



**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	IWT126
Project title	Strengthening measures to combat IWT in the W-Arly-Pendjari landscape.
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Benin
Lead Organisation	Zoological Society of London (ZSL)
Partner(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. General Directorate of Water, Forests and Hunting (DGEFC)2. The Forensic Science Service for the City of London Police3. Kings College London (KCL)
Project leader	<i>Alain LUSHIMBA</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>July 2024 – September 2024 HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media	

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.

The Zoological Society of London is implementing a plan to strengthen measures to combat illegal wildlife trade in the W-Arly-Pendjari landscape in Benin.

The W-Arly-Pendjari complex is the largest transboundary protected area in West Africa, spanning over one million hectares across Benin (577,000 ha), Burkina Faso (250,000 ha) and Niger (220,000 ha). It is a key component of the WAP Biosphere Reserve landscape and is recognised as one of the last remaining wilderness areas of international importance in West Africa. The WAP is the last stronghold of the critically endangered West African lion and northwest African cheetah, and it supports the largest population of elephants in West Africa. However, the region faces significant threats from illegal wildlife trade (IWT), compounded by regional insecurity and limited response capacity.

This report summarises progress made during the first three months of the grant period, from July to September 2024, following funding approval in July 2024. This initial quarter focused on essential administrative tasks to launch the project, including the development of the work plan and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) plan, as well as planning meetings with implementing partners.

1. Work plan and MEL plan

During July and August 2024 our focus was on preparing the team for project implementation. This included mobilising additional roles within the project team (such as law enforcement trainers) establishing all necessary processes and developing a detailed work plan.

The work plan outlines objectives, tasks, timelines, and resources required to achieve the project's goals, serving as a roadmap to guide the team towards successful completion and enabling progress tracking.

Weekly meetings will be held to monitor adherence to the timeline, promptly address any challenges, and adjust the plan as needed. By following this work plan, the team aims to achieve the project objectives efficiently within the specified time and budget. Regular updates and open communication will be maintained to ensure the project's success.

2. Planning meetings with the implementing partners

In September 2024, a consultation meeting was organised with the key partner, the General Directorate of Water, Forests and Hunting of Benin. The meeting focused on aligning the activity implementation schedule and the project launch with the detailed work plan.

During this period, a scoping meeting was organised with the local partner, the NGO Initiative for the Preservation of Life (IPV), selected to implement community-based income-generating activities supported by the project. This meeting enabled the establishment of a clear framework for effective community involvement in achieving the project's objectives. It also provided an opportunity to review impact indicators for community support and to align the project with the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) requirements, specifically the Complaints Management Mechanism (MGP) for the WAP. The MGP-WAP is an organised, institutionalised process developed by WAP stakeholders to systematically receive, investigate, and address complaints or concerns from community members in the WAP area. Such complaints may relate to potential misconduct by law enforcement officers or other conflicts involving WAP conservation actors or projects. Concerns and complaints raised by community members of WAP will help the project better understand how its impacts are perceived and experienced locally.

The effective commencement of activities is scheduled for the third quarter (October 2024). Including Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET), Law Enforcement Advanced Practitioner

(LEAP) training, as well as support initiatives for community projects and awareness campaigns in villages surrounding the WAP.

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.

As field activities did not commence in the first quarter, we can't report specific challenges the project has encountered. However, the announcement of the project's approval for funding was very well received by our partners. The project has been designed to address specific needs identified by Benin's government law enforcement agencies, who have shown strong interest and readiness for the initial training sessions.

The intervention of the IWT project will help establish a new partnership framework with Benin's law enforcement services and agencies including customs, border police, forestry and judiciary - through capacity building activities.

Furthermore, the project aims to enhance local communities' perception of conservation by supporting income-generating activities (IGAs), delivering direct benefits to these populations.

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: *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)?

☐ **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?

NA

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.

NA

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1 st 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.	NA
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	n/a
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1 st 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.	NA
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	yes
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	