

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

Note: 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 2023

Project reference	29-021
Project title	More bees: Supporting agrobiodiversity and livelihoods in Amhara, Ethiopia
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Ethiopia
Lead partner	Bees for Development
Partner(s)	Bees for Development Ethiopia, Pesticide Action Nexus Ethiopia, Pesticide Action Network UK, Bahir Dar University
Project leader	Janet Lowore
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	https://beesfordevelopmentethiopia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/More-Bees-Newsletter-2_FINAL.pdf

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

The last six months (April to September 2023) covers the first half of year 2 of the project. The overall progress of the project in this half year is fair – with some challenges emerging from August onwards.

Output-1: Activities against this Output were scheduled for September. They did not occur due to the security situation in Amhara (see below) and have been re-scheduled to start in November 2023.

Output-2: The last remaining IPM trials which were set-up in Year 1 were harvested and analysed in April 2023. The results indicate no significant yield loss even with much-reduced application of pesticides. The new season's work was due to start with farmers and Development Agent training in September. This work as been re-scheduled to start in November 2023 (due to insecurity situation – see below).

Output-3: Beekeeping enterprises establishment and re-establishment activities were accomplished as planned in April to July. Training on basic beekeeping concepts, how to make top-bar hives, how to get bee colonies, and how to establish apiaries has been given for 114 new beekeeper smallholder farmers, of which 34 are females [A 3.2]. The accomplishment is 95% of the plan. At the end of the training, each trainee made one top-bar hive by themselves. The project supplied the necessary materials required for top-bar hive making. In addition, training in how to boost forage availability for bees, how to enrich habitat and how to protect colonies from pesticides has been given for these new beekeepers [A 3.4]. To enable new beekeepers to establish beekeeping enterprise and former beekeepers use improved

beekeeping practice, beekeeping inputs have been provided, as planned. The project provided bee colonies, top-bars and protective clothing for new beekeepers and top-bars and protective clothing for former beekeepers [A 3.5].

Output-4: Bi-annual IPM and beekeeping newsletter published and 250 copies distributed to key stakeholder organizations (government, NGOs, etc.) as planned. The main points covered in the bi-annual newsletter include: concept of agro-ecology, beekeeping training, men and women role in farming (gender analysis result), IPM-FFS result, and annual survey to assess the changes that have been made with the project [A 4.4].

Output level indicators such as 3.2, 3.4, 3.5 and 4.4 which have been implemented in the reporting period are appropriate and these indicators are achieved more than 95%.

The implementation of extension worker and farmer trainings on agro-ecosystem (Output-1) and IPM (Output-2) have been delayed by two months due to insecurity. The security situation is now improving and we hope delayed activities will be delivered in the 3rd quarter of the project year (October to December 2023).

In April 2023 we interviewed 55 beneficiaries to assess the changes that have been made since starting the project in June 2022. The assessment indicated the following changes:

- 78% reduction in respondents citing pesticides alone as the best way to control pests and diseases in their crops.
- 74% increase in participants citing good cultural practices as a good way to control pests and diseases in their crops.
- 90% increase in respondents stating that other insects apart from honey bees were beneficial to them and their farms.
- 83% increase in respondents who are interested in encouraging natural pest enemies on to their farms.
- 57% increase in farmers interested in using Neem extract on their crops as a natural pest repellent.
- 64% increase in farmers interested in sowing legumes or maize borders as habitats for natural pest enemies.

The project has reviewed its output level assumptions. The government extension workers were expected to support the project and work alongside project staff to regularly follow-up the FFS and collect trial data – this has occurred, although project staff team do have to encourage their participation. Farmers are not willing to allocate land for free for IPM trials so the measures we put in place for using Farmer Training Centre land and for renting land were necessary. Farmers are willing to attend 1 to 2 hours learning in Farmer Field School and share the knowledge they gain from FFS to other farmers.

The other assumption was that beekeepers and non-beekeepers are able and committed to apply IPM and reduce pesticide application. The project introduced IPM in the last irrigation cropping season. The farmers are eager to apply IPM. However, one challenge that we have learned is that they cannot reliably find Neem seeds in local markets. This is a gap which we are addressing through raising neem seedlings for planting and helping farmers find neem seeds from elsewhere.

In general we have learned that achieving a change in thinking and behaviour about how farmers use pesticides requires much time, high commitment and collaboration between the project staff and key government staff. The team remain committed to this endeavour.

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.

A notable problem arose on 4 August when a 6-month state of emergency was announced, covering the whole of the Amhara region. This was prompted by internal conflict between the Federal Government and the Amhara people's freedom demanding group 'FANO'. The Federal Government sent the national defence force to disarm the group, precipitating violence and the State of Emergency. The work areas of this project are affected. Due to the insecurity, there was no free movement and transport services were stopped. Agricultural extension, trade and other services were interrupted, with most government offices shutdown. Internet is also shutdown. Some improvement noted on 15 October 2023. The implementation of some the planned trainings within Outputs 1&2 were not done on time.

Now the security situation is improving and transport services have commenced, especially in Fogera district one of the two project districts. The Command Post of the State of Emergency is now permitting public meetings, and training and workshop events, which were previously prohibited. We hope that the project can accomplish delayed activities planned for Fogera district in the 3rd quarter of the project, with minimal impact on budget, timetable and results. Fortunately, the timing of events was in our favour as Aug-Sept coincides with the least busy time for project activities. The situation in North-Mecha district remains more problematic and we will submit a Change Request with view to requesting to re-schedule some activities to next year.

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 – email was sent on 15 September informing NIRAS about the state of emergency. At that time we were hopeful that the situation would be temporary and the impact would be minimal.

Formal Change Request submitted: Not yet. We had hoped a Change Request would not be necessary – however – on reflection we realise that we do need to make some changes in light of the on-going, although improving, security situation.

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

Change request reference if known: Not yet

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)

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 2024)?

Yes No Estimated underspend: ██████████

4c. If yes, then you need to 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 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?

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**