

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects

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

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

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2023

Project reference	IWT125
Project title	Breaking the illegal wildlife trade chain in Bagmati Province, Nepal
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal
Lead partner	WWF UK
Partner(s)	WWF Nepal, Department of National Parks, and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Central Investigation Bureau (CIB)
Project leader	Rebecca May (WWF UK)
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31st October 2023 (HYR1)
Project website/blog/social media	https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk/project/XXIWT125/

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

As well as initiating and implementing the project activities, the project core team (WWF-UK and WWF Nepal) has been having monthly calls, and has updated the logframe to align with the BCF core indicators, completed the risk assessment, developed a detailed activity plan and monitoring plan, and carefully considered the feedback received when the project was approved. The project start was slightly delayed, but we expect to be able to implement the activities as planned within year 1. In the logframe, we have added a new indicator O 2.4, which relates to the feedback received around action taken by transportation workers, and this is explained in the responses document. The detailed progress is as follows:

Output 1: Enhanced Conservation Champions networks and improved employability at source

- Project Inception and rollout workshop (completed)

The workshop took place on August 22–23 in Sauraha Chitwan, with the active participation of 27 representatives (Annex 1) from the park offices of Chitwan National Park (CNP) and Parsa National Park (PNP), Buffer Zone Management Committee (BZMC), 5 Buffer Zone User Committees (BZUCs), Community-based Anti-poaching Units (CBAPU) of respective 5 BZUCs, WWF Nepal, and the Terai Arc Landscape office. The workshop was successful in gaining overall insight into the project's aim, implementation sites, and strategies among the stakeholders through different technical sessions (Annex 2). The constructive discussions and interactions among the participants strengthened coordination and collaboration and leveraged support among the project stakeholders.

- 25 Conservation Champions and 75 Youths selection Criteria (finalised and circulated in the field for selection process)

The selection criteria were discussed and agreed with the chairperson and representatives from BZUCs during the inception meeting. The roles and responsibilities along with the expectations in terms of commitment and delivery for Conservation Champions were shared with the wider

stakeholders to ensure ownership and support for the Champions. The five BZUCs are currently in the process of selecting and onboarding the Conservation Champions. The selection criteria manual has been prepared in both English and Nepali, and these are different for the 25 Conservation Champions and the 75 youth. The Conservation Champions training will be held in November 2023.

- Selection of 25 CBAPU youths to develop as Conservation Champions (ongoing)

The selection process of 25 CBAPU youths from five targeted BZUCs is ongoing, strictly adhering to the selection criteria manual. Meanwhile, the respective BZUC office has been undertaking related interactions and meetings with youth groups and community members to select dedicated youth with strong commitments towards wildlife conservation. The selection will be finalised in all BZUCs by November, and comprehensive capacity-building training will be launched for the selected youths. CBAPU coordinators of respective BZUCs will lead the team of youths (altogether 20) from each BZUCs in training and campaigns.

- Training curriculum and session plan for training Conservation Champions (finalised)

A training curriculum and session plan has been prepared to capacitate the CBAPU members as Conservation Champions. The six day training will include themes related to wildlife conservation and campaigns, experiential learning and wildlife crime control. These will be useful in the design and delivery of Behaviour Change Communications (BCC).

- Pre-and post-training assessment questionnaire (Ongoing)

A semi-structured questionnaire will be prepared to assess the pre- and post- training knowledge of 1500 individuals from the transportation sector and 390 Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) personnel from Nepal Police and Armed Police Force (APF). Currently the curriculum development on nature & nexus with IWT is underway after the completion of which the pre and post questionnaire will be finalised.

- Wellbeing assessment questionnaire (finalised)

A wellbeing assessment questionnaire, which will first be trialled with a few local people, has been prepared together with WWF colleagues experienced in wildlife crime and community surveys to assess the wellbeing (financial, community safety, and security) of 25 Conservation Champions and 75 selected youths before the implementation phase and at the endline of the project.

- Knowledge, Attitude, Practice (KAP) questionnaire (finalised)

A questionnaire has been prepared to assess the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice related to wildlife conservation and wildlife crime control of 25 Conservation Champions and 75 selected youths, as well as the selected individuals from the local community at User Group level.

- Arrest data within 5 BZUC regions (Baseline created)

The number of local people who were involved in wildlife crime offences from the past 5 years (2017-2022) was collected and compiled for each of the 5 targeted BZUC regions. This project will compare the pre-project 3 year total (as the baseline) with the 3 year total at the project endline, and also look at trends over this period to understand the impact of this project. The project target is for the number of local people involved in wildlife crimes and offences from these project regions to decrease by 50% by the end of the project.

- Data collection on most employable skills for youth employment / rapid survey with private sector

To support youth employment, a rapid survey was conducted with the private sector (tourism sector) in the project area in July. Information regarding the most employable skills for the hospitality sector and required repair mechanics was collected from hotels, resorts, and hotel associations. This information will be very helpful in determining, in discussions with the 75 selected young people, the most suitable training in year 2.

- Mapping of hospitality and tourism sector training providers (ongoing)

As preparation for various hospitality/tourism and repair mechanics training planned for 100 youths in year 2, a survey of suitable institutions and training centres is ongoing in the project area (Chitwan). The training providers that are certified by the Government of Nepal and /or by the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), having quality training curricula, and experienced trainers and class instructors are being explored and listed. There is a plan to finalise training providers by the end of February Y1.

- Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF) Orientation & Sensitisation (Completed)

The WWF Nepal safeguards specialist conducted ESSF orientation and sensitization in IWT project roll out to implementing partners (BZUCs, CBAPUs). The core component of ESSF, which aims to manage risks, uphold human rights, and ensure conservation projects deliver better outcomes for communities and nature, was disseminated to participants. The concept of “do no harm” by identifying, avoiding, and mitigating any negative social and environmental impacts in project activities carried out by WWF Nepal was communicated with the participants, in addition to the importance of grievance redress mechanisms and accessibility of suggestion boxes.

- Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) facilitation and Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) Sensitisation (Completed)

FPIC implementation processes involved detailed discussion of project activities and mitigation measures with relevant community leaders, who need to understand FPIC processes, so that they use this when prioritising Indigenous People (IP) communities as CBAPU Conservation Champions. As the National FPIC Implementation Guideline launched in June 2023 is relatively new, the project will also help aid awareness and build capacity on FPIC processes among a wider range of community stakeholders. The major considerations were regarding the target age range and provision of additional support for women to ensure their sustained participation as Conservation Champions. Participants expressed the need to ensure livelihoods support was based on need so that sustained efforts and participation is achieved.

Output 2: Capacity building of transportation sector through Community Police Partnership (CPP) in transits

- Meetings with CIB regarding project introduction (completed)

The Wildlife Trade Monitoring Unit of WWF Nepal conducted multiple informal as well as formal meetings with CIB officials to introduce and discuss the project objectives and activities. The meetings have strengthened our working relations, generated constructive feedback, as well as enhanced the understanding of the overall picture of wildlife crime control in Bagmati Province.

- Meeting with CIB regarding the model of integrating IWT in CPP (completed)

The existing scope, status, and activities of the CPP programme, and opportunities to integrate IWT into the CPP were discussed with CIB. CIB officials have agreed to explore how to do this. It was agreed that a one-day workshop needs to be conducted soon among officials from CIB, transportation sector, and WWF Nepal to finalise the model whereby IWT is integrated into CPP with the transportation sector of Bagmati province.

- Meeting with CIB regarding sensitisation for transportation workers (completed)

The planning meeting with CIB for the one-day sensitisation event for transportation workers was conducted, focussing on four themes: introduction to wildlife conservation & crime in Nepal; legal provision for wildlife conservation and wildlife crime control in Nepal; mode of carrying wildlife parts and exploitation of the transportation sector; and role and contribution of the transportation sector in curbing illegal wildlife trade.

- Consultancy process for developing digital message on IWT (ongoing)

A general discussion with CIB for developing digital messages to be displayed in 10 transit locations, as well as through website and social media platforms of WWF Nepal & Nepal Police, took place. CIB will be supporting the consultant selected for this assignment during content finalisation. Appropriate consultant identification & selection is underway.

Output 3: Capacity building for law enforcement officials along routes

- Training curriculum on nature and IWT (ongoing)

Consultant selection process for developing training curriculum on nature & nexus of IWT including human rights is underway. The selected consultant will prepare a curriculum which will be reviewed by an expert and finalised before conducting capacity building training to Police personnel deployed at the border and along the IWT trade routes of Bagmati Province.

- Digital identification manual and app for wildlife parts identification (ongoing)

Consultant selection process for developing wildlife parts identification manual is underway. The selected consultant will prepare a manual which will be reviewed by an expert before finalising. The user-friendly digital version of the identification manual will be built into the app, to be used by police personnel deployed in posts along the route. Discussions with CIB about the app development and selection of the consultant are ongoing.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

In the first 6 months of this project, there have been no notable problems, except for some delay in delivering the workplan of Output 2 & 3 due to MOU renewal with CIB being delayed and change in leadership of CIB. However, this should not affect the overall budget and timetable of project activities which are planned to be completed this year.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: No

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

Change request reference if known: NA

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

Actual spend: £ [REDACTED]

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

Yes No Estimated underspend: £ [REDACTED]

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

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

NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

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

Although expenditure to date is lower than foreseen (14% of the Year 1 budget has been spent by the end of September), the project team is confident that they will spend a significant proportion of the planned Year 1 budget in the second half of the year. The period November to March is an intense period of field implementation, following the selection of the Conservation Champions, and MOU with CIB, as well as a period of festivals in Nepal. WWF Nepal is anticipating a potential underspend of £ [REDACTED] for Year 1 at the current time. We are currently reviewing the Year 1 budget with partners to make appropriate changes and consider alternatives. We will shortly be submitting a Change Request Form as would like to request changes between budget lines within the Year 1 budget, and notify Niras of some staff changes.

As a new project this year, we also attach the following documents to this report:

1. Logframe - which maps indicators against BCF standard indicators
2. Risk Register
3. Response to the feedback letter received at contracting.

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.

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

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