree Chetana BZCF) and Shree Rastriya primary school (Bhatighari Chure CF), to raise awareness among students, teachers, parents, and other community members on pangolin conservation.

Three events on conservation awareness have been conducted at a drop-in centre at Shree Rastriya Primary School. Through these events, 170 students, teachers and school management committee members have been made aware of wildlife and habitat conservation issues. Drop-in centres have been provided with essential posters and booklets. The drop-in centre at Shree Primary school (*Annex 4.14.3 and 4.14.4*) and Shree Chetana BZCFUG have developed plans to set up a small library with books, pangolin conservation artwork and information boards.

Similarly, two interaction programmes were conducted for local stakeholders and community members at Shree Chetana BZCFUG to raise local community members' awareness around pangolin, their status, conservation challenges and need, and the role community can play for pangolin conservation. In total, 50 community members (22 female; 20 indigenous and disadvantaged groups) attended this interaction programme (*Annex 4.14.1 and 4.14.2*).

Activity 3.11: Support CMPCA to identify drivers of IWT and poaching of pangolin

Four workshops were conducted in project intervention sites (two in each site) to identify the drivers of IWT and poaching. Two workshops were conducted with CFUG and CBAPU members and two were conducted with women's cooperative members. In total, 73 community members (1 BZUC, 9 CF, 15 CBAPU, and 48 women's cooperative members) participated to identify the drivers. Of these, 61 were female and 58 belonged to indigenous and disadvantaged groups (*Annex 4.15.1 and 4.15.2*).

The major drivers affecting pangolin conservation identified during the workshop were: lack of public information /awareness regarding pangolin conservation, habitat fragmentation, forest fires, deforestation, extraction of river products (sand and gravel), overuse of insecticides and pesticides, open grazing, road construction inside the forest, physical infrastructure set up in and around the forest area, and waste disposal inside the forest. Beside these, illiteracy and socio-cultural factors influence the trade in pangolin and other wildlife (*Annex 4.15.3*).

Output 4: Vulnerable community members are accessing sustainable livelihood options, ensuring economic resiliency, reducing the economic drivers of poaching and IWT related activities.

The activities under Output 4 relate to community livelihoods and include identifying vulnerable communities and the impact of COVID-19 on community livelihoods; establishing and institutionalizing women-led cooperatives; capacitating women's groups with management and

livelihood skills; supporting seed funds; and providing alternative options to fuel wood. All planned activities for year one have been completed.

Activity 4.1: Identify vulnerable forest dependent communities, locally appropriate livelihoods, and wellbeing in the community

A social survey was conducted in both the project implementation sites. In total, 357 community members, 210 from Bhatighari Chure CFUG and 147 from Shree Shree Chetana BZCFUG, were interviewed during the survey, representing the 376 households across the two project sites. 74% of those interviewed were female and 71% belonged to indigenous and disadvantaged groups. With the help of the social survey baseline on forest dependency, wellbeing and conservation acceptance as well as other parameters were measured (*Annex 4.16.1*).

In Bhatighari Chure CFUG, the average wellbeing index was calculated to be 0.36. Within the community, the *Dalit* disadvantaged group was found to have lowest wellbeing index (0.32). More than 94% of respondents were engaged in collecting forest resources, but their average forest dependency index was 0.65, indicating a moderate level of forest dependency. The level of acceptance for conservation was 96.91%; however, only 67.7% indicated strong acceptance of conservation (*Annex 4.16.1*).

In Shree Chetana BZCFUG, the average wellbeing index was calculated to be 0.52. Within the community, *Dalits* were again found to have the lowest wellbeing index (0.44). More than 82.9% of respondents were engaged in collecting forest resources. As in Bhatighari Chure, their average forest dependency index indicated a moderate level of forest dependency (0.52). The level of acceptance for conservation was 76.5%, but a mere 19.72% had strong acceptance of conservation (*Annex 4.16.1*).

Activity 4.2: Assess the impact of Covid-19 on existing livelihoods

The impact of COVID-19 on community livelihoods was also assessed through the social survey. The survey showed 88% of respondents impacted by COVID-19: 29% experiencing job loss, 30% facing a shortage of food items, 22% unable to pay loans, 6% having lost their business, 2% unable to pay even the school fee (*Annex 4.16.1*).

In Bhatighari Chure CFUG, 88.1% respondents faced negative impacts from COVID-19, with 33.33% unable to pay loans, 27.62% unable to purchase food and essential items, 23.33% having lost their job and not finding other employment, 7.62% having lost their business, and 0.95% unable to pay the school fee (*Annex 4.16.1*).

In Shree Chetana BZCFUG, 87.07% of respondents reported they faced negative impacts from COVID-19. The most frequently reported impact was job loss and not being able to find another job at 38.1% of respondents, followed by 35.37% unable to purchase food and essential items, 4.76% unable to pay loans, 4.76% unable to pay the school fee, 2.72% losing their business and 1.36% reporting other impacts (*Annex 4.16.1*).

Activity 4.3: Establish and institutionalize women-led cooperatives

Two women-led cooperatives were established, one in each of the project sites. All 68 members are female, and 80% of them belong to indigenous and disadvantaged groups. The members were selected based on the social survey conducted above.

In Shree Chetana BZCFUG, *Chetana Mahila Aayarjan Samuha* (Chetna Women's Income Generation Group) was formed on 22 March 2022, with 35 female members, 22 of them belonging to indigenous and disadvantaged groups (*Annex 4.17.1*). In Bhatighari Chure CFUG, *Aayamik aayarjan bipanna barga mahila upasamiti* (Poor Women's Income Generation Sub-Committee) was formed on 25 March 2022, with 33 female members, all of them belonging to indigenous and disadvantaged groups (*Annex 4.17.2 and 4.17.3*).

The primary objective of the formation of women-led cooperatives is to support women from marginalized and vulnerable communities to become economically independent, as well as to have equal rights over natural resources. As women spend more time interacting with nature, we also wanted to encourage them in active engagement and leadership in conservation activities.

Activity 4.4: Train cooperative members on management and operation mechanism of the cooperatives

Two training sessions on group management and account keeping systems were conducted for the women's groups (one for each group). 82 people (68 cooperative members and 14 CFUG executive members) participated in the training. Of these, 85% were female and 80% belonged to indigenous and disadvantaged groups (*Annex 4.17.1, 4.18.2, 4.18.3 and 4.18.4*). During the training, participants learnt about community bank and group management, loan base interest rates, financial management, family budgeting and bookkeeping systems.

After the training, the average knowledge score of participants in Chetana Women's Income Generation Group was increased by 26 points: the average pre-test score was 41% and, post-test, the average score was 67% (*Annex 4.18.5 and 4.18.6*).

Activity 4.5: Support seed money to setup soft loans for the cooperative members

The women-led cooperatives were provided with seed funds amounting to NPR 1,734,865. In Shree Chetana community forest, *Chetana Mahila Aayarjan Samuha* (Chetna Women's Income Generation Group) was provided with NPR 1,034,865. In Bhatighari Chure CFUG, *Aayamik aayaarjan bipanna barga mahila upasamiti* (Poor Women's Income Generation Sub-Committee) was provided with NPR 700,000 (*Annex 4.19.1*). Currently, both women-led cooperatives are in the process of taking loans for livelihood schemes and making monthly savings to expand their seed funds.

Activity 4.6: Train cooperative members on sustainable alternative livelihood skills

Three trainings were conducted for the women's cooperatives, aiming to provide new skills and improved livelihoods. For *Chetana Mahila Aayarjan Samuha* (Chetna Women's Income Generation Group), 7 days' commercial livestock rearing training was conducted (*Annex 4.20.1 and 4.20.2*). For Bhatighari Chure CFUG's *Aayamik aayaarjan bipanna barga mahila upasamiti* (Poor Women's Income Generation Sub-Committee), 3 days' commercial agriculture production training and 3 days' commercial livestock rearing training were conducted (*Annex 4.20.3 and 4.20.4*).

In the livestock rearing training, participants learned basic to advanced skills of livestock rearing, as well as about different possible livestock diseases and the preventive/curative measures required for healthy livestock. Similarly, in commercial agriculture production training, participants learnt techniques of seed production, weed management, nutrient management, organic farming, off-season vegetable farming, harvesting, and irrigation.

After the training, the average knowledge score of participants increased by 19 points in Chetana Women's Income Generation Group (from a pre-test average knowledge score of 46% to a post-test average of 65%) (*Annex 4.20.5 and 4.20.6*).

Activity 4.7: Conduct monthly meetings among cooperative members

Six monthly meetings (three in each site) were held by the women-led cooperative groups. At the initial meeting, members decided interest and monthly saving rates. Both groups set an interest rate of 6% per year. However, monthly saving amounts agreed by members differed between the groups, with the Chetna community forest women's cooperative agreeing to save NPR 100/member/month and the Bhatighar community forest women's cooperative agreeing to save NPR 300/member/month (*Annex 4.21.1 and 4.21.2*). In the subsequent two meetings, monthly savings were collected from each member, totalling NPR 16,900 (113 GBP) across the two meetings.

3.2 Progress towards project Outputs

Output 1: Intelligence-sharing and collaboration between national and transboundary law enforcement agencies to combat IWT is deepened, enabled through capacity building and technology improvement, resulting in actions taken along suspected trade routes and border points.

The priority for the first year of the project was to support WCCB to adopt an IWT database. WCCB has committed to adopt and make WCD-MIS operational (*Annex 4.4.1 and 4.4.3*). After 6 different orientation and coaching events, forest/protected area officials are now entering wildlife crime data into WCD-MIS. From this year, data input into the system has gained

momentum, with 575 cases already entered. Before the project's initiation, fewer than 300 cases were entered each year. On average, 13 new cases per day are being entered into the system (*Ind 1.3, Act 1.3*).

Progress towards other indicators will be visible from Y2 onwards because activities needed to initiate the change are planned for Y2 and Y3. For example, an increased sharing of IWT-related intelligence by transboundary government counterparts (*Ind 1.1*) will be observable after the national and transboundary sharing mechanism is developed and the IWT survey report and maps are shared in a transboundary sharing meeting. The knowledge retention of trainers (*Ind 1.2*) can be measured after they receive the training-of-trainers. Similarly, an increase in wildlife law enforcement surveillance (*Ind 1.4*) at identified IWT border hotspots will be observable after the IWT survey report and maps are shared among law enforcement agencies more widely. As IWT border hotspots are determined by the IWT survey this year, the baseline for surveillance at the identified IWT hotspot corridors is set as zero (*Ind 1.4*).

Output 2: Priority illegal wildlife trade routes through Nepal are identified, with law enforcement agencies' enhanced understanding of wildlife crime hotspots and strengthened capacity, enabling the disruption of transnational wildlife crime.

A draft report on IWT and IWT route maps have been prepared with the help of the IWT survey and a series of meetings and workshops among the WCCB secretariat, WCCB district cells and SAWEN (*Ind 2.1; Act 2.2*). The validation of the report and maps is expected to be completed by Y2.

Investigation officers will be developed as trainers on wildlife crime cases after training is conducted in Y2 and Y3 (*Ind 2.2*). Similarly, any increase in suspected IWT traffickers will be observable after training on wildlife crime is provided (*Ind 2.3*).

Output 3: Two Community-Managed Pangolin Conservation Areas (CMPCAs) established within the Chitwan-Sindhuli corridor promote participatory pangolin conservation and protect pangolins and other traded species, reducing IWT its source.

After holding a series of consultations and engagement meetings with members of two communities from Shree Chetana BZCF and Bhatighari Chure CF within Chitwan-Sindhuli corridor, two inclusive CMPCAs have been successfully established (*Ind 3.1; Act 3.2*). Overall, 376 households (a total of 1,879 people, 975 male and 904 female) are participating in pangolin conservation through the CMPCAs (*Ind 3.1; Act 3.2*). The CMPCA in Shree Chetana BZCF has 166 member households, encompassing 416 male and 387 female community members, while the CMPCA in Bhatighari Chure community forest has 210 member households with 559 male and 517 female members. The CMPCAs have drafted participatory natural resource management plans, which will be formally endorsed by stakeholders in Y2 (*Ind 3.2.1*). To support CMPCAs in controlling IWT, CBAPUs with 20 voluntary youth and community members (9 female; 12 from indigenous and disadvantaged groups) have been formed (*Act 3.5*). In year one, CMPCAs have initiated their actions for pangolin conservation and addressing other IWT. The CBAPU in Bhatighari Chure community forest conducted an initial forest patrolling event (*Ind 3.2.2; Act 3.6*), which did not find any major conservation issue especially with regards to hunting. Similarly, the CMPCAs conducted an awareness programme for 170 school children/school management committee members and 50 stakeholders and community members in Y1 (*Ind 3.2.2; Act 3.10*). These activities are expected to increase from Y2.

Output 4: Vulnerable community members are accessing sustainable livelihood options, ensuring economic resiliency, reducing the economic drivers of poaching and IWT related activities.

This year, two women-led cooperatives have been established, one in each project site, with 68 members (all female; 47 belonging to indigenous groups, 8 belonging to disadvantaged groups (Madhesi and Dalit), 11 belonging to Brahmin/Chettri and 2 belonging to other groups) (*Ind 4.1, Act 4.3*). After capacitating these groups with cooperative management training, the project established start-up funds amounting to NPR ██████████ to ensure group members have sustainable access to financial resources. This fund has already increased by 1.5% (NPR ██████████, or ██████████ GBP) with the savings collected from members in Y1 (*Ind 4.2, Act 4.5*). This fund will further expand in the coming years with the monthly savings collected and the interest generated from revolving the fund.

The communities identified commercial livestock rearing and agricultural production as their sustainable livelihood schemes, so group members were trained in skills related to these identified livelihood schemes (Ind 4.3.1, Act 4.6). The number of members adopting these skills can be calculated from Y2. With the help of the social survey, a baseline for forest dependency (indicator 4.4) was set. The average forest dependency index for Bhatighari Chure CFUG is 0.65 and for Shree Chetana CFUG is 0.52.

3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

Outcome: Green transboundary corridors in Chitwan-Sindhuli secured through strengthened law enforcement, underpinned by community-led participatory pangolin conservation, with diversified sustainable livelihood schemes improving human wellbeing and reducing key drivers for IWT.

The preparatory tasks required to lay the foundation for achieving the project outcome have been completed this year. The project started by broadening the knowledge base on trade routes and strengthening the wildlife crime database management information system (WCD-MIS). On an average, 13 new cases per day are being entered in the system following the project's support. In Y1, wildlife crime data entry in WCD-MIS has increased from 300 cases to 575 (Ind 1.3). The knowledge created can be used by law enforcement agencies for investigation, prosecution, and transboundary cooperation, providing a basis for progress towards Indicators 0.1 and 0.2. Community engagement in curbing IWT and conserving pangolin has also been ensured by successfully establishing CMPCAs and CBAPUs (Ind 3.2). These CMPCAs have initiated their activities, with one patrolling event and an awareness programme for 170 students /school committee members and 50 stakeholders and community members. These activities will contribute towards the achievement of increased support for conservation among communities (Ind 0.3.1) and help lay the groundwork for greater sharing of information with law enforcement (Ind 0.3.2), both of which will be measured in later stages of the project. To support inclusive community wellbeing through sustainable livelihoods, women-led cooperatives have been established, along with a seed fund (Ind 4.1). The members have already started collecting monthly savings and have grown their seed fund by 1.5% (Ind 4.2). Going forward, these cooperatives will independently and sustainably manage the financial resources initially supported by the project for livelihood schemes. This has contributed to creating an enabling environment for communities to increase their wellbeing (Ind 0.4).

This year, outcome-level baselines have been set to monitor the changes that this project will bring. The baseline for the communities' acceptance/support for conservation (Ind 0.3) was set. In Bhatighari Chure CFUG, the average level of strong acceptance/support for conservation is 67.7%, while in Shree Chetana BZCFUG it is 19.72%. This year, there were no issues related to IWT in the project intervention site; therefore, the CMPCA members have not yet shared any information with law enforcement agencies. Hence, the baseline for credible information shared by CMPCA members is 0 for year one (Ind 0.3). The community wellbeing index score (Ind 0.4) was also set. The wellbeing index score for the community in Bhatighari Chure CFUG is 0.36 and for Shree Chetana BZCFUG it is 0.52 (Ind 0.4).

Changes against the outcome-level indicators will be trackable in the coming years and will therefore be reported from Y2 onwards.

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Outcome: Green transboundary corridors in Chitwan-Sindhuli secured through strengthened law enforcement, underpinned by community-led participatory pangolin conservation, with diversified sustainable livelihood schemes improving human wellbeing and reducing key drivers for IWT.

Assumption 1: Pangolin conservation remains a national priority.

Comments: Still holds true. The Pangolin Conservation Action Plan for Nepal (2018-2022) is active.

Assumption 2: Law enforcement agencies continue sharing data on arrests and prosecution.

Comments: Still holds true. WCD-MIS is receiving data (Section 3.1 and 3.2).

Assumption 3: Local communities are supportive of conservation and are keen to diversify their income generation.

Comments: Still holds true. Communities are actively participating in project activities and have formed community groups to support conservation (Section 3.1 and 3.2).

Assumption 4: Avenues exist for improving law enforcement's response to IWT and they remain supportive of conservation initiatives.

Comments: Still holds true. Law enforcement is participating in project activities and providing necessary information (Section 3.1 and 3.2).

Assumption 5: The short-medium term impacts of COVID on all stakeholders, government and communities continue to be assessed and integrated into project planning, delivery, and sustainability.

Comments: Still holds true. A social survey was conducted to assess COVID-19 impact on community livelihoods (Section 3.1).

Output 1: Intelligence-sharing and collaboration between national and transboundary law enforcement agencies to combat IWT is deepened, enabled through capacity building and technology improvement, resulting in actions taken along suspected trade routes and border points.

Assumption 6: There is avenue for partnership with SAWEN to improve transboundary information sharing mechanism and collaboration.

Comments: Still holds true. Output 1 and Output 2 have been implemented in partnership with SAWEN. (Section 3.1 and 3.2)

Assumption 7: Opportunities to improve national capacity and coordination of the wildlife enforcement agencies through WCCB exist.

Comments: Still holds true. Orientation and coaching on WCD-MIS was held jointly by SAWEN and the WCCB secretariat.

Output 2: Priority illegal wildlife trade routes through Nepal are identified, with law enforcement agencies' enhanced understanding of wildlife crime hotspots and strengthened capacity, enabling the disruption of transnational wildlife crime.

Assumption 8: Chitwan-Sindhuli corridor remains a priority pangolin habitat for the Government of Nepal.

Comments: Still holds true. DNPWC, DoFSC, DFO, and the PAs participated in the project workshop to discuss knowledge gaps and identifying trade routes (Section 3.1).

Assumption 9: Unidentified trade routes exist in the project site and law enforcement agencies remain supportive in identifying trade routes linked to the project site.

Comments: Still holds true. DoFSC, DFO, and the PAs participated in the project workshop to discuss knowledge gaps and identify trade routes, and prepared a draft trade route map (Section 3.1).

Output 3: Two Community-Managed Pangolin Conservation Areas (CMPCAs) established within the Chitwan-Sindhuli corridor promote participatory pangolin conservation and protect pangolins and other traded species, reducing IWT its source.

Assumption 10: The communities remain receptive to forming CMCPA.

Comments: Still holds true. Two CMPCAs have been formed across both project sites (Section 3.1 and 3.2).

Assumption 11: Suitable and diverse candidates are voluntarily available and willing to work as CBAPU members.

Comments: Still holds true. Two CBPAUs were formed with a total of 20 members (Section 3.1 and 3.2).

Assumption 12: School management remain supportive.

Comments: Still holds true. Two drop-in centers have been formed, and a conservation awareness programme was conducted (Section 3.1).

Assumption 13: Community and law enforcement collaborations continue with a shared vision to halt IWT.

Comments: Still holds true. The CMPCA and law enforcement agencies (DFO and PAs) are jointly working to develop the CMPCAs' management plans (Section 3.1).

Assumption 14: Communities are being fully supported in post-COVID recovery with engagement in conservation and additional security providing enabling conditions for them to do so.

Comments: Still holds true.

Output 4: Vulnerable community members are accessing sustainable livelihood options, ensuring economic resiliency, reducing the economic drivers of poaching and IWT related activities.

Assumption 15: Gender and social bias exist; women and marginalized communities are under-represented in decision making and livelihood generation schemes.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 16: Communities are receptive of diversifying livelihood schemes as an alternative to forest dependent livelihood.

Comments: Still holds true. Communities are participating in identifying livelihood schemes and enhancing their livelihood skills (Section 3.1).

Assumption 17: ZSL's livelihood works have been successful in generating over 50% increase in seed fund in other projects.

Comments: Still holds true. This capacity has been further evidenced for this project by the fact that in Y1, after only two months of saving, the seed fund has already increased by a total of 1.5% (Ind 4.2).

Assumption 18: More than 25% of the members in the existing CMPCAs have adopted sustainable higher income generating activities.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 19: Economic conditions (post COVID) continue to enable suitable incentive framework is futureproofed across the trail sites for beyond the life span of the project.

Comments: Still holds true.

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

Impact: *Pangolin-trafficking and IWT is reduced throughout the Shivalik landscape, securing long-term community support and wellbeing through diversified sustainable livelihood schemes and strengthened collaboration across law enforcement agencies.*

This is the first year of the project, so it is too early to report evidence of the contribution that the project is making towards this impact. However, the project has laid the foundation and is making positive progress to contribute to the reduction of pangolin trafficking and IWT throughout the Shivalik landscape and to securing long-term community support and wellbeing.

In the first year, the project's various interventions have reached approximately 177 law enforcement officials (PA managers, forest officials, the APF, the CIB of the Nepal Police, and customs officials); 3 local and provincial government officials; and 1879 community members (975 male and 904 female), which has disseminated the message of pangolin conservation and the government's priority to curb pangolin trafficking through the Shivalik landscape (Section

3.1 and 3.2). Community engagement interventions have further sensitized the community about the benefits of conservation and diversified livelihoods.

4. Thematic focus

This year project has contributed following two themes:

Strengthening law enforcement

The project has supported WCCB to identify knowledge gaps on IWT and develop trade route maps (*Ind. 1.3 and 2.1*). Similarly, wildlife crime data management information system (WCD-MIS) usage by enforcement agencies had been very slow since its establishment. The project made significant strides in making the database effective and operational by supporting required trainings for forest/protected area officials and by equipping them. This year has seen the number of cases entered into the database nearly double, from 300 to 575, demonstrating the improved operation of the database (*Ind 1.3*). This information and the maps developed will strengthen WCCB and other enforcement agencies in performing educative surveillance, investigation, and prosecution in coming years. Similarly, to support enforcement agencies and provide IWT-relevant information, two CMPCAs and two CBAPUs have been established (*Ind 3.1*).

Developing sustainable livelihood to benefit people directly affected by IWT

The project is targeting two communities residing in the fringe areas of pangolin habitat within Chitwan-Sindhuli corridor. More than 80% of community members (out of a total of 376 households) are dependent on forest resources in the pangolin habitat (Annex 4.16.1). To reduce pressure on pangolin habitat and increase livelihood skills and income, two women-led cooperatives have been established, with 68 women members, and have been supported with seed funds amounting to NPR ██████████ (*Ind 4.2*). Of the total members across both groups, 47 belong to indigenous groups and eight belong to disadvantaged groups. The members were trained in livelihoods skills (commercial livestock rearing and agricultural production) and capacitated on cooperative management so that they can manage the seed fund effectively and use it for income-generating activities (*Act 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6*). The members have already started collecting monthly savings and have grown their seed fund by 1.5% (*Ind 4.2*)

5. Impact on species in focus

This is the first year of the project, so it is too early to report evidence of the contribution that the project is making towards impact on the species on focus. However, in this first year, pangolin conservation messages have directly reached approximately 177 law enforcement officials and 1879 community members (975 male and 904 female) in the Sindhuli-Chitwan corridor landscape. (We have no means to measure the indirect reach of the message to other members of the public beyond this due to our activities.) To move towards long-term pangolin conservation and IWT reduction, pangolin hot spots and trade routes have been identified (*Ind. 2.1*). Similarly, WCD-MIS is being updated (*Ind 1.3*) and community groups (CMPCAs and CBAPUs) have been formed and are operational for community support and engagement (*Ind 3.1*). Community groups have already initiated their conservation actions, such as forest patrolling in pangolin habitat and raising awareness among students, stakeholders, and community members (*Ind 3.2*).

6. Project support to poverty reduction

The project is targeting two communities residing in the fringe areas of pangolin habitat within Chitwan-Sindhuli corridor. There are 376 households in these communities, with a total population of 1879 people (975 males and 904 females) (*Ind 3.1*). The average wellbeing index is 0.52 (*Ind 0.4*). The project is aiming to reach 200 households with sustainable livelihoods schemes to increase their income and wellbeing and to reduce their dependency on natural resources in pangolin habitat. Specifically, women from indigenous and disadvantaged groups are the main targeted beneficiaries for the livelihood schemes. In first year, two-women led cooperatives have been established, with 68 women members, and have been supported with seed funds amounting to NPR ██████████ (*Ind 4.2*). Of the total members across both cooperatives, 47 belong to indigenous groups and eight belong to disadvantaged groups. The members were trained on livelihoods skills (commercial livestock rearing and agricultural production) and capacitated on cooperative management so that they can manage the seed

fund and use the funds for the income-generating activities they are now trained on. These two women-led community cooperatives have expanded their initial seed fund by 1.5% with two months' saving (*Ind 4.2*). Cooperative members are expected to report an increase in income generation in the coming years of the project.

7. Consideration of gender equality issues

The project is progressive towards gender equality. Men and women are given equal opportunities to participate in capacity-building opportunities; however, women are often less represented than men in Nepal unless the project specifically encourages women's participation. This was also evident in general activity implementation in Y1: for example, of the 177 law enforcement officials who participated in the first year of the project, only 19% were women. Similarly, during various consultation meetings conducted at community and landscape level, only 27% women participated (*Section 3.1, Act 3.1*). Thus, to ensure women's voices and participation in the project, the project conducted two dedicated workshops to collect women's perspectives on IWT. During the social survey, positive discrimination was used to increase women's participation. In total, 74% women were included in the social survey (*Annex 4.16.1*). Likewise, the project formed two women-led cooperatives with 68 women members to create economic decision-making opportunities for women in the project sites (*Ind 4.2*). These members were then trained in cooperative management and in livelihoods skills and were supported with seed funds amounting to NPR 1,734,865 (*Ind 4.2*). Women members have full management rights over this seed money. Based on the fund management guidelines, members will take loans at low interest to start the livelihoods schemes in which they have been trained. They are thus expected to have increased income sources of their own in the following years of the project.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

The PCC and PMUs are the key monitoring units established by the project for monitoring and evaluation purposes (*Annex 4.2.1 and 4.2.2*). Similarly, PNP and DFO Dhanusa, in coordination with project partners, buffer zone representatives and local communities, are conducting regular monitoring of the project progress at the site. Regular visits have been conducted by the project lead to monitor and evaluate project implementation. Altogether, 2 monitoring visits have been made by the project lead.

The project also uses a performance appraisal framework (PAF), tied to the logframe, for ZSL staff to conduct M&E. The PAF uses ZSL's web-based systems to track progress and promote interaction between project partners. Monthly highlights reports are generated from the PAF with input from all the relevant project components. These feed into the regular project reports for both the IWT Challenge Fund and ZSL's internal M&E procedures.

As this is the first year of the project, it will be too early to demonstrate through evidence the contribution that the activities and outputs are making towards the outcomes. This year, the project team worked more on preparatory tasks, such as creating baselines (*Ind 0.3, 0.4, 1.4, 3.4, 4.4*). Similarly, output indicators related to institutional strengthening (*Ind 1.3*) and establishment (*Ind 3.1, 4.1, 4.2*) and IWT knowledge creation (*Ind 2.1*) were achieved in the first year. In addition, Indicators 3.2, 3.3, 4.2 and 4.3, which relate to institutional strengthening and to sustainable livelihoods, have been partially met. Activities planned for year two will initiate progress towards other output and outcome indicators.

To date, there have been no changes in the M&E plan. As planned, M&E responsibilities are shared among partners and all required data are being collected accordingly. SAWEN is supporting with data and evidence for output 1 and 2 and HN and MWT are supporting for output 3 and 4. HN is also conducting pre- and post-event surveys to measure the effectiveness of the capacity-building events. Monitoring and reporting officers are compiling data received from the partners to report against the logical framework.

9. Lessons learnt

Listed below are the project team's learnings from this first year of project implementation:

- **Concrete and adaptive implementing strategies are key to timely and quality implementation:** Despite the reduced implementing period, the project team was able

to complete most of the planned activities. This was made possible by the concrete implementing strategies that the project team developed. This included detailed workplans for implementing partners, as well as continuous communications, follow up and technical backstopping to implementing partners. These strategies are often unwritten and are adapted to the situation, so it is very important to discuss them in a thoroughly and timely fashion within the implementation team.

- **Virtual platforms and capacity enhancement of partners is important during challenging situations:** The first year of any project requires rigorous consultation among partners to ensure the project starts smoothly, but as this project started amidst COVID-19 restrictions, virtual platforms like Skype helped the team to conduct regular meetings. Similarly, during the preparation of this report, which coincided with local election time, a shared online drive helped facilitate instant information sharing and updates from partners based at remote project sites. The project team made this possible by informally coaching implementing partners about the use of these virtual platforms. The project plans to continue this practice throughout the project period.
- **Coordination and cooperation with relevant authorities, government leaders and stakeholders at the project implementing site is a must for generating ownership and support for the project.** Holding sharing meetings at the project site and ensuring timely coordination among the relevant authorities, government leaders and stakeholders helped in generating ownership of the project and support in project implementation.

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

This is not applicable to this report as this is first year of reporting.

11. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

This is not applicable to this report.

12. Sustainability and legacy

The project was developed in line with the Government of Nepal's priority area, the National Pangolin Conservation Action Plan, and DNPWC's strategic plan. DNPWC therefore has taken ownership of the project and has supported the project's development and implementation. The trade route map and WCD-MIS will be a great asset to DNPWC and all law enforcement agencies for educative operations. Similarly, the community groups (CMPCAs and CBAPUs) formed by community forests as part of the project provide an assurance of long-term community support for pangolin conservation and IWT reduction. The women-led cooperatives formed in this first year of the project, with sustainable financial flow mechanisms, are a step towards establishing environmentally and economically sustainable livelihoods in project communities. These women-led cooperatives have expanded their original seed fund by 1.5% with two months' saving (Ind 4.2), which shows their investment in and ownership of the project activities. As the activities planned for first year of the project went smoothly, the exit strategy for the project remains valid.

13. IWT Challenge Fund identity

The project supported by the IWT Challenge Fund is a distinct project in the Chitwan-Sindhuli green corridor. However, the project also aligns with the government's programme for pangolin, tiger and rhino conservation, which considers control of poaching and IWT to be a key element in conservation for all of the project's focus species.

The IWT Challenge Fund has been mentioned in each agreement signed with the partners. The UK Aid logo and a description of the project have been published in ZSL's periodic newsletter. The UK Aid logo, along with the partner logo, has also been placed on banners. The project will continue placing the UK Aid logo on hoarding boards and any other communication materials.

In general, the wildlife conservation community in Nepal is familiar with the IWT Challenge Fund because of previously supported projects. However, this project has particularly publicised the IWT Challenge Fund in Madhesh province through engagement of local and

province-level government bodies and line agencies in inception meetings and stakeholder consultations.

14. Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

Due to Covid-19-related restrictions, many of the project interventions, including workshops, trainings and any activity that required people to gather, were pushed towards the latter quarters of Y1 and the workplan was revised accordingly. The use of virtual platforms (such as Skype, Microsoft Teams, and an online drive) was optimized. Coordination, communication, and follow up were increased with implementing partners, and human resources were added to the project's implementation. Throughout the project implementation period, health and safety protocols including the use of masks and sanitizer were made mandatory in all workshops and meetings held. Similarly, staff were frequently provided with portable sanitizer and masks, and sanitation and hygiene were given top priority in the office. The staff were also provided with flexibility to work from home. With such adaptive management, the project team was able to complete the majority of the activities planned for year one. Therefore, long-term delays are not expected unless another wave of Covid-19 hits Nepal. Since virtual platforms have been very effective, the project team will continue to use them even after the Covid-19 pandemic.

15. Safeguarding

Please tick this box if any safeguarding or human rights violations have occurred during this financial year.

If you have answered yes, please ensure these are reported to ODA.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk as indicated in the T&Cs.

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

I agree for the IWTCF Secretariat to publish the content of this section (please leave this line in to indicate your agreement to use any material you provide here).

The first year of the project successfully laid the foundations needed to achieve the project's ultimate intended impact of reducing pangolin trafficking and IWT, securing long-term community support and wellbeing through diversified sustainable livelihood schemes, and strengthening collaboration across law enforcement agencies. Through the kind support of the IWT Challenge Fund and an effective partnership with South Asian Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN), the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) was able to broaden the knowledge base on IWT by identifying and mapping trade routes. Similarly, the wildlife crime data management information system (WCD-MIS) had not been functional since its establishment, but after the project supported orientation and coaching for 76 forest/protected area officials on entering data in the system, data entry in WCD-MIS has gained significant momentum, with an average of 13 new case entries per day. The data entered has increased from 300 cases to 575 in year one. This systematic data and knowledge on IWT routes will help enable law enforcement agencies to make educative responses during transboundary communication and coordination. The project's participatory approach to community engagement in pangolin conservation has begun with the establishment of two Community-Managed Pangolin Conservation Areas (CMPCAs) and two Community-Based Anti-Poaching Units (CBAPUs) across the two project sites. These groups have initiated conservation actions that have included conducting one forest patrol and creating awareness around pangolin conservation among 170 students and teachers and 50 stakeholders and community members. Towards the goal of securing inclusive community wellbeing with sustainable livelihoods, women-led cooperative groups have been established and provided with seed funds. The cooperative members have started collecting monthly savings and have expanded the project-supported seed fund by 1.5% to date, indicating their investment in and ownership of the cooperatives and the project's livelihood schemes. In addition, the project was successful in engaging all three tiers of government at local, provincial, and federal level. In particular, outreach to the provincial government in Madhesh province was a notable achievement for ZSL Nepal.

The project has remained progressive towards gender equality. To ensure women's voices and participation in the project, it continued to put particular effort into women-focused interactions and interventions. This year, two dedicated workshops were conducted to collect women's perspectives on IWT, and 74% women respondents were included in the social survey of the project sites. Similarly, the project ensured the participation of community members belonging to indigenous and disadvantaged groups. On average, 70% of the community members engaged in project interventions belong to indigenous or disadvantaged groups.

The project was able to achieve these milestones within a reduced implementation period and while dealing with the challenges of Covid-19 and potentially fraught local elections through concrete and adaptive implementing strategies, enhanced coordination with partners, and optimum use of virtual platforms.

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?	X
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to IWT-Fund@itsi.co.uk putting the project number in the subject line.	
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with IWT-Fund@itsi.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.	X
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	X
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	X
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	