

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

Project reference	IWT103
Project title	Reducing Poverty and Illegal Trade Utilizing Bolivia's Charismatic Red-fronted Macaw
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Bolivia
Lead partner	Asociación Armonía
Partner(s)	Toro Toro Municipality SERNAP: Toro Toro National Park Government of Cochabamba
Project leader	Bennett Hennessey
Report date and number	01 April 2023 – 30 September 2023 - HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	https://armoniabolivia.org/ https://twitter.com/armoniabolivia?lang=en https://www.facebook.com/armoniabolivia/

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).

1. Project Summary

The project is well underway and we are succeeding in implementing all proposed activities. We completed the birdwatching tourism development which includes two birdwatching trails to observe Red-fronted Macaws, a Macaw sculpture to attract people taking a (selfie) picture and learn more about macaw conservation, a roofed bird observation site, and a birdwatching tourism regulation manual approved by the communities. We developed a "Communication, Education and Awareness Plan" which is being implemented in the project area. Through workshops at local schools, we have reached 1,258 children in 10 communities. To interact with the students, we created a new Red-fronted Macaw mascot which is a big hit among the children. A total of 131 families are actively using the beekeeping and eco-agriculture materials that were provided, helping these indigenous communities to increase their income through sustainable production models. These families received a multitude of training to implement best practices management techniques. Additionally, we are implementing new strategies to halt the human-macaw conflict through the implementation of new "Macaw-Friendly and Organic Deterrents" which we are currently testing. Toro Toro Park rangers received training in monitoring Red-fronted Macaws with use of digital applications which will provide detailed Red-fronted Macaw presence/absence data in the region.

2. Project Partnerships

The partnerships established through this project are strong and still in place. The collaboration between the Toro Toro Municipality, Toro Toro National Park and communities has generated a collective and positive stance towards the protection of the Red-fronted Macaw. We developed a new partnership with the Forestry and Environmental Protection Police (POFOMA) who are responsible for dealing with reports of wildlife trafficking. We are coordinating joint efforts to improve the monitoring of Red-fronted Macaw trafficking reports and we will train POFOMA staff to identify threatened bird species, their conservation status and threats.

3. Project progress

o Education

Armonia contracted experts who developed a "Communication, Education and Awareness Plan". The plan includes guidelines and methodologies on how to reach different national and local stakeholders. This plan is actively put to use and we completed the environmental education workshops which focused on the local communities and schools. We will continue the campaign "We Want Them Free" in Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, Sucre and Potosi which is planned for December.

The following progress was made:

- Communication, Education and Awareness Plan developed (**Annex 1**).
- Colouring book for children (**Annex 2**) and Colouring plates for campaign created (**Annex 3**)
- Sergio Lima (environmental education consultant) conducted environmental education workshops which reached 189 adult participants in the communities of Thayapaya, Inca Corral, Rancho Pampa, Calahuta, Julo Grande
- Sergio Lima completed environmental education workshops at 10 schools which reached 1,258 children, and completed workshops for school teachers which reached 70 teachers including the district director for education who is responsible for all teaching materials (**Annex 4**)
- For these environmental education workshops, a Red-fronted Macaw custom was made, which turned out to be a big hit during the workshops at the schools (**Fig. 3 – Annex 5**).
- The filming of chapter 3 (4-chapter miniseries) was completed and we are working on post-production
- From April to September multiple interviews were conducted with the project team (**Annex 6**). Very noteworthy, Guido Saldaña (Armonía's Red-fronted Macaw Program Coordinator) was named Eco Hero by the Spanish DW Channel. This was shared on the DW Spanish news channel and on their YouTube channel in Germany: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2veayfNHLw>
- As part of the "We Want Them Free" campaign, we participated in the International Book Fair in La Paz at the UK Embassy stand which included a special dance performance conducted by our "We Want Them Free" campaign dancer (**Fig 4. Annex 5**)
- We showed chapter 1 and 2 of the miniseries and Guido Saldaña presented the IWT project activities at the UK embassy stand (Book Fair)

○ **Tourism**

Armonía completed the birdwatching tourism development. We created 2 birdwatching trails to observe Red-fronted Macaws in Julo Grande and Matanseria (known as Jala Jala), in close collaboration with the local communities. To attract people to visit Julo Grande we placed a large Red-fronted Macaw sculpture with the purpose for people to take a (selfie) picture and learn about the conservation needs for the Red-fronted Macaw. We selected the Julo Grande community as this site showed the highest incidents of Red-fronted Macaw trapping before the project started. The relationship with this community has improved significantly over the last 6-months with the implementation of all the tourism actions in this community. This sculpture is located near the main road and will receive educational signage. It is important to highlight that this work was carried out in close collaboration and approval of the communities. Signage will be placed in November.

The following progress was made:

- Construction of Julo Grande and the Matanseria birdwatching trail completed (**Annex 7**)
- First drafts of birdwatching trail and information signs have been developed (**Annex 8**)
- Red-fronted Macaw sculpture was installed at the Julo Grande community (**Fig. 5 & 6 - Annex 5**).
- Construction of a roofed bird observation point along Matanseria trail completed (**Fig. 7 - Annex 5**).
- Armonia completed the Community Tourism Workshops which resulted in the development of a Tourism Regulation Guide for the communities of Julo Grande and Matanseria (**Annex 9**).

○ **Beekeeping and Eco-friendly Agriculture**

The eco-friendly agriculture (macaw friendly food production) and beekeeping program is well advanced. A total of 131 families received either beekeeping equipment or plants and trees for their agroforestry plots. These families received a multitude of training to implement best practices management techniques. The eco-friendly agriculture beneficiaries received training in pest control and Agroforestry best practices. The installation of both the beekeeping, the experimental agroforestry plots and pest control plots for papaya and lemon trees were completed. All the necessary equipment for monitoring and maintenance of the beehives was delivered. We do provide additional training to the beekeeping beneficiaries to keep the bees alive as we are struggling with a severe drought plaguing all of Bolivia.

The following progress was made:

- All beekeeping and eco-agriculture products have been delivered to 131 families (see annual report)
- Multiple trainings and workshops were completed to demonstrate best practices production techniques.
- Armonia will adapt the beekeeping Market Strategy which was developed by the Ministry of Development in 2021 to be a short and applicable document that will benefit the beekeeping families within the project area.

- Monthly monitoring of the bee hives is currently being carried out by our beekeeping consultant. We are in a critical phase as a severe drought is affecting the entire region. Communities in the Caine region declared an emergency situation (**Fig. 8 – Annex 5**).
- Armonia developed a study to find Red-fronted Macaw friendly and ecological deterrents to halt the Human-Macaw conflict. Local examples were studied and international solutions were analysed (**Annex 10**). Different macaw friendly deterrents are currently tested in the field.

- **Improved Protection**

Armonia delivered all monitoring equipment to the Toro Toro National Park and is actively used by the local park rangers. Armonia conducted the first Red-fronted Macaw monitoring workshops demonstrating the cell phone application KoboCollect. The Park Rangers are trained to implement this monitoring tool which will generate a Red-fronted Macaw database for both the National Park and Armonia. We also reached out to the national “Forestry and Environmental Protection Police” (POFOMA), who is responsible for combating illegal wildlife trafficking across Bolivia. We aim to develop protocols that guide the actions against traffickers.

The following progress was made:

- First meeting was organized with the Forestry and Environmental Protection Police (POFOMA) in La Paz to develop strategies to capture wildlife traffickers and to create a bird trafficking database.
- The KoboCollect monitoring workshops were completed with the participation of 8 Toro Toro Park Rangers as well as our field consultant Wilder Calahuma who is a member of the Matanseria community (**Fig. 9 – Annex 5**).
- The Red-fronted Macaw monitoring forms were completed and uploaded to the KoboCollect application with access to all Toro Toro Park Rangers (**Annex 11**).

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.

Apart from the extreme drought throughout the project area, we have not experienced significant struggles affecting the project. Due to the severe drought, we are witnessing a delayed production of honey and other crops from our beneficiary families.

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:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance	No
Change request reference if known:	No

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): NO

4c. N/A

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

An important aspect of this project is to increase community income through the implementation of beekeeping and ecofriendly agricultural actions. All beneficiaries already received either beekeeping material, plants and training. The food production on the other hand goes slower than expected due to a severe drought that affects all of Bolivia. According to the communities and local experts, yield should be measured after the rainy season in May-June 2024. This is beyond the original end date of the project. Therefore, we would like to request a 6-month extension in order to be able to evaluate the economic changes this project has made on local communities. This is in line with the recommendations provided in the 2023 annual report review (recommendation #5). An official change request was sent in October 2023. Awaiting reply.