



**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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025**

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

**Submit to: [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line.**

<b>Project reference</b>	IWT141
<b>Project title</b>	Enhancing capability to tackle Trans-Himalayan Illegal Wildlife Trade
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Nepal, India, China
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Environmental Investigation Agency
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Greenhood Nepal, Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI)
<b>Project Leader</b>	Debbie Banks
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	EIA does not have separate websites or social media accounts for individual projects but will update EIA's main website and social media accounts with news of this project. Addresses are as follows: <a href="https://eia-international.org/">https://eia-international.org/</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/environmentalinvestigationagency">https://www.facebook.com/environmentalinvestigationagency</a> <a href="https://www.linkedin.com/company/environmental-investigation-agency/">https://www.linkedin.com/company/environmental-investigation-agency/</a> <a href="https://www.instagram.com/eia_news/?hl=en">https://www.instagram.com/eia_news/?hl=en</a>

**Content in red should be treated as confidential and redacted in public report.**

**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 monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) 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.*

**Key project progress under Output 1 in the reporting period:***Trans-Himalayan Trade Assessment Drafting*

Research and collections conducted over the past six months have been incorporated into the draft trade assessment including Chinese court judgements on bears, pangolins and big cats (mainly tigers and leopards), the EIA seizure database, and overt field work. Cases and incidents have been used as supporting evidence of trade routes and methodologies.

*Overt field work*

We finalised the trade assessment overt field work checklist through several rounds of discussion between Greenhood Nepal and EIA. The tool was first tested in Bhaktapur (n = 1). The main fieldwork was conducted over seven days across Kathmandu and Pokhara in July 2025. In Kathmandu, we focused on the Thamel area, where we approached 18 individuals, including Chinese (n=16) and Nepalese (n=2). We conducted five formal interviews and one informal conversation facilitated by the EIA translator. We also visited Swayambhu and Bouddha area in Kathmandu but did not find any Chinese-run shops. In Pokhara, nine individuals were approached, resulting in full interviews with Chinese nationals (n=3) and price inquiries related to herbal products at Nepalese-run shops (n=2). Across both sites, interviewees included Chinese hotel and restaurant owners, supermarket and handicraft shop operators, chefs, and logistics service providers. Overt field work in the Nepal-China border regions of Humla and Sankhuwasabha will be concluded by the end of March 2026.

**Key project progress under Output 2 in the reporting period:**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Key project progress under Output 3 in the reporting period:***Greenhood Nepal Wildlife Crime database*

EIA and Greenhood have been progressing well towards the completion of the database. Since April, the data entry form on PowerApp has been completed, along with the data entry guidelines. The team has also been focusing on designing and creating the PowerBI dashboard which will be used to search and export the database. We are using 50 sets of sample data to prepare draft of visualisation charts. Currently, we are working on export and filter functionality of Power BI visualisation. We expect to complete the first draft of Power BI visualisation on sample data by the end of December. We received data from all 13 Divisional Forest Offices and have started compiling the data based on the data entry form. EIA and Greenhood met in person in the week commencing 27th October in Kathmandu to finalise the design of the PowerBI dashboard and the export layout to begin the technical implementation.

The two teams have been keeping in touch through regular calls to ensure the database is developing on time, however data collection has been directly impacted with ongoing political tensions in Nepal, as access to court cases have been delayed. There are also indirect impacts of these political tensions as it has caused the team members to divert their attention to more

urgent matters in other work streams. However, the overall impact of this will not be significant as the Greenhood team anticipates that access will be granted before project completion so data entry will still be feasible in Year 2 and 3 as originally planned. There is also additional incident data provided from EIA's database that will be suitable for entry.

#### *Frontline Officials Training (India)*

Two law enforcement workshops were held in the first week of July in Haldwani, an area prone to illegal wildlife trade because of its easily accessible border with Nepal. One workshop was conducted on July 3rd at the Terai East Forest Division Office in Haldwani, which was attended by 64 Forest personnel. A second workshop on July 4<sup>th</sup> was held at the Uttarakhand Forest Training Academy for the Terai Central Forest Division, Haldwani, attended by 123 participants, including ranger trainees from Madhya Pradesh. The workshops were attended by a total of 32 female Forest officers. WPSI's lawyer, Ms Manjula Shrivastava led the workshop, and all participants confirmed that the workshop was beneficial for field personnel. WPSI distributed a field kit for each participant, including a copy of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and a brief guide on enforcement prepared by WPSI.

#### *Greenhood Nepal OSINT Training*

Following the first in-person training session that took place in year 1 of the project, OSINT activities have continued through monthly check-in sessions with Greenhood Nepal which serve as an opportunity to share new OSINT tools and raise questions or challenges in their OSINT research. Greenhood Nepal was recognised for their OSINT research in a [Mongabay article citing their findings on the illegal pet trade in Nepal](#).

The next OSINT training dates and training schedule have been confirmed for early 2026 which will include more advanced techniques, an OSINT guide and training Greenhood Nepal on how to deliver their training sessions to local CSOs, law enforcement and journalists.

We have started collecting materials and topics to be included in Nepali OSINT guide. We will prepare a draft guide before the second in-person OSINT training. We have also started preparing the list of potential individuals and organisations to be trained by Greenhood in OSINT which includes Nepal Police, Central Investigation Bureau, Nepal Army, South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN), The Jane Goodall Institute Nepal and journalists' association reporting on environment and science in Nepal. We will formally approach these organisations after the second in-person OSINT training.

#### **Key project progress under Output 4 in the reporting period:**

EIA has continued to maintain relations with SAWEN and Interpol. We were invited to attend the SAWEN General Assembly, originally scheduled for November 2025, but following the political unrest this has been deferred to post-March 2026, dates to be confirmed.

[REDACTED] In preparation for the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties to CITES (CoP20), EIA has prepared a [briefing](#) that calls for retention of a CITES decision on the leopard trade, adoption of an improved reporting mechanism to inform recommendations to counter trade in all Asian big cats, and highlights the impact of China's domestic market for leopard bone and pangolin scales in contributing to poaching and trafficking. This has been shared with CITES authorities in India, Nepal and China and other Parties.

[REDACTED] EIA has also contributed to significantly to a joint NGO publication on Asian big cat trade due to be published before CITES CoP20.

**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 political unrest in Nepal has affected the project although, as explained above, we do not foresee this impacting key delivery targets.

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

Discussed with NIRAS:

No

Formal Change Request submitted:

No

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

N/a

Change Request reference if known: *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: £

**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)?**

**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 31<sup>st</sup> 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](mailto: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.

There are no risk updates.

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

☒

[Redacted]

Suspicious or allegations related to safeguarding concerns should be reported to [ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk)

N/a

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.

The only point from our Year 1 Report Review to be addressed in the Half Year Report was: "It is noted the project does not appear to have responded to the additional feedback points provided in their Stage 2 feedback letter." The Special Conditions stated in our Stage 2 feedback letter were as follows:

1. Defra met with EIA and, assurances were provided that outputs will be high level analyses, not including nominal information. [Redacted]
2. The project should provide a full risk register within their first Half Year Report (due 31st October 2025) and continue to report on these risks in all Annual Reports (due 30th April).
3. Ensure strong messaging on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Human Rights (HR) expectations are included in scheduled engagements and any training
4. Include the number of arrests and/ or convictions in all Half Year and Annual Reports due on the 31st of October and 30th of April respectively, each year.

Responses to Special Conditions:

1. Detailed below
2. Provided before start of project
3. Detailed below
4. Included in Year 1 Half Year Report, Year 1 Annual Report and above

## EIA Data Protection and Handling

[Redacted]

**Messaging on International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights within training**

Within the OSINT training, there is a section dedicated on conducting OSINT investigations in line with legislation as well as ethical conduct. This is reiterated throughout the training, reinforcing the importance of proportionality when considering undertaking OSINT on a person or persons. This will also be a crucial teaching point for Greenhood Nepal to communicate in their training.

In our workshops for frontline Forest officers, we discuss human rights concerns raised by local people and how enforcement officials should handle these issues when apprehending suspects in wildlife cases. We covered guidelines from the Supreme Court and directions from the Human Rights Commission. Also discussed are obligations of officials to follow new laws, such as Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA), effective from July 1st, 2024, which provide key guidance for registering wildlife offence cases.