

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

Note: If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2022

Project reference	IWT 104
Project title	Enhancing enforcement to reduce tiger trafficking in the Mekong
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Thailand, Lao PDR, Vietnam, China, Myanmar, China
Lead partner	Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)
Partner(s)	Education for Nature Vietnam (ENV), Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT)
Project leader	Debbie Banks, EIA
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 st October 2022, HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	<p>EIA does not have separate websites or social media accounts for individual projects as yet, but will seek to update this multi-media page for the purposes of the project going forward https://reports.eia-international.org/tiger-trade-trail/</p> <p>Otherwise, EIA's main website and social media accounts are as follows:</p> <p>https://eia-international.org/</p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/environmentalinvestigationagency</p> <p>https://mobile.twitter.com/EIA_News</p> <p>https://www.linkedin.com/company/environmental-investigation-agency/</p> <p>https://www.instagram.com/eia_news/?hl=en</p>

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

Under Output 1, all project partners have continued to maintain the multiple databases on an ongoing basis (crime incidents, captive tiger facilities and status, price database and tiger stripe database). EIA, WFFT and ENV have all made significant progress with field work to document regional tiger trade, including in parts and derivatives of captive tigers. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] EIA and WFFT's desk and field research has generated information on new persons of interest (POI) based in Thailand who are part of networks moving wild tiger parts from Indonesia and Malaysia into Thailand, with onward distribution along Myanmar – China and Laos – China routes, and moving live tiger cubs from Thai farms to stock Laos tiger farms. These POI are also trafficking pangolin scales, rhino horn, ivory, and tokay gecko. Some of the POI identified are in business with the criminal enterprises running tiger farms in Laos. This information will be further corroborated during field research in Y2 Q3. In addition to briefing law enforcement, this information will form part of the briefing we will provide to the CITES Secretariat and other ICCWC members ahead of CITES tiger missions, which are now scheduled for Thailand, Laos and Viet Nam in January 2023. Other ongoing activity under Output 1 has continued i.e. preparation of intelligence reports and analyses to law enforcement.

Linked to earlier work by EIA and partners to document transnational IWT trade networks operating in the Mekong, information had been provided to US Fish and Wildlife Service regarding [Teo Boon Ching](#) and associates. Ching was recently arrested in Thailand and [extradited to the US](#) to face criminal charges for his role in IWT. Information on senior figures who commissioned the services of Ching for the importation of illegal wildlife from Africa, includes POI involved in tiger farming in the region, and EIA and partners have continued to forward new information during this reporting period on Ching's network.

Under Output 2, EIA had an initial meeting with the Viet Nam Financial Intelligence Unit (FIUs), opening up a channel for communication to share relevant information. We are currently preparing briefings regarding POI using Vietnamese bank accounts to receive payments for tiger parts and products and other IWT. We produced a second typology or case study on the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone and the US-blacklisted Kings Romans organised crime group (OCG) in Laos. We have profiled affiliated businesses and POI involved in building a port at the GTSEZ and the international banks that are exposed to risk for their connections to LaoViet Bank, which is financing the Kings Roman OCG's expansion project. The United for Wildlife (UfW) Finance Task Force hosted a webinar for EIA to present the case study to Asia Pacific members. More detailed information has been requested by a number of the regional banks following the webinar. We have also maintained ongoing activity to provide reports to Know Your Customer databases (e.g. Thomson Reuters), regarding arrested and convicted wildlife traders.

Under Output 3, relevant transport sector information from field research to date is being extracted to update a regional tiger trade typology and will be finalised following upcoming field work in Q3.

Under Output 4, in relation to the upcoming 75th CITES Standing Committee and the 19th Conference of the Parties, we have prepared a [briefing on key issues at CoP](#) and are in the process of preparing briefings for SC75 and for two side events on tigers and other big cats, which will be hosted in partnership with WWF and 4PAWS International. Project partners WFFT will also be in attendance for part of CoP so that we can collectively brief the Secretariat ahead of tiger missions to the project countries. Through collaboration with [UNODC via the SAFE project](#), WFFT hosted delegations from the governments of Laos, Viet Nam and Thailand at their wildlife rescue centre to share a good practice example of running a sanctuary where there is no breeding, buying, selling or handling of tigers. It is hoped this opens the door to further discussions to support implementation of CITES recommendations for Laos, under non-compliance procedures, towards phasing out tiger farms.

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.

No notable problems that will impact overall project outputs, but we will review the timetable pending outcome of CITES CoP19 and the field research in Q3.

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

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS: Yes/No

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

Change request reference if known:

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

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

4b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

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

N/A

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), 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.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS-LTS International 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**