



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

Half Year Report

Project reference	IWT 142
Project title	Strengthening Law Enforcement Responses to Counter IWT in Cameroon
Country	Cameroon
Lead Organisation	Global Conservation
Partner(s)	Appui à l'autopromotion et l'insertion des femmes, des jeunes et des désœuvrés (APIFED)
Project Leader	Oliver Fankem
Report date and number	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	N/A

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed project implementation timetable.

The project has made strong progress over the last 6 months, and indicators are still relevant and achievable. Alongside this Half Year Report, a Change Request is being submitted with slight adjustments to Indicators 0.2, 1.6, 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7 to account for a typo and reflect challenges with case submission and Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) market development.

Collaboration with Gabonese National Agency for National Parks (ANPN) has improved significantly. GC met with the ANPN directors and members of the ANPN Scientific Committee to strengthen coordination. GC trained 3 ANPN staff and provided Minkebe National Park with 40 camera traps, which were deployed between 18 April to 8 May 2025. These cameras support surveillance activities across the park. To date, 12 covert cameras have also been installed along known elephant poacher trails on the Cameroon side of the border, capturing evidence of poaching, including group sizes and the frequency of ivory transport from Gabon. Additional covert cameras will soon be deployed on the Gabon side to complete mapping of elephant poaching networks in Minkebe.



Surveillance and interdiction activities continue in the Dja and Nguem Reserves, with over 260 patrol days conducted using the SMART-Earthranger approach during this reporting period. Although fieldwork was somewhat limited in the lead-up to the October presidential election,

reconnaissance surveys were conducted for surveillance and mapping of high conservation value forests for ecotourism. In terms of securing the Dja, the project remains on track to meet its Year 2 and Year 3 targets. Year 1 targets have already been exceeded, with over 20 wildlife seizures achieved. The focus now is ensuring that all seizures and arrests lead to formal court cases and prosecutions, which remains a key priority for the LEO.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A second 3-day NTFP workshop was held in Djoum from 12 to 14 August 2025 at the APIFED NTFP warehouse, training 30 community members from seven target villages in best practices for Bush Mango (*Irvingia gabonensis*) and Rondelle (*Afrostyrax lepidophyllus*) collection, processing, and storage. A two-day field practical on Djansa (*Ricinodendron heudelotii*) collection and processing was also conducted in Nkolkoumou village forest with 21 participants, including Baka community members. Challenges included reduced community engagement due to the presidential election and an unusually long dry season, likely linked to climate change, which limited fruiting and NTFP production during the period.

For ecotourism development, 4 joint missions with APIFED were conducted between 2 and 10 September 2025 to identify attractions between Djoum and Mintom, drawing on local knowledge from village elders and resource persons. GC and the Dja Conservation Service also explored the southern and eastern sectors of the Dja Reserve for potential new sites, including bays, clearings, and key wildlife areas. The Assock Baka cultural site, managed by APIFED, was also identified as a potential attraction. The ecotourism feasibility study report is now in the proofreading stage.

During this reporting period, discussions were held with 3 secondary schools (2 in Djoum and 1 in Mintom) to convert existing environmental clubs into tourism clubs by the end of November 2025 as school resumed in September 2025. APIFED has already completed the structuring of the Assock Baka Ecotourism Club, bringing the total to 4 of 8 planned clubs. The remaining four will be integrated with Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) to strengthen community groups and diversify income-generating activities. Candidates have been identified for training in boat piloting, campsite management, and wilderness guiding. English language and other skills training will be planned with school youth later in the year.

Assumptions:

- Community members view sustainable livelihood alternatives as superior to illicit activities.** This still holds true. Legislation is criminalising poaching and communities are becoming involved in income-generating sustainable livelihood activities.
- Communities are receptive to GC's involvement and increased law enforcement presence.** This still holds true. Communities are very receptive and are requesting even more involvement from GC and law enforcement in their areas.
- Corruption among rangers remains low.** This is not holding true as corruption among rangers remains high. We hope to see this trend down as we put in place more control tools.
- Tourism profits are shared equitably across all 8 communities.** Profits may not be

equitable as some communities are more attractive and popular for tourism than others.

5. **NTFP market is strong enough to provide significant livelihood benefits.** This still holds true but benefits are largely long-term and periodic.
6. **Dja and Ngoyla rangers and customs officers stay engaged in training activities.** This still holds true. Rangers are enjoying the trainings and learning new skills such as first aid and safety.
7. **Positive interpersonal dynamics exist between instructors and Dja/Ngoyla officers.** This still holds true. Officers are building comradery and confidence.
8. **Trail guard cameras function reliably with real-time satellite signal and minimal maintenance.** As noted in the Annual Report, this did not hold true but we are still moving forward with an alternative approach (non real-time).
9. **Community members willingly share poaching evidence from their land.** This still holds true. Community members are willingly sharing information with the project team.

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.

While the project team has achieved the Year 1 target for wildlife seizures, efforts to engage and apprehend suspects face challenges. Additionally, NTFP production was limited by the unusually dry season, and training sessions aimed at youth have been delayed as many were on school holidays until September 2025.

Regarding ivory sampling, government stockpiles remain sealed and inaccessible for testing. GC has sought to establish MOUs with the relevant authorities but continues to face delays. Following a June visit to the Gabon laboratory, where existing samples had already been tested, GC is now considering conducting its own sampling. Camera trap footage has contributed to identifying several suspected poachers, and, working in collaboration with Conservation Justice, information has been shared with the appropriate law enforcement agencies. These efforts have brought the team closer to supporting a successful seizure and arrest led by the competent authorities.

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

Discussed with NIRAS:	No
Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No
Change Request reference if known:	

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?

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

N/A

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.

N/A

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

No

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.

Present gender disaggregated data on project activities, such as training, to strengthen the project's GESI approach. It would further be useful to clarify if a 50% target is appropriate for the context if ranger/scouts' positions are mainly held by men. Gender disaggregated data will be included in the 2026 Annual Report.

Include meeting reports in report annexes, including those used to manage partnerships with implementing partners. Meeting reports will be included in the 2026 Annual Report.

Clarify the planned exit strategy for sustainability of project activities beyond the timeframe of the project.

This will be clarified in the Annual Report in April 2026.