



**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 2025

Please note all projects that were active before 1st October 2025 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

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

Project reference	IWT136
Project title	Tackling wild meat demand, supply and trade in Western Equatoria
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	South Sudan
Lead Organisation	Fauna & Flora International (FFI)
Partner(s)	South Sudan Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism (MWCT) encompassing the Wildlife Service (WLS) Caritas-Austria
Project Leader	Michelle Moeller
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 October 2025 HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	www.fauna-flora.org/countries/south-sudan

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

Outcome: Evidence-based solutions to reduce the use of wild meat, together with stronger law enforcement capacity, systems, and transboundary networks, reduce IWT and contribute to poverty reduction in Western Equatoria.

Activity 0.1: Reported in Y1 Half Year and Annual Reports. Steering committee was held during Y2 to provide technical guidance on implementation of sustainable livelihoods scale-up. The next meeting is planned for Y3.

Activity 0.2: Reported in Y1 Annual Report and planned for reporting in Y3.

Activity 0.3: Reported in Y1 Annual Report and planned for reporting in Y3.

Activity 0.4: Ongoing. Methodology of a basic needs household assessment for beneficiaries of the livelihood component was developed and agreed upon with project partners. Household surveys with project beneficiaries have been completed in the 3 target locations. Analysis of results is now underway to establish a wellbeing baseline of beneficiary households that will allow the project to assess changes in household access to income and protein through the implementation of sustainable livelihoods.

Activity 0.5: Ongoing. Survey123 data collection forms have been developed and are under review to ensure ease of use in the field and that data is collected in an applicable format for analysis. Recent insecurity has disrupted the flow of data from some County Offices to the WLS HQ, so migration from paper-based data collection will be completed in stages, with digital training planned in the remainder of Y2

Activity 0.6: Ongoing. Monthly patrol data collection and quarterly reporting were sustained in Year 2, utilising SMART across all three protected areas (SNP, BGG, and BK). These reports continued to inform strategic patrol planning and respective training, thereby maximising the coverage of the protected areas and capability for adaptive management in response to evolving threat levels and monitoring needs of priority protected species. The transition to SMART Mobile is ongoing, with intensive training of the Fauna & Flora Team and initial training of BK and BGG Game Reserves complete.

Output 1: Sustainable livelihoods provide viable income sources and protein alternatives to 150 households and, supported by behaviour change messaging, contribute to reducing the rates of wild meat hunting and selling

Activities 1.1-1.2: Completed in Y1 and reported in Y1 Annual Report.

Activity 1.3: Completed. Pilot of pig farming and milling machines as sustainable livelihood options reported in Y1 Annual Report. Monitoring of pilot stage demonstrated that pig farming is feasible and can be scaled up to additional beneficiary households as planned across all 3 target locations. Market assessments conducted indicated that pig farming has more potential to generate income and protein alternatives in the long-term than milling machines. Analysis of the effect of new economic and protein alternatives on the rates of wild meat hunting and selling is yet to be conducted, as pigs delivered in the pilot are yet to reach maturity. The basic needs household survey includes wellbeing indicators that once repeated in Y3 will contribute to the assessment of intervention impact.

Activity 1.4: Completed. Contextual livelihoods skills training was advanced in Y2 of the project from learnings of the pilot stage, and from technical input of the project partners. Training manuals and programmes for pig and poultry farming were developed and delivered through a gender-sensitive approach to 120 households across the 3 target locations by Caritas-Austria in collaboration with FFI, Community Empowerment Agency for Transformation (CEAFoT) and the Ministry of Animal Resources, Fisheries and Tourism (MARFT). The use of intervention-specific training adapted to the context of each site is designed to ensure implementation of best-practice and relevant approaches to livelihood options by beneficiaries.

Activity 1.5: Ongoing. Sustainable livelihoods scale-up commenced in Q1 of the project, led by Caritas-Austria in collaboration with CEAFoT and MARFT, and under the technical guidance and oversight of FFI. Implementation of pig farming to 30 households has been completed in the first target location, and delivery of pig and poultry farming interventions to a further 35 households is currently ongoing in the second target location at the time of reporting. By end of November 2025, all livelihood interventions will be implemented across the 3 target locations, reaching 120 households. Monitoring and support to beneficiaries across the 3 target locations has been maintained throughout implementation and will continue during Y3 of the project.

Activity 1.6: Completed and reported in Y1 Annual Report.

Activity 1.7: Completed. Behaviour change messages were tested in June-July 2025 with identified target audiences: buyers of wild meat, hunters and sellers of wild meat, restaurant owners and patrons and religious leaders of various faiths. Testing elicited the need to step back to introduce the concepts of wildlife and environmental conservation to the general public, in addition to deliver targeted messages. Messages for a general audience and targeted messages for buyers, sellers and hunters of wildlife were finalised and communication channels identified.

Activity 1.8: Ongoing. Message delivery started in July 2025 and is on-going. Mass message dissemination was achieved through a state-level football tournament, with over 15,000 in attendance. The event reinforced messages through visible materials such as t-shirts, football players' jerseys and banners; audible announcements by match commentators and the State Governor; and interactive participation by the audience in conservation-related entertainment. Messages were further disseminated through radio talk shows with the WLS, and faith-based sermons by religious leaders of the main churches in the project locations.

Activity 1.9: Planned for future reporting periods.

Output 2: Capacity and systems to monitor and adaptively manage IWT and confiscate/seize wild animal products are in place and operational in the Wildlife Service within all counties of Western Equatoria, informed by up-to-date knowledge of place networks and trade dynamics.

Activity 2.1: Completed and reported in Y1 Annual Report.

Activity 2.2: Ongoing. Refresher training of WLS HQ and Yambio County Office IWT Team is ongoing, with targeted Survey123 data collection training planned for the remaining WLS County Offices as security allows.

Activity 2.3: Ongoing. Replication of data collection forms into Survey123 is ongoing, with field-testing and review underway. Finalisation of the scale-up and digital training is planned for Q3/4

Activity 2.4: Completed and reported in Y1 Annual Report.

Activity 2.5-7: Planned for future reporting period (See Activity 2.3)

Activity 2.8: Ongoing. Sensitisation with WLS is ongoing due to disruption from changes to security climate and changes within MWCT.

Output 3: Increased interagency collaboration between the Wildlife Service, other law enforcement agencies, and the judiciary within Western Equatoria and South Sudan, and with relevant counterparts in DRC, improves understanding of transboundary IWT.

Activity 3.1: Ongoing. Due to the changing security climate and changes within state-level government of Western Equatoria and within MWCT in Y2, this activity has been delayed. Preparations are currently underway with the state-level WLS and MWCT. Furthermore, discussions have been initiated with the Garamba authorities. The objective is to convene the annual meeting during Q4.

Activity 3.2: To accompany implementation of Activity 3.1

Activity 3.3: See Activity 3.1

Activity 3.4: Ongoing. The scheduled quarterly IWT Interagency Forum meeting was impacted by changing state-level security requiring the focus of forum members, and was therefore held in Q1. Members participated in dialogue to support WLS with current challenges and initiated plans for joint operations to tackle wild meat trading.

Activity 3.5: Ongoing. IWT Interagency Forum members were engaged on the project's behaviour change component in Y2 through a dedicated workshop. This session was led by the FFI Behavioural Change Technical Specialist and was designed to elicit direct input and recommendations from members. Specifically, participants provided guidance on developing targeted messaging and identifying the most suitable communication channels for dissemination to different target audiences. An additional IWT workshop, facilitated by WLS, was hosted at the State Court to specifically engage State-level judicial officials. The Wildlife Act and national legislation concerning wild meat hunting and protected areas were presented, promoting greater IWT awareness and the critical need for enhanced judicial support to the WLS.

Activity 3.6: Ongoing. In Y2, the WLS initiated and successfully executed multiple interagency collaborative actions, representing the first operational undertaking of its kind for Western Equatoria. These activities were strategically focused on market sweeps to address the illicit sale of wild meat and the disruption of trading routes via coordinated roadblock operations. Furthermore, the WLS Headquarters received active support from various law enforcement agencies to issue a preventative warning concerning the sale of wild meat to all market vendors. While it is premature to conduct a comprehensive market and impact survey, anecdotal evidence gathered over recent months indicates that the sale of wild meat is neither visible nor readily available throughout Yambio, as reported by multiple stakeholders. This represents a significant and noticeable development within the primary urban hub for wild meat trading and consumption in Western Equatoria, and underscores the critical importance of collaborative support to the WLS.

Output 4: Project learning and recommendations are documented and shared with key national and regional stakeholders.

Activities 4.1-2: Planned for future reporting periods.

Activity 4.3: Ongoing. With changes to state-level government throughout Y2, the need for continued engagement meetings with various state-level government authorities has been clear. The new Minister of Local Government, Director for National Security, Director General of the Ministry of Health, the Former Acting Western Equatoria State Governor and the current Western Equatoria State Governor have all been engaged on multiple occasions with the WLS by FFI to discuss the project and the work of the WLS. Following successful engagement of the Director General, the Ministry of Health fully endorsed the project and guided on disease-related behaviour change messages. FFI has since been invited as a member of the Ministry's 'One Health Forum' which will provide an additional platform for awareness on the risks of wild meat consumption

Activity 4.4: Ongoing. Project updates have been shared with the MWCT (Director General, Undersecretary and Minister) during Y2. Recent changes within MWCT necessitated the reintroduction of the project to key positions and will inform the timeline for an annual workshop.

Activity 4.5: Ongoing. This activity has not taken place due to changing state level government officials and the fluctuating security climate. This activity is planned for Q3 & 4.

Indicators - M&E

Project monitoring and evaluation in Y2 continues to be guided by the detailed M&E plan developed with project partners in Y1.

Outcome Indicator monitoring has progressed despite disruptions from insecurity and delayed project partner involvement.

Outcome Indicator 0.1: Repeat surveys on wild meat purchasing is planned for Y3 to assess behaviour change outcomes linked to the implementation of livelihood and behaviour change interventions in Y2.

Outcome Indicator 0.2: Seizure monitoring has continued in Q1 and Q2 despite disruptions to data collection from security changes. With full migration to Survey123 in Q3 and Q4, monitoring capacity against baselines will be improved.

Outcome Indicator 0.3: Species monitoring data continues to be collected and analysed. The use of SMART mobile will improve data validation and allow for greater adaption to ensure outcome indicators are achieved during Y2 and Y3 of the project.

Outcome Indicator 0.4: A basic needs household assessment has been conducted in Q2 to establish a formal baseline across the 120 target households. Analysis of the household assessment will continue during Q3 and Q4.

Output indicator monitoring has continued to be robust. Sustainable livelihoods scale-up and implementation has been well documented at each stage, project training and workshops recorded, and sex-disaggregated data collection and gender-sensitive indicators incorporated in each component and assessment activity. The project's GESI Technical Specialist continues to advise on inclusive and responsive M&E approaches.

Assumptions

Civil unrest in South Sudan does not hinder project implementation:

During Q1 and Q2, there were occurrences of civil unrest in project activity areas. With the appropriate systems in place, Fauna & Flora successfully navigated and managed these risks and will continue to apply these systems going forward into Q3.

In addition to c.900 direct beneficiaries, the project will indirectly benefit a wider population of c.152,000 people through new economic activity, increased law enforcement capacity, and greater awareness of conservation actions and IWT.

Political situation in Western Equatoria remains stable and people remain in their communities for the duration of the project.

WLS retains sufficient staffing in the project area to collect data using the reporting forms and to engage in adaptive management based on evidence and trends; staff turnover remains low with limited impact on trained staff.

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

The changing security climate has resulted in minor implementation delays and has required a higher allocation of resources to ensure the safe facilitation of project activities. Specifically, one of the four target locations initially selected for the livelihood component experienced fluctuating security conditions at the time of planned intervention. Following a risk assessment, and to safeguard personnel and resources, this location was removed from the livelihood component's scope. Given the existing resource limitations, combined with the impacts of the delayed project start and the challenging security environment, the livelihood initiatives will now focus on the remaining three target locations. This strategic narrowing of focus will allow for a more concentrated and robust allocation of resources, which is expected to ensure greater project outcome success within the revised operational constraints. This development will result in 120 households engaged in sustainable livelihoods by the project, but due to many households being more geographically dispersed in relation to the target locations than predicted, the representative number of direct beneficiaries should not be impacted.

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
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Formal Change Request submitted:	No
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Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No
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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*

Guidance for Section 4: The information you provide in this section will be used by Defra to review the financial status of projects. This review will identify projects at random for spot checks on financial management and will include requests for evidence of the actual spend information provided below. Please ensure the figures you provide are as accurate as possible and that you have the evidence to support it. You do not need to provide it now.

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

Actual spend: £ [REDACTED]

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2026)?

[REDACTED]

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

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible, and not later than 31st December. 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 BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

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

No

6. Project risk management

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

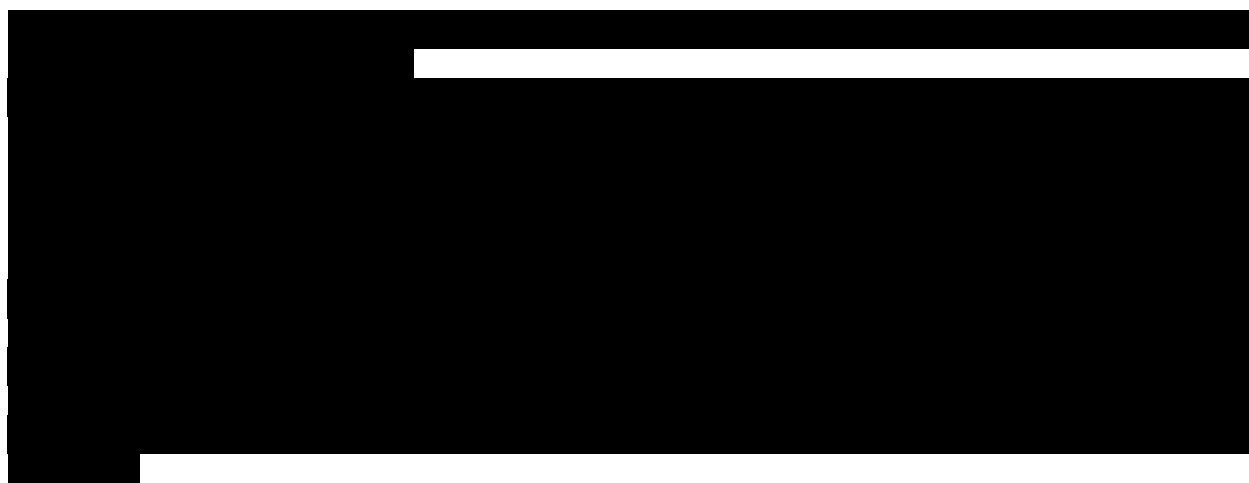


Health, Safety and Security (HSS): FFI HSS plan is reviewed regularly and updated as necessary, with FFI staff briefed on updates. Risk mitigation protocols have continued in Y2 to ensure FFI staff and project partners are briefed on security, aware of and updating field-level risk assessments and following HEAT training guidance.

Incident and Grievance Register: An updated register continues to be maintained by FFIs Technical Specialist, Governance, Equity & Rights.



Further feedback in the letter highlighted critical areas for strengthening our approach to addressing the complex conservation challenges in Western Equatoria. Under the guidance of FFI's Wildlife Trade team, we are committed to developing context-specific, conflict-sensitive solutions that consider human rights, sustainable livelihoods, and conservation outcomes. Below, we address each point received and outline how these considerations will be integrated into the project:



Human rights framework to address risks around human rights and conflict:

¹ <https://www.fauna-flora.org/publications/using-situational-crime-prevention-to-address-illegal-wildlife-trade-a-toolkit/>

Developing a human-rights framework is essential in an operating context where conservation intersects with complex socio-political realities.

Working with a paramilitary Wildlife Enforcement agency:

The involvement of an armed force requires nuanced management. FFI has maintained a partnership with the WLS for over a decade. South Sudan, including some of the project sites, has undergone disarmament efforts involving all armed forces, including the WLS, which are necessary to reduce armed tension between communities and paramilitary forces in conflict-prone areas. We will ensure strict oversight and develop a strategy for disengagement should any concerns arise. This measured approach aligns with FFIs commitment to operating with a 'do no harm' principle, drawing on both internal expertise and local insights. Furthermore, rangers routinely receive training on a code of conduct aligned with Universal Ranger Support Alliance standards and sign a pledge to uphold this code of conduct upon completing training, as well as being obliged to follow the government's code of conduct.

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

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

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

Feedback provided through IWT136 AR1R on the IWTCF Year 1 Main Annual Report IWT136, requested confirmation regarding the submission of a formal request to amend the project logframe or wording of the Outcome Statement.

To update in relation to this feedback: Outcome 0.3 does not require an amendment to its logframe or wording. This decision is based on the current expectation that the target number of locations established for market surveying remains achievable. Therefore, a formal change request relating to the project logframe will not be submitted.

² <https://www.fauna-flora.org/publications/ranger-training-human-rights-in-conservation/>

³ <https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/>