

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	IWT104
Project title	Enhancing enforcement to reduce tiger trafficking in the Mekong
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Thailand, Lao PDR, Vietnam, China, Myanmar
Lead partner	Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)
Partner(s)	Education for Nature Vietnam (ENV), Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT)
Project leader	Debbie Banks
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR3
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>

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).

Please note, feedback from our Year 2 Annual report was that we “refer to each partner in the reporting a lot. Please refer to the project for clearer attribution”. In response, we would like to make clear that everything in the report relates to the project and should be attributed as such. We have tried to refer more to ‘the project’ in this report but it’s not always appropriate and would in some cases lose meaning and therefore we have made several specific partner attributions below.

Key project progress under Output 1 in the reporting period:

- EIA field investigations in May 2023 that [REDACTED] shared with law enforcement agencies, with subsequent arrests and prosecution likely for two of the cases. [REDACTED]
- Project partners have collectively filed 49 intelligence reports, produced a further 49 profiles and summaries and submitted 20 intelligence submissions to authorities and other stakeholders.
- ENV issued its Q2 and Q3 (April – September) Wanted Notice to Ministry of Public Security, provincial governments, and police profiling 17 and 21 major online wildlife suppliers, most of which are advertising tiger parts and products, amongst other endangered species.
- EIA's support for the work of the USFWS in countering wildlife trafficking, including our contributions to the operation that led to the conviction of Teo Boon Ching, was acknowledged and the Project Leader was invited to present to the prestigious USFWS-run International Conservation Chiefs Academy for South and Southeast Asia law enforcers.
- A further five captive tiger facilities in Thailand have been identified for risk assessment which WFFT will undertake in the second half of this year.
- Four (out of 20) tiger facilities in Vietnam are 'of concern', keeping 85 tigers in total. Nine tiger farms have been inspected during the reporting period.
- After months of encouragement, one privately owned facility in Vietnam voluntarily transferred all six of their tigers to a rescue centre. The two remaining privately owned facilities, one of which is a facility of concern are currently in the process or in discussions that will result in transfer of their tigers to authorities, or in one case, a licensed public facility.

Key project progress under Output 2 in the reporting period:

- Information generated under the project by EIA was used by the Financial Action Task Force Asia Pacific Group (FATF APG) to highlight the role of criminal enterprises in tiger and other wildlife farming and trade in Laos, and failure of the country to conduct investigations or cooperate with other countries, putting the country at risk of global financial sanctions.

Key project progress under Output 3 in the reporting period:

- EIA are currently finalising a Financial Typology and Red Flags document produced under the project for the finance sector and a briefing for the transport sector.
- ENV provided the profiles and banking information on 18 wildlife suppliers in early April 2023 to the United for Wildlife (UfW) Financial Taskforce.
- ENV sent its 2nd communication to 774 major transportation companies in Vietnam urging owners and company managers to ensure compliance with relevant transportation laws that prohibit transportation of wildlife. The measure is part of ENV's campaign in response to several court cases previously noted above.

Key project progress under Output 4 in the reporting period:

- EIA's analysis of weaknesses in Laos wildlife legislation, including their CITES Decree, formed the basis of international critique, and the CITES Secretariat is finally

recommending CITES trade suspensions on Laos at the upcoming CITES Standing Committee (Geneva, November 2023).

- EIA and partners briefing to the CITES Secretariat on tiger farms, and EIA's participation in the CITES Big Cats Task Force, have contributed to important recommendations that will be put forward at CITES Standing Committee.
- EIA, WWF, 4PAWS, AZA, EAZA and others led the development of a Roadmap for phasing out tiger farms to be presented at the upcoming CITES Standing Committee
- Long-term advocacy has resulted in actions to end consumption and phase out tiger farms being reflected in the KPIs of the [Global Tiger Recovery Program 2.0](#) adopted in July 2023.
- EIA circulated our critique of China's Wildlife Protection Law and will be reconnecting with a network of China-watchers to revise future strategy.
- A preliminary legal analysis of Thai law has been conducted under the project by EIA, and gaps and questions identified for consultation with a Thai legal expert. A briefing will be produced and circulated over the remainder of the project, with distribution via partners and a preliminary briefing to policy makers before project end.
- [REDACTED]
- In August, ENV released [a review of prosecutions in 2022](#) highlighting the progress of the Vietnamese criminal justice system in tackling wildlife crime. The prosecution review is produced annually, and targets members of ENV's 4251-member Criminal Justice System Network, as well as key decision makers provincially and centrally.
- Issue 1, 2023 of ENV's [Wildlife Crime Bulletin](#) was released. The crime bulletin addresses current issues relating to application of the law, provides updates, notices, and alerts on key developments such as a new law, and provides frontline law enforcement officers with recognition for successful operations. The Wildlife Crime Bulletin is distributed in Vietnamese to all relevant government decision-makers, national assembly members, provincial leadership, police, prosecutor, and court systems in all 63 Vietnamese provinces.
- Targeted communication to delegates to the National Assembly from Nghe An Province, was aimed at keeping the tiger trade issue in Nghe An at the front of their mind as ENV continues to work, under the project, with law enforcement to address the Nghe An tiger trafficking hotspot.

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.

There are some imminent project staff changes within WFFT due to be finalised in November. This is likely to impact the timing of some plans and potentially some budget lines. Once we are clear on the impacts, we will submit a change request accordingly.

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

Discussed with NIRAS:	Not yet (due to changes still being finalised)
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Formal Change Request submitted:	Not yet
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Received confirmation of change acceptance	N/a
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Change request reference if known:	
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4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)

Actual spend: £ [REDACTED]

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?

We would like to suggest a review of the deadlines set by NIRAS for the funds you manage, bearing in mind that an organisation may be involved in multiple funding streams. Over the past few weeks, our team within EIA has worked to develop and submit a Darwin Initiative application (deadline October 23rd), a Round 10 IWTCF application (deadline October 30th) and this HYR (deadline October 31st). This is additional to further applications submitted by different EIA teams. This has meant an incredible strain on our team, and our wider colleagues, to meet these extremely closely plotted deadlines. We are conscious that the level of strain could be make or break in terms of being able to access BCF funds for smaller, local partner organisations, for example.

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**