Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Main & Extra: Annual 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: 30th April 2025

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	IWT134
Project title	Reducing medicinal plant illegal harvesting through cultivation and good governance
Country/ies	South Africa
Lead Organisation	The Endangered Wildlife Trust
Project partner(s)	South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), Agricultural Research Council (proposal), Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency
IWTCF grant value	£377,470
Start/end dates of project	15 Sept 2024 to 31 March 2025
Reporting period (e.g. April 2024-Mar 2025) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	Annual Report 1: Sept 2024 to March 2025
Project Leader name	Jenny Botha
Project website/blog/social media	https://ewt.org/
Report author(s) and date	Jenny Botha 27 March 2025

1. Project summary

Traditional medicine plays a vital role in the health and livelihoods of millions of people globally but high demand for wildlife products, shrinking habitats, climate change, and other threats are leading to increasing pressures on the survival of many species in the wild. In South Africa, approximately 70,000 tonnes of illegally harvested plant products are estimated to be traded or used for traditional medicine annually contributing to 178 species being listed on the IUCN's Red List national threat categories.

Historically, efforts to curb trade of plants and animals used for traditional medicine have largely failed, resulting in conservation agencies, NPOs and other organisations seeking to improve relations with traditional healers, mainly through the cultivation of highly valued species. Most traditional healers are willing to use cultivated plants for traditional medicine particularly if plants are grown according to cultural protocols (pers. comms, traditional healers from Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Gauteng 1996 — present).

Despite the widespread support by traditional healers for these initiatives, high volumes of plants continue to be traded in markets across the country, resulting in ongoing pressures on wild populations. Traders and harvesters have, until recently, been excluded from *ex situ* and other conservation strategies to reduce pressures on wild populations (e.g. habitat protection), leading to ongoing and significant risks to hundreds of species.

In a previous initiative, the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) engaged with traders from Thohoyandou and Sibasa markets in Limpopo on the potential of ex-situ conservation measures to safeguard their resource base leading to

This integrated project aims to reduce pressures on wild populations of selected medicinal plant species by:

1 Scaling up *ex-situ* cultivation with traditional healers in collaboration with partners;
2 Including traders and harvesters from regional and metropolitan medicinal markets in Limpopo (Sibasa and Thohoyandou), Gauteng (Mai-Mai and Faraday) and KwaZulu-Natal (Warwick, Umlazi, and Pongola).
3 Engage with, and strengthen the capacity of communities living near protected areas in Mpumalanga and Limpopo (Medike and Blouberg Nature Reserves) and Mpumalanga (Blyde River Canyons) to improve the protection and management of Red Data list species such as *W. salutaris, Siphonochilus aethiopicus, Dioscorea sylvaticus,* and *Haworthiopsis limifolia, Alepidea cordifolia, and Boweia volubilis*). This includes the development of strategies to monitor plant populations over time through the development of a citizen science initiative incorporating students from the University of Venda and traditional healers or other community members from the area.
4 Increasing awareness of wildlife legislation and the impacts of wildlife offences amongst the South African Police Service (SAPS) officials, community leaders, community members, traders, harvesters, traditional healers, and other stakeholders in the three harvesting areas.
5 Strengthening awareness and support for the project within the communities we are engaging with through engagement on the values of biodiversity, wildlife legislation and the impacts of wildlife offences on society, and broadening the scope of project benefits through the implementation of curriculum-aligned Education for Sustainable Development modules alongside educators in primary schools and awareness session on the values of biodiversity, impacts of wildlife offences, and wildlife legislation with youth in each of the project areas.

Clearly, the development of efficient mass production systems will take time. To succeed, we need to ensure that products remain affordable to the poorest consumers, and that processes and production are streamlined. They also need to be aligned to cultural protocols as far as possible. We will need to work closely with all stakeholders to achieve these ambitious targets.

2. Project stakeholders/ partners

Our original project partners in our proposal included the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), the Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Agency (MTPA), and the University of Venda (UniVen). Each plays a key role in the project, and were invited to participate due to the contribution that they were making to the sector, or could potentially make. Each was actively involved in project planning and development during our application phase, either through the Medicinal Plant Working Group and/or one-on-one meetings. Community partnerships were developed through the high demand for traditional medicine, and conservation concerns regarding the sustainability of high harvesting levels. During this period, we received valuable feedback from the British High Commission in Pretoria. Their review and inputs enabled us to strengthen our proposal and identify gaps.

We are also working informally with additional conservation organisations, including the Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment, and Tourism (LEDET), Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and in time, we will be working with officials from various state departments in KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, we consult with technical

specialists, particularly in the horticultural sector, who have extensive experience in propagating recalcitrant species.

Several key members of three of our partner organisations resigned from their jobs at the end of last year, or changed their project portfolios. This resulted in the EWT filling gaps, but we are still working closely with most partners. The ongoing participation of the third organisation will be confirmed in our next report as projects were being reprioritized earlier this year.

We continue to partner closely with SANBI, particularly horticulturalists from the Walter Sisulu Botanic Gardens in Johannesburg and the Thohoyandou Botanic Gardens in Limpopo Province at this stage. We are hoping to expand these networks over the next six months to ensure a constant supply of medicinal plant seedlings to meet the needs of community stakeholders over time and to strengthen the networks of support to local communities, traders, and traditional healers.

During the current reporting period, the EWT and SANBI horticulturalists developed a three-day training workshop on introductory plant cultivation, and piloted the course with four groups of traditional healers in Vhembe, Limpopo (see Attendance registers and participant summary in Evidence file).

We are now reviewing and improving the content of these pilot courses and the first draft of a training manual, based on feedback from participants and our own observations. The EWT and SANBI also collaborated on a seed collection trip in the Soutpansberg during March 2025, and will be conducting additional trips to collect propagation material for additional species in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. Seedlings are being produced at Walter Sisulu and Thohoyandou nurseries.

Prior to the start of the IWTC project, communities living in the Blyde River area requested assistance in improving the management of medicinal plants that occur naturally in their areas during workshops hosted by SANBI. To meet this reques, and to enable us to support these and other communities reduce unsustainable harvesting levels and improve governance, we included Citizen Science Medicinal Plant Monitoring component in this project. This includes (i) conducting a baseline survey of a species identified by local traditional healers or harvesters who live in the vicinity as a potential concern; (ii) the co-development and piloting of monitoring protocols; and (iii) the co-development of an improved management plan if necessary. We are currently working with UniVen lecturers to identify students to participate in this component of the project.

In addition to the above partners, we are engaging with three commercial nurseries in Gauteng, two in KwaZulu-Natal, and one commercial and one community nursery in Limpopo to produce plants for the project. The EWT team will visit additional nurseries in KwaZulu-Natal during our field visit in May.

It is early days but, so far, all our partnerships are progressing well but, as with all projects, tight timelines could undermine the extent of participation with community groups. In some areas, traders and harvesters have historically had poor relations with conservation officials, mainly through interactions relating to law enforcement. It will take time to build trust and develop strong, resilient partnerships.

We are employing several strategies to strengthen relations and improve our partners' understandings of the role of biodiversity, including (where appropriate) conducting workshops to provide opportunities for community partners to identify the root causes of the problems they are experiencing, and potential solutions. This provides us an opportunity to assess the gaps in alignment between conservation objectives and those of community partners, as divergent goals frequently lead to the undermining of conservation objectives in the long-term. We are also actively involving community stakeholders in research and monitoring, to enable them to assess long-term progress and actively participate in adaptive management to strengthen our approach going forward. In addition, field visits to natural areas, including botanic gardens, nature reserves, nurseries, etc. build relationships and facilitate opportunities for informal discussions on conservation and society that are often remembered and valued decades later.

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

Unfortunately, the project only started in mid-September 2025 due to funding delays, so this project (and reporting) period has been considerably shortened. A key focus initially was on project onboarding, including measures to fill gaps arising through staff changes in partner organisations, project staff recruitment, and procurement of vehicles and other project equipment.

We have made considerable progress on the project since its inception in Sept 2024, with the focus being on onboarding, strengthening community relations, prioritization of species for cultivation, sourcing of propagation material, and building efficient systems and processes.

Activity 1.1. Stakeholder engagement with stakeholders and identification of the species required by the various groups

In addition to project onboarding, we have worked hard to strengthen relations with traditional healers in Vhembe during the past 6.5 months engagement, and have made progress in the identification and verification of plant species that they are utilizing.

We conducted two field visits to the Thohoyandou Botanic Gardens for approximately 38 traditional healers and harvesters from the Nzhilele Valley in February 2024 (see attendance summary, registers and photographs in Evidence folder; not all the healers attended). In addition to strengthening relations between conservation staff and stakeholders from local communities, the field visits enabled us to directly identify and verify over 50 species (see attached list). We also provided training on the collection of botanic specimens to further build on this list. A colleague from the University of Venda joined us on one of the days.

We also started working on a plant list with traditional healers who live in Kutama in the Western Soutpansberg, but a planned visit to introduce our new socioecologist to the groups and continue this engagement had to be postponed due to the project leader sustaining an injury that required surgery. This, combined with a vehicle accident, delayed our field visit to the Mona and other markets in KwaZulu-Natal, which we had originally planned for March 2025.

Traders from the Johannesburg metropolitan markets are less easy to meet collectively as they understandably cannot be away from their businesses for prolonged periods of time. A group is, however, willing to schedule a day to visit the Walter Sisulu Botanic Gardens in Gauteng in May 2025. We are also slowly starting to identify species that they would like to start cultivating, some of which are well known and thus easily verified, for example, *S. aethiopicus, W. salutaris*, and *Ocotea bullata*. Leaders have also agreed that cultivation training will benefit them, although we will need to adapt our training processes and protocols to facilitate participation of as many Faraday stakeholders as possible.

We are further engaging telephonically with traders from the Mona markets, as well as the municipal department responsible for the market. This includes the development of a Service Level Agreement with the latter, collation of plant lists, and arrangement of visits to the market.

Activity 1.2. Pepper-bark tree seedling distribution and identification of horticultural training needs to traditional healers and community members.

44 Pepper-bark tree seedlings were distributed to additional community members in the Western Soutpansberg. We will monitor the survival of the distributed plants in the upcoming year. It is important that plants are distributed both to traditional healers and community members to ensure project acceptance. These opportunities also provide opportunities to informally engage with local community members on wildlife legislation and the values of biodiversity.

Activity 1.3 Distribute Pepper-bark seedlings to traders and assess additional horticultural training needs.

We are in the process finalising permits for the distribution of seedlings to traders in Gauteng and will be meeting with officials from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife in May 2025. There have been numerous delays in both areas, the latter due to a change in project staff.

Activity 1.4 Develop and implement tailored horticultural training for different groups

As reported above, we collaborated with SANBI to develope a three-day training course for traditional healers and harvesters, which was piloted in Vhembe, Limpopo. The course included presentations and discussions on the values of biodiversity, soil preparation and demonstrations of various propagation techniques. Wildlife legislation and permitting processes were also discussed. We are currently refining the course manual, which will be translated into TshiVenda, sePedi, xiTsonga, seSotho, and isiZulu.

Activity 1.5. Source and distribute seedlings of additional species.

To date, 80 seedlings have been distributed to 80 traditional healers and harvesters from HaMatsa and surrounding villages in Vhembe, and . Although not all these species are endangered, a key goal of this project is to make it easier and more convenient for people to source plants from legal sources than from the wild.

Activity 1.6. Establish and implement monitoring and evaluation systems, support systems and, potentially, short educational video clips e.g. cultivation techniques

We are currently in the process of developing support systems via WhatsApp chat groups to streamline communication and facilitate the sharing of lessons, as well as enable project staff to provide advice and other inputs to participants timeously. Over time, this will include the sharing of video clips and other information to strengthen capacities and maintain interest over time.

To streamline the processing of permits and M&E, we are also developing a database with a linked electronic registration form for permits. This system will streamline the implementation of M&E.

Activity 2.1 Conduct initial engagement with community leaders, police and conservation officials in each area to determine attitudes towards wildlife offences, particularly relating to the medicinal plant trade, and develop tailored training on the impacts of wildlife offences and legislation.

We have engaged with community leaders in Kutama and initiated discussions with one of the district SAPS police stations in the Western Soutpansberg. We will expand these engagements in the next three months, focusing initially on a second police station in the same area. The latter is responsible for an area that is being heavily impacted by illegal harvesting and hunting, and where communities have expressed a willingness to engage with us to address these challenges.

Activity 2.2 Implement training and engagement on wildlife legislation and the impacts of wildlife offences with the SAPS, community stakholders, traditional healers and traders.

We are in the process of developing training materials on wildlife legislation and the impacts of wildlife offences for local SAPS officials. We are currently focusing on Limpopo, as SAPS officials in this area have expressed interest in participating in wildlife legislation workshops.

Activity 2.3. Develop two best practice guidelines / knowledge products by the end of Year 3.

This activity is scheduled for Year 3.

Activity 3.1 In collaboration with community stakeholders, conservation officials, and other partners, assess current harvesting levels, effectiveness of existing controls, challenges, and co-develop strategies to improve these.

We have had early discussions with leaders in the Western Soutpansberg but have not yet begun engaging with community stakeholders in Blouberg and the Blyde River areas. These engagement processes are scheduled to begin in June — July 2025.

Activity 3.2 Develop two posters and fact or information sheets to support training and awareness (English, Tshivenda, sePedi, and isiZulu).

We are in the process of developing material for the posters but have not yet completed them. We are aiming to get the first set of posters completed by June 2025 for the Limpopo region.

Activity 3.3 If communities agree, train citizen scientists and conduct participatory assessments of selected plant populations with university partners.

We are currently engaging with the University of Venda to identify students to participate in the project. The approach will be developed in collaboration with local community stakeholders, including traditional healers, harvesters, leaders and others who may be interested in the process (e.g. youth).

Activity 4.1 Introduce our curriculum-aligned, interactive ESD project to teachers and, if they would like to participate, implement in three schools in each project area.

Several modules have been developed in preparation for implementation in the next quarter. We have already engaged with community leaders, the circuit manager, and seven primary schools in the Western Soutpansberg, and will begin with these schools. In addition, we are planning to collaborate with an environmental management consultant from HaMatsa in the Eastern Soutpansberg to start implementing ESD in this area.

Activity 4.2 In areas where high numbers of young people harvesting illegally or engaging in wildlife offences, conduct awareness sessions on wildlife offences, legislation, and potential consequences (100 youth).

This activity has not yet started as we still need to engage with communities in the three project areas.

Activity 5.1 Conduct at least three presentations, webinars, or discussions to share lessons and best practice with colleagues from developing southern African countries and South Africa.

This activity will be implemented in the next two years.

Activity 5.2 Produce a paper or guidelines on lessons and best practice on the scaling up of medicinal plant cultivation and strengthening governance by end of Year 3.

This activity is scheduled for Year 3.

Activity 5.3. Produce one new tool or approach to reduce harvesting impacts of wild plant species through the development of legal alternatives.

The tool or approach will be identified over time in collaboration with community and conservation or university partners.

3.2 Progress towards project Outputs

Output 1. Stakeholders (traditional healers living near hotspot and/or protected areas and traders and harvesters in six regional markets) alleviate pressure on wild medicinal plant populations by growing and harvesting plants ex-situ.

With 205 traditional healers and harvesters in Vhembe having already participated in four 3-day horticultural training courses, we have exceeded our target to train 150 by the end of years 2, and well on our way to achieving our project target.

Number and disaggregation of participants who attended four 3-day horticultural training courses in HaMatsa and Bochum, in Vhembe

Participants	No. of traditional healers and gatherers
Total number of participants	204
No. of men (incl youth)	60
No. of women (incl youth)	145
Number of youth	74
No. of youth disaggregated by gender: Men	28
No. of youth disaggregated by gender: Women	46

We also distributed 80 plants two participants from the two Matsa groups, and will shortly be doing the same for Bochum, depending on their access to water. Having managed to access 1,000 *S. aethiopicus* seedlings, we are confident that we will meet our seedling distribution targets by year 3. We will distribute plants to the two Bochum groups in the next quarter, provided water is available as we are heading into the dry season.

We are confident that traditional healers, traders and gatherers in our other project areas will participate as enthusiastically. Our biggest challenge will be to accommodate demand.

Output 2. Increased awareness of wildlife legislation and the impacts of wildlife offences amongst the South African Police Service (SAPS), community leaders, community members, traders, harvesters, traditional healers, and other stakeholders in the three harvesting areas.

We have collated materials on wildlife legislation and the impacts of wildlife offences in Limpopo, but will also be working with law enforcement and compliance officials from LEDET as there is variation in legislation between provinces.

Output 3. Strengthened governance and institutional capacity of community leaders in three harvesting areas, including harvesting controls and improved management (e.g. monitoring) of wild populations.

It was not possible to begin engagements with local communities in Blyde and Blouberg during this project period, although we did consult with leaders from villages situated adjacent to the Medike Reserve during November and December 2024. Response to strengthening harvesting controls (and illegal hunting) was positive although the need to protect wildlife and natural resources is under increasing pressure through competing land-use options, not all of which are deemed sustainable by those in the conservation and environmental sectors. Again, this process stalled due to time constraints and medical setbacks, but will be resumed during the first quarter of year 2.

Output 4. The wider community supports the project and also benefits through the implementation of curriculum-aligned Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) modules to strengthen education in under-serviced schools.

We have begun engaging with leaders, the circuit manager, and schools in the Western Soutpansberg but have not yet begun implementation of ESD or or awareness and engagement sessions with local youth and the wider community.

Output 5. Learning and best practice shared with colleagues in South Africa and at least three neighbouring countries (Mozambique, eSwatini, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana)

This project output is scheduled for the latter half of year 2 and year 3.

3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

Project Outcome. *Traditional healers and, for the first time, traders gain access to medicinal plants legally, while strengthened controls deter potential harvesters from harvesting wild plant populations in three communities.*

We have made considerable progress towards creating improved access to medicinal plants in Vhembe with 205 traditional healers from Vhembe having attended training in basic cultivation techniques. We have also distributed 80 plants to the different groups in this area. At this early stage, we opted not to distribute Red List species (other than Pepper-bark Trees) as we wanted to first monitor planting and survival rates of distributed seedlings.

In addition, engagement with Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal traders (Faraday and Mona) is progressing well. We will be conducting field visits and workshops with them in the next quarter to share our understandings of biodiversity and factors that are eroding it, as well as the role and their relations with conservation(ists), and the way forward. Are they willing to actively partner to ensure the long-term survival of species that are used in traditional medicine?

The impacts towards reducing illegal harvesting incidents are negligible at this early stage of the project (SMART indicator 1) and we will not yet see a reduction in harvesting impacts on wild populations (SMART indicator 2). However, the first six months of the project has laid a strong foundation for this project outcome to be achieved over time. We are confident that we will make significant progress towards achieving the project outcome by the end of the project.

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

The project assumptions included in our funding application are still valid, in our opinion.

Assumptions — Outcome.

- It is more cost-effective and convenient to harvest from homesteads than from the wild.
  Comment: this is vital. Most people will opt for the most convenient and cost-effective options both personally and, even more importantly, for their businesses.
- Traders and gatherers do not enjoy the risk of perpetually being on the wrong side of the law.
  Comment: We know this through engagements with them.
- Products can be produced through cultivation at prices equivalent to the costs of harvesting from the wild.
  Comment: Consequently, we are avoiding the implementation of medicinal plant nurseries which substantially increases production costs (Botha et al. 2007), and are developing systems to provide propagation material and provide seedlings at affordable prices.

- Parallel markets catering for more affluent consumers in other projects focusing on commercialisation of medicinal species do not lead to harvesting from the wild.
  Comment: Again, we know this to be true.
- Consumers consider cultivated plants to have similar medicinal properties to wild harvested plants.
  Comment: We know they do, with >200 traditional healers and gatherers having participated in horticultural training courses. People are busy and they would not have done

so if they did not believe cultivated plants have similar properties to those harvested from the wild.

Assumptions Output 1.

- Traditional healers are willing to cultivate.
  Comment: We know they are, again evidenced by their willingness to participate in this project.
- Sufficient seedling numbers for all target species.
  Comment: This is an ongoing challenge but we have already sourced sufficient seedlings to meet our targets for *S. aethiopicus* and *W. salutaris.* We are also working with commercial nurseries to plan for the provision of seedlings over the next two years, and are holding both online and in-person workshops to plan mass cultivation strategies.
- Cultivation costs equal to or close to collection costs for wild-harvested plants.
  Comment: This is an ongoing challenge and we will work closely with traders, traditional healers, and harvesters to monitor, adapt and streamline our processes to achieve this.
- Traders and traditional healers in the regional markets and hotspot harvesting areas are willing to cultivate and have sufficient land to do so.
  Comment: They have already demonstrated this. We are working exploring potential opportunities to access land in Gauteng with EWT colleagues.
- Conservation authorities issue permits to traders, harvesters, and traditional healers to grow medicinal plants *ex situ*.
  Comment: We are in the process of developing streamlined permitting system with GDARD and have already developed one with LEDET.
- Cultivation contributes to livelihoods.
  Comment: again, it is vital that this approach does not erode livelihoods partly for ethical reasons and partly because this will lead to shadow markets and price gouging.

Assumptions Output 2.

- Support will be provided by the local South African Police Service officials in each area.
  Comment: This assumption will only be able to be verified in the next report. We have already started working with SAPS officials from one district in the Western Soutpansberg.
- Local community leaders and members trust the police and are willing and able to work with the EWT, police and provincial conservation officials.
  Comment: This is likely to vary between areas, based on the perceived integrity of SAPS branches, existing relations between stakeholders, and other factors.
- Systems and processes are developed to enable local community leaders to enact governance mechanisms.
  Comment: Again, this will depend on local relations, leaders' willingness and ability to participate, and the level of acceptance or resistance from communities. The last-mentioned will vary according to local circumstances as well as longstanding histories and relations between stakeholders.
- Local leaders, SAPS, and provincial conservation agencies willing to participate and co-develop effective controls.
  Comment: Again, this is likely to vary between project areas.

Assumptions Output 3.

- Stakeholders are willing to develop improved harvesting controls.
- Communities are willing to record incidents. Record keeping can be a challenge in some communities, but we have developed simple systems that improve the likelihood of participation.
- Community members are willing to monitor species.

Comment: The above three assumptions will be reported on during the next project period.

Assumptions Output 4.

- Schools willing to participate.
- Low literacy levels may impede expression of level of understanding.
- Youth are willing to participate in awareness sessions.

Comment: The above assumptions are still valid and will be reported on during the next project period.

Assumptions Output 5.

- Colleagues are willing and available to share best practice and lessons learned.

Comment: The above assumption will be reported on during the last project period.

Impact: achievement of positive impact on illegal wildlife trade and multidimensional poverty reduction

Project Impact as per original application:

> Threats to medicinal plant populations reduced through scaling up of cultivation, inclusion of traders and harvesters, and strengthened governance and local institutional capacity to control illegal harvesting in hotspot areas.

In collaboration with partners, we believe that this project has substantial potential to contribute to a reduction in the unsustainable and illegal harvesting of wild plant populations for traditional medicine. There has been a noticeable shift towards recognition that bold, ambitious targets are required if we are to make headway in addressing this longstanding conservation challenge. Unlike many other similar conservation challenges, the goals of conservation and community stakeholders are closely aligned, viz., recognising that we all need to protect and manage species that are highly valued in traditional medicine to ensure a continued supply of medicinal products (in the case of traditional healers, traders and gatherers) and/or to reduce threats to biodiversity (from the conservation standpoint).

Well-functioning ecosystems and biodiversity are closely linked to human well-being. Safeguarding medicinal plant species ensures long-term access to a vital healthcare resource while at the same time, our approach ensures that traditional healers, traders, gatherers and others who use or depend on medicinal plants for their livelihoods will be able to do so in the long-term.

We are not aiming to diversify markets through the beneficiation of products at this stage due to a deep concern that this is likely to increase the prices of products in the markets and once again deprive the poorest consumers of a much-needed resource. There is also a strong likelihood that that this approach could exacerbate harvesting pressures rather than alleviate them through the development of parallel markets when we are already stretched to cater for high demand in the existing one.

4. Thematic focus

The thematic focus areas that we selected for this project in our funding application were:

1. Strengthening law enforcement
2. Developing sustainable livelihoods to benefit people directly affected by IWT

5. Impact on species in focus

It is too early in the project to determine impact. We will however, be distributing 1,000 *S. aethiopicus* rhizomes to traders, traditional healers and harvesters as soon as the permits have been approved. This is a relatively fast growing species and, once growers have learned the technique, should be easy to propagate.

Similarly, we will be able to make a significant impact towards reducing pressures on *W. salutaris* as this is also a relatively fast growing species and seedlings are usually available for distribution.

Dioscorea sylvatica is more difficult. Although it readily grows from seed, the plant is usually dioescious and very slow growing. Our approach is, however, to encourage community growers to cultivate diverse species, including slow growing plants and faster growing ones and - over time - to implement rotational cultivation and cropping practices.

In addition to its values in traditional medicine, *Haworthiopsis limifolia* is a popular horticultural subject, particularly amongst plant collectors. Although other species can be used as substitutes in some cases, for example, protection, where the plants are used as for their therapeutic values, we need to ensure that people are receiving the correct species. *H. limifolia* is a fast grower and easily propagated from seed, so once seed is available, it will be relatively straightforward to produce seedlings for distribution. Plants are being heavily harvested for the succulent trade as well, so this is an instance where a dual conservation approach to cater for different markets is required.

6. Project support for multidimensional poverty reduction

This project will advance knowledge and provide excellent case studies on the effectiveness of integrated conservation strategies to address threats to medicinal plant species, in collaboration with traditional healers, traders, gatherers and diverse project partners from conservation, academia, and private sectors. Lessons will be shared with colleagues from Mozambique, Swaziland, and other Southern Africa countries feeding into collaborative efforts to address cross border trade.

Our long-term vision is to extend this approach throughout the sub-region to substantially reduce the demand for wild-harvested products.

The project will contribute to the global public good through the sharing of lessons, data, and technical support in the conservation of threatened species, and strategies to improve sustainable use whilst contributing to alleviating poverty.

Poverty is multi-dimensional, however, and incorporates access to essential services, including water, sanitation, housing, education, health care, and other resources. People living in poverty often lack access to these and other resources (including natural resources), limiting their freedom of choice and access to opportunities that could improve their standards of living, as well as limited or lack of access to power, voice (although people have always found ways to resist, either overtly or covertly), and security (personal, civil, socioeconomic).

Although we are not directly contributing to a reduction in income poverty, we are striving to ensure that prices of medicinal plant products do not increase through scarcity, as species becoming increasingly more difficult to source, or through the introduction of competing markets that lead to an increase in prices. We are also including traders and harvesters to ensure that those who are already involved in the trade continue deriving livelihoods in a sustainable manner that ensures the long-term persistence of the resources.

We will be further sourcing plants from both commercial nurseries and those established by entrepreneurs from under-served communities. We will not be starting new nurseries for this project however, as these have regularly failed to achieve both conservation and socioeconomic benefits in the past, with many barely surviving or failing completely, sometimes leaving their owners worse off than they were previously.

To further contribute to local economies, we utilise service providers from the area wherever possible which creates additional job and income generating opportunities for local businesses, and also spreads projects benefits through the community, for example, catering, supplies and transportation, workshop facilities, etc.

This project contributes to the biodiversity and, in some cases, the improved management of habitats that underpin the functioning of ecosystem services.

In addition to sharing knowledge, information, and lessons learned with colleagues across Southern Africa, we will also build the capacity of traditional healers, traders, and gathers, and local communities, many of whom live below the poverty datum line.

7. 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	X
Transformative	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	

The entire rationale of the project is to ensure that vulnerable and marginalised groups who were subject to discrimination and social engineering resulting in loss of land and access to vital natural resources are able to continue accessing the plants they depend on for traditional medicine. We are also striving to ensure that those who currently depend on medicinal plants for their livelihoods are able to retain these livelihoods and become active partners in developing strategies to ensure a consistent supply of medicinal plant products that both they and their customers depend on.

We adopt a gradual and incremental approach to GESI, considering cultural and social norms and practices as well as power relations. Top-down approaches often lead resistance, resentment, and further discrimination and ostracization. As far as possible, we are developing systems to facilitate equal opportunities for participation and access to resources. We are also careful to ensure that we treat all those we interact with equally to avoid exacerbating or causing conflicts, as well as inequalities. For example, as far as possible we will ensure that we have sufficient volumes of one species to distribute to all those who want them in any particular group. Similarly, training is conducted in the villages or on site (traders) to create opportunities for as many people to participate as possible. We also ran several field visits to the botanic gardens. This is contrary to many approaches where a small number of participants are selected to participate in workshops or training situated at distant venues.

In addition to considering the basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups, and striving to ensure that we will not contribute to or create further inequalities through careful consideration of the potential impacts of our processes, activities, distribution of resources, and other factors, we also need to ensure that communities support the project and that there are no negative repercussions on traditional healers or other local participants. In some instances there can be tensions between groups with different belief systems and

worldviews, resulting in antagonism and suspicion of the other party's activities. Channelling substantial project benefits to one group, especially if the organisation is only developing one project in the area, can lead to tensions as excluded community members may question why only a small proportion of people are benefiting, leading to intra-community resentment and conflicts. These situations, or other poor project outcomes, can result in long-term harmful impacts on participants and/or other community members.

Cultural and social perceptions of the status of women and vulnerable or marginalised groups are often deeply entrenched in society and based on values and judgements of worth and worthiness. Development agencies have the power to strengthen these attributes in participants, but clearly this should not be at the perceived expense of other individuals or groups. Understanding of local customs and beliefs is vital.

Our project principles and approaches are based on recognition and value of peoples' rights, both legal and customary. These may not always align, particularly relating to natural resources. For example, harvesting is frequently perceived to be a civil right and, once permission has been from the Chief, can be implemented without the need for further permits. Similarly, nature is often perceived to be a 'free good' and consequently open to harvesting by anyone who needs a particular resource.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

The EWT has robust M&E systems to track project progress and ensure we meet targets. We have adopted the Conservation Standards (formerly the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation), a cycle of best practices and principles to assist us in ensuring that we are systematic about designing, implementing, monitoring, and adapting projects. The Conservation Standards were developed and improved over the last decade by leading conservation planning practitioners and are implemented globally. Monitoring is implemented at the level of activities, objectives, and impacts. Our staff use the associated software programs, Miradi and Miradi Share, to save and share project plans, and report on progress and indicators. This allows adaptation and improvement of project designs to ensure conservation goals and objectives are achieved.

The EWT has a full-time Conservation Strategy Officer (Lesley Helliwell) to oversee M&E processes, and she will support M&E in collaboration with the Project Leader. The Project Leader will be responsible for M&E, including the establishment and implementation of feedback mechanisms that support adaptive management throughout implementation. The Project Leader will also be responsible for holding monthly team meetings during which all team members will feedback on progress against the Log Frame table to enable detection of potential challenges early and enable us to address them timeously. We communicate regularly with partners and funders to keep these stakeholders updated on project progress, and any necessary amendments we need to make to project approaches.

Indicators are provided in Annex 3.

Each component of the project will be monitored as per the indicators and processes in our Log frame, most of which will be integrated into processes from the outset. The M&E approaches track project implementation, partner participation, and the contribution of our project Activities to its Output, Outcome and Impact.

M&E approaches:

1. Registering the details of participating traditional healers, traders, and harvesters.
2. The number of seedlings distributed, recipient details, and seedling survival, which will be monitored annually from the second year.
3. Training courses will be monitored through attendance registers and post-training assessments.

4. Community participation to improve the management of selected plant populations will be monitored through attendance registers, meeting notes, workshop materials, and the development and implementation of management plans.
5. Plant populations in selected areas will be monitored through citizen scientists and post-graduate students to determine whether harvesting controls are leading to a reduction in harvesting pressures.
6. Monitoring illegal harvesting incidents will enable us to monitor changes in frequency over time, and possible areas for improvement in the establishment of controls.
7. We will determine ongoing willingness of traders and harvesters to cultivate and participate through semi-structured interviews. Seedlings take time to reach harvestable size and volumes also need to be bulked so three years may be too early to detect changes in cultivated versus illegally harvested products. Through the diverse M&E approaches above however, we are confident that we will be able to determine the willingness of project participants to cultivate.

Monitoring plant populations, for example, enables assessment of both the resilience of the population and the effectiveness of efforts to strengthen harvesting controls and improve the governance of plants that are illegally harvested in the area. Monitoring illegal harvesting incidents supports this activity, and also provides an indication of the level of buy-in by traders, harvesters and — possibly, traditional healers.

Similarly, monitoring plant survival enables assessment of the level of buy-in by community stakeholders. If plant mortalities are high, is this due to a lack of support (indicating that we are unlikely to achieve some of our Outputs and Outcomes), or is it due to biophysical factors?

9. Lessons learnt

A key lesson is to take the time for reflection and strengthening our approaches and courses. For example, although our horticultural training courses were extremely well-received, we know they can be improved. Participants received all the technical skills that we were planning to demonstrate, but we believe that redesigning theory sessions to be more interactive will be more enjoyable and beneficial for participants, and also enable us to obtain a more nuanced understanding of their relationship with nature, the challenges they are experiencing with respect to accessing natural resources, and other issues.

We will thus be evaluating the previous workshop content and training approaches in the upcoming weeks with SANBI horticulturalists. Our next course will be far more interactive, drawing more extensively on participants' own experience, their customary practices, and their knowledge of the local area. Although this will mean a substantial revision of the course, we know that it will pay dividends. Of course, this course will also have to be piloted and evaluated; it is an iterative process. And since groups are different, we need to be prepared to adapt training approaches to meeting the needs of participants, which may mean reverting to a more formal presentation style for some groups.

We would strongly recommend that other trainers also consider implementing training in villages where people live, partly to enable more people to participate, and partly because this approach enables trainers to gain a far better understanding of the local context and circumstances that participants experience. This also enables participants to envisage implementing the practical aspects of training into their own circumstances and lives. In some instances, participants return home believing that they lack sufficient resources to be able to implement training.

10. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

We provided responses to reviewer comments in our funding application in our first report, viz. EWT134, Interim report (Oct 2024). Most of the comments were explanatory notes, but partners agree with reviewers on points that were raised regarding implementation and the

long-term nature of an initiative like this. For example, we are in agreement that seedling supply is underpins the success of the project, and have already made concerted efforts to ensure that we are able to access sufficient volumes both through our partners (SANBI nurseries at their botanic gardens) and through nurseries. In addition, we will be holding a mass cultivation planning workshop in August, as well as mini-workshops in the first quarter.

In addition, we have always been acutely aware of the need to maintain momentum if we achieve our Outputs, Outcome, and Impact in this project. The initiative is ambitious and requires concerted, targeted effort (to ensure the poor do not lose access to medicinal plants), to maintain momentum and continue supporting community partners. The EWT has participated in collaborative funding proposals with our funding partners and will also need to start working on funding to ensure continuation of the project post 2027. As mentioned in our response to reviewers, we will also need to expand the project to additional communities.

Our project does not have an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment .

11. Risk Management

Changes to funding opportunities and global relations arising through shocks arising through the United States government and is private sector allies has led to significant challenges and loss for the poor worldwide and led to economic instability. To date, this project has not been directly affected, fortunately. Indirectly, though the pressures to ensure that we meet the needs of the poorest sectors of society has once again ramped up, particularly in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has together with other shocks and events (including climate change) reduced progress made in addressing poverty both in South Africa and the rest of the world.

The situation demonstrates also again the importance of resilient networks and partnerships, and robust processes and systems to enable adaption as far as possible. Since the risks have been not directly affected the project, it is noted here but has not been added to the risk register.

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12. Scalability and durability

Significant volumes of medicinal plants are traded in the markets annually across the Southern African sub-region and, for this project to succeed, it has to be both scalable and durable in the long-term in time incorporating neighbouring countries to implement similar initiatives to proactively address cross-border trade through the creation of access to legally sourced medicinal products.

It is too early to assess whether the project has changed attitudes and whether this will translate into changed behaviour. To reiterate, an initiative like this takes time and will only succeed if the financial costs are aligned to existing market prices, and if it is easier and more convenient to access plants legally than it would be to harvest illegally.

13. IWT Challenge Fund identity

The IWT Challenge Fund logo will be used on our training manual, which will be printed in four languages and shared with training participants and partners in three provinces. It will be recognised as a partner alongside the EWT, SANBI and others who are participating in the particular component of the project.

We are keeping a relatively low profile in terms of media to avoid potential sociopolitical and other challenges that may arise. These have in the past severely undermined projects and led to them stalling or being closed. We will report on specific project activities and, in year 3, write an article covering the whole project. By this stage, cutlivation systems and processes will hopefully be in place so that the project will not be weakened should external conflicts arise through perceived competition for resources.

Until then we will write articles and social media posts of particular aspects of the project, and participate in workshops, providing recognition to the IWTCF and the UK Government for their contribution to the conservation of medicinal plants, particularly Red List species.

14. Safeguarding

15. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (April 2024-March 2025)

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	**2024/25 Grant (£)**	**2024/25 Total actual IWT 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)				
TOTAL	**118,238**	**78,603.98**		

Table 2: Project mobilised or matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

	Secured to date	Expected by end of project	Sources
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project (£)			Fondation Franklinia. A proportion of these funds were used to cover costs to ensure continuity to groups between Mar — Sept 24.
Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project (£)			Elizabeth Wakeman Henderson Fund

16. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

We are currently refining our training course and training materials.

The project has progressed well, but the shortened time frame has been a challenge. We will achieve our objectives but will need to find creative ways to ensure continuation of support to the community stakeholders over time.

17. Optional

I agree that the Biodiversity Challenge Funds may 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).

Globally, approximately 28,185 plant species have been identified as being used in medicine (Allkin 2017), frequently as an ingredient in traditional medicine or as other herbal remedies, with a smaller but equally important proportion being used in allopathic medicine. High harvesting levels frequently lead to the extinctions of local plant populations or, in time, species. In South Africa, 178 medicinal plant species are listed on the IUCN's Red List national threat categories.

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) is implementing an integrated approach in collaboration with traditional healers, traders, harvesters, and partners from the conservation sector to reduce pressures on wild plant populations. Over the years, there have been widespread efforts to support traditional healers to access medicinal plants through cultivation. Although this approach has been partially successful, the volumes that are utlised and traded across the country require substantial scaling up of cultivation and other conservation efforts to safeguard species for future generations.

As part of this initiative, we facilitated two field trips to the Thohoyandou Botanic for traditional healers and harvesters from Vhembe, situated in the far north of South Africa in Limpopo Province. In collaboration with horticulturalists and scientists from the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), we verified the scientific names of over 50 species that the group regularly uses. The importance of direct identification becomes apparent when one considers that in South Africa approximately 3,640 species have been recorded for their uses as medicine, while 1,055 are used in rituals, and 911 species are used for both rituals and medicine. There is also frequently an overlap in vernacular names, so it is important to correctly identify the species that are being used to the best of our ability.

We then hosted four 3-day horticultural training courses which were attended by 205 traditional healers and gatherers, again in collaboration with SANBI horticulturalists, in this case from Walter Sisulu Botanic Gardens in Johannesburg. In addition to plant propagation demonstrations, discussions were held on the links between biodiversity and ecosystem services and human wellness, emphasizing the importance of maintaining soil health, pollinator services, and other natural systems and services that we depend on. These are clearly particularly important when growing medicinal plants that will be used for their therapeutic attributes. An understanding of cultural norms and protocols is also vital, particularly when growing medicinal plants as these are strongly intertwined with spiritual and cultural beliefs.

File Type (Image / Video / Graphic)	File Name or File Location	Caption including description, country and credit	Social media accounts and websites to be tagged (leave blank if none)	Consent of subjects received (delete as necessary)
Image		Traditional healers from Vhembe, Limpopo Province visit the Thohoyandou Botanic Gardens.		Yes
Image		Transplanting seedlings during the horticultural training course		Yes
Image		Transplanting practical		Yes
MP4		Sharing knowledge during training and beyond		Yes
MP4		Music is integral to traditional healing and healers at many levels		Yes

18. References

Allkin B. 2017. Useful Plants – Medicines: At Least 28,187 Plant Species are Currently Recorded as Being of Medicinal Use. In: Willis KJ, editor. *State of the World's Plants.* London (UK): Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; 2017. PMID: 29144713.

Botha J., Witkowski E.T.F. and Cock J. 2007. The commercial viability of South African outreach nurseries. *Agroforestry Systems. 70: 135—156*

Annex 1:Report of progress and achievements against logframe for Financial Year 2024-2025

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
Impact Threats to medicinal plant populations reduced through scaling up of cultivation, inclusion of traders and harvesters, and strengthened governance and local institutional capacity to control illegal harvesting in hotspot areas.	(Report on any contribution towards positive impact on illegal wildlife trade or positive changes in the conditions of human communities impacted by illegal trade e.g. steps towards alternative and sustainable livelihoods) Although at an early stage, our project has made progress towards including traders and harvesters into conservation strategies. We are engaging with traders from the Faraday, Mai Mai markets in Gauteng, the Mona market in KwaZulu-Natal and the Sibasa and Thohoyandou markets in Limpopo. We are also working with over 300 traditional healers in Limpopo to co-develop strategies to reduce pressures on wild plant populations.	
Outcome		
Outcome indicator 0.1 A 40% reduction in the number of illegal harvesters observed or caught in each of the three harvesting hotspot areas adjacent to the Medike Nature Reserve, Blouberg Nature Reserve, and Blyde River Canyon Reserve by Year 3, compared to the Year 1 baseline.	We have not yet begun working with communities who wish to reduce illegal harvesting in their areas, so we have not made progress yet towards this goal.	In the next quarter, we will engage with communities situated adjacent to the Blyde River Reserve in Mpumalanga Province, as well as with those living near the Blouberg Reserve and in the Soutpansberg Mountains in Limpopo Province.
Outcome indicator 0.2. Number of medicinal plants remaining in each population does not diminish, or increases, between Year 1 and 3. During the first year, surveys will be conducted of selected wild populations to obtain baseline data.	Several communities have requested assistance to reduce illegal harvesting and improve the management of wild plant populations that occur in their areas. We have not yet been able to conduct baseline research on these populations yet, due to a shortened project timeframe but will be doing so in the next six months.	We will conduct baseline surveys of plants in at least two communities in the next three months, but hopefully all three (assuming they all still wish to participate).
Output 1		

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
Output indicator 1.1 Cumulatively, at least 150 traditional healers participate in medicinal plant cultivation by end Year 2, with 300 participating by the end of Year 3.	205 Traditional healers and gatherers from Vhembe participated in four 3-day horticultural training courses. Of these, 80 participants received plants to cultivate at home as part of their starter packs.	
Output indicator 1.2. Cumulatively, at least 1,000 seedlings are donated to, and planted by, traditional healers by end of Year 2 and 2,000 by the end of Year 3. Given the high volumes traded, this is a first step towards reducing illegal harvesting. It will take take to achieve the levels of cultivation required over time to measure a significant reduction in volumes traded. But it is a vital and long overdue first step in this important conservation measure.	To date, we have distributed approximately 125 plant seedlings as we are first assessing planting and survival rates of the seedlings that have been distributed so far. We were also working on a tight timeline. Plant distribution takes time in rural areas situated a distance apart, due to the limited loads that can be carried at once. However, we have procured two trailers and are installing shelving to expedite deliveries.	We have placed plant orders for the next period and are in the process of finalising permitting systems in Gauteng and Limpopo, and will be meeting with compliance officials in KwaZulu-Natal in May to do this We will also distribute seedlings to the two groups at Bochum who received training, provided water is available as we are heading into the dry season.
Output indicator 1.3. Species dependent, at least 40 - 60% seedlings survive and grow to end of Year 3.	This will be monitored over time.	Test systems to streamline permits, M&E and other processes
Output indicator 1.4 At least 100 traditional healers who receive seedlings for cultivation receive horticultural training by end of Year 3. [IWTCF- A01].	205 traditional healers and harvesters have received horticultural training in this reporting period, more than double our target.	We will conduct additional training courses with traditional healers in KwaZulu-Natal or Mpumalanga.
Output indicator 1.5. At least 25% of 1,400 traders in six regional markets in South Africa (Thohoyandou, Faraday, Mai Mai, Warwick, Umlazi and Pongola), who have access to suitable land cultivate at least 3,000 medicinal plants by end of Year 3. [IWTCF-A02].	There have been numerous delays in the development of permitting systems, but we are pushing for these to be finalised asap to enable us to start distributing seedlings to traders in Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal.	Continue pushing for permits to be finalised in Gauteng and meet officials in KwaZulu-Natal.
Output indicator 1.6. Horticultural training provided to at least 60 traders and/or harvesters who indicate that they are willing to cultivate and receive seedlings by the end of Year 2. [IWTCF-A01].	We have not yet begun training traders and harvesters as it has been difficult to meet them as a group.	We are arranging a visit to the Walter Sisulu Botanic gardens in May which will including a planning session.

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
Output indicator 1.7. At least 60 traditional healers and traders who received training report they are applying new capabilities six months or more after training. Training will be continuous, with final numbers provided at the end of Year 3 [IWTCF- A02].	It is early in the project to predict whether the traditional healers will apply their new capabilities but those who attended the previous courses at HaMatsa have, for the most part, started planting. Several villages were hampered by water outages.	We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of training through WhatsApp, meetings, and site visits.
Output indicator 1.8 At least 30% of traditional healers and participating traders report a decrease in unsustainable practices, or a willingness to do so in the future as a result of project activities by the end of Year 3 [IWTCF- A15].	It is too early to assess this.	This will be conducted in the third year of the project.
Output 2. Increased awareness of wildlife legislation and the impacts of wildlife offences amongst the South African Police Service (SAPS), community leaders, community members, traders, harvesters, traditional healers, and other stakeholders in the three harvesting areas.		
Output indicator 2.1. Wildlife legislation course and training materials developed by Month 6.	We are in the process of developing the wildlife legislation course and training and awareness materials.	We will complete this by July 2025, enabling us to implement the training courses in winter.
Output indicator 2.2. At least 70% people attending engagement and awareness-raising workshops in four illegal harvesting hotspot areas demonstrate improved understanding of wildlife (particularly plant harvesting) related crimes by end of Year 3 [IWTCF-B01]. .	This will be implemented once the engagement and awareness raising sessions have been conducted.	Scheduled for year 3
Output indicator 2.3. At least two best practice guides and knowledge products developed (cultivation guidelines, wildlife legislation brochures for police) and endorsed by conservation officials by Year 3 [IWTCF-B05].	Scheduled for Year 3.	Scheduled for Year 3.
Output 3. Strengthened governance and institutional capacity of community leaders in three harvesting areas, including harvesting controls and improved management (e.g. monitoring) of wild populations.		
Output indicator 3.1 Harvesting controls and sanctions co-developed with at least two of the three communities by the end of Year 3, together with measurements of their implementation and compliance.	We will be engaging with the three communities in the next quarter.	We will be engaging with the three communities in the next quarter.

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
Output indicator 3.2 Two posters and fact or information sheets developed and distributed to police stations and community leaders on the impacts of wildlife trade and legislation developed, aligned to community needs after initial engagement, by end of Year 1 (English, Tshivenda, sePedi, and isiZulu) [IWTCF-C02].	We are in the process of developing the posters and information sheets.	Posters and information sheets to be finalised, translated and printed by July 2025.
Output indicator 3.3. 3–4 citizen scientists trained to monitor populations of at least one wild plant species in each community by end of Year 1 (in collaboration with researchers from the University of Venda - UniVen) [IWTCF-D02].	We are engaging with the University of Venda to invite students to participate in this component of the project.	We will begin co-designing and implementing processes with at least one village by July 2025.
Output 4. The wider community supports the project and also benefits through the implementation of curriculum-aligned Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) modules to strengthen education in under-serviced schools. .		
Output indicator 4.1. At least 700 school children in 3 schools in each of the four hotspot areas receive interactive, lessons that improve their understanding of concepts in subjects such as natural science and technology, and awareness of the values of nature by end of Year 3. Disaggregated by gender.	We have engaged with seven schools in the Western Soutpansberg. Teachers and principals are very supportive of the project so we will be able to start implementing ESD modules at the start of next term.	Resource preparation and engagement with schools in the additional communities we will be working in.
Output indicator 4.2 Awareness sessions conducted with 100 youth on the links between human well-being and environmental health and biodiversity, impacts of wildlife offences, legislation, and potential consequences in areas in which high numbers of young people are participating in illegal plant harvesting or other wildlife offences by end of Year 3.	Once we have begun working with the three communities, we will engage with leaders and communities on the most appropriate means of engaging with youth.	Re-scheduled for first quarter.
Output 5. Learning and best practice shared with colleagues in South Africa and at least three neighbouring countries (Mozambique, eSwatini, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana)		
Output indicator 5.1 At least three presentations, webinars, or discussions implemented to share lessons learned through project implementation and best practice (e.g. efficacy of citizen scientists; processes implemented in communities, traders, traditional healers; implementation watchpoints; production of medicinal plants at affordable prices) by end of Year 3 through medicinal plant working groups, conferences or workshops, or other platforms.	Scheduled for year 3	Scheduled for year 3
5.2. Paper or guidelines developed on lessons and best practice on the scaling up of medicinal plant cultivation and strengthening governance by end of Year 3.	Scheduled for year 3	Scheduled for year 3

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
5.3 At least one new and enhanced tools/approach developed for tackling IWT by end of Year 3 (Approach: the integration of traders into conservation initiatives) [IWTCF D26].	Scheduled for year 3	Scheduled for year 3
5.4 1–2 post-graduate students gain valuable research and stakeholder engagement experience in developing participative M&E processes with communities, and monitoring plant populations towards their Honours and MSc degrees [IWTCF-D05].	See above. This is ongoing, and will be started in year 2	See above. This is ongoing, and will be started in year 2

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: Threats to medicinal plant populations reduced through scaling up of cultivation, inclusion of traders and harvesters, and strengthened governance and local institutional capacity to control illegal harvesting in hotspot areas.			
Outcome: Traditional healers and, for the first time, traders gain access to medicinal plants legally, while strengthened controls deter potential harvesters from harvesting wild plant populations in three communities.	0.1 A 40% reduction in the number of illegal harvesters observed or caught in each of the three harvesting hotspot areas adjacent to the Medike Nature Reserve, Blouberg Nature Reserve, and Blyde River Canyon Reserve by Year 3, compared to the Year 1 baseline. 0.2 Number of medicinal plants remaining in each population does not diminish, or increases, between Year 1 and 3. During the first year, surveys will be conducted of selected wild populations to obtain baseline data.	0.1.1 Number of illegal harvesting incidents recorded in each harvesting hotspot. Systems will be established with communities who currently lack records to monitor and record the number of illegal harvesters during the first year, in collaboration with the Traditional Council, community records, and police reports. Disaggregation by gender, age group, geographic area. 0.2.1 Participatory, empirical M&E assessments developed with community members and collaborating researchers from the University of Venda to enable local citizen scientists to monitor selected populations at regular intervals, verified by independent researchers. Baseline data to be collected during Year 1. Disaggregation by plant species, population size, time, geographic area. 0.2.2 Collection of baseline data for populations during Year 1. Disaggregation by plant species, population size, geographic area (Year 1).	• It is more cost-effective and convenient to harvest from homesteads than from the wild. • Traders and gatherers do not enjoy the risk of perpetually being on the wrong side of the law. • Products can be produced through cultivation at prices equivalent to the costs of harvesting from the wild. • Parallel markets catering for more affluent consumers in other projects focusing on commercialisation of medicinal species do not lead to harvesting from the wild. • Consumers consider cultivated plants to have similar medicinal properties to wild harvested plants (we know they do). • Note - The number of bulbs, rhizomes and tubers that are visible above ground depends on rainfall and other conditions.

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
Outputs: **1**. Stakeholders (traditional healers living near hotspot and/or protected areas and traders and harvesters in six regional markets) alleviate pressure on wild medicinal plant populations by growing and harvesting plants *ex situ*.	1.1 Cumulatively, at least 150 traditional healers participate in medicinal plant cultivation by end Year 2, with 300 participating by the end of Year 3. 1.2 Cumulatively, at least 1,000 seedlings planted by traditional healers by end of Year 2 and 2,000 by the end of Year 3. 1.3 Species dependent, at least 40 - 60% seedlings survive and grow to end of Year 3. 1.4 At least 30% of 300 traditional healers who receive seedlings for cultivation receive horticultural training by end of Year 3. [IWTCF- A01].	1.1.1 Monitor planting by traditional healers in collaboration with group leaders, social media, photographs and, where possible, visits to a sample of homesteads. Disaggregation by gender, age group, geographic area. 70-80% of traditional healers are women. 1.2.1 Traditional healers provide records of number of seedlings planted. Disaggregation by plant species, geographic area. Baseline: 80-85% of traditional healers in areas we have worked already are women. 1.3.1 Traditional healers provide records of the number of seedlings surviving each year. Disaggregation by plant species, plant size, geographic area. 1.4.1 Attendance registers. Disaggregation by gender, age group, geographic area. Baseline: 80-85% of traditional healers in areas we have worked already are women. 1.4.2. Pre- and post-training assessments. Disaggregation by gender, age group, geographic area. In Limpopo, 70% of traders are men. In Mona Market, KwaZulu-Natal, there may be a higher proportion of women. We will verify the gender of participating women during Year 1.	• Traditional healers are willing to cultivate. • We can access sufficient seedling numbers for all target species. • Cultivation contributes to livelihoods. • Cultivation costs equal to or close to collection costs for wild-harvested plants. • Traders and traditional healers in the regional markets and hotspot harvesting areas are willing to cultivate and have sufficient land to do so. • Conservation authorities issue permits to traders, harvesters, and traditional healers to grow medicinal plants *ex situ*. • Sufficient piped water or rainfall for seedling growth.

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
	1.5. At least 25% of 1,400 traders in six regional markets in South Africa (Thohoyandou, Faraday, Mai Mai, Warwick, Umlazi and Pongola), who have access to suitable land cultivate at least 3,000 medicinal plants by end of Year 3. [IWTCF- A02].	1.5.1 Each participating trader receives (signs for) 10–30 seedlings of five fast-growing medicinal plant species that are in high demand in their area. Planting rates will be assessed through reporting at group level, social media, and photographs. Disaggregation by gender, age group, geographic area, plant species. 1.5.2 Percentage planting and survival of seedlings monitored from a selected subset of traders. Disaggregation by gender, age group, geographic area, plant species. Baseline data to be verified during Year 1.	
	1.6. Horticultural training provided to 20–40% of the traders and/or harvesters who indicate that they are willing to cultivate and receive seedlings by the end of Year 2. [IWTCF- A01].	1.6.1 Attendance registers. Disaggregation by gender, age group, geographic area. Baseline data to be verified during Year 1. 1.6.2 Pre- and post-training assessments. Disaggregation by gender, age group, geographic area, plant species.	
	1.7. At least 50% of traditional healers and traders who received training report they are applying new capabilities six months or more after training. Training will be continuous, with final numbers provided at the end of Year 3 [IWTCF-A02]. 1.8 At least 30% of traditional healers and participating traders report a	1.7 Number reporting they are applying new capabilities through focus group and participative assessments. Disaggregation by gender, age group, geographic area. Baseline data will be collected as participants join the project.	

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
	decrease in unsustainable practices, or a willingness to do so in the future as a result of project activities by the end of Year 3 [IWTCF- A15].	1.8. Number reporting a decrease in unsustainable practices (harvesting or sourcing cultivated species that are of harvestable size from unsustainable sources) as a result of project activities. This will be determined through focus group assessments supplemented with a sample of individual interviews, Disaggregated by gender, age group, geographic area, species.	
2. Increased awareness of wildlife legislation and the impacts of wildlife offences amongst the South African Police Service (SAPS), community leaders, community members, traders, harvesters, traditional healers, and other stakeholders in the three harvesting areas.	2.1 Wildlife legislation course and training materials developed by Month 6. 2.2 At least 70% people attending engagement and awareness-raising workshops in four illegal harvesting hotspot areas demonstrate improved understanding of wildlife (particularly plant harvesting) related crimes by end of Year 3 [IWTCF-B01].	2.1.1 Wildlife legislation training course and awareness/engagement materials developed (at least two brochures and one poster) 2.2.1. Number of people attending engagement and training sessions, including exposure to additional wildlife legislation awareness products such as the EWT LAWS website (www.laws.ewt.org.za) Baseline data to be collected during the workshops. Disaggregation by gender, age group, stakeholder group, type of training, geographic area. 2.2.2. Number of people with improved understanding of the impacts of wildlife offences and legislation. 2.3.1. Number of guides and knowledge products produced and endorsed. Disaggregation by language, typology.	• Support will be provided by the local South African Police Service officials in each area • Local community leaders and members trust the police and are willing and able to work with the EWT, police and provincial conservation officials. • Systems and processes are developed to enable local community leaders to enact governance mechanisms. • Local leaders, SAPS, and provincial conservation agencies willing to participate and co-develop effective controls.

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
	2.3. At least two best practice guides and knowledge products developed (cultivation guidelines, wildlife legislation brochures for police) and endorsed by conservation officials by Year 3 [IWTCF-B05].	2.3.2 Number of guides and knowledge products shared with local communities, South African colleagues, and those from neighbouring Southern African Developing countries.	
3. Strengthened governance and institutional capacity of community leaders in three harvesting areas, including harvesting controls and improved management (e.g. monitoring) of wild populations.	3.1 Harvesting controls and sanctions co-developed with at least two of the three communities by the end of Year 3, together with measurements of their implementation and compliance. 3.2 Two posters and fact or information sheets developed and distributed to police stations and community leaders on the impacts of wildlife trade and legislation developed, aligned to community needs after initial engagement, by end of Year 1 (English, Tshivenda, sePedi, and isiZulu) [IWTCF-C02]. 3.3. 3–4 citizen scientists trained to monitor populations of at least one wild plant species in each community by end of Year 1 (in collaboration with researchers from the University of Venda - UniVen) [IWTCF-D02].	3.1.1 Number of controls and sanctions co-developed and implemented over the project period. Assessment of efficacy and adaptation over the project period, with leaders and others. Disaggregation by gender, age group, offender typology, behaviour type, geographic area. 3.1.2 Harvesting incidents recorded. Disaggregation by site and language. 3.2.1 Number of posters and fact / information sheets distributed to police stations and community leaders. 3.3.1. Pre- and post-training assessments. Disaggregation by gender, age group, geographic area. 3.3.2 Pre- and post-assessments conducted following training. Disaggregation by gender, age group, geographic area. 3.3.3 Monitoring records independently verified (e.g through Uni Ven).	Stakeholders are willing to develop improved harvesting controls. Communities are willing to record incidents. Record keeping can be a challenge in some communities, but we have developed simple systems that improve the likelihood of participation. Community members are willing to monitor species.

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
4. The wider community supports the project and also benefits through the implementation of curriculum-aligned Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) modules to strengthen education in under-serviced schools.	4.1 At least 700 school children in 3 schools in each of the four hotspot areas receive interactive, lessons that improve their understanding of concepts in subjects such as natural science and technology, and awareness of the values of nature by end of Year 3. Disaggregated by gender.	4.1.1 Number of school children receiving curriculum-aligned ESD education. Disaggregation by gender (in South Africa, the proportion of male:female learners is approximately 50:50), age group, school, geographic area. 4.1.2 Post-educational assessments to determine understanding of learning materials. Disaggregation by gender, age group, school, geographic area. 4.1.3 Number of school educators who participate in the ESD modules. Disaggregation by gender, age group, school, geographic area. 4.1.4 Number of schools at which educational modules are presented. Disaggregation by school, geographic area. 4.1.5 Number of educators who continue to implement modules independently. Disaggregation by gender, age group, school, geographic area. 4.2.1 Number of youth who participate in engagement on the impacts of wildlife offences on people and the environment, and are informed about wildlife legislation. Disaggregated by	• Schools willing to participate. • Low literacy levels may impede expression of level of understanding.

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
		gender (50:50 male to female ratio), age group, geographic area.	
	4.2. Awareness sessions conducted with 100 youth on the links between human well-being and environmental health and biodiversity, impacts of wildlife offences, legislation, and potential consequences in areas in which high numbers of young people are participating in illegal plant harvesting or other wildlife offences by end of Year 3.	4.2.2 At least a 60% increase in knowledge and understanding demonstrated through pre- and post-learning assessments. Disaggregation by gender, age group, geographic area.	Youth are willing to participate in awareness sessions.
5. Learning and best practice shared with colleagues in South Africa and at least three neighbouring countries (Mozambique, eSwatini, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana)	5.1 At least three presentations, webinars, or discussions held to share lessons learned through project implementation and best practice (e.g. efficacy of citizen scientists; processes implemented in communities, traders, traditional healers; implementation watchpoints; production of medicinal plants at affordable prices) by end of Year 3 through medicinal plant working groups, conferences or workshops, or other platforms.	5.1.1. Number of engagements to share best practice. Disaggregation by gender, age group, stakeholder group, geographic area. 5.1.2. Disaggregation by typology and language.	Colleagues are willing and available to share best practice and lessons learned.
	5.2. Paper or guidelines developed on lessons and best practice on the scaling up of medicinal plant cultivation and strengthening governance by end of Year 3.	5.2.1 Tool for integrating traders into conservation initiatives developed. Disaggregation by approaches/areas or markets.	
	5.3 At least one new and enhanced tools/approach developed for tackling IWT by end of Year 3 (Approach: the integration of traders into conservation initiatives) [IWTCF D26].	5.3.1 Enhanced approach to scaling up medicinal plants developed through the inclusion of traders.	

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	5.4 1–2 post-graduate students gain valuable research and stakeholder engagement experience in developing participative M&E processes with communities, and monitoring plant populations towards their Honours and MSc degrees [IWTCF-D05].	5.4.1. Research projects implemented.	

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. Each activity should start on a new line and be **no more than approximately 25 words.**)

1.1 Continue engaging with traditional healers and traders and identify additional species for cultivation and assess cultivation potential.

1.2 Distribute Pepper-bark seedlings to traditional healers and identify horticultural training needs.
1.3 Distribute Pepper-bark seedlings to traders and assess additional horticultural training needs.

1.4 Develop and implement tailored horticultural training for different groups (e.g. from basic planting and maintenance to more advanced propagation techniques).

1.5. Distribute seedlings of additional species as they become available.

1.6. Establish and implement monitoring and support systems, e.g. WhatsApp groups for communication; data base for monitoring; potentially, short video clips on cultivation techniques and solving problems.

2.1 Conduct initial engagement with community leaders, police and conservation officials in each area to determine attitudes towards wildlife offences, particularly relating to the medicinal plant trade, and develop tailored training on the impacts of wildlife offences and legislation.

2.2 Implement training and engagement on wildlife legislation and the impacts of wildlife offences with the SAPS, community stakholders, traditional healers and traders.

2.3. Develop two best practice guidelines / knowledge products by the end of Year 3.

3.1 In collaboration with community stakeholders, conservation officials, and other partners, assess current harvesting levels, effectiveness of existing controls, challenges, and co-develop strategies to improve these.

3.2 Develop two posters and fact or information sheets to support training and awareness (English, Tshivenda, sePedi, and isiZulu).

3.3 If communities agree, train citizen scientists and conduct participatory assessments of selected plant populations with university partners.

4.1 Introduce our curriculum-aligned, interactive ESD project to teachers and, if they would like to participate, implement in three schools in each project area.

4.2 In areas where high numbers of young people harvesting illegally or engaging in wildlife offences, conduct awareness sessions on wildlife offences, legislation, and potential consequences (100 youth).

5.1 Conduct at least three presentations, webinars, or discussions to share lessons and best practice with colleagues from developing southern African countries and South Africa.

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
5.2 Produce a paper or guidelines on lessons and best practice on the scaling up of medicinal plant cultivation and strengthening governance by end of Year 3. 5.3. Produce one new tool or approach to reduce harvesting impacts of wild plant species through the development of legal alternatives. 5.4 Provide introductory and preparatory training to university students with experiential support to develop best practice for future generations of socio-ecologists.			

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, scheme, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and **deleted the blue guidance text** before submission?	
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to BCF-Reports@niras.com putting the project number in the subject line.	
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.	
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.	
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 encourage to develop a risk register.	
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 17)?	
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	