Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Main & Extra: Final 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: no later than 3 months after agreed project end date.

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

IWT Challenge Fund Project Information

Scheme (Main or Extra)	Main
Project reference	IWT 118
Project title	**Empowering local women to reduce Illegal Wildlife Trade in Liberia**
Country(ies)	Liberia
Lead Organisation	Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF)
Project Partner(s)	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL), Libassa Wildlife Sanctuary (LiWiSa)
IWT CF grant value	£533,278
Start/end dates of project	July 2022 – December 2024
Project Leader's name	Hedwige Boesch-Achermann
Project website/blog/social media	www.wildchimps.org www.facebook.com/wildchimps www.linkedin.com/company/15740334
Report author(s) and date	Tarik Bodasing, Annika Hillers, Elemuel Newah, 25/06/2025

1.   Project summary

The present project, funded by the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund, aimed to reduce the demand for bushmeat and other wildlife products and to improve wildlife law enforcement in Liberia, through collaboration and awareness with female bushmeat sellers in major bushmeat hubs, support for local female community ecoguards for forest patrols and awareness, and capacity building for rangers, who collaborate closely with the community ecoguards and the national Wildlife Crime Task Force.

The project ran from July 2022 to December 2024 and was implemented by the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL), and the Libassa Wildlife Sanctuary (LiWiSa), in close collaboration with the Liberian Forestry Development Authority (FDA), the Forestry Training Institute (FTI), and the Liberia Marketing Association (LMA).

The project activities built upon successful pilot projects and were complementary to ongoing community engagement and law enforcement network activities. The project expanded on the proven successful collaboration with female bushmeat sellers, targeting major bushmeat hubs and allowing the women to shift to viable, legal businesses. Such interventions have previously been tested in smaller scale pilot projects and have yielded positive results showing in particular that the involvement of the local women reduces the pressure on Liberian wildlife and increases public knowledge about the law, protected species, zoonotic diseases, and basic conservation principles.

The project specifically targeted 300 female bushmeat sellers in ten major bushmeat hubs throughout Liberia. These hubs were identified through information obtained from the Wildlife Crime Task Force (WCTF), as well as additional bushmeat market surveys conducted during this project. The WCF, FDA, and FTI worked with the LMA in order to conduct bushmeat market surveys, including bushmeat sellers' income surveys. The LMA also helped identify female bushmeat sellers at each bushmeat hub to be trained and participate in the program, and to raise regular awareness at the respective markets. In total, out of 300 women in the program, 270 successfully participated and permanently changed to legal businesses.

Furthermore, the project aimed to increase the number of female community ecoguards in the national community ecoguard program at seven (Proposed) Protected Areas (P)PAs in Liberia (Sapo, Gola Forest and Grebo-Krahn National Parks, Lake Piso Sustainable Multiple Use Reserve, and Krahn-Bassa (hereafter referred to as Proposed Kwa National Park), Foya, and Cestos-Senkwehn PPAs). WCF worked with FDA, FTI, SCNL and RSPB to increase the number of female ecoguards to at least ten women per site, thus at least 70 female ecoguards in total, and ensure regular monitoring of the community ecoguard teams by mentoring, and strengthening the FDA community ecoguard unit. While Cestos-Senkwehn PPA had to be dropped from the project due to some changes on the side of the Liberian government, the total number of female ecoguards increased to 75, with regular support through the IWT CF project. Sites with more female ecoguards tend to show higher program success, with significant reduction of illegal activities, such as poaching for live trade and bushmeat consumption. The project provided training in Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) mobile, navigation, protected species identification, national conservation law, human rights, and basic first aid.

Rangers at the (P)PAs were not patrolling regularly before the onset of the project, and were not using standardized protocols for patrolling, and for recording wildlife and wildlife crime. Protected area rangers were also not fully collaborating with local community ecoguards and communities. In order to improve collaboration between the FDA Protected Area Division, local communities and law enforcement authorities, WCF and partners built the rangers' capacity and established a standardized system for how the rangers use the information collected by the community ecoguards for targeted law enforcement missions. Selected rangers received additional training from LiWiSa and the World Parrot Trust on animal care, as well as from the WCTF on law enforcement protocols, wildlife crime case and data management using the Survey 123 software, allowing them to follow up on cases of IWT and on animals released back to the wild, after confiscation and successful care at LiWiSa. In total, 197 individuals were trained in these different areas.

Overall, the project created opportunities for positive collaboration with local forest fringe communities through strengthening of relationships, direct employment for youth and marginalized groups, in particular women, and conservation of critical natural resources in the landscape.
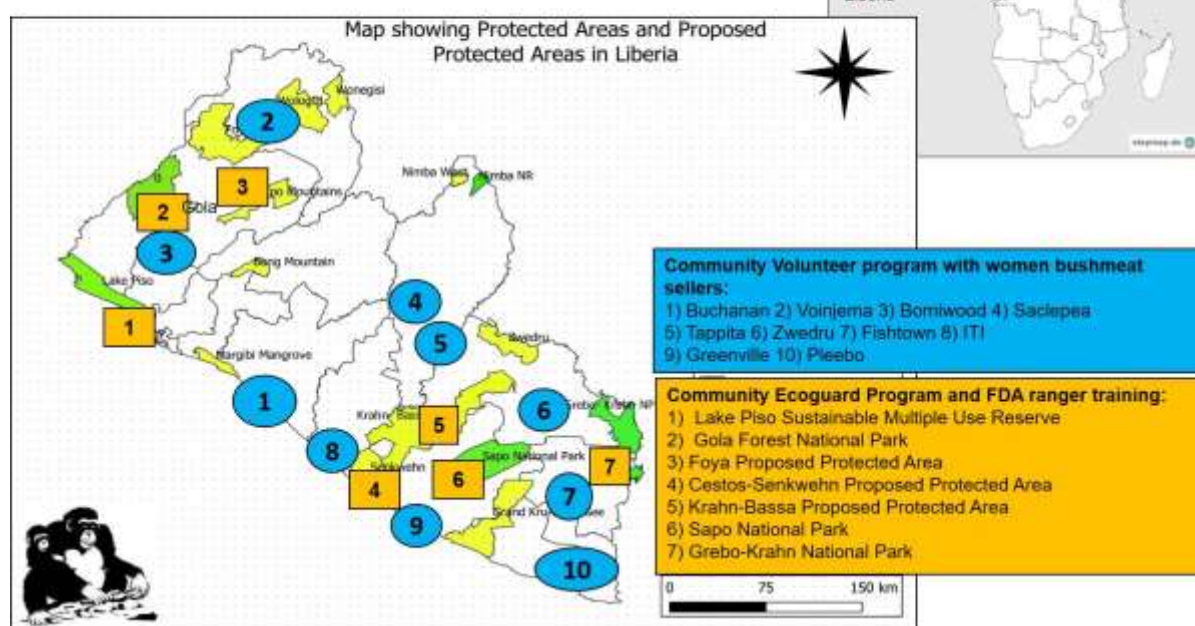
Figure 1. Map of project area highlighting locations of key Protected and Proposed Protected Areas of work (in orange) and target bushmeat market locations (in blue)

2.   Project Partnerships

The project was led by WCF and implemented in close partnership with SCNL, RSPB and LiWiSa, and in close collaboration with the FDA, FTI and LMA. All stakeholders in this project had been working in other projects together before and were involved in designing the project and writing the proposal. Though it is indeed a requirement that as an international NGO it is necessary to have a line ministry in Liberia and WCF had been working with the FDA for the past 13 years, the partnership in this project was a voluntary and desired one, building upon the collaborative success from previous and other ongoing projects. The project implementation team had regular meetings (physical and online) and constant exchange on progress and activities through a WhatsApp group, to ensure that all stakeholders involved were informed and fast action could be taken. The regular interaction included all elements of project and work planning, monitoring and evaluation of activities, decision-making and reporting. While WCF was the overall project lead, the Project Coordinator was from the RSPB and together with the project team, which also included FDA, FTI and LMA, responsibilities were shared as much as possible. The project also supported continuous capacity building for the Liberian (government) partners, to increase the sustainability of the action. All partners contributed to the writing of this final report.

This project further strengthened the partnership and collaboration of all stakeholders involved, to the extent that the team successfully applied for additional funding for two European Union-funded projects *("PROBIO – Protecting biodiversity through law enforcement and community-led initiatives"*, running from January 2024 to March 2026; *"SUSTAIN – Sustainable forest conservation in southeastern Liberia",* running from January 2025 to December 2027), to continue or even expand some of the activities funded through IWT CF. Based on the experience from this project, already during the course of the project, it was possible to adjust some of the approaches for better efficiency, and it was also possible to identify champions for the various activities among the government and other local institutions involved. The partners are continuing to work together in other projects and are also continuing to seek funding in further projects. A recent joint follow-up application to the IWT CF unfortunately was not successful.

Besides the formal partners in the project (SCNL, RSPB, LiWiSa), the FDA was not only involved in all project activities, but with support from this project actively took the lead on the community volunteer program with the female bushmeat sellers, on all training for community ecoguards and linked to law enforcement and WCTF-related training. Besides this, the FTI worked with the project through providing students for the surveys in the bushmeat markets, which also contributed to the capacity building of the students, who were trained in the use of the Kobocollect Toolbox software and on conducting standardized surveys. The LMA was instrumental in supporting the bushmeat surveys and in selecting, supervising and mentoring the female bushmeat sellers. All three institutions showed excellent collaboration, leadership and support for the project. Two other external entities, the World Parrot Trust and the Center for Environment, Forest Conservation and Research were involved in training for rangers, the WCTF and other law enforcement agents on the illegal trade, care for and release of Timneh Parrots which is still heavily traded within and outside of Liberia. The British Embassy in Monrovia was in strong support of the project from the drafting stage to the end, both through regular presence during project activities, for example during awareness events with the female bushmeat sellers in Monrovia, Buchanan, Voinjema, Saclepea and Tappita, as well as through regular technical advice. The level of engagement and support from the members of the British Embassy was outstanding and they were always available to receive updates and to participate in selected activities as much as possible, which even included the Ambassador and the Chargée d'Affaires.

Attendance sheets, activity reports, and pictures could serve as proof for the collaboration and partnership.

3. Project Achievements

3.1 Outputs

3.1.1. A nationwide community volunteer program with female bushmeat sellers established with education, training, and awareness-raising to reach the sellers and the broader community.

1.1. Bushmeat market and bushmeat sellers' income surveys conducted in 10 major Liberian towns at beginning and end of project
At the project outset, ten localities across Liberia were identified as targets for the community-volunteer program (Figure 1, blue locations). These locations were known by FDA, the WCTF, or local enforcement agencies, or by WCF and NGO partners as being large hubs for the illegal trade in protected species and in bushmeat. A market survey form used on a previous project on female bushmeat sellers was adapted and FTI students were trained to conduct the surveys using the KoboCollect tool. Questions on the form included what species were being sold, cost of species, total weekly income, and standard questions on age, place of residence, household size, etc.

The initial survey was carried out in 17 markets across Liberia from November to December 2022 with a total number of 184 interviews, while the final survey was carried out between June and September 2024, with a total of 262 interviews (Figure 3). Income surveys were not done separately, but incorporated into the initial and final surveys described above. The results from this survey allowed to identify the ten bushmeat hotspots, where the 300 targeted female bushmeat sellers were later on accepted and monitored in the community volunteer program: Buchanan, Voinjema, Bomiwood, Pleebo, Fishtown, Zwedru, Tappita, Greenville, ITI, Saclepea (see also Figure 1 and Table 1).

The mean weekly income as calculated during initial (pre-business change) and final (post-business change) surveys was compared for all markets (Figure 2). Comparison showed that the mean weekly income reduced after women changed businesses to legal enterprises, but that the variation was not substantial overall (Initial mean = 6,770 LRD; Final mean = 4,235 LRD), and that the pattern was not consistent between markets. Indeed, there were markets, were the income increased after the change (Greenville, ITI). However, even though the results show that initially the income through legal businesses seems to be less than from selling bushmeat in most markets, future surveys may show a different result, when businesses are fully established and expanded. Furthermore, feedback from the 270 women who changed from selling bushmeat to legal, sustainable businesses indicates that the fact of no longer being at risk, i.e. no longer being dependent on hunters, no longer being at risk of confiscations and arrests, and no longer being exposed to the constant risk of zoonotic diseases, as well as being part of the group of ex-bushmeat sellers, has reduced the stress for the women and has created a level of pride in the women that seems to be more important than only considering the financial income aspect.
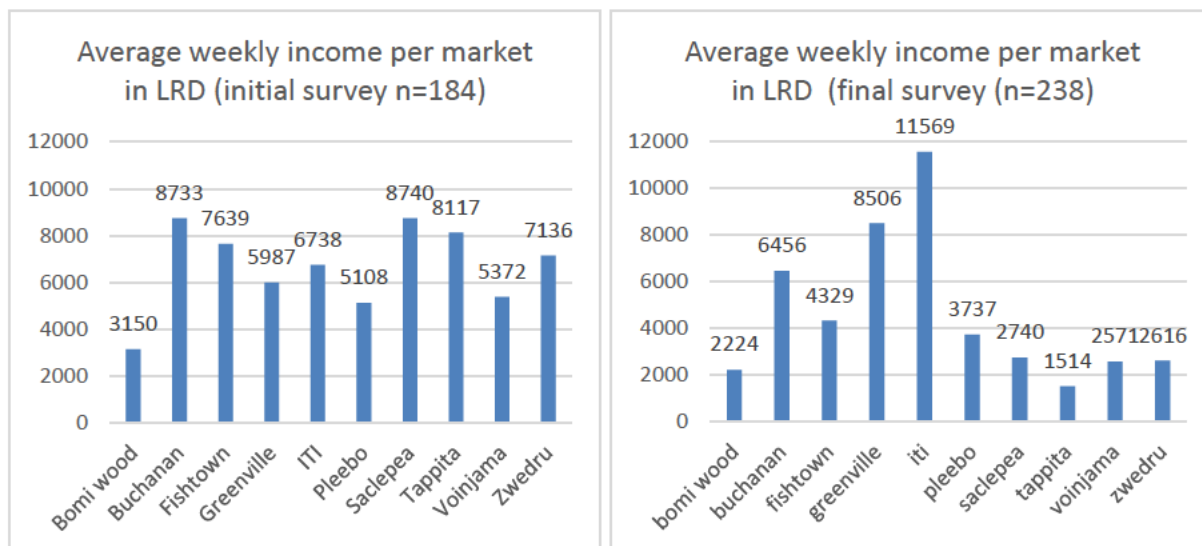
Figure 2. Mean weekly income (in Liberian dollars) per market based on initial (left) and final (right) surveys of female bushmeat sellers at all 10 market locations for IWT CF project

Due to variance in the number of women selling at markets on different days and at different locations, as well as negative perceptions of surveys about bushmeat, the number of interviews conducting at the outset of the project (initial survey) was lower compared with the end. Following these initial interviews in 2022, many more women came forward and requested to join the program and were recruited. Most of these women went on to be certified and transition to new livelihoods, becoming ex-bushmeat sellers. Most of these ex-sellers were interviewed in the final survey as shown above.

1.2. 300 female bushmeat sellers identified and formally committed to changing business to legal enterprise

With the help of LMA, 347 female bushmeat sellers were trained, of which 300 women were accepted in the program, and out of these, 270 women actually changed to legal businesses. This change was verified through regular monitoring, both through the LMA leadership in the ten bushmeat hubs, but also through (partly secret) monitoring by FDA, SCNL and WCF. The 300 women who were accepted in this community volunteer program signed formal agreements for a duration of six months with the project, during which they committed to conduct awareness and to stop violating national laws, which is equal to stop selling bushmeat and change to legal, viable businesses. This process was also strongly supported by LMA. While in eight of the ten markets, all female bushmeat sellers in the program changed businesses, in two markets, Voinjema and Zwedru, ten and 20 women, respectively, failed to change. It was observed that these two markets are overall showing the highest number of bushmeat sellers, but also, the support from the market leadership from LMA in Voinjema and Zwedru seemed to be less compared to the other targeted markets. Potentially, those market leaders are receiving personal benefits from the bushmeat sale. The non-compliance and the lack of support from the LMA market superintendents in Voinjema and Zwedru has been brought to the attention of the LMA President, but action is still pending. Nevertheless, it is seen as a big success that 270 out of 300 women (90%) no longer are selling bushmeat and the market survey indeed indicates a clear reduction and in some previous bushmeat hubs even complete elimination of bushmeat sale.

All 270 women who successfully stopped selling bushmeat and changed to legal businesses through this project were honored during final awareness programs and received certificates and appreciation from FDA, LMA and the entire project team. In four locations (Buchanan, Voinjema, Saclepea and Tappita) the British Embassy in Monrovia was directly involved in the ceremony programs (see Figure 3 below), which served as a great motivation for the women.

1.3. 300 female bushmeat sellers trained in relevant laws, protected species, importance of wildlife, risks of zoonotic diseases, and awareness communication methods.

Prior to the initial recruitment in January 2023, 347 female bushmeat sellers received training across the ten target bushmeat hubs (Table 1). Training was carried out by FDA and WCF in protected species identification, basic conservation principles and ecotourism, zoonoses and the risks of infectious diseases, the National Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management law, and the law enforcement aspects of the illegal wildlife trade and trade in bushmeat.

Further training on awareness raising methods was also provided with the expectation that the trainees would be able to conduct awareness raising in their respective communities (those recruited and those not recruited). Thereafter, a total of 300 women signed agreements and were formally recruited as community volunteers. Table 1 below provides the breakdown of these women per market location. It is important to note that many more women were interested in participating in the program, in particular after the start of the awareness, but the project was limited to 300 female bushmeat sellers.

The vast majority of the 270 women who transformed to legal businesses remained in the market environment and the sale of market goods. These are either dry goods and cloth, oil, vegetables and fruits, or direct alternatives to bushmeat, such as fish and chicken. Few women opened their own shops, or started cross-border trade, e.g. with Côte d'Ivoire.

Table 1. Number of female bushmeat sellers trained and recruited as community volunteers per market.

N°	Location	# of women trained	# of women recruited as community volunteers
1.	Buchanan	25	20
2	Voinjama	36	35
3	Bomiwood	42	30
4	Pleebo	41	30
5	Fishtown	29	20
6	Zwedru	50	50
7	Tappita	35	35
8	Greenville	23	20
9	ITI	34	30
10	Saclepea	32	30
Total		**347**	**300**

1.4. At least 60 awareness-raising events targeting bushmeat markets, consumers, restaurant owners, and schoolchildren.

Over the course of the project, 118 awareness raising events were conducted in the community around and at the ten bushmeat hubs, reaching a total of 3,400 individuals including 1,989 women (Table 2). During these awareness-raising events, the community volunteers spoke with their community members about the project, about the importance of wildlife, protected species, among those the critically endangered chimpanzees, relevant laws and risks of the bushmeat trade. They also educated other bushmeat sellers and restaurant owners. The project team, in collaboration with the community volunteers, and the ex-bushmeat seller drama team from Monrovia, conducted five awareness-raising events in Saclepea (200 participants), Zwedru (141), Jalay Town/Sapo National Park (120), Ziah Town/Grebo-Krahn National Park (75), and Kumah Town/Proposed Kwa National Park (75) over the reporting period as part of World Chimpanzee Day celebrations in 2023 and 2024. Finally, he community volunteer certification ceremonies in the ten bushmeat hubs, with high level representation from FDA, LMA, project partners, local authorities and the British Embassy in Monrovia attracted additional community members who displayed interest in the community volunteer program and helped to raise more awareness (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Certification ceremonies for the successful community volunteers (female bushmeat sellers) in Saclepea (left) with representation from the British Embassy in April 2024 (left) and in Zwedru in September 2024 (right).

Table 2. Number of awareness raising events carried out by community volunteers (female bushmeat sellers) across the ten markets with number of participants (also given disaggregated by gender).

N°	Location	Awareness events per location	Male	Female	Total
1	Fishtown	7	33	39	72
2	Pleebo	10	89	212	301
3	Zwedru	22	109	245	354
4	ITI	13	120	186	306
5	Saclepea	18	555	588	1,143
6	Tappita	8	89	113	202
7	Voinjama	6	94	86	180
8	Greenville	10	33	163	196
9	Bomi wood	7	69	63	132
10	Buchanan	17	220	294	514
Total		**118**	**1,411**	**1,989**	**3,400**

3.1.2. Community Ecoguard Program supported in 7 (proposed) protected areas, with the number of female participants increased.

<u>2.1 At least 210 patrols carried out annually per project year by community ecoguards in 7 (P)Pas.</u>
While the project initially targeted seven (P)PAs, Cestos-Senkwehn PPA could no longer be part of the project, due to a change in partnership with FDA in this landscape, and the new partner NGO not being interested in continuing the community ecoguard program. Thus, only six (P)PAs could be targeted by the project. A total of 386patrols were carried out across the six areas over the duration of the project, with 50 patrols in year 1, 156patrols in year 2, and 180 patrols in year 3 (Table 3). Thus, the annual target of 210 was not reached, which was also due to continuous delays for the gazettement for the (P)PAs in this project, as the community ecoguard teams were much involved in some pre-gazettement activities. Furthermore, patrols at Sapo National Park were delayed and partly suspended due to the presence of a large number of illegal miners and persistent security risks.

All patrols involved mixed teams of male and female ecoguards. Patrol data is given by project year rather than calendar year. Foya PPA and Proposed Kwa National Park did not start regular community ecoguard patrols until 2023, while Gola and Lake Piso had only just received the SMART training in 2022 and took some time to start adopting the SMART Mobile tool successfully. The major increase in number of patrols observed across most (PP)PAs from 2022 onwards is due to the increased number of ecoguards being employed and therefore the increased number of teams and patrol effort.

Table 3. Number of patrols carried out by community ecoguards per project year.

Protected Area	Year 1 (Jul 22 – Mar 23)	Year 2 (Apr 23 – Mar 24)	Year 3 (Apr – Dec 24)
GKNP	32	34	25
PKNP	10	25	46
SNP	2	22	18
GFNP	3	45	38
FPPA	0	12	12
LPMUR	3	18	41
Total	**50**	**156**	**180**
Grand Total		**386**	

2.2. At least 70 female ecoguards trained, equipped, and patrolling in 7 (P)Pas.

By the end of the project, 75 female community ecoguards were trained, equipped and supported to conduct monthly or bi-monthly patrols at six (P)PAs (Table 4): Grebo-Krahn National Park (GKNP), Proposed Kwa National Park (PKNP), Sapo National Park (SNP), Gola Forest National Park (GFNP), Foya Proposed Protected Area (FPPA), and Lake Piso Sustainable Multiple Use Reserve (LPSMUR). Except for LPSMUR, where for the first two years of the project female-only teams patrols, the female ecoguards formed mixed teams with male ecoguards (104) and in some areas, allowed surveillance patrol effort to be doubled compared to pre-project patrol efforts. The increase in the number of female ecoguards through the project is also beneficial from a community development and poverty-reduction perspective as it empowers young women in these communities to become financially independent though provision of sustainable income (Figure 4). They also act as ambassadors for conservation and protection of wildlife and ecosystems through the awareness activities conducted as part of community ecoguard patrols.

Table 4. Breakdown of number of (female) ecoguards trained, equipped, and patrolling per protected/proposed protected area.

Protected Area	Male	Female	Total
GKNP	17	15	32
PKNP	25	15	40
SNP	9	13	22
GFNP	30	10	40
FPPA	10	10	20
LPSMUR	13	12	25
Total	**104**	**75**	**179**

Figure 4: Tourism zone patrol team at Sapo National Park (SNP) with female team members (left) and female ecoguard from SNP proudly presenting her four-bedroom house which she constructed thanks to her ecoguard stipend (right).

2.3. Illegal activities in 7 (P)Pas reduced by 10% on old areas and by 20% in new areas

As information from regular community ecoguard patrols was not yet available for all six target areas, the comparison of encounter rates of illegal activities was only made for the years 2023 and 2024. This comparison showed that illegal activities reduced by >20% at four protected areas (Table 5): Old areas: GKNP, PKNP, and GFNP; new area: SNP. In PKNP and SNP, the maximum number of planned patrols could be completed in 2024 with every team conducting six patrols per calendar year. The highest reduction in illegal activities was observed for the SNP tourism zone (-31%). Overall, this continuous decrease of illegal activities is a highly encouraging outcome, demonstrating the community ecoguard program's effectiveness. However, at two new areas (P)PAs, the encounter rate of illegal activities increased by >10%: LPMUR and FPPA (Table 5). The increase may possibly be an artifact of increased numbers of ecoguards and patrol coverage from 2023 to 2024. We therefore suggest using 2024 figures as a baseline for these two areas moving forward. It is also important to note that due to the lack of manpower and resources, there are no regular law enforcement patrols being conducted by the FDA anywhere in Liberia. This means the community ecoguards, who have no mandate to enforce any law and are only conducting surveillance patrols, are the only group that are ensuring regular presence in the (P)PAs. This make the overall long-term success of the community ecoguard program even more remarkable.

Table 5. Comparison of illegal activity encounter rate of six proposed and established protected areas between 2023 and 2024.

(Proposed) Protected Area	2023	2024	% change of encounter rate of illegal activities
GKNP (old area)	3.3	2.1	-22.2%
PKNP (old area)	3.5	2.3	-20.7%
SNP (new area)	1.9	1.0	-31.0%
GFNP (old area)	3.3	2.2	-20.0%
FPPA (new area)	2.2	3.1	+17.0%
LPMUR (new area)	2.5	3.7	+19.4%

3.1.3. Capacity of FDA rangers increased at (proposed) protected areas.

3.1. 100 FDA rangers from 7 (P)PAs trained in Community Ecoguard Program methods, patrol planning, and wildlife crime law enforcement protocols.

Over the course of the project, a total of 197 rangers and/or wildlife law enforcement officers, including 23 women, were trained in various aspects related to conservation law enforcement and wildlife protection (Table 6). This included support for an initial training of FDA law enforcement rangers from across Liberia in July 2022 on key principles of protected area management, which included both ranger-driven enforcement and WCTF protocols. A follow-up training for key focal point rangers was given in Monrovia in August 2023 that focused on advanced training for 24 pre-selected rangers on evidence gathering, arrests and detention and use of the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) Wildlife Crime database data collection form through Survey 123. In January 2024 law enforcement training was conducted in Zwedru for rangers and auxiliaries. In February 2024, a joint training session was held with the original WCTF members as well as the entire Special Wildlife Investigations Unit (SWIU) to focus on harmonized law enforcement protocols for wildlife crime cases and to showcase the updated National Wildlife Crime Database to law enforcement partners. Finally, World Parrot Trust conducted two specialized training sessions in June and July 2024 focused on the illegal wildlife trade in birds, mainly parrots. The training sessions included pre- and post-knowledge test, which showed an overall substantial increase of knowledge obtained through the training sessions.

Table 6. Capacity-building trainings organized for rangers and/or wildlife law enforcement officers.

No.	Date	Name of Training	Location	Total participants	Male	Female
1	July 2022	Protected area management training for FDA rangers	Gola	69	65	4
2	28-31 August 2023	Wildlife Crime Task Force Training	Libassa	24	20	4
3	29-31 January 2024	Forest law enforcement auxiliary training on crime scene investigation, processing evidence, handling of suspects and court proceeding	Zwedru	12	11	1
4	15-16 February 2024	Wildlife Crime Task Force /SWIU training	Monrovia	47	40	7
5	28 June 2024	First response training: Rescue & rehabilitation of confiscated parrots	Libassa	16	13	3
6	1-2 July 2024	World Parrots Trust training	Zwedru	29	25	4
		Total number of persons trained		**197**	**174**	**23**

3.2. Systems established for rangers to use the CEP-collected data, and to conduct awareness-raising with the community ecoguards and other community members.

A centralized Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) database was setup for the FDA Conservation Department at the FDA Headquarters in Mount Barclay, Liberia. A desktop computer and Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) were purchased and SMART V7.5.10 installed. Two long-term volunteers from the FTI were recruited, trained and supported by the project.

They worked with the FDA twice a week to also build FDA's capacity in maintaining and using the database. All six of the (P)PA's targeted by the IWT CF project were backed up to this SMART database every two to three months during the project period. The result is a centralized and standardized system that will allow FDA Conservation Department and SMART Focal persons to access and utilize the Community Ecoguard collected patrol and surveillance data to track progress in terms of the Community Ecoguard Program, and to monitor changes in illegal activities and wildlife observations across the PA network. It also provides baseline data for reporting both, internally and to project partners, as well as to relevant communities around the various (P)PAs. Furthermore, the project team worked with the local FDA teams to organize targeted law enforcement interventions based on the monthly SMART reports. This led to some unprecedented successes. For example, at GKNP, law enforcement conducted by FDA rangers and auxiliaries, as well as joint security patrols that were conducted based on the SMART reports from the community ecoguard surveillance patrols, led to the first arrest, prosecutions, and convictions of six suspects arrested in 2024, since its establishment in 2017.

Any problems encountered in achieving the Outputs
The major problem encountered that partially affected the Outputs of the project was the non-compliance of 30 female bushmeat sellers in the community-volunteer program (Output 1). These 30 women continued to sell bushmeat despite signing the agreement and collecting their initial stipends. They were subsequently dropped from the program and could not be replaced at that stage, bringing the total number of ex-bushmeat sellers successfully changing to legal businesses and being certified to 270 instead of the target of 300. This problem was captured under Assumption 2 (i.e., *Local stakeholders are interested in awareness raising campaigns, are willing to participate, and are receptive to changing practices*) in the receptive to changing practices part of the assumption. Unfortunately, apart from these non-complying individuals being dropped from the program, there was no other resolution due to timing of the project and limited funding.

Furthermore, also related to Output 1, the fact that Cestos-Senkwehn PPA could no longer be targeted by the project and that the community ecoguards were strongly involved in pre-gazettement activities at the various (P)PAs during the first year of the project resulted in a reduced number of community ecoguard patrols achieved. While the project target were 210 patrols per year, only 180 per year could be achieved during the last year of the project.

3.2 Outcome

The project fully achieved the desired reduction in IWT products through the community volunteer program with female bushmeat sellers, support for female community ecoguards including increased forest patrols and awareness raising in communities, and capacity-building for rangers leading to improved wildlife law enforcement. A total of 118 awareness events on wildlife conservation, protected species and the FDA Conservation law were delivered at ten target locations across Liberia, reaching a total of 3,400 individuals including 1,989 women. Bushmeat sales at these ten target markets also reduced by >90% through the transitioning of 270 female bushmeat sellers to legal and sustainable business enterprises. However, the mean income of bushmeat sellers decreased at eight markets, with only ITI and Greenville registering an increase in mean weekly income after business change. This is to be expected given the high prices of certain types of bushmeat in many parts of Liberia. A total of 75 women as part of 179 community ecoguards were supported by monthly stipends to patrol in the six (P)PAs. Lastly, 197 FDA rangers and other individuals involved in law enforcement received training in wildlife law enforcement, wildlife crime database, community ecoguard protocols, and in SMART Mobile for law enforcement monitoring inside (P)PAs and improved law enforcement practices in line with WCTF protocols.

3.3 Monitoring of assumptions

Assumptions were monitored throughout the duration of the project. Assumption 1 (i.e., *Stability of the COVID-19 pandemic*) turned out to be of no consequence as there were no further lockdowns or restrictions of any sort due to this for the duration of the project. Assumption 2 (i.e., *Local stakeholders are interested in awareness raising campaigns, are willing to participate, and are receptive to changing practices*) did partially affect Activity 1 (Community Volunteer Program) through the non-compliance of 30 out of 300 female bushmeat sellers with the terms of the agreement to change business. However, this did not affect the overall target being achieved (>50% reduction in bushmeat trade at 10 markets) since 270 out of 300 women successfully changed business.

3.4 Impact

The project impact focused on effective protection of Liberia's wildlife by all relevant stakeholders and the reduction of poverty for local community members in the long term through increased capacity and sustainable incomes. The project contributed to a high-level impact on IWT via the reduction in bushmeat trade at ten markets over the short-term (270 women converted to legal business), and through supporting poverty reduction via provision of alternative sustainable livelihoods for 75 women as part of 179 community ecoguards employed during the project.

The project also supported the training of 197 rangers and wildlife crime officers in law enforcement protocols and provided essential equipment and training to enhance the collection of data on the illegal wildlife trade across Liberia.

In addition, the project supported 118 awareness-raising events for local communities as part of the Community Volunteer program, and skills development for >100 rangers and 179 community ecoguards. Provisioning of stipends for the Community Volunteers and the Community Ecoguards contributed positively to poverty reduction and was made sustainable via new donor grants that have taken over from January 2025 immediately after the IWT CF project closure. However, one unforeseen caveat of the project was the initial reduction in income for most of the community volunteers (ex-bushmeat sellers) once they changed business. Although it was not a substantial difference (Before change=6,770 LRD versus After change=4,235 LRD), this result means that monetary benefits under this component of the project did decrease slightly. However, this is compensated significantly by the stipend of $60 that the community volunteers received monthly during their agreements with a six-month duration. Furthermore, other benefits linked to changing to legal, sustainable businesses seemed to be more important for those women who successful changed. They reported the benefit of experiencing less stress, not being exposed to potential loss of business, not being dependent on any hunter and not being exposed to zoonotic diseases. Furthermore, the women also expressed a high level of pride of being part of a larger group of ex-bushmeat sellers in Liberia, and of contributing to a better future for Liberia.

4. Contribution to IWT Challenge Fund Program Objectives

4.1 Thematic focus

4.1.1. Reducing demand for IWT products
The project contributed to this objective through the community volunteer program focusing on female bushmeat sellers. The reduced demand is mainly through 90% of female bushmeat sellers converting to legal business enterprises and leaving the bushmeat markets. This resulted in less bushmeat being sold at these markets overall, as well as fewer protected species sold as bushmeat. The results of this can be seen in Section 3 above and is supported by the relevant indicators in Annex 3. The overall outcome and impact achieved is the reduction in bushmeat sales of key protected species in the illegal wildlife trade and a substantial reduction in bushmeat sales at ten significant markets across Liberia over the project cycle.

4.1.2. Ensuring effective legal frameworks and deterrents
Through the increase knowledge, awareness and capacity of all stakeholders involved in this project, i.e. at from the level of community members, over NGOs partners, to the government partners, the project contributed to the more effective implementation of the legal frameworks. At the level of the rangers and law enforcement officers trained, the increased capacity allowed them to improve in their law enforcement activities, which included the effectiveness in confiscations, arrests and prosecutions. The more effective law enforcement hase clearly increased the level of deterrents. For example, in 2024, the first ever convictions for six poachers arrested in GKNP was a big success, and at the level of the WCTF, 22 cases were prosecuted and let to successful convictions, which was more than in the entire history of Liberia. This project contributed to this success.

4.1.3. Strengthening law enforcement
The project contributed to this objective through recruitment, training of and support for female community ecoguards to conduct surveillance patrols and this provide information for law enforcement patrols support in six (P)PAs particularly those where ranger numbers were very low. In total, 75 women as part of 179 community ecoguard were supported across six (P)PAs and trained to record illegal activities and raise awareness in forest edge communities. In doing so, they directly supported the efforts of the FDA Law Enforcement Department.

Law enforcement rangers and officers of the Wildlife Crime Task Force (WCTF) and Special Wildlife Investigations Unit (SWIU) were also trained in the use of wildlife crime protocols. This included aspects such as evidence detection and gathering, seizure and arrests, animal handling and care, and use of platforms and online applications such as ESRI Survey 123 and the FDA National Wildlife Crime Database. The trainings provided are detailed in Section 3 above and in Annex 3 under the relevant indicators for training of rangers in Output 3. Training was provided to 197 rangers/officers and auxiliaries under the IWT CF project and contributed directly to law enforcement efforts, either in (Proposed) Protected areas or as part of the national operations of the WCTF and SWIU.

4.1.4. Developing sustainable livelihoods to benefit people directly affected by IWT

Through the project activities, 270 female bushmeat sellers were supported financially over six months each to transition from illegal wildlife trade (bushmeat sales) to legal and sustainable enterprises e.g. textiles, food sales and crops. However, the alternative livelihood was only made possible through the monthly stipend payments in return of conducting awareness during this transition period, that acted as additional incentive. While it is unclear how sustainable the alternative livelihood is economically in the long-term, none of the 344 women (including the 270 women in this project) in Liberia who changed from selling bushmeat to legal businesses, including through this project, was ever observed to turn back to selling bushmeat. In addition to the community volunteer activity, 75 female community ecoguards as part of 179 ecoguards in total in Liberia were recruited and are currently still actively working as ecoguards (having moved to a new European Union-funded projects). The community ecoguard activity has a good track record of sustainability and longevity, particularly in rural parts of the country where alternative livelihoods are scarce. In particular the wellbeing and social status of female ecoguards is significantly raised through their regular income.

Evidence provided in Section 3 in the main report and in the annexes supports the fact that the project has contributed to three of the above objectives. Community volunteer agreements, pre- and post-intervention bushmeat survey reports, SMART community ecoguard patrol reports, and ranger/officer attendance at key training sessions are all main evidence pieces that support the contributions. Images of community volunteers being certified, community ecoguards on patrol and rangers deploying protocols they were trained in contributes to additional evidence.

SMART reports show increased patrol teams and spatial coverage as well as increased detection of illegal activities. The WCTF and SWIU were supported through training and equipment provision with the outcome being an increase in numbers of cases brought to court, number of seizures and number of suspects detained/arrested. This can be seen in the latest version of the ESRI Wildlife Crime Database.

4.2 Impact on species in focus

The direct impact on the key focal species at risk of IWT in Liberia is difficult to measure over such a short time span as the project cycle. Mammal population recovery and performance in particular is a long-term process and we do not expect that populations of the critically endangered western chimpanzee, monkeys and duikers or more elusive species such as pygmy hippos and forest buffalos are going to simply recover following a reduction in bushmeat sales over a two-year period at ten markets. However, based on the outputs of both the community volunteer program and the progress of the WCTF/SWIU, we observed that in the short-term, a reduction in bushmeat at markets and an increase in confiscations of wildlife and arrests and detention of suspects would lead to a slightly reduced impact on several species, and on the forest habitat, which hopefully will have a more positive impact in the long term. The bushmeat market showed reduced trade and availability of key species in the targeted market areas.

Likewise, based on WCF's long-term experience across West Africa, the positive impact of the community ecoguard program has shown a decrease of illegal human activities, which are mainly focused around hunting. In those (P)PAs where the community ecoguard programs are fully established, the target is to reach a level of encounter rates of illegal activities of 0.5 signs/km or less, leading to stable animal populations (experience from Taï National Park in Côte d'Ivoire). However, the surveillance patrols conducted by the community ecoguards must be followed by effective law enforcement to achieve this target.

4.3 Project support for multidimensional poverty reduction

The project contributed to a reduction in poverty and improved human development in the following way:

- Providing training and capacity building for 75 female community ecoguards among 179 community ecoguards and 197 law enforcement officers and rangers in detection of illegal activities, SMART

Mobile Patrol monitoring tools and wildlife crime protocols and the wildlife crime database respectively. The project also resulted in key training and awareness raising for 347 female bushmeat sellers trained and provided financial support and guidance to 300 of them, to allow them to transition to legal businesses instead of remaining in the illegal and risky bushmeat industry.

- This not only reduced the trade in bushmeat of key protected species such as western chimpanzees, colobus monkeys and crocodiles, but also contributed to human development via provision of certain skills and financial support to women in local communities. This empowers local women and facilitates the transition to an alternative livelihood. Equally, apart from skills learned during project trainings, the community ecoguards benefitted further through regular stipends based on patrols conducted per month. This allows young women in rural communities to become financially independent and also provide an income to support themselves and extended families.

Project beneficiaries included 75 female community ecoguards across six (P)PAs, 300 females (out of which 30 had to be dropped from the program after three months due to non-compliance) bushmeat sellers across ten markets in Liberia, and 197 rangers/officers from FDA and partner organizations. The latter received key skills training in technical aspects e.g. ESRI Survey 123, as well as on the National Conservation Act and WCTF protocols. They also received necessary equipment in the form of smartphones. The community ecoguards and community volunteers received monthly stipends from the project although this differed between the two groups in terms of numbers and total cost.

The direct impact on poverty included:

- Increased income and job security for 75 female community ecoguards in six broader landscapes across Liberia linked to Protected Area network.

- Temporarily increased income and financial security and transition from risky illegal business to legal business for initially 300, then 270 (after 30 had to be dropped due to non-compliance) community volunteers across ten major bushmeat hubs.

The indirect impact on poverty included:

- Specialized training and equipment provided to FDA rangers through project activities results in long term investment in operational capacity and support for partners.

- Financial and logistical support for FDA Law Enforcement teams results in long-term investment in operational and policy support for partners.

- Increased awareness on wildlife conservation and protected species law through community ecoguard and community volunteer awareness raising in local communities.

4.4 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

GESI Scale	Description	Put X where you think your project is on the scale
Not yet sensitive	The GESI context may have been considered but the project isn't quite meeting the requirements of a 'sensitive' approach	
Sensitive	The GESI context has been considered and project activities take this into account in their design and implementation. The project addresses basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	
Empowering	The project has all the characteristics of a 'sensitive' approach whilst also increasing equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups	
Transformative	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	X

This project is assessed as transformative, as through the community volunteer and the community ecoguard programs, close to 345 women in ten key bushmeat hubs and around six (P)PAs experienced transformative change, not only in terms of knowledge and capacity, but also in terms of social and financial status and wellbeing. The community ecoguard program, which before was very male-dominated (25 women among 112 ecoguards; 22%) now promotes 75 women across Liberia (75 women among 179 ecoguards; 42%), which has a significant impact not only on the individuals involved, but also on their families and communities as a whole. It also has impacted the institutions involved, i.e. FDA. FTI and the LMA, who have taken the lead on implementation and promoting the aims and principles of the project beyond this project. Considerig the awareness conducted, the majority of those reached through the awareness were women (1,989 women out if 3,400 people reached; 59%), which is not usually the case for general awareness and show the effort made to in particular create an opportunity to women to learn more about the natural resources and being able to manage them. Furthermore, out of 197 rangers and law enforcement officers, 23 were women (12%). While this is still a low number considering that fact that before this project close to no women were involved in law enforcement and considered for capacity building in law enforcement by the FDA, we do see this as a success.

From the start of designing the project, the focus was on empowering rural women and youth, considering their existing disadvantages in terms of capacity, ability to participate the lead on the management of natural resources and decision-making. The project also considered the existing vulnerability of women who have no financial independence and are exposed to an increased risk of zoonotic diseases.

5.   Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) played a vital role in recording the successes of the IWT CF project. It provided quality data to inform management decisions that eventually led to greater accountability and lessons learnt. To ensure an effective and efficient system for tracking the project indicators, a detailed M&E plan was developed for the project in November 2022.

Subsequently, relevant stakeholders and project partners updated the plan in January 2023 and a workshop was facilitated by the M&E Officer to train all project partners and key staff in the plan. The purpose of the M&E plan was to track and assess the project indicators and to ensure that activities and plans are going according to schedules. All indicators were disaggregated and units of measurement were established. This helped to ensure that project data were properly collected, stored, and used for decision-making, accountability (both to donor and local community/partners) and learning purposes.

Additionally, an indicator tracking tool (ITT), and other output monitoring tools were developed to assist with tracking awareness raising events under the project. The training assessment exit questionnaire and attendance sheet were updated. The updated attendance sheet disaggregated the age ranges of participants to include youth (<35) and adults (>35) years.

All project-related data were collected from relevant partners and field staff on a monthly basis. Data collection during this reporting period was spread across different landscapes and partners. For example, 12 interns from the FTI supported the collection of the project baseline data using the KoboCollect toolbox in 17 targeted locations. To validate the quality of the data, the M&E Officer ensured that both primary and secondary data are verified using a number of data verification standards. Where feasible, additional interviews or discussions were initiated to further validate particular information, such as the number of participants at a training. In such cases, verification with training participants using simple random sampling was critical to ensuring that the project was registering the intended change or hitting the right targets.

The project's M&E system was crucial for ensuring data quality and providing valuable feedback. Rigorous verification methods, including supplementary interviews and random sampling, were employed to validate both primary and secondary data, guaranteeing accuracy. This focus on data reliability ensured that project decisions were based on sound information. Furthermore, the M&E process was highly participatory, actively engaging beneficiaries and stakeholders in tracking progress. Regular performance reviews fostered collaboration and open communication among partners, allowing for shared learning and a sense of ownership. Information dissemination was prioritized to maintain transparency and facilitate informed decision-making. Multiple channels, such as email, WhatsApp groups, detailed reports, and regular project update meetings, were utilized to keep all partners and stakeholders informed.

This comprehensive approach ensured that project progress was clearly communicated, promoting a shared understanding of outcomes and enabling timely adjustments as needed. Throughout the project, a system of internal evaluation was employed by WCF and project partners to track performance, assess effectiveness, and identify areas for improvement. This internal evaluation served as a crucial tool for monitoring progress towards project goals, pinpointing strengths and weaknesses, and ensuring accountability.

Methods and Processes:
WCF's M&E Officer facilitated regular project performance review sessions, bringing together project partners to discuss progress, challenges, and lessons learned, and to develop action plans. Data collection included pre- and post-surveys conducted with 300 female bushmeat sellers using the Kobo-Collect tool. FTI students received training in data collection and reporting. Additionally, systematic reviews of project processes and outcomes were conducted.

The internal evaluation process yielded several benefits, including:
- Continuous Improvement: Enabling ongoing adjustments and refinements to project implementation.
- Team Engagement: Fostering a sense of ownership and involvement among project partners.
- Real-time Insights: Providing timely data for informed and responsive decision-making.

6. Lessons learnt
The key lessons learnt as a result of this project are as follows:

Activity 1 – Community Volunteer Program
The Community Volunteer Program worked extremely well in achieving the objective of a decrease in the sale of bushmeat at local markets and supported a transitioning of local women away from illegal trade in bushmeat. However, a number of aspects of the intervention could be improved. These included:

- The pre-intervention survey needed to take place independently of the project being introduced to the women for the first time. It should also take place totally independently of recruitment. In the future, the LMA and the FDA should be tasked with discussing this with market sellers well before the students or NGOs get involved. In this way, the bushmeat sellers will be fully aware of the student visits, the NGO role and nature of the surveys and project activities. This would resolve the bias in numbers at the beginning and end of project surveys and also engage the sellers trust quicker and more effectively. It would also place more emphasis on the role of the LMA market superintendents.

- Considering the vital role the LMA marker superintendents are playing in selecting, supervising and mentoring the women on the markets and that we observed that those superintendents who were fully committed to the program actually were able to fully eliminate the sale of bushmeat from some markets and also to ensure compliance of the female bushmeat sellers in the community volunteer program (eight markets), it is obvious that the non-compliance in two markets (Zwedru and Voinjema), also shall be linked to the attitude and commitment of the market superintendents. While this issue was brought to the attention to the LMA President, a more thorough investigation, potentially involving the WCTF, could possibly help to understand if the respective market superintendents are receiving direct benefits from the sale of bushmeat in their markets. In the future, increased pressure should also be placed on LMA to ensure that market superintendents are in full support.

Activity 2 – Community Ecoguard Program
Supporting and improving the Community Ecoguard Program at the various Protected Areas worked well throughout the project lifespan. However, there are also big assumptions made that need to be better understood or assessed upfront, particularly in areas where FDA (law enforcement) is non-existent:

- A big assumption of the project and other similar projects is that increasing community ecoguards and community ecoguard patrols will lead to a decrease in illegal activities. However, although this did happen in four of the six protected areas, it must be noted that community ecoguards cannot carry out law enforcement. Thus, any reductions in illegal activities observed are purely as a result of community ecoguard presence and their influence with the local communities. Without law enforcement as a backup, this reduction will be unsustainable.

This can be witnessed in areas like Foya and Lake Piso, where illegal activities have generally remained the same despite the ecoguard programs due to a total absence of law enforcement by the FDA and communities now familiar with the fact that community ecoguards have no mandate to enforce law.

- Baselines need to be established for new areas and PPAs before comparisons of before and after effects can be accurately made. Examples are Lake Piso and Foya where few or no community ecoguard patrols were taking place prior to the start of the project. For these areas, we are then comparing year to year within the project cycle and it is a very high expectation to witness change over such a short time period. We recommend that the values established in this project and others running at the same time be used as baselines for future projects focusing on these activities.

Activity 3 – Capacity building and support for FDA rangers and SMART and Community Ecoguard Focal Unit

Training of FDA rangers in various aspects of patrol monitoring, law enforcement, wildlife crime mitigation and data recording and management was successfully achieved during the project. However, as with the previous activities, certain assumptions presented problems and need to be clearly outlined at the start of the project:

- Training of members of the SMART and Community Ecoguard Focal Unit did not actually lead to improved data management or more effective governance. This is due to the extremely low-capacity level of FDA staff, a lack of organization and control within the Unit and a general absence of leadership from the FDA Conservation Department. These same issues also hampered law enforcement training for wildlife crime officers and rangers as despite receiving training, they were unable to implement many of skills learned. The Conservation Department needs to have clear guidelines and Terms of Reference for all staff members and enforce these to ensure that staff are achieving their key performance objectives. Additionally, we recommend a system where rangers/officers are held accountable for not achieving a certain level of data recording or monitoring.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Changes in key project staff half-way through project activities caused problems, particularly to the M&E component of the project, both in Monrovia and Zwedru. If possible, it is preferable to keep the same staff on board for the duration of projects, especially when social surveys are being implemented. Using the same FTI students for pre- and post- bushmeat market surveys for example, worked very well.

7. Actions taken in response to Annual Report reviews

Few recommendations were given by the reviewers that should be addressed in this final report. One was to improve on the submission of supporting document linked to M&E, which we hope has been addressed by ensuring the full documentation is submitted and well labelled. Second, the information on the type of businesses and livelihoods that the ex-bushmeat sellers transformed to should be available. We included such additional information within the update for the respective activity and the information is also available in the community volunteer database. Furthermore, we added some recommendations to address the non-compliance of some of the female bushmeat-sellers, and also elaborated more on the sustainability aspect.

8. Risk Management

As recommended in the reviewer comments, we conducted a review of the risk assessment, to ensure that any potential new risks were identified and addressed. An added risk, as recommended by the reviewers, was the limited capacity and ability for FDA to take leadership on certain aspects of the project, such as the community ecoguard program. However, in 2024, we saw some improvement through empowerment of key FDA staff by the FDA leadership to take on more responsibilities and some of the delays caused by the beginning of the project could actually be addressed. For example, at SNP, in 2024, the maximum possible number of patrols was conducted in the SNP tourism zone by the tourist ecoguards/tourist guides, which include the 13 women supported through this project. In other areas, the number of ecoguard patrols increased during the last year of the project. The gain in routine with these activities in the various target areas may have contributed to this. With regard to the sustainability of the project, which also was identified as a potential new risk, the additional funding obtained by WCF and partners helped to mitigate this risk, and helped to continue most activities of the project (though at a smaller scale for the community volunteer program with the female bushmeat sellers).

9. Scalability and Durability

The project has shown to have an important impact and to continue to build the basis for continuation and further expansion. Experience exchange and promotion of project successes have helped to ensure long-term engagement and local ownership of key stakeholders, i.e. community members, marketeers, partners and collaborators. The high level of interest for continuation of the project initiatives from both, the local communities and the government show the importance of the project achievements. Beneficiaries, in particular the female ex-bushmeat sellers, as well as the female community ecoguards have taken pride in their achievements and have taken clear ownership, by sharing their personal experiences and success stories. In line with this, it is remarkable that the ex-bushmeat sellers were even able to convince other bushmeat sellers who were not directly benefitting from the project to also stop selling bushmeat and the women have started to organize themselves, to come up with their own loan programs to encourage other women to also stop selling bushmeat and to change to legal businesses. Some of the market superintendents from LMA, i.e. those who are leading the local markets, also have taken full ownership and have fully stopped the sale of bushmeat in some of the markets.

From the side of donors, the successful achievements of the project have been convincing. Currently, five active WCF-led projects are supporting the continuation of the community ecoguard program and law enforcement activities in the various landscapes and one of the projects also at the national level for the WCTF, while two are supporting the continuation of the community volunteer program with the female bushmeat sellers. The donors of this active projects are the European Union (3 projects), Rainforest Trust, and Rainforest Rescue. In three of the projects, either all or some of the current project partners and beneficiaries continue to be involved.

The key organizations and key stakeholders involved, have built up robust and trustful collaborations and partnerships through the project and see the mutual benefit of collaboration. They are actively continuing to promote the project achievements and are coming up with their own ideas of how to continue. They are also coming up with ideas for new or improved policies, in particular on how to fully stop the bushmeat sale in the markets and on how to create additional or new alternative livelihoods. This includes connecting the key stakeholders to conservation enterprises and value chains promoting forest and biodiversity conservation in the long term.

The original exit plan was based on the responsible behaviour of the women and them taking ownership, as well as the full establishment and ownership of the community ecoguard program and law enforcement by FDA. Furthermore, the promotion of sustainable funding mechanisms was considered, that should continue to pay for the community ecoguard program in the long term. While indeed, the women are showing and promoting a true behaviour change, we also see several steps on the side of the government that are ensuring that all achievements of the projects shall be maintained, such as:

- With support from WCF and partners, FDA and other law enforcement entities have drafted the national law enforcement strategy which will be validated soon, and which builds upon the surveillance patrols conducted by the community ecoguards. The community ecoguard program thus formally is fully part of FDA's and other government partners' strategy.

- FDA and partners have developed standardized Terms of Reference for the Community Ecoguards and Auxiliaries. The latter are considered advanced ecoguards who are supporting law enforcement with FDA Rangers.

- FDA, other government institutions and partners have increased efforts to develop sustainable funding mechanisms and to develop pilot projects as fast as possible, specifically with regard to REDD+ (*Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries*) projects and conservation agreements. The support for local community members involved in forest monitoring and conservation are an important component of this initiative.

- There is an increased effort to functionalize the Liberia Conservation Fund, which shall become a source of sustainable support for PA management, including the community ecoguards

- FDA, LMA and partners are working toward organizing ex-bushmeat sellers in conservation enterprises and improving the level of alternatives by organizing skills training, promoting non-timber-forest-product value chains, etc.

- Recent increased engagement with the highest level of government (the Liberian President), has allowed WCF to promote the project achievements and the President committed to promote

conservation and has shown particular interest in the promotion of women on conservation, as well as ensuring effective law enforcement in the protected areas and beyond.

Based on the above, we are confident that all project achievements will endure and will be expanded (which is already happening).

Furthermore, all project staff have been maintained beyond the project and are now paid by other projects, in the same way as all community ecoguards continue to be active in their various areas. In line with this, all capacity built has remained and will remain in the country and the new and ongoing projects are also building upon the capacity that was built in the IWT CF project.

Project equipment and materials will officially be handed over to those entities that are already using them, which includes the project partners and collaborators.

10.   IWT Challenge Fund Identity

During all project activities the logos from IWT CF and UK AID were fully displayed and promoted. Project stickers and banner were produced that were displayed and used to label all equipment. Likewise, the logos were printed on t-shirts used by the community volunteers and community ecoguards, so that the project identity and the IWT CF and UK AID logos were visible also during forest patrols and awareness. Also, for other awareness events that were supported by the project, all logos were visible and the contribution of the IWT CF and the UK Government was fully recognized. The IWT CF project was usually recognized as a distinct project. Exceptions were larger awareness programs shared with other partners and donors. The project helped to promote the knowledge and understanding of the IWT CF, which was explained through the various awareness programs, as well as through media programs, such as radio programs and newspaper articles.

WCF is active on social media and the project has been promoted through the various channels, i.e. the WCF website, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and IWT CF/BCF have been tagged (11. July 2022, 19. April 2023, 16. May 2023, 14. July 2023, 31. August 2023, 12. February 2024, 12. March 2024, 23. September 2024). News section of WCF webpage: https://www.wildchimps.org/news.html, May 2023 - Exciting update on the new national park in Liberia!, April 2023 - Community consultations around Krahn-Bassa Proposed Protected Area continue as gazettement activities near completion.

11.   Safeguarding

12. Finance and administration

The section below provided information about the finances of the project since the last Annual Report.

11.1 Project expenditure

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2024/25 Grant (£)	2024/25 Total actual IWT CF 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)				
Audit costs				
TOTAL	£ 135,731	£135,731		

Staff employed (Name and position)	Cost (£)
Dr. Annika Hillers, Project Leader WCF	
Zoro Gone Bi Irie Berenger, Field Coordinator WCF	
Princess Yormie Tweh, Senior Field Supervisor WCF	
Elemuel Nenwah, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer WCF	
Garyfox Gayflor, Administration & Finance Manager WCF	
Henriattor Singbeh, Administration, HR & Finance Officer WCF	
Boakai Massalay, Mechanic Driver WCF	
Jerry King, Driver WCF	
Amos T. Benson, Driver WCF	
Tarik Bodasing, Project Coordinator RSPB	
Gordon B. Sambolah, Field Coordinator SCNL	
Rolland K. Warner, Field Supervisor SCNL	
Ma-Sue Koffa, Financial Assistant SCNL	
Valere Verbaet, Sanctuary Director, LiWiSa	
Medical insurance (WCF staff)	
TOTAL	

Capital items – description	Capital items – cost (£)
NA	0
TOTAL	0

Other items – description	Other items – cost (£)
Bank transfer fees	████
Awareness materials	
Rainboots	
Audit	
TOTAL	

11.2 Additional funds or in-kind contributions secured

Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project	Total (£)
Wild Chimpanzee Foundation	████
TOTAL	

Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project	Total (£)
PROBIO: Protecting biodiversity through law enforcement and community-led initiatives (EU-funded)	████
SUSTAIN: Sustainable forest conservation in southeastern Liberia (EU-funded)	
NaturAfrica TGKS: Biodiversity Conservation with Special Emphasis on the West-African Chimpanzee through Integrated Management of the Taï Grebo-Krahn-Sapo Forest Complex	
TOTAL	

11.3 Value for Money
Considering the impact of the project leading to true, long-term behaviour change of at least 345 women, increased law enforcement capacity for at least 197 rangers and law enforcement officer, reduced bushmeat sale on the ten major bushmeat hubs in Liberia and reduced illegal activities by more than 20% in four established (P)PAs, we consider that good value for money was achieved by the project. This is even more true, considering the extremely small level of administrative costs, with only 13 staff member receiving salary on the project from four project partners, which include only two full-time staff, while all other staff only worked partially for the project.

As the project was complemented by other projects, also the input in terms of equipment and materials was limited, as materials and equipment provided by other projects could be used.

12.   Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere
Overall, the project team and all stakeholders involved have concluded the project with a positive experience, which we will continue to promote in Liberia and beyond. Based on the experience shared, neighbouring countries, in particular Sierra Leone, have expressed strong interest in piloting the community volunteer program, while the community ecoguard program is already running in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. A project application to the IWT CF, upscaling the project to more areas in Liberia and expanding it to Sierra Leone, unfortunately was not successful.

The training provided in this project was complementary to other projects and in 2024 contributed to unprecedented successes of the WCTF/SWIU, as 22 wildlife crime cases led to successful convictions with suspects either being in jail or paying fines. This number is higher than the total number of convictions for wildlife crimes in the entire Liberian history before 2024.

13.   OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds to edit and use the following for various promotional purposes (please leave this line in to indicate your agreement to use any material you provide here).

The biggest and most unique achievement of the IWT CF project was the reduction in bushmeat trade at ten Liberian bushmeat hotspots through the training, support, and certification of 270 female bushmeat sellers as community volunteers. Not only did the transitioning of these women to legal and sustainable business have a direct impact on bushmeat sales at these locations, but the awareness-raising conducted by these women in their role as community volunteers also reached large segments of the rural community around key established and proposed protected areas in the country. The combination of non-enforcement and incentive-based approaches such as this should be expanded further, but also coupled with rigorous law enforcement at known bushmeat markets to supress the illegal wildlife trade in bushmeat over the long-term. Ensuring the sustainability of such interventions is critical and projects should attempt to provide longer-term support, including skills training and conservation enterprise development for those who have transitioned to legal enterprises.

Image, Video or Graphic Information:

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)
11 Images (JPGs) submitted with the supporting documents	1.8 Community volunteers_1-11_WCF-Liberia (11 JPGs, project photos)	Community volunteer program, Liberia, Wild Chimpanzee Foundation		Yes
3 Images (JPGs) submitted with the supporting documents	2.3 Ecoguards_1-3_WCF-Liberia (3 JPGs, project photos)	Community ecoguard programm, Liberia, Wild Chimpanzee Foundation		Yes

Annex 1 Report of progress and achievements against logframe for the life of the project

Project summary	Progress and achievements
Impact **Liberia's wildlife is effectively protected by all relevant stakeholders and poverty for local community members is reduced in the long term through increased capacity and sustainable incomes**	- The Community Volunteer Program was a resounding success with 270 out of 300 women certified during the intervention. All of these women stopped selling bushmeat and transitioned to legal and sustainable businesses over the lifespan of the project. The result was a significant decrease in bushmeat sales of protected species at the target markets. - 75 female community ecoguards were supported and active over the lifespan of the project. The program created sustainable livelihoods for these women and also increased the number of ecoguards in the target landscapes. This contributed to increased patrol coverage and a decrease in illegal activities recorded for 4/6 of the Protected Areas. - Training of 197 rangers/officers in law enforcement and wildlife crime principles improved the collection of data on wildlife crime. The project also supported the FDA SMART and Ecoguard Focal Unit to collect and store all national Community Ecoguard patrol data at a central location at the headquarters. This contributed towards capacity building and sustainable skills for local partners.
Outcome **Reduction in IWT products with improved wildlife law enforcement through collaboration and awareness with bushmeat sellers, support for female community eco-guards for forest patrols and awareness, and capacity-building for rangers**	
Outcome indicator 0.1 10 broader communities receive awareness on wildlife conservation issues and law	Awareness raising and training events were carried out at the ten target markets under the Community Volunteer program. These events were carried out by the FDA, LMA and NGO partners. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in Annex 3 Indicator table.
Outcome indicator 0.2 Bushmeat sales in markets reduced by 50% by sellers changing business	Bushmeat sales reduced by 90% due to women changing to legal and sustainable businesses. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in Annex 3 Indicator table.
Outcome indicator 0.3 Bushmeat sellers increase income by 10% after changing business	Bushmeat seller income did not increase, but decreased slightly after changing business. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in supplementary information submitted with main report (Bushmeat survey reports pre and post CV program).

Outcome indicator 0.4 70 Local community women and youth provided with livelihoods alternative to bushmeat trade, through Community Ecoguard Program	75 female ecoguards were trained and active as part of the Community Ecoguard Program at six Protected and Proposed Protected Areas. Many of these ecoguards would have likely been involved in unsustainable activities if not provided with a sustainable alternative livelihood. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in Annex 3 Indicator table as well as in supplementary information (Annual SMART reports).
Outcome indicator 0.5 More effective wildlife crime law enforcement through 100 better-trained FDA rangers	Wildlife crime enforcement and data recording was improved through training of 197 law enforcement personnel from FDA and partner agencies. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in Annex 3 Indicator table.
Output 1 *A nationwide community volunteer program with female bushmeat sellers established with education, training, and awareness-raising to reach the sellers and the broader community*	
Output indicator 1.1 Bushmeat market and bushmeat sellers' income surveys conducted in 10 major Liberian cities at beginning and end of project	Market and income surveys were conducted at ten target markets across Liberia at the start and end of the community volunteer program. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in Bushmeat survey reports.
Output indicator 1.2 300 female bushmeat sellers identified and formally committed to changing business to legal enterprise	300 bushmeat sellers recruited and 270 actually changed to legal businesses. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in Annex 3 Indicator table as well as Bushmeat survey reports.
Output indicator 1.3 300 female bushmeat sellers trained in relevant laws, protected species, importance of wildlife, risks of zoonotic diseases, and awareness communication methods	347 bushmeat sellers were provided with training through focused training run by FDA, LMA and NGO partners at the ten market locations. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in Annex 3 Indicator table as well as supplementary information (seller contracts).
Output indicator 1.4 At least 60 awareness-raising events targeting bushmeat markets, consumers, restaurant owners and schoolchildren	118 awareness raising events were conducted in the greater community at the ten locations and attended by local members of the public. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in Annex 3 Indicator table.
Output 2 *Community Ecoguard Program supported in 7 (proposed) protected areas, with the number of female participants increased*	
Output indicator 2.1 At least 210 patrols carried out annually by community ecoguards in 7 (P)PAs	386 community ecoguard patrols were carried out over the lifespan of the project across six Protected Areas involving mixed teams of female and male ecoguards from

	surrounding local communities. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in Annex 3 Indicator table as well as SMART reports.
Output indicator 2.2 At least 70 female ecoguards trained, equipped, and patrolling in 7 (P)PAs	75 female ecoguard trained, equipped and employed to actively conduct patrols as described above across six Protected Areas. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in Annex 3 Indicator table, as well as SMART reports.
Output indicator 2.3 Illegal activities in 7 (P)Pas reduce by 10% on old areas and by 20% in new areas	Illegal activities reduced by >20% in three (P)PAs and by >30% in one PA. However, illegal activities increased at one existing PA and one new PPA, which however could be an artefact of much increased survey effort. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in Annex 3 Indicator table and SMART reports.
Output 3 *Capacity of FDA rangers increased at (proposed) protected areas*	
Output indicator 3.1 100 FDA rangers from 7 (P)PAs trained in Community Ecoguard Program methods, patrol planning, and wildlife crime law enforcement protocols	197 rangers/officers were trained in law enforcement and wildlife crime techniques and protocols, and in the community ecoguard protocol over the lifespan of the project. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in Annex 3 Indicator table.
Output indicator 3.2 Systems established for rangers to use the CEP-collected data, and to conduct awareness-raising with the community ecoguards and other community members	One system (SMART) established at six Protected Areas and at the central headquarters of the FDA to record, store and analyse the patrol data collected during community ecoguard and/or law enforcement patrols. Evidence provided in Section 3 of main report and in Annex 3 Indicator table.

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
Impact: **Liberia's wildlife is effectively protected by all relevant stakeholders and poverty for local community members is reduced in the long term through increased capacity and sustainable incomes**			
Outcome: Reduction in IWT products with improved wildlife law enforcement through collaboration and awareness with bushmeat sellers, support for female community eco-guards for forest patrols and awareness, and capacity-building for rangers.	0.1 10 broader communities receive awareness on wildlife conservation issues and law. 0.2 Bushmeat sales in markets reduced by 50% by sellers changing business. 0.3 Bushmeat sellers increase income by 10% after changing business. 0.4 70 Local community women and youth provided with livelihoods alternative to bushmeat trade, through Community Ecoguard Program. 0.5 More effective wildlife crime law enforcement through 100 better-trained FDA rangers	0.1 Bushmeat survey report, photos 0.2 Bushmeat survey report, Agreement signed with volunteers, annual report 0.3 Bushmeat sellers income survey 0.4 Training report, stipend payment slips 0.5 Training report, Training attendance sheets, CEP database	Stability of the COVID-19 pandemic (national regulation dependent)
Output 1 A nationwide community volunteer program with female bushmeat sellers established with education, training, and awareness-raising to reach the sellers and the broader community.	1.1 Bushmeat market and bushmeat sellers' income surveys conducted in 10 major Liberian cities at beginning and end of project. 1.2 300 female bushmeat sellers identified and formally committed to changing business to legal enterprise. 1.3 300 female bushmeat sellers trained in relevant laws, protected species, importance of wildlife, risks of zoonotic diseases, and awareness communication methods. 1.4 At least 60 awareness-raising events targeting bushmeat markets, consumers, restaurant owners, and schoolchildren.	1.1 Bushmeat survey and report, including pre- & post salary survey report. 1.2 Agreement signed with volunteers, stipend payment slips. 1.3 Attendance sheets, report including results from pre- & post project salary and outcomes surveys, Bushmeat survey report. 1.4 Report and photos of the actions, Annual Report, photos, signed receipts.	Local stakeholders are interested in awareness raising campaigns, are willing to participate, and are receptive to changing practices Stability of the COVID-19 pandemic (national regulation dependent)

Output 2			
Output 2 Community Ecoguard Program supported in 7 (proposed) protected areas, with the number of female participants increased.	2.1 At least 210 patrols carried out annually by community ecoguards in 7 (P)Pas. 2.2 At least 70 female ecoguards trained, equipped, and patrolling in 7 (P)PAs 2.3 Illegal activities in 7 (P)Pas reduce by 10% on old areas and by 20% in new areas	2.1 Monthly field reports, CEP database, maps. 2.2 Training report and attendance sheets, stipend payment slips, Monthly field reports, CEP database. 2.3 SMART reports.	Local stakeholders are interested in awareness raising campaigns, are willing to participate, and are receptive to changing practices
Output 3 Capacity of FDA rangers increased at (proposed) protected areas	3.1 100 FDA rangers from 7 (P)PAs trained in Community Ecoguard Program methods, patrol planning, and wildlife crime law enforcement protocols. 3.2 Systems established for rangers to use the CEP-collected data, and to conduct awareness-raising with the community ecoguards and other community members.	3.1 Training attendance sheets and reports, CEP database. 3.2 Monthly field reports, CEP database, Annual report.	

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 Carry out bushmeat market surveys including income surveys of bushmeat sellers in 10 major Liberian cities at the beginning and end of project.

1.2 Identify 300 female bushmeat sellers in marketplaces and engage them to formally commit to changing business to legal enterprise.

1.3 Train 300 female bushmeat sellers in relevant laws, protected species, importance of wildlife, risks of zoonotic diseases, and awareness communication methods based on successful pilot methods.

1.4 Conduct at least 60 awareness-raising events targeting bushmeat markets, consumers, restaurant owners, and schoolchildren.

2.1 Support 35 Community Ecoguard Teams in 7 (proposed) protected areas to carry out regular patrols.

2.2 Train, equip, and support at least 70 female ecoguards to patrol in 7 (proposed) protected areas.

3.1 Train 100 FDA rangers from 7 (P)PAs in Community Ecoguard Program methods, patrol planning, and wildlife crime law enforcement protocols.

3.2 Establish and implement systems for rangers to use the CEP-collected data, and to conduct awareness-raising with the community ecoguards and other community members.

Annex 3 Standard Indicators

Table 1   Project Standard Indicators

Please see the Standard Indicator Guidance for more information on how to report in this section, including appropriate disaggregation. N.B. The annual total is not cumulative. For each year, only include the results achieved in that year. The total achieved should be the sum of the annual totals.

IWT CF Indicator number	Name of indicator	If this links directly to a project indicator(s), please note the indicator number here	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total achieved	Total planned
IWT CF - CO1	Number of people reported with changed behaviour in IWT post-intervention	1.2	People	Gender: female Survey type: Structured direct observation	85	185	0	270	300
IWT CF – CO2	Number and type of IWT behaviour change materials produced / Number and type of IWT behaviour change materials distributed	1.2	Number	Typology of materials produced (protected animal flyers)	95	535	0	630	300
IWT CF – CO3	Number of communication channels carrying campaign message	0.3	Number	Type of communications channel (i.e. radio, television, internet, social media etc	5	2	0	7	6
IWT CF – A01	Number of people who received training in sustainable livelihood skills	0.3	People	Gender: females 347	85	185	77	347	300
IWT CF – A02	Number of people reporting they are applying new capabilities (skills and knowledge) 6 (or more) months after train		People	Gender: females Type of training: Community	69	83	45	197	100

IWT CF Indicator number	Name of indicator	If this links directly to a project indicator(s), please note the indicator number here	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total achieved	Total planned
				Ecoguard Patrol Protocol					
IWT CF – A15	Number reporting a decrease in unsustainable practices as a result of project activities		People	Gender: 270 females Type of practice: bushmeat selling	20	250	0	270	300
IWT CF – B01	Number of people trained in law enforcement skills		Number	Gender: 14 females; 114 males Types of law enforcement training: Sustainable Protected Area Management	69	83	45	197	100
IWT CF – B09	Duration or frequency of patrols by law enforcement rangers supported through the project		Frequency		47	156	185	388	210
IWT CF – B10	Number of arrests (linked to wildlife crime) facilitated by the project		Number		0	6	0	6	5
IWT CF – D02	Number of individuals benefitting from training (i.e. broader households of individual directly trained)		People/Number	Gender: 372 females and 1 male	135	238	0	373	300
IWT CF – DO3	Number of people reported with changed behaviour in IWT post-intervention				4	3	0	7	5
IWT CF - CO1	Number and type of IWT behaviour change materials produced / Number and type of IWT behaviour change materials distributed				85	185	0	245	300

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)
"Former bushmeat sellers certificated ambassadors wildlife conservation"	Newspaper article		Male	Liberian	Liberian Observer	https://www.liberianobserver.com/liberia-former-bushmeat-sellers-certificated-ambassadors-wildlife-conservation

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 consider the best way to submit. One zipped file, or a download option, is recommended. We can work with most online options and will be in touch if we have a problem accessing material. If unsure, please discuss with BCF-Reports@niras.com about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	x
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, **do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 14)?**	x
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
Have you provided an updated risk register? If you have an existing risk register you should provide an updated version alongside your report. If your project was funded prior to this being a requirement, you are encouraged to develop a risk register.	
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors?	x
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	x
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	