



**BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects **Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus**

Half Year Report

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

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 2024

Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	IWT115
Project title	Demand reduction for threatened tortoises and freshwater turtles (TFTs) in Bangladesh.
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Bangladesh
Lead Organisation	Wildlife Conservation Society, Bangladesh
Partner(s)	Not Applicable
Project leader	Dr. Md. Zahangir Alom, Country Director, WCS Bangladesh
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	April 1 - September 30, 2024, HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	<i>Not Applicable</i>

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

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

The project started on July 1, 2022. Progress on activities was made during this reporting period, as outlined below against each activity and the timeline agreed upon in December 2023 (Annex 1).

Output 1: Behavioural change strategy developed for reducing the demand for TFTs based on improved understanding of market dynamics and consumer motivations.

Activity 1.1: Media search and data analysis to identify TFT consumption and trade hotspots and continue monitoring of seizures.

Media data collection continued from April 1, 2024, to September 31, 2024. During this period five incidents of illegal TFT trading were recorded, involving 376 animals, all of which were confiscated alive (Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of species recorded in media reports from April 1, 2024, to September 31, 2024.

Common Name	Scientific Name	IUCN Red List Status	Number of Individuals reported
Indian peacock softshell turtle	<i>Nilssonina hurum</i>	EN	2
Indian flapshell turtle	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>	VU	83
Indian roofed turtle	<i>Pangshura tecta</i>	VU	270
Unidentified sp.			21

Activity 1.2: TFT market surveys.

No market surveys were scheduled for this reporting period. We completed the first round of surveys in Y1 and conducted a second survey in Year 2 to see if and how things had changed since the first survey (see Year 2 Annual Report).

Activity 1.3: Develop and finalise map of TFT consumption and trade hotspots and consult with key stakeholders.

Activity completed in Y1. See Y1 Annual Report.

Activity 1.4: Develop pre and post KAP survey in consultation with the key stakeholders.

Activity completed in Y1. See Y1 Annual Report. We have drafted the post-KAP survey and shall be reviewed by WCS Institutional Review Board by December 2024.

Activity 1.5: Conduct pre-KAP survey in identified TFT consumption and trade hotspots.

Activity completed in Y1. See Y1 Annual Report.

Activity 1.6: Meeting with the Forest Department to share pre-KAP survey results.

Activity completed in Y2. See Y2 Annual Report.

Activity 1.7: Develop a draft TFT demand reduction behaviour change strategy in consultation with BFD and stakeholders.

Activity completed in Y2. See Y2 Annual Report.

Activity 1.8: Consultation workshop/meeting with Forest Department for approval of TFT demand reduction behaviour change strategy.

Activity completed in Y2. See Y2 Annual Report.

Activity 1.9: Analyse the KAP survey data to identify socio-economic drivers of illegal trade and consumption and prepare summary report.

Activity completed in Y2. See Y2 Annual Report.

Activity 1.10: Repeat market surveys throughout project to monitor any drop in size of market to support indication of reduced demand.

Market surveys were conducted in Year 1 and Year 2. Additional surveys will be conducted in Year 4 Q3.

Output 2: Behaviour change strategy implemented resulting in measurable changes to knowledge, attitudes and practices of TFT consumers, and lessons learned to improve future campaigns.

Activity 2.1: Develop awareness raising key messages and materials.

We have produced various TFT awareness materials, including posters, flyers, booklets, stickers, t-shirts, and fridge magnets (Annex 2 to Annex 8) both in English and Bangla languages. We were on track to complete the development of materials in the last 3 months, but piloting/testing of these materials was postponed due to political unrest across

the country and the subsequent change in the ruling government. Following the protests governance weakened significantly, and large gatherings were discouraged. This has impacted the planned awareness raising events, film showings, and the distribution of materials to local community members.

Activity 2.2: Documentary film on reducing TFT consumption.

The TFT documentary film production is complete and ready for the showings as part of the awareness raising events planned under the behaviour change campaign (Annex 9). The events are being rescheduled for Y3Q3 as a result of the recent political unrest.

Activity 2.3: Design TFT consumer demand reduction campaign.

The demand reduction campaign has been designed and is ready for initial piloting to test the messages and materials. This was initially planned for Y3Q1 but has now been rescheduled to Y3Q3 due to the unexpected political unrest. A revised project timeline has been drafted (Annex 9) and submitted with this half-yearly report. Given the remaining time in the project and the impact of the political unrest, we will be submitting a change request for the project to reschedule the demand reduction campaign from Y3Q3 to Y4Q1 and Y4Q2.

Activity 2.4: Execute campaign in identified TFT consumption and trade hotspots.

Based on the baseline KAP study results and TFT market survey findings, we have identified key hotspots for TFT consumption and trade: Khulna, Gopalganj, Madaripur, and Satkhira districts. These locations will be the focus of the behaviour change pilot campaign activities. As noted above the execution of the pilot campaign has been delayed to Y3Q3.

Activity 2.5: Organize and hold two journalist training workshops.

Activity completed in Y2. See Y2 Annual Report.

Activity 2.6: Conduct post-KAP surveys in the areas where TFT demand reduction campaign took place.

This activity was originally planned to be completed by Y2Q4; however, due to delays in the roll out of the campaign, the survey has also been postponed. We now expect to conduct the mid-term KAP survey in Y3Q4 following the pilot demand reduction campaign in Y3Q3. Post-campaign KAP surveys will be rescheduled for Y3Q4 and then be helped after the rollout of the full campaign in Y4Q1 and Y4Q2.

Output 3: Establish collaboration for behaviour change for TFTs through sharing of the approach between wildlife managers, law enforcement officials and development agencies in Bangladesh and India on successes and failures in demand reduction.

Activity 3.1: Organise two virtual meetings between India and Bangladesh.

Activity completed in Y2. See Y2 Annual Report.

Activity 3.2: Organise an in-person workshop at Bana Bhaban in Bangladesh with participation by forest officials from Bangladesh and India.

This activity was initially planned for in Y3Q1. It was delayed from Y3Q1 due to national elections in India, and Indian government staff were unable to travel at this time. The activity was then rescheduled to Y3Q2. The political unrest in Bangladesh has complicated this activity significantly as the former Bangladesh Prime Minister fled the country and took shelter in India. The Indian Government has subsequently restricted visas for Bangladeshis, and political ties with the interim government are yet to be established. We will continue to monitor the situation but based on the current conditions and the length of time needed for approvals and visas this activity will likely need to be cancelled. We will explore options for sharing the lessons learned from this project and continued transboundary dialogue on this issue between India and Bangladesh. We will submit a change request including a financial change to the project.

Activity 3.3: Organise an in-person workshop at Aranya Bhaban in India with participation by forest officials from Bangladesh and India.

This activity was planned for Y3Q4. However, based on the current political situation and relationship with the government of India and the interim government of Bangladesh, we do not believe this activity will be possible in the timeline of this project and will propose to cancel this activity. We will submit a change request including financial changes to remove this activity from the project. WCS will continue to monitor the situation and identify potential options for virtual exchanges between the relevant authorities in each country and other organisations who would benefit from sharing the work undertaken through this project.

Activity 3.4: Distribute summary report on socio-economic drivers of involvement in illegal trade and consumption with stakeholders including development agencies.

Activity completed in Y2. See Y2 Annual Report.

Activity 3.5: Share TFT consumer demand reduction campaign strategy and model with WCS-India and other organisations.

Activity completed in Y2. See Y2 Annual Report.

Output 4: Bangladesh's national wildlife protection laws strengthened for TFT protection.

Activity 4.1: Prepare background document and draft proposal for listing all the threatened TFT species under the Wildlife Act, 2012.

We prepared and submitted the proposal for listing all threatened TFT species under the Wildlife Act in Year 1. WCS continues to follow up with the BFD to check on progress in reviewing the document and moving it forward to the next step. BFD has conducted three separate meetings on this, and the draft has been sent to the ministry for review.

Activity 4.2: Prepare a proposal to clarify definitions of Schedule I and II protected species in the Wildlife Act, 2012.

We completed this activity in Year 1, with the proposal to clarify definitions submitted to BFD. We continue to follow up with BFD on the progress of the Wildlife Act amendment. BFD already conducted three separate meetings on this, and a draft has been sent to the ministry for review.

Activity 4.3: Follow-up meetings and engagement with BFD on proposals to list threatened TFT species and clarify definitions of Schedule I and II protected species in the Wildlife Act, 2012.

This activity is making progress as planned. Our WCS Legal Advisor is in touch with both the BFD and the ministry to push the draft proposal towards finalizing it.

Activity 4.4: Prepare a proposal to add regulatory directives from the Wildlife Act, 2012 to the Import Policy Order under the Imports and Exports (Control) Act, 1950 and submit it to Customs.

Activity completed in Y2. See Y2 Annual Report.

Activity 4.5: Follow-up with Customs Agency through meetings and engagement on the proposal.

Several phone calls were made with Customs officials through personal communications led by our WCS Legal Advisor and two meetings were held with them during this reporting period aiming to amend the Import Policy Order under the Imports and Exports (Control) Act, 1950.

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.

The project progressed as planned until Y3Q1. During Y3Q2 political unrest erupted in Bangladesh in July 2024 due to nationwide student-civilian protests. The protests and the government's counter-response resulted in unstable conditions across the country and political regime change. Hindu communities became vulnerable to Muslim fundamentalists. An interim government is now in charge. During the period of unrest travel was restricted for staff safety and the ability to implement activities was impacted. Since then, organizing large public gatherings and open events has been highly sensitive. Our TFT demand reduction campaign requires mass public gatherings, especially in Hindu communities. Given the current situation, we have been unable to conduct such events, and we are currently unsure when this will be possible. This situation continues to cause delays in implementation. As the political situation improves, we anticipate that we will be able to complete piloting of the campaign by Y3Q3 and Y3Q4.

This situation will potentially impact both the budget and timetable of project activities. Delays in piloting the campaign will impact the implementation of the main TFT demand reduction campaign. The project timetable will be adjusted to accommodate the current political climate and delays to project activities. In addition to impacts on the campaign, at this point, the cross-border meeting with India has also been cancelled due to a current lack of political willingness from both India and Bangladesh.

A revised project activity timeline has been drafted (Annex 10) and a formal Change Request will be submitted to update the timeline along with a financial change request. An updated risk registrar is also added with this report (Annex 11).

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

Discussed with NIRAS:

No

Formal Change Request submitted:

No

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

No

Change Request reference if known: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome*

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)

Actual spend:

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2025)?

Yes ☒ No ☐

4c. If you expect and underspend, then you should 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 to your project 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?

A formal change request will be submitted by December 2024 to adjust the project timeline, modify activities, and adjust the project budget.

6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report. If your project was subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment, please use this space to comment on any changes to international human rights risks, and to address any additional mitigations outlined in your offer letters. Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.

The feedback from the Year 2 annual report was received and well noted. The feedback included two questions requesting further details and clarification.

Clarification on the demand reduction strategy and model – is this part of the same document or will a separate one be developed for the model?

The demand reduction strategy (see Annual Report Year 2) and model are part of the same document. The strategy has been finalized up to the point of the piloting of the approaches. Once the initial pilot has been completed, a simplified visualization of the behaviour change model will be added and the strategy will be refined further to incorporate some modifications based on the results of piloting of the campaign and the results of the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey on the pilot campaign. The current version of the strategy and model have been attached to this report.

Further develop the strengthening of the exit strategy with clear objectives and actions for how to achieve them.

To strengthen the exit strategy, the project will focus on creating sustained changes in consumer behaviours through a comprehensive demand reduction campaign, including films, community radio programs, exhibitions, and various awareness materials such as posters, booklets, stickers, fridge magnets, t-shirts, and leaflets. This campaign will serve as a replicable model for other regions and species. We will build local capacity through journalist training, mentoring Hindu religious leaders, and encouraging local ownership through turtle guardians, ensuring sustainability. Additionally, we have started advocacy for legal reforms to protect TFT species and support enforcement efforts. These actions aim to extend the project's positive conservation impacts beyond its duration and benefit other globally threatened and CITES-protected species. Furthermore, the project team has secured a three-year grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to continue the extended TFT behavior change campaign in other identified TFT consumption hotspots during Y4 of this project.

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1st April 2024)

Have you responded to any additional feedback (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	Yes
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	Yes

For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1st April 2024)

Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	Yes
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For All Projects

Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	Yes
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	Yes
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Yes