

## 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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022**

<b>Project reference</b>	<a href="#">IWT118</a>
<b>Project title</b>	Empowering local women to reduce Illegal Wildlife Trade in Liberia
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Liberia
<b>Lead partner</b>	Wild Chimpanzee Foundation
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Forestry Development Authority (FDA), Forestry Training Institute (FTI), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL), Libassa Wildlife Sanctuary (LiWiSa), Liberia Marketing Association (LMA)
<b>Project leader</b>	Prof. Christophe Boesch
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>HYR1</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="http://www.wildchimps.org">www.wildchimps.org</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/wildchimps">www.facebook.com/wildchimps</a> <a href="https://www.linkedin.com/company/15740334">www.linkedin.com/company/15740334</a>

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

### Activity 1 - Community volunteer programme with female bushmeat sellers

Preparations commenced for the initial survey of bushmeat markets at key points across Liberia. The project Coordinator (Tarik Bodasing) held two meetings with relevant persons from the Forestry Development Authority (FDA), who were able to provide information used in the selection of the initial markets. These were the Head of Tourism (Peaches Cumme) and the Wildlife Confiscation Unit Manager (Edward Appleton). Additional input from key NGO staff (RSPB, SCNL and WCF) working on the project was also used and a final list of 18 markets was produced. A separate meeting was then held with the President of the Liberian Marketing Association (LMA) involving the FDA Head of Tourism, Project Coordinator and the Project Leader (Dr Annika Hillers), to inform her of the details of the project and to obtain consent and contact details of the market superintendents in the respective counties of focus. Establishing this link was a crucial part of this project activity as the superintendents will later be used in the engagement and selection of female bushmeat sellers to the volunteer programme.

During this time, discussions between the Project Coordinator and the Head of the Forestry Training Institute (FTI) remained ongoing regarding the involvement of graduate students in the initial bushmeat market survey. A list of 15 students was put forward by FTI to participate in the initial market survey. The 15 students comprised of 6 females and 9 males. A week of training for the students is planned for mid-October and will focus on the relevant survey protocols, species identification and the use of the Kobo Collect application on smartphones. To this end, ten rugged and field-tested Blackview smartphones were purchased for the project and the Kobo Collect application and survey form installed. These smartphones will also be used later for the actual market surveys to ensure reliable electronic data collection. The Kobo Collect form and smartphone setup was done by the Project Coordinator and the newly recruited WCF M&E officer (James Gbeadur) both of whom have previous skills in the use of electronic forms of data capture via smartphone applications.

### Activity 2 – Recruitment and training of female community ecoguards in key landscapes

The Project Coordinator (Tarik Bodasing) and SCNL project technicians (Gordon Sambollah and Rolland Warner) commenced planning for the recruitment and initial training of female community ecoguards at Foya Proposed Protected Area (PPA), one of the project landscapes. An initial 16 names were put forward 8 from Gbarpolu county and 8 from Lofa. This was done in order to ensure a fair dispersion of opportunities for selection from the entire rural community surrounding Foya. However, due to prolonged rains all the way through August and September, the road to Foya was in terrible condition and the initial training was postponed until early October.

Similarly, in the south-east landscape, initial recruitment and training activities were pushed back several weeks due to high rainfall and poor road conditions. However, WCF project staff in Zwedru are planning to carry out initial training and recruitment of female ecoguards at Cestos-Senkwen PPA and Krahn-Bassa PPA in October. Training materials for this and the Foya training will focus on the community ecoguard protocol for patrolling developed by WCF and include components on navigation, identification of illegal activities and biomonitoring. This will then be followed up subsequently with training in the deployment of the SMART Mobile electronic patrol monitoring application (planned for December) and will be carried out by a trained team involving the Project Coordinator (RSPB), Field Technicians (WCF/SCNL) and the Project M&E Officer (WCF).

**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.**

A key challenge has been the prolonged rainy season and condition of road networks across the country. This has resulted in postponements and delays to field surveys and training exercises, particularly as all the project sites are in remote areas of the country with poor access and mobile networks. Despite this challenge we expect that the project activities are still on schedule and that project staff will still be able to deliver the activities according to the implementation timetable over the next 2 months.

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

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS: No

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

Change request reference if known:

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

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: £ 0

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

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

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

No

**If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.**

**Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with NIRAS-LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com). The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**