

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

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

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2023

Project reference	IWT116
Project title	Equipping southwest Indian Ocean countries to combat illegal shark trade
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Mozambique; Tanzania
Lead partner	Wildlife Conservation Society
Partner(s)	Mozambican National Oceanographic Institute (InOM); Tanzania Deep Sea Fishing Authority (DSFA); Dr Rima Jabado, UAE; Dr Demian Chapman, Mote Marine Laboratories, United States; Stellenbosch University, South Africa
Project leader	Rhett Bennett
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	

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

This report covers the period April – September 2023.

Activities 1.1 and 1.2 were completed in Y1 and reported in the Y1 annual report.

Activities 1.3 and 1.4 are on schedule. A rapid genetic sequencer was procured (match funds) for Mozambique, and an expert from Mote Marine Laboratory in Florida, USA, will train five participants from Mozambique’s Institute of Oceanography (InOM) and the Museum of Natural History, in November 2023. In addition, a sequencer has also been secured for Tanzania, and Tanzanian government staff will also be trained in November. These machines will remain in country post training, allowing trained personnel (government in partnership with WCS) to effectively utilise the machines for species identification during actual shipment inspections.

Activity 1.5 was completed in July 2023. Two InOM technicians travelled to Stellenbosch University, South Africa, for ten days of training on genetic barcoding for shark and ray species identification. In addition, two technicians from the Museum were also supported to attend the training. Trainees reported: *“The training was successful for the trainees once they could cover the topic from DNA extraction to preparation samples for Dye terminator sequencing, as well as the data analysis and the result interpretation. This course showed the importance of the DNA Barcoding as useful tool to confirm the identification of the threatened species of sharks and rays as strengthening national capacity to implementation CITES in Mozambique but also reinforced the need of funding for correct laboratory analysis to reduce the ambiguities on conservation purpose of this group; and having consumables for extraction, PCR amplification, and sequencing, they can apply all the knowledge gained in both labs where they are located (InOM and Museum). Furthermore, this training enforced that the two institutions must team up and assist all other institutions working on conservation management.”*

Activities 1.6-1.7: Research has been initiated into appropriate platforms on which to develop the mobile phone app for customs agents, and discussions have been initiated among WCS staff in several countries involved in IWT to learn from past experiences. It is apparent that different approaches are needed for Mozambique and Tanzania. In Mozambique, discussions are underway with a potential partner organization, the Mozambique Wildlife Alliance (MWA), which is led by the former Law Enforcement Director from the Mozambican National Administration for Conservation Areas, who has strong links with WCS. In Tanzania, WhatsApp has been identified as the preferred communication platform between relevant customs officials and shark identification experts. Training will be provided on the use of these platforms in 2024.

Activity 2.1: Coastal fishery catch surveys have been ongoing at 9 sites in Tanzania and 7 sites in Mozambique throughout the project. Data are recorded on mobile phones and automatically uploaded to a database. Species identification is verified by two experts to ensure that the correct species names are allocated to each individual shark or ray recorded.

Activity 2.2: Trade surveys, comprising questionnaire-based interviews with shark/ray/fish traders, are complete in Tanzania, with 180 individuals interviewed from 9 communities. The same surveys are underway in Mozambique through match funding, with 30 individuals interviewed to date. An additional 60 to 70 interviews are planned for 2023.

Activity 2.3: This activity is ongoing, although the number of samples obtained for this activity is lower than anticipated. We are confident we will be able to analyse some samples, hopefully from each country, and are assessing alternative options to answer the questions that this activity was intended for. We also have over 1,000 genetic samples collected in Mozambique and Tanzania to date, through fishery surveys, some of which have been processed, revealing vast proportions of threatened and CITES-listed shark and ray species.

Activity 3.1: Discussions are underway with a consultant specializing in providing expert marine observer services to a diverse range of maritime industries, to develop the scoping report.

Activity 3.2: This activity is not yet underway but is on track to be complete once further progress has been made with regards to Activity 3.1 (see above).

Activity 4.1: Fishing community engagement has been ongoing Mozambique and Tanzania since the project started. In Tanzania, we have worked with local fishing communities to map catches of sharks and rays for various fishing grounds, with the goal of identifying hotspots in the community fished areas. This covers 2 landing sites, used potentially by 13 different fishing communities, in Tanzania. Meetings with communities in Misali Island (west of Pemba Island, Tanzania) are planned for later in 2023 to discuss zoning of the fishing grounds and integrate the relevant data collected through the catch and socioeconomic surveys in the planning. In Mozambique, there has been further engagement with fishing communities at Zalala Beach in Zambezia Province, a hotspot for shark landings. Potential solutions identified by community fishers and other interested parties at Zalala Beach, primarily through focus group discussions, have been incorporated into a document with recommended actions for more sustainable fisheries. Through this document a work plan will be developed to further this work and develop a management plan for Zalala Beach fishing activities.

Activity 4.2: This activity has recently started in both Mozambique and Tanzania. A broad management plan was developed for Maputo National Park in Mozambique. However, the authorities intend to develop management plans for *specific ecosystems* within the park and WCS has been engaged to assist with this process. This process will take place over the next few months but is envisaged to be complete by the end of the project period. In Tanzania, the Fisheries (Amendment) Regulations of 2009 are currently under revision, and WCS is engaging with the relevant government authorities to provide input to these revised/updated regulations.

Standard Indicators and Assumptions: Most assumptions hold true, and we should be able to demonstrate that with progress made over the next 6 months. We will also be able to report against the recently developed Standard Indicators for this project, in the annual report.

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.

[REDACTED]

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: N/A

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)

Actual spend: [REDACTED]

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2024)?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

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

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

No, thank you.