

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)

Submission Deadline: 30th April 2023

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IWT Challenge Fund Project Information

Project reference	IWT110
Project title	Combating illegal trade of bears and diversifying livelihoods in Laos
Country/ies	Laos
Lead Partner	Free the Bears
Project partner(s)	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO), Luang Prabang
IWTCF grant value	£355,113
Start/end dates of project	01/07/2022 – 31/03/2025
Reporting period (e.g. April 2022-Mar 2023) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	July 2022 – March 2023 Annual Report 1
Project Leader name	Brian Crudge
Project website/blog/social media	https://freethebears.org/ https://www.facebook.com/freethebearsfund https://twitter.com/freethebears
Report author(s) and date	Brian Crudge, 25 ^h April 2023

1. Project summary

The placement of confiscated wildlife remains a major obstacle to effective law enforcement in Laos. By rapidly increasing capacity to house confiscated bears, this project will enable responsible government agencies to effectively implement legal deterrents in order to end the trafficking of bears in Laos and help maintain the ecological intactness of forest ecosystems. Additionally, we will demonstrate the role that well-run wildlife sanctuaries can play in poverty reduction through the creation of diverse livelihood and educational opportunities.

Laos is a major source and transit point for IWT. Asiatic black bears and sun bears are highly sought-after for use in Traditional Medicines and to replenish stocks on bile farms domestically and internationally. Both species are CITES Appendix 1. Despite legal protection, populations are declining, with illegal hunting and trade recognised as the most immediate threats. Without adequate infrastructure for placement of animals, there is low political will to enforce existing laws which, as a result, fail to act as effective deterrents to IWT.

Working in partnership with the Lao government since 2003, Free the Bears established a dedicated bear rescue centre and, since 2017, has been developing Laos' first official government-owned wildlife sanctuary in order to help combat IWT. Free the Bears has helped in the placement of 119 confiscated bears, the majority of which have been seized since 2017. This has effectively stemmed to flow of bear cubs into illegal bile farms (where captive breeding does not occur) and has prevented growth of bear bile farming in Laos. However, development of facilities in which to place bears has struggled to keep pace with confiscation rates. Without ample sanctuary facilities available, political will for law enforcement agencies to close illegal bear bile farms containing large numbers of live bears may be lacking and advocating for increased effort is challenging. This project will strengthen wildlife law enforcement and ensure effective legal deterrents in Laos by rapidly increasing capacity to provide immediate short-term housing for confiscated bears such that Lao authorities can be further encouraged and have the ability to confiscate bears from bile farms whilst continuing to prevent further bears from entering farms through effective investigation and rapid interdiction.

This project is focused on Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary, 17 km from Luang Prabang City, and the six villages closest to the sanctuary, which are all adjoining or within Protection Forest. Livelihood options are limited in this area and, as such, the sanctuary is an important and secure source of income and a resource for the communities. Development and operation of the Wildlife Sanctuary benefits the local communities through direct and indirect livelihood opportunities, supporting a holistic approach which demonstrates how wildlife conservation actions combined with sustainable wildlife tourism have the potential to contribute significantly to the development of the region. Development of the sanctuary will provide livelihood opportunities for at least the next 30 years through the provision of life-long care to bears and associated requirements for skilled labour and opportunities for tourism.



2. Project stakeholders/ partners

Free the Bears has been collaborating with government partners in Southeast Asia to provide world-class facilities for the placement of bears confiscated from illegal trade since 1997. While several models of wildlife rescue center and sanctuary management exist, all Free the Bears-supported facilities are specifically owned by local and national government partners to ensure commitment to long-term success. Free the Bears' main project partner in Laos is the Luang Prabang Provincial Department of Agriculture and Forestry (PAFO). Under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, PAFO is mandated to manage, protect and conserve the country's natural resources, including wildlife, within Luang Prabang Province for the present and future generations. The Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary, which is the focus of the proposed project, is owned by PAFO and receives financial and technical support from Free the Bears. PAFO representatives sit on the Project Management Committee (PMC) of Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary along with representatives from the Governor's Office, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Forestry Inspection and the Department of Planning and Cooperation. Over the past year, the PMC has conducted site visits to the sanctuary and held a PMC meeting on 14 February 2023. See Annex 4.1 for PAFO project report 2022-23.

The Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary is an important flagship project for both PAFO and MAF, being Laos' first and only government-owned multi-species wildlife rescue facility and frequently hosts capacity building workshops and visits from high-ranking officials. For this project, PAFO is responsible for ensuring the legal transfer of confiscated wildlife from the point of interdiction to the sanctuary and, for certain suitable individuals following rehabilitation, release back to appropriate protected habitat in Laos.

For the current project, PAFO were also involved in the household surveys (Activity 3.5), facilitating approval from relevant village chiefs and conducting the surveys. Technical specialists from the Community Engagement Division of San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance (long-term collaborators of Free the Bears), including an expert in social equity of conservation projects, contributed to the design of the household surveys and have committed to assisting with data analysing and reporting in 2023.

Other stakeholders of the project include the 15.7 Working Group – a collection of representatives from organisations working on illegal wildlife trade in Laos as well as UK, EU and US embassy partners. Through this Working Group, members were invited by the Department of Forestry to review and comment on a draft revision of Laos' Wildlife and Aquatic Law in order to strengthen species protection under the law. Among the usual Working Group participants, the October 2022 meeting was attended by Ivonne Higuero, CITES Secretary General, and Sofie Hermann Flensburg, CITES Secretariat. This was an opportunity for Free the Bears to raise the ongoing issue of illegal bear farms in Laos and advocate for CITES to apply pressure on the government of Laos to address this issue.

The British Embassy in Laos has been included in this project from the outset. In July 2022, Cashel Gleeson, then Chargé d'affaires of the UK Embassy in Laos, met online with Free the Bears representatives to discuss this Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund project, as well as the potential to host at stakeholder meeting in Vientiane to discuss roadblocks to bear bile farm closures in Laos. On 23rd September, British Ambassador to Laos, John Pearson, and Policy & Projects Support Officer, Payolin Razmouny, visited Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary see the facilities and get an update on the IWTCF project. In December, at the Luang Prabang Film Festival, the British Embassy and Free the Bears co-hosted a screening of the BBC docuseries 'Bears About the House', which is centred around the development of the sanctuary and wildlife conservation in Laos, which was followed by a Q&A session on IWT issues in Laos for members of the public and invited government partners. Subsequent to this event, representatives from the UK and US embassy conducted a site visit to the sanctuary in order to learn more about progress being made and challenges remaining.

Finally, in January 2023, the UK Ambassador and Deputy Head of Mission, Cashel Gleeson, were present to witness Free the Bears take possession of two Asiatic black bear cubs that had been handed over voluntarily from a private owner in Vientiane Capital. This occasion was used to raise awareness of the support provided by the UK government to this work in Laos, as well as publicise the number for the Wildlife Crime Hotline for a national audience, being shared on the embassy "UK in Laos" Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=564750719031914&set=pcb.564750799031906> and covered by local media [UK Ambassador to Laos Witnesses Handover of Two Moon Bear Cubs - Laotian Times](#)

Additionally, long-term partners of Free the Bears, The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS), which operates Edinburgh Zoo and the Highland Wildlife Park, sent their blacksmith, Rab Clark, to Luang Prabang for a three-week work placement in February to assist with the design and fabrication of prototype transport crates. Rab also assisted with the temporary holding pens designed by UK-based Building Trust International (BTi) who have worked with Free the Bears on sanctuary developments across the region.

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

Activities under Output 1 (Increased capacity to house confiscated bears at the Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary), have progressed well: Activity 1.1 Design of temporary modular holding pens was achieved ahead of schedule by Y1Q2; Activity 1.2 Fabrication of temporary holding pens, with a target of +5 by Y1Q4, while not achieved is reasonably on track overall with +8 holding pens approximately 80% complete by Y1Q4, with the final 20% delayed due to supply chain issues; and Activity 1.3 Animal keeper recruitment and training, +2 by Y1Q4, achieved with two new keepers hired in Q2 and passed the training period in Q3.

Activities under Output 2 (Increase in confiscation rates for bears and other protected wildlife throughout Laos), have progressed moderately. Activity 2.1 Procurement of dedicated rescue vehicle taking place as planned by Y1Q2, and modifications ongoing into Q4.

Activity 2.2 Build capacity of government agencies in short-term handling and care of wildlife, through month-long on-site training of at least 20 officers in Y1 and Y2 has not taken place as intended due to delays in completing the necessary on-site accommodation. Lack of available accommodation on-site at Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary prevented Free the Bears from hosting government officers during planned work placements. The large number of bears confiscated from the illegal wildlife trade and placed in care at the wildlife sanctuary during 2021 and 2022 necessitated prioritising construction of permanent housing for bears, over that of on-site accommodation. The accommodation is due to be complete in May 2023 and a change request submitted in December 2022 was approved for the work placements to take place in Years 2 and 3 of this project, rather than Years 1 and 2. Meanwhile, materials have been prepared for a training workshop delivered to veterinary students from the National University of Laos in March 2023 in collaboration between Free the Bears, Lao Conservation Trust for Wildlife and the Elephant Conservation Centre. Some of these materials will be adapted for use during the government officer work placements. This activity under Output 2 currently does not have an adequate indicator. The logframe should be updated to include a IWTCF Standard Indicator for this activity.

Activity 2.3 Fabricate bear-safe transportation crates and distribute to 6 of 18 provinces by Y1Q4 is partially complete with 6 new transport crates fabricated following a design conceived by the visiting blacksmith from the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland. Transport crates will be delivered to the provinces following the work placements or opportunistically during rescue missions in Year 2.

Activity 2.4 Assist government agencies in the transportation and placement of confiscated of bears and other protected species, has continued throughout Year 1 of the project, which commenced 1st July 2022. Between July 2022 and March 2023, a total of 7 Asiatic black bears and 1 sun bear was transfer to care at Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary, bringing the total number of bears rescued by Free the Bears in Laos to 119, with more bears currently in our care than in bile farms in Laos. Ten individuals of 9 other species were also rescued during this period, including one Critically Endangered Sunda Pangolin. See Annex 4.2 for arrivals report.

Activities under Output 3, Reduce poverty in local communities adjacent to Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary, for Year 1 of the project, have progressed well. Activity 3.2 Sign agreements with households to grow produce (fruit, veg, rice) for the sanctuary, +30 by Y1Q4, was

completed in full. For the coming year it was agreed with households that we will purchase 7 produce types from 30 families.

Activity 3.3 Handicraft workshops, twice per year, attended by at least 15 households from the local communities, with at least 50% female participants, was completed in Q4. Rather than traditional handicrafts that might be sold at the tourist market, it was decided to use the weaving skills of the local community members to produce bespoke hammocks for rescued bears which are required on an ongoing basis and could be paid for directly by the sanctuary.

Activity 3.4 Agreements made with 4 villages to assist in transporting produce to market, was completed in Q4 following modification of the rescue vehicle.

Activity 3.5 Conduct follow-up and endline socioeconomic surveys in (at least) 300 households completed by Q4, slightly behind schedule but surpassing the target of 300. In total, 397 interviews were conducted out of a possible 596 households available in the participating communities. These surveys follow-on from surveys conducted in 2017; however, the survey instrument was changed significantly to improve sections on indicators of wellbeing. This was an iterative process between Free the Bears and collaborators San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance (SDZWA) through which ethical approval was also secured. Four female staff from Luang Prabang Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office were trained in collection of socioeconomic data, tested the survey instrument in the communities and provided feedback for the final design. Data will be digitised and analysed during Year 2 of the project with endline surveys conducted in Year 3.

3.2 Progress towards project Outputs

Output 1. Increased capacity to house confiscated bears at the Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary.

1.1 300% increase in capacity to provide immediate short-term housing for confiscated bears, from 10 adult bears in 2021, to 30 by end of year 2, and to 40 by the end of year 3. Temporary holding pens are 80% complete and we are currently on track to increase capacity to 18 by Y2Q1 and to 30 by Y2Q4. Capacity is documented in bi-annual Welfare Audits. This increase will be recorded in October 2023.

1.2 Increase animal keeper staff from 9 male, 3 female in 2020, to 9 male, 4 females by Y1Q4, 9 male, 5 females by Y2Q4, and 10 male, 6 females by Y3Q4. Ahead of schedule. As of Y1Q2 Free the Bears employs 10 male and 5 female keepers at Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary.

Output 2. Increase in confiscation rates for bears and other protected wildlife throughout Laos.

2.1 Proportion of reported bear trade cases resulting in confiscation/hand-over increases from <30% in 2019 to >50% by the end of year 2, and >60% by the end of year 3. No targets set for Year 1 of this project. In Year 2, data on reported cases in 2022/2023 will be compiled and compared to actual number of bears confiscated.

2.2 Proportion of reported protected wildlife trade cases resulting in confiscation/handover increases from >30% in 2019 to >40% by the end of year 2, and >50% by the end of year 3. No targets set for Year 1 of this project. In Year 2, data on reported cases in 2022/2023 will be compiled and compared to actual number of wildlife confiscated.

2.3 Bear-safe transportation crates distributed to 6 of 18 provinces/prefecture by Y1Q4. Behind schedule but on track to be completed in Year 2. Six transport crates have been fabricated and are ready for distribution following Activity 2.4.

Output 3. Reduce poverty in local communities adjacent to Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary.

3.1 At least 50% of project annual budget expended within 10km of the sanctuary, and at least 80% with 20km. On track. During Year 1 of this project (July '22 – March '23), 18% of total project expenditure was within 10km of the sanctuary and 95% was within 20km of the sanctuary. Much of this is locally-grown produce and labour from communities within the

immediate vicinity of the sanctuary, contributing greatly to the local economy. Of the IWT110 grant, 3% was expended within 10km and 91% within 20km of the sanctuary.

3.2 Number of full-time employment opportunities for local community members receiving payment for labour increases from 31 (85% male) in 2022 to 40 (80% male) by the end of Year 2. As with Outcome indicate 0.3 below, a review of internal accounting processes will take place in Y2Q1 to assess effectiveness of tracking this data. A challenge is that many of the community members do not have personal identification numbers which would facilitate aggregation of payments to individuals. Appropriate steps will be taken in Year 2 to address this issue.

3.3 Number of local households with contracts to grow produce (fruit, veg, rice) for the sanctuary increases from 50 in 2022 to 70 by the end of year 2. Ahead of schedule. Agreements were signed with an additional 30 households Year 1, bringing the total number of households with formal agreements to 80 by the end of Year 1. See Annex 4.3. Further agreements will be signed based on the needs of the sanctuary and capacity of producers.

3.4 Number of local households deriving income from the production of handicrafts for sale at the sanctuary and associated locations/events increases from 12 in 2020 to 30 by the end of Year 2. We held two handicraft workshops in Year 1 of this project, with a total of 32 female and 3 male beneficiaries from the 6 communities closest to the sanctuary. This initiative will be reviewed with the communities in 2023 to formalise the process and achieve targets set for Year 2.

3.5 Number of local households assisted in transporting produce to market increases from 0 per month in 2021, to 16 per month by the end of year 1. This target has not yet been achieved. Towards the end of Year 1, Village Chiefs were preoccupied with widespread wildfires in the surrounding areas and were not available to discuss the equitable distribution of this assistance. To-date, an agreement has been made to assist 6 households in one village to transport produce once per week. Similar agreements will be made with the other villages in Year 2 of the project.

3.6 Relative increase in socioeconomic conditions of participating communities from 2017 baseline, 2022 follow-up and 2025 endline household surveys. On track for assessing this indicator. Household surveys were conducted with 397 individuals during Year 1 of this project. Analysis and comparison with 2017 data will be conducted during Year 2 to provide preliminary findings and the surveys will be repeated in Year 3.

3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

Outcome: Improved capacity to enforce wildlife laws reduces the number of bears being traded and/or held illegally, and the care of confiscated animals provides opportunities for livelihood diversification in local communities.

0.1 Percentage of reported bear trade cases resulting in confiscation/hand-over increases from <30% in 2020 to >50% by the end of year 2, and >60% by the end of Year 3. The number of bears confiscated in Laos increased from 6 in 2020, to 12 in 2021 and 14 in 2022. Free the Bears continues to follow-up with the responsible agencies on reports of bear trade. No targets set for Year 1 of this project. In Year 2, data on reported cases in 2022/2023 will be compiled and compared to actual number of bears confiscated.

0.2 Number of bears in bile farms in Laos decreases from ca. 100 in 2021, to 80 by end of year 2, and less than 50 by the end of year 3. As the number of bears trade cases intercepted increases, the number of bears on bile farms decreases. Unofficial reports indicate that the number of bears on bile farms at the end of Year 1 of this project has decreased to fewer than 80 individuals. Free the Bears is in discussion with the relevant government agencies to obtain the latest official numbers.

0.3 Number of households deriving at least the equivalent of minimum wage from the sanctuary increases from 59 in 2020, to at least 120 by the end of year 2, and 160 by the end of year 3. Measures such as formalised producer agreements were put in place in Year 1 of this project

which will facilitate verification of this indicator. A review of internal accounting processes will take place in Y2Q1 to assess effectiveness of tracking this data.

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Outcome assumptions:

Outcome level assumptions still hold true, as far as can be determined at this stage of the project.

Output assumptions:

Assumption 1.1 Required material and labour can be sourced locally and in a timely manner such that deadlines are met.

Comments: This assumption was not met. There have been difficulties sourcing some materials locally. The quality and quantity of steel available was not enough which meant that it had to be ordered from abroad. To address this, for Year 2 of the project we have requested all funds for materials to be transferred in the first quarter to allow us to purchase a bulk order and have materials ready at hand when needed for the remainder of the year. This will allow the outputs to be delivered on schedule.

Further, the availability of local, trusted and affordable construction workers is limited. This delayed completion of some infrastructure at the sanctuary which resulted in Activity 2.2 being postponed from Year 1 & 2, to Year 2 & 3. This was approved by a Change Request. The overall effect of this is not expected to impact project Outcome.

All other assumptions hold true for Year 1 of the project.

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

Impact: Reduction in number of bears traded and held in bile farms in Laos, and demonstrable poverty reduction stemming from opportunities created through proper placement of confiscated wildlife.

The first bear bile farm was established in Laos in 2000. The number of bile farm bears peaked in ~ 2012 with a total of 120 bears. Since there is no evidence of breeding on so-called farms, it is suspected that all farms are founded and restocked with wild-caught bears. Since 2012, Free the Bears have worked with the government of Laos to place 93 confiscated bears, effectively stemming the flow of bears from the wild into farms. Unofficial reports indicate that there are now fewer than 80 bears remaining on farms in Laos. Government-owned sanctuaries managed by Free the Bears now house over 100 bears which would have otherwise remained in the illegal wildlife trade network.

Through this project, Free the Bears and partners can have higher-level impacts on illegal wildlife trade through advocacy and collaboration with stakeholders, as described in Section 2 above.

Although the human development and wellbeing impact of this project is difficult to measure at this early stage, data has been collected from the participating communities with the view to determine the number of households that perceive receiving benefits from the sanctuary and measure impact in terms of material and subjective wellbeing. The project actively supports crop diversification by serving as a local demand for an array of produce.

With expenditure of 550,000 USD within 20km of the project site within the first nine months of this project, the development and operation of the sanctuary makes a considerable contribution to the local economy. As the project progresses, we intend to quantify the portion benefiting communities through direct employment and sale of goods or services. In quantifying such benefits, the aim is to demonstrate that sustainable wildlife tourism has the potential to contribute significantly to the development of the region. This will further encourage authorities to shut all bear farms and combat the unsustainable and disreputable illegal wildlife trade in Laos and the region.

4. Thematic focus

This project is focused on:

2. Ensuring effective legal frameworks and deterrents
3. Strengthening law enforcement

Having adequate infrastructure for the placement of confiscated live animals enables the responsible agencies to enforce existing laws which can act as effective deterrents to illegal wildlife trade. Capacity building and advocacy will increase in Year 2 and 3 of this project to support political will and resources in effective implementation of legal frameworks and deterrents to IWT. Throughout the project, project staff will facilitate the flow of information between partners, in particular to investigate and interdict cases of trade in live bears which could otherwise be used to re-stock bear bile farms.

5. Impact on species in focus

This project is focussed on Asiatic black bears (*Ursus thibetanus*) and sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*), as well as other trade-threatened species such as Pangolin (*Manis sp*). A total of 7 Asiatic black bears and 1 sun bear was transfer to care at Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary, bringing the total number of bears rescued by Free the Bears in Laos to 119. Ten individuals of 9 other species were also rescued during this period, including one Critically Endangered Sunda Pangolin. The pangolin will be release at a suitable time in a protected area. Two Asiatic black bears that were confiscated in May 2022, prior to the current project, entered into a pilot release programme intended to allow confiscated animals to be eventually released to protected forest where they can fulfil their ecological role, helping to maintain healthy forest ecosystems and providing an alternative to life-long care for bears rescued from IWT.

6. Project support to poverty reduction

This project is focused on Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary, 17 km from Luang Prabang City, and the expected beneficiaries are the six villages closest to the sanctuary, which are all adjoining or within Protection Forest, have limited livelihood options and, as such, the sanctuary is an important and secure source of income and a resource for the communities. Development and operation of the Wildlife Sanctuary will benefit the local communities through direct and indirect livelihood opportunities and will demonstrate that sustainable wildlife tourism has the potential to contribute significantly to the development of the region. With expenditure of 550,000 USD within 20km of the project site within the first nine months of this project, the development and operation of the sanctuary makes a considerable contribution to the local economy.

In Year 1, project partners, Luang Prabang Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office, conducted 397 interviews with members of households in the six focal communities to determine the number of households that perceive receiving benefits from the sanctuary and to determine the scale of the impact of this project in terms material and subjective wellbeing, and awareness about the value of wildlife.

7. Gender equality and social inclusion

Please quantify the proportion of women on the Project Board ¹ .	(data currently not available)
Please quantify the proportion of project partners that are led by women, or which have a senior leadership team consisting of at least 50% women ² .	(data currently not available)

¹ A Project Board has overall authority for the project, is accountable for its success or failure, and supports the senior project manager to successfully deliver the project.

² Partners that have formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

Annual monitoring and evaluation of this project is conducted by the Project Management Committee which is overseen by project partners, Luang Prabang Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office. PAFO representatives sit on the Project Management Committee (PMC) of Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary along with representatives from the Governor's Office, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Forestry Inspection and the Department of Planning and Cooperation. Over the past year, the PMC has conducted site visits to the sanctuary and held a PMC meeting on 14 February 2023.

The Project Lead will be responsible for M&E of this project, with the assistance of Free the Bears Laos Programme Manager. Progress towards delivering the outputs of this project is assessed on an ongoing basis during Free the Bears Laos Programme monthly meetings, and in monthly reports, as well as biannual internal Welfare Audits which details the percent occupancy of total housing capacity for each sanctuary.

Free the Bears maintains a secure Animal Records Database and Monthly Reports for each country programme which clearly details the size of the current animal population, including and arrivals, transfers and deaths. Department of Forest Inspection are responsible for conducting annual audits of captive prohibition category wildlife. However, obtaining official numbers of bears kept in other facilities throughout Laos is not easily possible at regular intervals. During Year 2 of the project, we will discuss this issue with project partners and other stakeholders to identify a solution.

At the outset of the project, new systems were introduced to track the proximity of expenditure to the sanctuary and surrounding communities. During Year 2 of this project, as mentioned in Section 3, systems will be put in place to track payments to individuals benefiting directly from the sanctuary such that we can better monitor and evaluate this.

Risks to the delivery of the project will be reviewed regularly using the risk register, with risks and mitigation measures updated and adapted as required. Annual and Half Year progress reports and a Final Project report complying with IWT CF requirements will be submitted by Free the Bears for review. These reports will provide robust reporting against the intended objectives and outputs indicators detailed in the logframe. A complete audit will be conducted in the final year of the project and submitted to IWTCF.

9. Lessons learnt

As mentioned in Section 3.2, there have been difficulties sourcing some materials locally. The quality and quantity of steel available was not enough which meant that it had to be ordered from abroad. To address this, we will make a bulk order to have materials ready at hand when needed.

Through this project - through press coverage and official government visits to the sanctuary - we have been able to demonstrate the significant support provided by the UK Government towards addressing the illegal wildlife trade in Laos. It is hoped that this support can be leveraged in Year 2 of the project to advocate strongly for the immediate closure of all bear bile farms in Laos.

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

The grant acceptance letter highlighted a number of points for consideration here:

Comment: While the main focus of this project is on providing accommodation for seized bears, there is little in the way of strategies to reduce demand, or to prevent others from setting up bile facilities and poaching bears. Please reflect on this in future reporting.

Response: Although demand reduction activities are not included in this specific IWTCF project, they are included in Free the Bears' strategic plan within the region. Together with project partners, in Cambodia we have conducted the largest consumer research effort in the region to understand drivers of demand for a wildlife produce (in our case, bear bile/gallbladder). This research was used to inform the design of a behaviour change intervention which is currently being implemented on a small scale and its impact will be

evaluated following a Before-After Control-Impact (BACI) design before potentially being implemented at a larger scale. We have also conducted research in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam to understand motivations of hunters and potential intervention strategies beyond law enforcement that may reduce hunting of bears and other species. However, there are opportunities within this project to raise awareness of the law, e.g. when bears are confiscated from traders.

Preventing others from setting up bile farms is central to Free the Bears efforts in Laos and to the impact of this project. This has been the focus of our work in Laos since we began working with the Government of Laos in 2003. Essentially, we aim to achieve this by cutting of the supply of bear cubs with could be used to stock new farms and continuing to advocate for phasing-out of bear bile farming with the relevant government agencies.

Comment: There is an articulation of gender inclusion, however this could be strengthened further through considering leadership roles for female beneficiaries.

Response: Leadership roles of female beneficiaries will be given further consideration as the project progresses. In particular, female representation during community meetings will be evaluated.

Comment: The community benefits appear to be logical, but it was not clear whether there was an existing market for handicrafts.

Response: There is a potential market. The borders of Laos reopened to international visitors in May 2022 follow prolonged COVID-lockdown. Tourist numbers started to pick-up in October. Given the slight uncertainty regarding the level of demand for handicrafts, it was decided in Year 1 to use handicraft skills to produce hand-woven hammocks for the bears, thereby creating a market directly at the sanctuary and addressing a supply-shortage that had created a demand due to COVID border closures. This strategy will be reviewed in Year 2 in consultation with the participating communities.

Comment: Growing food for the bears and tourism are other examples of social and economic opportunities, however additional detail on these activities would have been beneficial (for example, what do the bears eat that can be grown, and how much of it).

Response: This information was not readily available at the application stage. In order to sign agreements to grow produce, we first reviewed the variety and quantity of food items eaten by the bears. The Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office then met with local communities to discuss which types of produce can be grown locally. This has required some diversification of crops on the part of the local villages which has meant some delays in production but will lead to greater benefits long-term for the communities.

Comment: Evidence of support from relevant law enforcement agencies through the provision of letters of support would have strengthened the proposal further.

Response: A letter of support was provided by the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO). The Department of Forestry Inspection (DOFI) is responsible for wildlife law enforcement under the direct supervision of PAFO at the provincial level.

Comment: Please revise your logframe to ensure that the target numbers outlined in the proposal narrative align with those in the logframe, and that logframe indicators clearly align to each other (consider indicators 0.3, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5).

Response: This will be discussed with the BCF team to determine whether a Change Request is required.

11. Risk Management

One unanticipated risk emerged in the past year. The risk register has been updated accordingly. A privately-owned facility near Vientiane which takes in some confiscated wildlife currently houses 2 sun bears and 23 Asiatic black bears. In January 2023 it was learned that the facility will have to move off the land that it is currently on, will have to relocate the facility, and may not have the capacity to continue housing bears. As the only other organisation in Laos with the capacity to care for this large number of bears, it is possible that the bears may

be transferred to a Free the Bears facility (Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary or Tat Kuang Si Bear Rescue Centre). As well as requiring significant additional resources, this influx of bears would limit the space available for newly confiscated bears. This issue remains under investigation to reach a manageable resolution.

12. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

Nothing additional to report.

13. Sustainability and legacy

Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary is an important flagship project for both PAFO and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, being Laos' first and only government-owned multi-species wildlife rescue facility. The sanctuary frequently hosts capacity building workshops and visits from high-ranking officials. In March, for example, the sanctuary was visited by Vientiane Department of Forestry, Head of the CITES Management Authority, and nine representatives from Thailand's Department of National Parks to learn how the sanctuary supports effective wildlife law enforcement.

In March 2023, Free the Bears hosted a site inspection visit by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries with a view to establishing global accreditation standards for the sanctuary which will further differentiate this model from commercial wildlife facilities in Laos and provided a platform with which to advocated for minimum standards legally required to house captive wildlife.

During Year 1, in order to create a greater connection with the Lao audience, both government and public, Free the Bears had BBC mini-series 'Bears About the House' dubbed into Lao language. This series focuses on the work of Free the Bears and government partners in Luang Prabang to tackle illegal wildlife trade. A screening of this documentary was co-hosted by Free the Bears and the British Embassy in Laos during the Luang Prabang Film Festival.

Tat Kuang Si Bear Rescue Centre, also managed by Free the Bears, typically welcomes over 300,000 local and international visitors each year. This provides an important opportunity for raising awareness about the project.

Vientiane Diplomatic Corp due to visit in May 2023 hosted by the British Embassy.

14. IWT Challenge Fund identity

At the launch of this project, Free the Bears worked with Defra's press office to provide content for the press release announcing this round's projects:

[Bears, chimpanzees and pangolins to be better protected after new funding boost for world's most endangered animals – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bears-chimpanzees-and-pangolins-to-be-better-protected-after-new-funding-boost-for-worlds-most-endangered-animals)

The UK Government's contribution to this project has been recognised on local and social media as well as at public events such as screenings of the BBCs Bears About the House mini-series at the Luang Prabang Film Festival.

Free the Bears is active on Facebook with over 100,000 followers. The first bear rescue in 2023 was witnessed by UK Ambassador to Laos. The Facebook post by Free the Bears updating followers on 17th January features the Ambassador, thanks IWTCF and tagged BCF. The video update shows the rescue vehicle purchased with this grant and displays the IWTCF logo prominently.

At the time of the rescue, Free the Bears coordinated with the communications office at the British Embassy in Vientiane to prepare a press release which was picked up by local news outlets: [UK Ambassador to Laos Witnesses Handover of Two Moon Bear Cubs - Laotian Times](https://www.laotiantimes.com/news/uk-ambassador-to-laos-witnesses-handover-of-two-moon-bear-cubs)

<https://www.facebook.com/freethebearsfund/videos/755409279450051/>

RESCUE UPDATE: SUCCESS! Our rescue team in Laos arrived to find 2 stressed orphaned moon bear cubs, a brother & sister, in tiny cages. We quickly reunited them in our larger transport crate & gave them food, water & browse to calm them. The rescue team made it safely back to the Cub Nursery of our #LuangPrabangWildlifeSanctuary last night as the sun was setting. The cubs are settling in well & this afternoon had their 1st explore of the Cub Nursery play area.

Special thanks to our Laos Government partners from the Provincial Agriculture & Forestry Office in Vientiane for facilitating yet another rescue. Special thanks also to the UK's Biodiversity Challenge Funds (the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund) for the grant to support our work tackling the illegal wildlife trade - we were honoured to have British Ambassador John Pearson attend the official handover of the

15. Safeguarding

Biodiversity Challenge Funds are committed to supporting projects develop and strengthen their safeguarding capabilities and capacity to prevent, listen, respond and learn. Defra will not automatically penalise projects where safeguarding concerns are identified, but will help projects respond and learn from the experience.

Has your Safeguarding Policy been updated in the past 12 months?	No
Have any concerns been investigated in the past 12 months	No
Does your project have a Safeguarding focal point?	Yes. Matt Hunt, CEO. [REDACTED]
Has the focal point attended any formal training in the last 12 months?	No
What proportion (and number) of project staff have received formal training on Safeguarding?	Past: 0% Planned: 0%
Has there been any lessons learnt or challenges on Safeguarding in the past 12 months? Please ensure no sensitive data is included within responses.	
Nothing to report.	
Does the project have any developments or activities planned around Safeguarding in the coming 12 months? If so please specify.	
Free the Bears Vietnam Programme is currently in discussion with local organisations specialising in delivering training in safeguarding. In 2023, we will evaluate the impact of this training with our team in Vietnam and determine if it will be possible to replicate in the other focal countries.	

16. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (April 2022-March 2023)

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2022/23 Grant (£)	2022/23 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	90,634	90,634		

Table 2: Project mobilising of matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023)

	Matched funding secured to date	Total matched funding expected by end of project
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project.		
Total additional finance mobilised by new activities building on evidence, best practices and project (£)		

17. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements or progress of your project so far (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes

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

File Type (Image / Video / Graphic)	File Name or File Location	Caption, country and credit	Online accounts to be tagged (leave blank if none)	Consent of subjects received (delete as necessary)
				Yes / No
				Yes / No
				Yes / No
				Yes / No
				Yes / No

Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against logframe for Financial Year 2022-2023

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2022 - March 2023	Actions required/planned for next period
<p>Impact</p> <p>Reduction in number of bears traded and held in bile farms in Laos, and demonstrable poverty reduction stemming from opportunities created through proper placement of confiscated wildlife.</p>		<p>The first bear bile farm was established in Laos in 2000. The number of bile farm bears peaked in ~ 2012 with a total of 120 bears. Since there is no evidence of breeding on so-called farms, it is suspected that all farms are founded and restocked with wild-caught bears. Since 2012, Free the Bears have worked with the government of Laos to place 93 confiscated bears, effectively stemming the flow of bears from the wild into farms. Unofficial reports indicate that there are now 80 bears remaining on farms in Laos. Government-owned sanctuaries managed by Free the Bears now house over 100 bears which would have otherwise remained in the illegal wildlife trade network.</p> <p>Through this project, Free the Bears and partners can have higher-level impacts on illegal wildlife trade through advocacy and collaboration with stakeholders, as described in Section 2 above.</p> <p>Although the human development and wellbeing impact of this project is difficult to measure at this early stage, data has been collected from the participating communities with the view to determine the number of households that perceive receiving benefits from the sanctuary and measure impact in terms of material and subjective wellbeing. The project actively supports</p>	

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2022 - March 2023	Actions required/planned for next period
		<p>crop diversification by serving as a local demand for an array of produce.</p> <p>With expenditure of 550,000 USD within 20km of the project site within the first nine months of this project, the development and operation of the sanctuary makes a considerable contribution to the local economy. As the project progresses, we intend to quantify the portion benefiting communities through direct employment and sale of goods or services. In quantifying such benefits, the aim is to demonstrate that sustainable wildlife tourism has the potential to contribute significantly to the development of the region. This will further encourage authorities to shut all bear farms and combat the unsustainable and disreputable illegal wildlife trade in Laos and the region.</p>	
<p>Outcome</p> <p>Improved capacity to enforce wildlife laws reduces the number of bears being traded and/or held illegally, and the care of confiscated animals provides opportunities for livelihood diversification in local communities.</p>	<p>0.1 Percentage of reported bear trade cases resulting in confiscation/hand-over increases from <30% in 2020 to >50% by the end of year 2, and >60% by the end of Year 3.</p> <p>0.2 Number of bears in bile farms in Laos decreases from ca. 100 in 2021, to 80 by end of year 2, and less than 50 by the end of year 3.</p> <p>0.3 Number of households deriving at least the equivalent of minimum wage from the sanctuary increases from 59 in</p>	<p>0.1 Percentage of reported bear trade cases resulting in confiscation/hand-over increases from <30% in 2020 to >50% by the end of year 2, and >60% by the end of Year 3. The number of bears confiscated in Laos increased from 6 in 2020, to 12 in 2021 and 14 in 2022. Free the Bears continues to follow-up with the responsible agencies on reports of bear trade. No targets set for Year 1 of this project.</p> <p>0.2 Number of bears in bile farms in Laos decreases from ca. 100 in 2021, to 80 by end of year 2, and less than 50 by the end of year 3. As the number of</p>	<p>0.1 In Year 2, data on reported cases in 2022/2023 will be compiled and compared to actual number of bears confiscated.</p> <p>0.2 Free the Bears is in discussion with the relevant government agencies to obtain the latest official numbers.</p> <p>0.3 A review of internal accounting processes will take place in Y2Q1 to access effectiveness of tracking this data.</p>

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2022 - March 2023	Actions required/planned for next period
	2020, to at least 120 by the end of year 2, and 160 by the end of year 3.	<p>bears trade cases intercepted increases, the number of bears on bile farms decreases. Unofficial reports indicate that the number of bears on bile farms at the end of Year 1 of this project has decreased to approximately 80 individuals.</p> <p>0.3 Number of households deriving at least the equivalent of minimum wage from the sanctuary increases from 59 in 2020, to at least 120 by the end of year 2, and 160 by the end of year 3. Measures such as formalised producer agreements were put in place in Year 1 of this project which will facilitate verification of this indicator.</p>	
Output 1. Increased capacity to house confiscated bears at the Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary.	<p>1.1 300% increase in capacity to provide immediate short-term housing for confiscated bears, from 10 adult bears in 2021, to 30 by end of year 2, and to 40 by the end of year 3.</p> <p>1.2 Increase animal keeper staff from 9 male, 3 female in 2020, to 9 male, 4 females by Y1Q4, 9 male, 5 females by Y2Q4, and 10 male, 6 females by Y3Q4.</p>	<p>1.1 Temporary holding pens are 80% complete and we are currently on track to increase capacity to 18 by Y2Q1 and to 30 by Y2Q4. Capacity is documented in bi-annual Welfare Audits. This increase will be recorded in October 2023.</p> <p>1.2 No targets set for Year 1 of this project. In Year 2, data on reported cases in 2022/2023 will be compiled and compared to actual number of bears confiscated.</p>	
Activity 1.1 Design of temporary modular holding pens, by Y1Q3.		Design of temporary modular holding pens was achieved ahead of schedule by Y1Q2	Temporary holding pen design will be tested and modified as necessary.
Activity 1.2 Fabrication of temporary holding pens, +5 by Y1Q4, +15 by Y2Q4, +10 by Y3Q4.		While not achieved, is reasonably on track overall with +8 holding pens approximately 80% complete by Y1Q4, with the final 20% delayed due to supply chain issues	8 temporary holding pens will be complete in Y2Q1. Required materials will be ordered in Y2Q1 and 12 more temporary holding pens will be complete by Q4.

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2022 - March 2023	Actions required/planned for next period
Activity 1.3 Animal keeper recruitment and training, +2 by Y1Q4, +2 by Y2Q4, +2Y3Q4		. +2 by Y1Q4, achieved with two new keepers hired in Q2 and passed the training period in Q3.	Two more keepers will be recruited and trained in Year 2: at least one female.
Output 2. Increase in confiscation rates for bears and other protected wildlife throughout Laos.	<p>2.1 Proportion of reported bear trade cases resulting in confiscation/hand-over increases from <30% in 2019 to >50% by the end of year 2, and >60%by the end of year 3.</p> <p>2.2 Proportion of reported protected wildlife trade cases resulting in confiscation/handover increases from >30% in 2019 to >40% by the end of year 2, and >50% by the end of year 3.</p> <p>2.3 Bear-safe transportation crates distributed to 6 of 18 provinces/prefecture by Y1Q4.</p>	<p>2.1 No targets set for Year 1 of this project. In Year 2, data on reported cases in 2022/2023 will be compiled and compared to actual number of bears confiscated.</p> <p>2.2 . No targets set for Year 1 of this project. In Year 2, data on reported cases in 2022/2023 will be compiled and compared to actual number of wildlife confiscated.</p> <p>2.3 Behind schedule but on track to be completed in Year 2. Six transport crates have been fabricated and are ready for distribution following Activity 2.4.</p>	
Activity 2.1 Procurement of dedicated rescue vehicle by Y1Q2		Complete.	Maintain vehicle.
Activity 2.2 Build capacity of government agencies in short-term handling and care of wildlife, through month-long on-site training of at least 20 officers in Y2 and Y3.		Has not taken place as intended due to delays in completing the necessary on-site accommodation. Lack of available accommodation on-site at Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary prevented Free the Bears from hosting government officers during planned work placements. The large number of bears confiscated from the illegal wildlife trade and placed in care at the wildlife sanctuary during 2021 and 2022 necessitated prioritising construction of permanent housing for bears, over that of on-site accommodation.	The accommodation is due to be complete in May 2023 and a change request submitted in December 2022 was approved for the work placements to take place in Years 2 and 3 of this project, rather than Years 1 and 2

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2022 - March 2023	Actions required/planned for next period
Activity 2.3 Fabricate bear-safe transportation crates and distribute to 6 of 18 provinces by Y1Q4.		Partially complete by Y1Q4, with 6 new transport crates fabricated following a design conceived by the visiting welder from the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland. Transport crates will be delivered to the provinces following the work placements or opportunistically during rescue missions in Year 2.	Conduct training with wildlife law enforcement officers and distribute transport crates.
Activity 2.4 Assist government agencies in the transportation and placement of confiscated of bears and other protected species, throughout Y1Q2 – Y3Q4		Continued throughout Year 1 of the project, which commenced 1 st July 2022. Between July 2022 and March 2023, a total of 7 Asiatic black bears and 1 sun bear was transfer to care at Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary, bringing the total number of bears rescued by Free the Bears in Laos to 119, with more bears currently in our care than in bile farms in Laos. Ten individuals of 9 other species were also rescued during this period, including one Critically Endangered Sunda Pangolin.	To continue throughout Year 2 and 3.
Activity 2.5 Advocate for bear farm closures and demonstrate increased capacity to house confiscated bears with a site visit to wildlife sanctuary for key government stakeholders, Y2Q2		No specific activities planned for Year 1 of the project. However, advocating for closure of bear farms occurred during other events and official visits to the sanctuary.	In Year 2, we will host an official site visit to Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary. This will be an opportunity to demonstrate the increased capacity at the sanctuary and advocate for bile farm closures.
Output 3. Reduce poverty in local communities adjacent to Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary.	<p>3.1 At least 50% of project annual budget expended within 10km of the sanctuary, and at least 80% with 20km.</p> <p>3.2 Number of full-time employment opportunities for local community members receiving payment for labour increases from 31 (85% male) in 2022 to 40 (80% male) by the end of Year 2.</p>	<p>3.1 On track. During Year 1 of this project (July '22 – March '23), 18% of total project expenditure was within 10km of the sanctuary and 95% was within 20km of the sanctuary. Much of this is locally-grown produce and labour from communities within the immediate vicinity of the sanctuary, contributing greatly to the local economy. Of the IWT110 grant, 3% was expended within 10km and 91% within 20km of the sanctuary.</p> <p>3.2 As with Outcome indicate 0.3, a review of internal accounting processes will take place in Y2Q1 to assess effectiveness of tracking this data. A challenge is</p>	

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2022 - March 2023	Actions required/planned for next period
	<p>3.3 Number of local households with contracts to grow produce (fruit, veg, rice) for the sanctuary increases from 50 in 2022 to 70 by the end of year 2.</p> <p>3.4 Number of local households deriving income from the production of handicrafts for sale at the sanctuary and associated locations/events increases from 12 in 2020 to 30 by the end of Year 2.</p> <p>3.5 Number of local households assisted in transporting produce to market increases from 0 per month in 2021, to 16 per month by the end of year 1.</p> <p>3.6 Relative increase in socioeconomic conditions of participating communities from 2017 baseline, 2022 follow-up and 2025 endline household surveys..</p>	<p>that many of the community members do not have personal identification numbers which would facilitate aggregation of payments to individuals. Appropriate steps will be taken in Year 2 to address this issue.</p> <p>3.3 Ahead of schedule. Agreements were signed with an additional 30 households Year 1, bringing the total number of households with formal agreements to 80 by the end of Year 1. Further agreements will be signed based on the needs of the sanctuary and capacity of producers.</p> <p>3.4 We held two handicraft workshops in Year 1 of this project, with a total of 32 female and 3 male beneficiaries from the 6 communities closest to the sanctuary. This initiative will be reviewed with the communities in 2023 to formalise the process and achieve targets set for Year 2.</p> <p>3.5 This target has not yet been achieved. Towards the end of Year 1, Village Chiefs were preoccupied with widespread wildfires in the surrounding areas and were not available to discuss the equitable distribution of this assistance. To-date, an agreement has been made to assist 6 households in one village to transport produce once per week. Similar agreements will be made with the other villages in Year 2 of the project.</p> <p>3.6 On track for assessing this indicator. Household surveys were conducted with 397 individuals during Year 1 of this project. Analysis and comparison with 2017 data will be conducted during Year 2 to provide preliminary findings and the surveys will be repeated in Year 3.</p>	
Activity 3.1 Recruit members of the local communities as labour, 40 by Y2Q4		No targets set for Year 1. Women from the community were employed as labour during Y1 but individual beneficiaries were not tracked.	Continue to employ local community members as labour, and introduce a system to track beneficiaries.
Activity 3.2 Sign agreements with households to grow produce (fruit, veg, rice) for the sanctuary, +30 by Y1Q4, +20 by Y2Q4		Year 1 target was achieved.	Depending on the requirements of the sanctuary, sign 20 new agreements.
Activity 3.3 Handicraft workshops, twice per year, attended by at least 15 households from the local communities, with at least 50% female participants.		Handicraft workshops held twice in Year 1, attended by 32 females and 3 males from the local communities, were completed in Q4. Rather than traditional handicrafts that might be sold at the tourist market, it was decided to use the weaving skills of the local community members to produce	In consultation with the local communities, agree on the production and purchase of novel handicraft items for which there is an accessible market.

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2022 - March 2023	Actions required/planned for next period
		hammocks for rescued bears which could be paid for directly by the sanctuary.	
Activity 3.4 Agreements made with 4 villages to assist in transporting produce to market, by Y1Q2.		Complete by Q4 following modification of rescue vehicle.	Monitor assistance provided to the community members and identify opportunities to extend to more community members.
Activity 3.5 Conduct follow-up and endline socioeconomic surveys in 300 households by Y1Q2 and Y3Q3, respectively.		Completed by Q4, slightly behind schedule but surpassing the target of 300. In total, 397 interviews were conducted out of a possible 596 households available in the participating communities.	Data will be digitised and analysed during Year 2 of the project with endline surveys conducted in Year 3.

Annex 2: Project’s full current logframe as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
<p>Impact: Reduction in number of bears traded and held in bile farms in Laos, and demonstrable poverty reduction stemming from opportunities created through proper placement of confiscated wildlife.</p>			
<p>Outcome: Improved capacity to enforce wildlife laws reduces the number of bears being traded and/or held illegally, and the care of confiscated animals provides opportunities for livelihood diversification in local communities.</p>	<p>0.1 Percentage of reported bear trade cases resulting in confiscation/hand-over increases from <30% in 2020 to >50% by the end of year 2, and >60% by the end of Year 3.</p> <p>0.2 Number of bears in bile farms in Laos decreases from ca. 100 in 2021, to 80 by end of year 2, and less than 50 by the end of year 3.</p> <p>0.3 Number of households deriving at least the equivalent of minimum wage from the sanctuary increases from 59 in 2020, to at least 120 by the end of year 2, and 160 by the end of year 3.</p>	<p>0.1 Department of Forestry Inspection records and Free the Bears internal annual records of reported cases and their outcome.</p> <p>0.2 Department of Forestry Inspection annual bear farm inventories, as mandated in the Lao Wildlife and Aquatic Law.</p> <p>0.3 Free the Bears internal accounts</p>	<p>0.1 International scrutiny from, for example CITES Standing Committee and the World Bank, is sufficient to ensure that national wildlife legislation pertaining to keeping bears is not weakened.</p> <p>0.2 Decentralised provincial authorities have the political will to enforce national wildlife legislation and confiscate illegally held bears, and are not impeded by COVID-related travel restriction.</p> <p>0.3 Efforts from those working to improve wildlife law enforcement in Laos, e.g. World Bank, are sufficient to increase awareness among the judiciary as to the serious nature of wildlife crimes and prosecute as such.</p> <p>0.4 Free the Bears is successful in securing continual core funding through traditional and novel revenue streams in order to provide long-term care to confiscated wildlife, and thus a continued source of income and livelihoods for local communities.</p>

<p>Outputs:</p> <p>1. Increased capacity to house confiscated bears at the Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary.</p>	<p>1.1 300% increase in capacity to provide immediate short-term housing for confiscated bears, from 10 adult bears in 2021, to 30 by end of year 2, and to 40 by the end of year 3.</p> <p>1.2 Increase animal keeper staff from 9 male, 3 female in 2020, to 9 male, 4 females by Y1Q4, 9 male, 5 females by Y2Q4, and 10 male, 6 females by Y3Q4.</p>	<p>1.1 Actual number of spaces available to house bears, as documented in Free the Bears biannual Welfare Audits and monthly husbandry reports.</p> <p>1.2 Free the Bears HR records detailing employment period and sex-disaggregated data.</p>	<p>1.1 Required material and labour can be sourced locally and in a timely manner such that deadlines are met.</p> <p>1.2 Construction of permanent sanctuary housing allows for smooth flow of rescued bears through temporary housing/Quarantine Station.</p>
<p>2. Increase in confiscation rates for bears and other protected wildlife throughout Laos.</p>	<p>2.1 Proportion of reported bear trade cases resulting in confiscation/hand-over increases from <30% in 2019 to >50% by the end of year 2, and >60% by the end of year 3.</p> <p>2.2 Proportion of reported protected wildlife trade cases resulting in confiscation/handover increases from >30% in 2019 to >40% by the end of year 2, and >50% by the end of year 3.</p> <p>2.3 Bear-safe transportation crates distributed to 6 of 18 provinces/prefecture by Y1Q4.</p>	<p>2.1 Free the Bears internal reports and official government records form Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of reported cases and their outcomes.</p> <p>2.2 Free the Bears internal reports and official government records form Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of reported cases and their outcomes.</p> <p>2.3 Free the Bears internal reports and signed handover documents.</p>	<p>2.1 National wildlife legislation pertaining to keeping bears is not weakened.</p> <p>2.2 Decentralised provincial authorities have the political will to enforce national wildlife legislation and confiscate illegally held bears.</p>
<p>3. Reduce poverty in local communities adjacent to Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary.</p>	<p>3.1 At least 50% of project annual budget expended within 10km of the sanctuary, and at least 80% with 20km.</p> <p>3.2 Number of full-time employment opportunities for local community members receiving payment for</p>	<p>3.1 Free the Bears internal accounting and records.</p> <p>3.2 Free the Bears internal HR records and employment contracts, including details of contract period and sex disaggregated data.</p>	<p>3.1 The number of confiscated bears placed in the sanctuary increases, thus requiring increased labour and food supplies.</p> <p>3.2 Free the Bears is successful in securing continual funding through the existing donor base and novel</p>

	<p>labour increases from 31 (85% male) in 2022 to 40 (80% male) by the end of Year 2.</p> <p>3.3 Number of local households with contracts to grow produce (fruit, veg, rice) for the sanctuary increases from 50 in 2022 to 70 by the end of year 2.</p> <p>3.4 Number of local households deriving income from the production of handicrafts for sale at the sanctuary and associated locations/events increases from 12 in 2020 to 30 by the end of Year 2.</p> <p>3.5 Number of local households assisted in transporting produce to market increases from 0 per month in 2021, to 16 per month by the end of year 1.</p> <p>3.6 Relative increase in socioeconomic conditions of participating communities from 2017 baseline, 2022 follow-up and 2025 endline household surveys..</p>	<p>3.3 Signed contracts between Free the Bears and farmers, and hard records of payment in monthly accounts.</p> <p>3.4 Signed agreements between Free the Bears and craftspeople, sales records and revenue-sharing programme data.</p> <p>3.5 Free the Bears Vehicle travel log records detailing assistance provided to specified households in each village.</p> <p>3.6 Baseline data from 2017, National Census statistics from 2015 and 2020, follow-up socioeconomic survey data in 2022, and endline survey data collected in 2025.</p>	<p>funding streams efforts in order to provide long-term care to confiscated wildlife, and thus a continued source of income and livelihoods for local communities.</p> <p>3.3 Visitor numbers are sufficient to provide a market for locally made handicraft products.</p>
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Activities (each activity is numbered according to the output that it will contribute towards, for example 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are contributing to Output 1)

1.1 Design of temporary modular holding pens, by Y1Q3.

1.2 Fabrication of temporary holding pens, +5 by Y1Q4, +15 by Y2Q4, +10 by Y3Q4.

1.3 Animal keeper recruitment and training, +2 by Y1Q4, +2 by Y2Q4, +2Y3Q4

2.1 Procurement of dedicated rescue vehicle by Y1Q2

2.2 Build capacity of government agencies in short-term handling and care of wildlife, through month-long on-site training of at least 20 officers in Y2 and Y3.

2.3 Fabricate bear-safe transportation crates and distribute to 6 of 18 provinces by Y1Q4.

2.4 Assist government agencies in the transportation and placement of confiscated of bears and other protected species, throughout Y1Q2 – Y3Q4

2.5 Advocate for bear farm closures and demonstrate increased capacity to house confiscated bears with a site visit to wildlife sanctuary for key government stakeholders, Y2Q2

3.1 Recruit members of the local communities as labour, 40 by Y2Q4

3.2 Sign agreements with households to grow produce (fruit, veg, rice) for the sanctuary, +30 by Y1Q4, +20 by Y2Q4

3.3 Handicraft workshops, twice per year, attended by at least 15 households from the local communities, with at least 50% female participants.

3.4 Agreements made with 4 villages to assist in transporting produce to market, by Y1Q2.

3.5 Conduct follow-up and endline socioeconomic surveys in 300 households by Y1Q2 and Y3Q3, respectively.

Annex 3 Standard Indicators

Table 1 Project Standard Indicators

IWTCF Indicator number	Name of indicator using original wording	Name of Indicator after adjusting wording to align with IWTCF Standard Indicators	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
IWTCF-B13	0.1 Percentage of reported bear trade cases resulting in confiscation/hand-over increases from <30% in 2020 to >50% by the end of year 2, and >60% by the end of Year 3.	0.1 Number of reported bear trade cases resulting in confiscation/hand-over increases from 06 in 2020 to 12 by the end of year 2, and 20 by the end of Year 3.	Number	Species	7 Asiatic black bears; and 1 sun bear	0	0	7 ABB; 1 SB	40
IWTCF-B09	0.2 Number of bears in bile farms in Laos decreases from ca. 100 in 2021, to 80 by end of year 2, and less than 50 by the end of year 3.	0.2 Number of bears in bile farms in Laos decreases from ca. 100 in 2021, to 80 by end of year 2, and less than 50 by the end of year 3.	Number	Estimated number of Individualals; Illegal facility	87	0	0	87	50
IWTCF-A13	0.3 Number of households deriving at least the equivalent of minimum wage from the sanctuary increases from 59 in 2020, to at least 120 by the end of year 2, and 160 by the end of year 3.	0.3 Number of households deriving at least the equivalent of minimum wage from the sanctuary increases from 59 in 2020, to at least 120 by the end of year 2, and 160 by the end of year 3.	People	Gender	0	0	0	0	160
n/a	1.1 300% increase in capacity to provide immediate short-term housing for confiscated bears, from 10 adult bears in 2021, to 30 by end of year 2, and to 40 by the end of year 3.								
IWTCF-A02	1.2 Increase animal keeper staff from 9 male, 3 female in 2020, to 9 male, 4 females by Y1Q4, 9 male, 5 females by Y2Q4, and 10 male, 6 females by Y3Q4.	1.2 Increase animal keeper staff from 9 male, 3 female in 2020, to 9 male, 4 females by Y1Q4, 9 male, 5 females by Y2Q4, and 10 male, 6 females by Y3Q4.	People	Gender	10 males: 5 females	0	0	10 males: 5 females	10 males: 6 females

IWTCF-B13	2.1 Proportion of reported bear trade cases resulting in confiscation/hand-over increases from <30% in 2019 to >50% by the end of year 2, and >60% by the end of year 3.	0.1 Number of reported bear trade cases resulting in confiscation/hand-over increases from 06 in 2020 to 12 by the end of year 2, and 20 by the end of Year 3.	Number	Species	7 Asiatic black bears; and 1 sun bear	0	0	7 ABB; 1 SB	40
IWTCF-B13	2.2 Proportion of reported protected wildlife trade cases resulting in confiscation/handover increases from >30% in 2019 to >40% by the end of year 2, and >50% by the end of year 3.	0.1 Number of reported bear trade cases resulting in confiscation/hand-over increases from 06 in 2020 to 12 by the end of year 2, and 20 by the end of Year 3.	Number	Species	Ten individuals of 9 species	0	0	10 individuals of 9 species	50 individuals
IWTCF-D03	2.3 Bear-safe transportation crates distributed to 6 of 18 provinces/prefecture by Y1Q4.	2.3 At least 20 local wildlife law enforcement agencies have improved capability and capacity as a result of training and provision of equipment.	Number of local organisations	Gender of trainees; By agency and province	0	0	0	0	20M:20F, 20Agencies
n/a	3.1 At least 50% of project annual budget expended within 10km of the sanctuary, and at least 80% with 20km.								
n/a	3.2 Number of full-time employment opportunities for local community members receiving payment for labour increases from 31 (85% male) in 2022 to 40 (80% male) by the end of Year 2.								

IWTCF-A03	3.3 Number of local households with contracts to grow produce (fruit, veg, rice) for the sanctuary increases from 50 in 2022 to 70 by the end of year 2.	3.3 Number of cooperatives established to grow produce for the sanctuary increase from 8 in 2022 to 13 by end of Year 1, and 17 by end of Year 2.	Number of cooperatives	Household; Produce type; Village	80 Households; 5 villages; 9 types of produce; 5 villages	0	0	80 Households; 5 villages; 9 types of produce; 5 villages	80 Households; 5 villages; 9 types of produce; 5 villages
IWTCF-A01	3.4 Number of local households deriving income from the production of handicrafts for sale at the sanctuary and associated locations/events increases from 12 in 2020 to 30 by the end of Year 2.	3.4 Number of local households that receive training in handicraft production for sale at the sanctuary and associated locations/events increases from 12 in 2020 to 30 by the end of Year 2.	People	Gender of trainee	3 male, 32 female	0	0	3 male, 32 female	90 people
n/a	3.5 Number of local households assisted in transporting produce to market increases from 0 per month in 2021, to 16 per month by the end of year 1.								
IWTCF-A15	3.6 Relative increase in socioeconomic conditions of participating communities from 2017 baseline, 2022 follow-up and 2025 endline household surveys.	3.7 Relative decrease in unsustainable practices in participating communities from 2017 baseline, 2022 follow-up and 2025 endline household surveys.	Percentage	Households; Type of livelihood,	0	0	0	0	25% of households

Table 2 Publications

Title	Type (e.g. journals, manual, CDs)	Detail (authors, year)	Gender of Lead Author	Nationality of Lead Author	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online)
n/a						

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 BCF-Reports@niras.com putting the project number in the subject line.	X
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with BCF-Reports@niras.com 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.	
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 17)?	
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	X
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	