



**BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



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

Half Year Report

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

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

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2024

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

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

Project reference	<i>IWT125</i>
Project title	Breaking the illegal wildlife trade chain in Bagmati Province, Nepal
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal
Lead Organisation	WWF-UK
Partner(s)	WWF Nepal, Department of National Parks, and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Central Investigation Bureau (CIB)
Project leader	<i>Rebecca May WWF-UK</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>31 October 2024, HYR2</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i>https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk/project/XXIWT125</i>

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

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

Activities have been implemented as planned, and indicators and assumptions still hold true.

Output 1: Enhanced conservation champions network and improved employability at source

Orientation and sensitization on Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF).

The ESSF orientation and sensitisation sessions were led by the WWF Nepal's Senior Inclusive Conservation Officer, involving implementing partners including respective BZUC's members, CBAPU's members, CCs, and YCs collectively. The programme was held from 29 July to 2 August at the five targeted BZUC project sites. Participants received an orientation on the WWF Statement of Principles on Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Indigenous Peoples, as well as guidance for Inclusive Conservation, managing and mitigating risks, upholding human rights, and ensuring conservation actions benefit nature and communities. Participants were informed about the significance of the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), the accessibility of the grievance box, and documentation of GRM. The WWF child safeguarding policy was also highlighted, emphasising its goal in safeguarding children and creating an environment that prevents child abuse, exploitation, or possible vulnerability.

Awareness raising / campaigns (Activities 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4; ref Annex 1, 2, 3, 4): The campaign "Disappearing: Without Conservation, Community and Youth," continues to be implemented by Conservation Champions (CCs). Through in-depth review and reflection, the conservation challenges faced by the communities within the BZUCs were identified and the effectiveness of previous messaging and awareness mediums were assessed. As a result, a new set of tailored messages and mediums were developed to resonate with diverse audiences, especially those directly affected by wildlife poaching. As BZUCs also face incidences of human-wildlife conflict, which can fuel retaliatory killing of wild animals, our messages included the need for human-wildlife coexistence and to curb IWT, with information about the relevant laws and legal penalties.

The CCs successfully conducted 10 community awareness events, specifically targeting indigenous and marginalised groups often dependent on forests and nearby rivers for their livelihood. These events, using key messages and inclusive approaches, reached 454 targeted individuals across 5 BZUCs.

To enhance the effectiveness of the campaign and ensure alignment with ongoing activities across the targeted BZUCs, a series of monthly coordination meetings were held. These meetings brought together CCs and BZUC members to identify strengths, opportunities, and areas for improvement, fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration. Interactive sessions were also conducted among CCs, YCs, and BZUC stakeholders from 29 July to 2 August across the five BZUCs to review and plan the youth-led conservation campaigns.

Vocational training for improved employability (Activities 1.5, 1.6): High-demand vocational skills were identified through a survey and consultative meetings with hospitality / tourism sector's stakeholders. The selected training included nature guide, culinary, bakery, barista, waiter/waitress, beautician, air conditioner & fridge repair, and auto mechanic.

To standardise the selection process, a template (Annex 5) was developed using insights from Year 1 survey and stakeholder consultations. This template categorises vocational training types to align industry needs with the interests of the 100 youths (CCs and YCs), and to streamline the decision-making process for selecting appropriate training options.

A comprehensive visit was conducted across the 5 BZUCs to engage with the youth. Key activities included discussing their vocational training interests and preferences, assisting them in filling out the vocational training selection template, evaluating the optimal start times for training programmes, and providing information on the most in-demand skills, and training duration.

A detailed plan and budget were prepared for vocational training based on the selections made by the youths and the budget quoted by the training institute. This plan includes the type of training programmes selected, costs and steps for rolling out the training.

To ensure quality assurance and effective service delivery, the selection of appropriate training providers has started. The training providers must be certified by the Government of Nepal and/or by the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), equipped with qualified technical instructors and quality practical facilities. All the training is planned to be carried out in Q3 of Year 2.

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

Grant development with CIB: WWF Nepal worked with the CIB to confirm the activities under Outputs 2 and 3 that they are leading on and responsible for. This process reconfirms their commitment and the workplan and budget have been included within a grant agreement.

Development of work plan for sensitisation events (Activities 2.1, 2.2): Work plan (including updated curriculum and timeline) has been co-developed by CIB and WWF Nepal to conduct one-day sensitisation events for transportation workers at the 10 transit locations, following the integration of IWT into CPP. The curriculum that was utilised during the Year 1 events (with 545 transportation workers) has been strengthened by incorporating feedback gathered from the participants and experts. Structured questionnaire will be designed to assess the knowledge-level and awareness of participating transportation sector workers before and after the training.

Development of digital message on IWT (Activity 2.3): The production of videos, comprising digital messages on IWT, national law and punishment, and the functions of Nepalese law enforcement agencies are progressing. One video has been successfully produced, and another four are in the development process and are expected to be finalised in November 2024. The digital messages will be shared to the larger audience via CIB & WWF Nepal webpage and social media platforms and exclusively displayed at police offices along the transit locations via digital signage.

Output 3: Capacity building of law enforcement along the routes

Curriculum development (Activity 3.1): The curriculum development for capacity building training events to police officials (Nepal police & APF) and senior Nepal police officials has been initiated under the collaborative efforts of CIB and WWF Nepal. The selected consultant has developed the curriculum, and it was reviewed by an expert. Trainee feedback has been taken into account to revise the curriculum for the Year 2 capacity building events.

Development of work plan for capacity building training to police officials (Activity 3.2): The work plan for conducting the three days training on the nature and nexus of IWT and enforcement processes has been co-developed by CIB and WWF Nepal. The training will commence in Q3 of Year 2, with 180 Nepal police officials deployed at major IWT routes, 160 senior Nepal Police Officials at district level and 120 APF officials (border areas). Structured questionnaires will be designed to assess their knowledge-levels before and after the training.

Development of work plan for capacity building training to senior Nepal police officials (Activity 3.3): The work plan for conducting one day training to 160 senior Nepal police officials at district level (Rasuwa, Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Kavre, Sindhupalchok, Dolakha & Ramechhap districts) has been co-developed by CIB and WWF Nepal, building on the 100 trained from 5 other districts (Sindhuli, Makawanpur, Chitwan, Nuwakot and Dhading) in Year 1. The training will commence in Q3 of Year 2.

Identification manual of wildlife parts & products and development of digital app (Activities 3.4, 3.5): The identification manual of wildlife parts and products has been finalised. This will be embedded within a digital app, which is being created and managed by the IT section of Nepal police as a separate IWT component within the existing Nepal police app. 125 android

mobile phones have been provided to the CIB, so that the police officials can use the app along with the communication features for smooth correspondence between the 100 police posts along the major routes of Bagmati Province.

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

The project team has been reviewing the project with a legacy / sustainability lens, given the feedback from the Year 1 report, and given the project is half way through. We will be sharing our responses / sustainability plan, along with any associated work plan and budgetary changes before 31st December.

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

Discussed with NIRAS:

No

Formal Change Request submitted:

No

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

No

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

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

Actual spend:

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

Yes ☒ **No** ☐ Estimated underspend:

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

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

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

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

In Year 2, the CIB will be conducting and participating in activities under outputs 2 and 3, for which we have a grant agreement in place, as notified and confirmed by email by NIRAS on 05/09/2024. Direct management of these activities by the CIB, with guidance, technical support and oversight by WWF Nepal, increases the CIB's ownership and project legacy.

In order to better understand the wellbeing survey responses from Year 1 (outcome level baseline), especially the concerns regarding safety and security, we had further conversations with the champions during the interaction sessions from 29 July to 2 August. Annex 6 provides further reflection.

Changes in staff - Doma Tshering Sherpa (replaced Bivishika as ESSF / GESI specialist) and Nabin Dhungana (replacing Kamal Raj Rai as Project Field Co-ordinator) in WWF Nepal (due to staff leaving) and Jalal Khail (replacing Debs Mackay) as Grant Specialist in WWF-UK from November 2024. A formal change request will be submitted shortly to communicate these staff changes.

Although expenditure to date is lower than foreseen (14% of the Year 2 budget has been spent by the end of September), the project team is confident to spend a significant proportion of the planned Year 2 budget in the second half of the year. The period November to March is an intense period of field implementation, with many training events planned up to March 2025. WWF Nepal is anticipating a potential underspend of £27,000 for Year 2 at the current time (in part due to exchange rate gains). We are currently reviewing the Year 2 budget with partners, together with our sustainability / legacy planning, to make appropriate changes and consider alternatives. We will submit a Change Request Form shortly as we would like to request changes between budget lines within the Year 2 budget, and notify Niras of some staff changes (as listed above).

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

There were two areas of feedback from the Year 1 report which required a response in this half year report. This is detailed in Annex 7.

We have been working on a legacy / sustainability plan, which will take into account the remaining feedback from the Year 1 report.

Checklist for submission

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

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

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

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

Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	Yes
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	Yes - no confidential info
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Yes