



**BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



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

Half Year Report

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

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

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2024

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

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

Project reference	IWT 140
Project title	Community engagement against poaching and IWT in Sudurpaschhim Province, Nepal
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal
Lead Organisation	National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC)
Partner(s)	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC); Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forests and Environment (MoTFE), Sudurpaschhim Province; Community Development Center (CDC)
Project leader	<i>Dr. Naresh Subedi</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>31th October 2024, HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media	

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

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

This project is being implemented in the Nepal's Sudurpaschhim Province that shares border with China and India. It aims to engage traditional hunting communities and strengthen law enforcement to curb poaching and IWT through innovative alternative livelihood support, minimizing retaliatory killings of wildlife, increasing conservation awareness among local communities and strengthening law enforcement capacity. The IWT and HWC mitigation activities are concentrated in the IWT and HWC hotspots of the province, while the law-enforcement capacity development and conservation awareness activities are being implemented province-wide.

The start date of our project is August 01, 2024. However, it went through Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) clearance. We received the clearance notification on September 23, 2024. The project was signed on September 27, 2024. Thus, we were only able to begin project implementation on October, 2024. This report thus presents the one-month progress of the project. During the period the project team was formed and oriented on project objectives and goals, logical framework, safeguard and reporting requirements.

Project sharing meeting with the implementing partner: Informal sharing meeting was conducted with the implementing partner-Community Development Center (CDC). We shared the details roles and responsibilities, safeguards, reporting requirements and resources available with the implementing partner. A formal agreement with the partner will be made soon.

Project sharing workshop with the provincial authorities: A formal project sharing was made with >70 provincial authorities (Minster, Secretary and high-level officials of MOITFE, Divisional Forest Officers, and PA officials of Sudurpaschhim province, and conservation partners of Nepal government). Authorities were informed on project goals, objectives, major activities/milestones and methodologies. We utilized the platform of Annual Progress Review Meeting of MolTFE to make this sharing.

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.

N/A

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

Discussed with NIRAS:	√ Yes
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Formal Change Request submitted:	√ Yes
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Received confirmation of change acceptance:	√ Yes
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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*

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

Actual spend:

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

Yes ☐ No ☐ Estimated underspend:

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

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

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

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

N/A

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

On March 2024, we received a provisional approval of the project. The comment received on Overseas Security and Justice Assessment was as follows:

- As the project has a role in providing security and justice assistance, assurances are required this will be done in line with HMG values on Human Rights. Please note funding is subject to adequate completion of the Overseas Security and Justice Assessment (OSJA).

NTNC sent a response letter to Defra on March 2024 assuring to ensure security and justice during implementation of project as follows:

“Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter serves to provide assurance that National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) will meaningfully engage with the Government of Nepal (GoN), project partners, local communities and stakeholders in the implementation of this project such that human rights values of both His Majesty’s Government of United Kingdom and GoN are duly maintained. NTNC abides to the Constitution of Nepal (2015) that provides fundamental rights to all Nepali citizens which is also in spirit with HMG’s values of freedom, human rights and the rule of law. NTNC assures that this project’s wildlife crime enforcement activities will be undertaken with due considerations to preserving the human rights by avoiding unlawful and unfair legal exercise. In doing so, NTNC will ensure that law enforcement officials are provided with adequate trainings on human rights and any human rights violations that may occur as a result of this assistance will be managed according to the GoN’s legal procedures.

We understand that this assistance will be subject to Overseas Security and Justice Assessment and the risks identified will be duly mitigated by NTNC as per the recommendations of the assessment. We would like to bring to your kind attention that NTNC has no past record of human rights violations and it adheres to ethical and human rights standards under the Constitution of Nepal.

Thank you.

Sharad Chandra Adhikari
Member Secretary”

Special conditions provisioned in the offer letter include the following:

- Notify the IWT Challenge Fund via the BCF-IWTCF@niras.com mailbox when arrests are made.

NTNC will send the notifications accordingly.

- Include the number of arrests undertaken in all Half Year and Annual Reports due on the 31st October and 30th April respectively, each year.

These will be reported accordingly.

- To ensure the level of risk remains low, Defra will not fund the spy camera activity and request this activity be removed from the project.

This activity has been removed.

- Ensure strong messaging on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Human Rights (HR) expectations are included in scheduled engagements and any training.

IHL an HR messaging will be addressed in the training.

- Incorporate actions to record and mitigate violations of IHL and HR risks in project risk assessments.

Project risk matrix has been updated as follows:

Risk description:

Cases of human rights violations from law enforcement, such as from wrong arrests, physical abuse, etc. may occur when law enforcement staff are not familiar with following the human rights standards in crime investigation and persecution process.

Risk Type:

Safeguarding

Probability/Impact:

Possible/Major

Mitigation Action:

Train frontline staff on national and international human rights principles and expectation during law enforcing. Record and treat occurring cases of human rights violation according to national legal procedures.

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1 st April 2024)	
Have you responded to any additional feedback (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)?	√
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	√
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1 st April 2024)	
Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	√
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	√

Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	√
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	√
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	√