



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

Half Year Report

Project reference	IWT 125
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	Rebecca May WWF-UK
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 October 2025, HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk/project/XXIWT125

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).

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

• Interaction with youth

During July and August, visits to community sites were conducted to identify the youths who were interested in undertaking refresher skill-based training. A total of 79 youths expressed their interest, which included 58 youths who had completed Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) training courses and 21 youths who completed Nature Guide Advance training in year 2.

• Selection of training service providers and preparation of Refresher Nature Guide Training

Training service providers selection procedures have been initiated, ensuring better delivery of refresher courses, with more focus on boosting practical and market-driven skills. A six-day training course has been developed for youths who participated in Advance Nature Guide Training in Year 2. The training course will be focus on Nature Interpretation, English Language Communication, Birding, and Responsible Eco-tourism. This Refresher Nature Guide training is scheduled for the second week of October, under the collaborative efforts of Chitwan National Park. The other hospitality sector's refresher training will commence once the selection of training service providers is completed and it is expected by the first week of November.

• Media updates and social outreach

A [video](#) documenting the journey and the work of youth champions under the project has been produced and shared on WWF Nepal social media pages. The video covers the training of

youth champions, their campaigns and impact in addition to their livelihood skill training. A separate video covering the livelihood initiatives of the project is also under production.

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

- **CPP Sensitisation events**

A total of 626 transportation personnel were sensitised through 10 events in 10 transits (Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Dhading, Nuwakot, Rasuwa, Kavre, Ramechhap, Dolakha and Sindhupalchok) of Bagmati Province during September 2025. The session plan developed during the year 2 was used, with further revisions made based on the feedback gathered from the participants and dignitaries, and insights obtained during the Community Police Partnership sustainability workshop.

- **Media updates and social outreach**

Three radio jingles focused on the legal provisions against illegal wildlife trade and transit, especially those relating to transportation workers, have been translated into the Tamang language and is being disseminated across Bagmati province between September 2025 and February 2026.

Outcome 3: Capacity building of law enforcement along the routes

- **Dissemination of digital messages**

Digital messages related to IWT issues, legal provisions, protected wildlife and focal project species, and human-wildlife co-existence has been displayed through 10 outdoor smart boards at 10 transits of Bagmati Province.

Five PSAs about illegal wildlife trade have been produced and disseminated on the smart boards and are being released on WWF Nepal's social media pages.

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 most significant event over these 6 months has been the political turmoil following the Gen-Z protests and demonstration in Nepal – especially Kathmandu. This resulted in the dissolution of parliament and appointment of a new interim prime minister. WWF Nepal staff worked from home and avoided travel during this particularly tumultuous time. Our project activities could continue as planned and we do not foresee any delays. There were no reported poaching incidents, although this was a concern we had, given the unrest and use of the Nepal Army to ease the tensions in Kathmandu. Elections will be conducted in March 2026.

The reformation process of Buffer Zone User Committee (BZUCs) of Chitwan National Park (CNP) has been delayed, primarily because of Gen-Z protects. Every BZUC should be reformed at every five years. BZUC reformation should be completed before October 2025.

Of the project's four BZ areas around CNP, only the Meghauli BZUC has been reformed so far.

For Parsa National Park, Manahari BZUC is functional as its term period is still valid.

We reviewed and analysed the potential risks and circumstances needed for safe programme implementation at our community sites, with prior coordination and consultation with the park office and Terai Arc Landscape and Conservation Program (TALCP).

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

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)

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 2026)?

[REDACTED]

4c. If you expect an 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.

N/A

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

Suspicions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk

6. Project risk management

6a. If your project has an Overseas Security and Justice assessment, please provide an update on any related risks, and any special conditions in your award paperwork if relevant for your project.

N/A

6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months?

[REDACTED]

Suspicions or allegations related to safeguarding concerns should be reported to
ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk

7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent Annual Report. As a reminder, all projects that were scored as 'Not Yet Sensitive' in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment of their latest Annual Report should demonstrate how they are meeting the minimum GESI-Sensitive standard.

Feedback from the Year 2 annual report:

- 1) *The reduction in IWT evidenced by a lower number of wildlife parts captured by police is commendable. Clarification is needed on what these wildlife parts are from. Is pressure on all species being reduced, or is the IWT trade focusing more sharply on specific products?*
- 2) *IWT criminal arrests have decreased even with consistent LEA efforts. Whereas this appears a good outcome for Bagmati Province, the reports notes elsewhere that forest and wildlife have increased in surrounding areas. Is there evidence that overall IWT is being reduced, or is it only being displaced because of a localised, successful, project outcome.*

In response to the two questions above, during the final evaluation and in discussion with stakeholders, especially with Nepal Police, we will be requesting and further analysing these data, together with experts' insights. However, our observations certainly highlight pangolin as a major concern. Also, whilst in this province, no tiger parts have been seized, we know that they have been seized in other provinces over the last 2 years. We will be further reviewing these data and be in a better position to respond to these questions in our final report. We also appreciate that determining cause and effect in such projects is challenging, but we will have a better insight as to how this project may be influencing the IWT trends in Nepal.

- 3) *The project reports on the well-being of 25 conservation champions and 75 local community members increasing, yet "Average annual income = 35,737 NPR per person (216 GBP) (average of 1,786 NPR for women, 68,517 NPR for men)". Is this a typo that needs correction? If not, what accounts for this gender inequality and what is the project attempting to do address it?*

The figure presented is the Income baseline taken in year 1 before the project activities were implemented. In the beginning of the project, majority of the female champions were unemployed, and some were pursuing higher studies. Whereas some of the men had seasonal jobs where they made good income compared to the women. By the end of the project, we expect a greater number of conservation champions and local community members (both men and women) to have increased income, as more will be securing paid work, and improved well-being. This disaggregation, with reflection on gender equality, will be included in the final report.

GESI

This project was scored as GESI-sensitive in the feedback on our previous annual report, and efforts are currently underway to increase women's participation in various skill-based trainings by conducting sessions at convenient times, locations and providing childcare support for young mothers where needed.