

Darwin Initiative Main Project Half Year Report (due 31st October 2017)

Project reference	23-022
Project title	Developing long-term stakeholder capacity for elephant conservation in Mali
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Mali, Burkina Faso
Lead organisation	The WILD Foundation
Partner(s)	The Mali Government: Ministry of the Environment, with its Direction Nationale des Eaux et Forêts (DNEF) as the principle contact; other Ministries as appropriate. The US Embassy to Mali The British Embassy to Mali The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)
Project leader	Dr Susan Canney
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	October 31 st 2017, HYR2
Project website/blog/social media etc.	http://www.wild.org/mali-elephants/

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

Following the reviewer's comments on the 2016-17 Annual Report a change request to modify the log-frame (attached) was submitted on October 12th. The outputs and activities below relate to the modified version of the log-frame.

Output 1. Revision of existing "Partial Elephant Reserve" text and boundaries re-drawn to cover the whole of the elephant range with Lake Banzena as a core protection zone.

There has been a delay in implementing output 1 for the reasons listed in section 2a below and previously in HYR1 and AR1. Output 1 is now scheduled for completion by end of year 3.

Activity 1.1. Local community validation meetings. Ongoing - Initial meetings completed in year 1; additional meetings with Banzena community members took place in April and May 2017 during missions to assess water levels and livestock numbers and community liaison by the anti-poaching unit (APU).

Activity 1.2. Text finalised. Ongoing – now scheduled for Q3 in year 3.

The revision of the legal text and boundaries of the partial reserve is underway and additional meetings were held with DNEF and other stakeholders in May 2017. The top priority for April-September has been to maintain the DNEF's commitment to keeping the APU operational, and now that this is the case the aim is to shift attention back to improving the situation at Banzena, with the drafting of protective legislation being a key step.

Activities 1.3-1.5. Scheduled for year 3.

Output 2: Training provided to improve capacity in habitat protection, natural resource management and benefit sharing.

Activity 2.1. Workshops and training for least performing communities. Ongoing.

Initiatives to reduce the abusive cutting of mature trees for charcoal production and dry season livestock fodder were launched across six communes across the elephant range with the aim of implementing local NRM conventions throughout each commune, including the south-east of the range, encompassing the “least performing” communities initially engaged in year 1. Specific activities included a local convention awareness meeting in Hombori in May; 16 one-day meetings to initiate the formation of local conventions in four communes, attended by 1,080 community members from 16 main campements (including 296 participants from Hombori commune, encompassing the least performing communities); three commune-wide meetings in August to elaborate the NRM conventions in three communes including Hombori; training and support for 348 community eco-guardians from the south-east of the range to monitor and report elephant movements and tree cutting (including 106 eco-guardians from the 8 campements engaged in year 1).

Activity 2.2. Workshops and training for Banzena communities. Ongoing – delayed in year 2.

The Banzena communities will be more intensively engaged from Q3 of this year, concurrently with activities relating to output 1. This process has been delayed due to issues described in previous reports and section 2a (namely insecurity and limited DNEF capacity).

Activity 2.3. Workshops for foresters in working with the communities. Ongoing.

Three advanced in-operations training and mentoring sessions for the 36-man APU (lasting a total of 45 days) were completed by Chengeta Wildlife trainers between April and September 2017. As detailed in previous reports, throughout all training activities an emphasis has been placed upon the importance of working with local communities sensitively and effectively to support CBNRM and anti-poaching activities and to mitigate human-elephant conflict. The presence of the APU has been welcomed by many communities that have not received any government assistance for extended periods, and the distribution of medical supplies and treatment has proved an effective way to interact with and support the most vulnerable people.

Output 3: Women’s associations created to manage and nurture non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in four test zones, thereby developing a model for sustainable revenue-generation from forest resources.

Activity 3.1. Preliminary meetings held with interested women from four test-zones; associations formed; and donkey and carts purchased. Completed.

Activity 3.2. Meetings and training workshops for the women. Ongoing.

All activities for this output are on schedule and the level of community interest in implementing additional income generating activities has exceeded expectations, as detailed in the annual report for 2016-17. Between April and September additional income-generating initiatives were launched with additional communities in the communes of Boni, Gandamia and Djaptodji. This was largely in response to the detection of widespread cutting of mature trees during monitoring surveys in the west of the elephant range. Follow-up training in record-keeping and monitoring was provided to the Tinhobou women’s association in May.

Activity 3.3. Monitoring of revenue received by women’s associations. Ongoing.

The field report from the revenue-generating initiatives launched in year 1 has been completed by the field manager and is currently being analysed by the UK team (findings will be summarized in AR2 and the report will be included as an annex). First indications show that for the 64 participants surveyed (50% women) from the livestock fattening initiative, their livestock increased in price by 51%, equating to an average of \$81 return per person after loan repayment, equivalent to a 465% increase in household cash for 71% of the surveyed participants. Additional data were collected from brief household surveys in April, May and September.

Output 4: Habitat, elephant and biodiversity loss and degradation are halted and reversed at four test sites.

Activity 4.1. Livestock and people surveys at Lake Banzena. Ongoing. The MEP field team, community eco-guardians and anti-poaching unit conducted livestock counts at Lake Banzena

between April and June. The numbers of livestock around Banzena remain very high (see section 2a) and it is very difficult to complete accurate ground counts. The anti-poaching unit used a camera drone to capture aerial photographs of the south-west shoreline which is the most heavily used section for watering cattle. These images were geo-rectified in combination with Very High Resolution (VHR) satellite imagery to produce initial estimates of the number of cattle encountered per kilometre of shoreline. Analyses are ongoing and it is hoped that automated counting of livestock using the VHR imagery will be possible. Brief household surveys were conducted in Daroma and Sartatane in May.

*Activity 4.2. Tree-cutting and bird surveys in four test-zones. **Ongoing.*** Since April community eco-guardians have been engaged to monitor and report tree cutting more intensively as part of the commune-wide efforts to reduce habitat degradation described in Activity 2.1. This is in addition to the MEP field team's monitoring activities (W-transects).

*Activity 4.3. Maintenance of database recording elephant killings (MIKE data). **Ongoing.***

In the first nine months of 2017 there has been a significant reduction in the rate of elephant poaching, with no elephants killed since the APU became fully operational in January. After nine elephants were killed by poachers in early January, no incidents were recorded in the following eight months. This represents an 86% reduction compared to the same period in 2015 when 64 elephants were killed, and a 64% reduction compared to the same period in 2016. This is a major step towards eliminating elephant poaching in the Gourma and is a remarkable achievement given the deteriorating security situation, particularly in the Mali-Burkina Faso cross-border region (see section 2a). This success is due to a continued commitment to elephant protection activities by the local communities that is fostered by the activities of this grant; coupled with the APU becoming fully operational. The APU are now able to verify community reports of poached elephants, increasing the reliability of these data.

Output 5: Research outputs developed and shared with target audiences.

*Activity 5.1. Briefing reports to government and partners. **Completed, ongoing.***

The MEP produces frequent briefings, alerts and updates about the situation in the Gourma for the government and project partners (Embassies, MINUSMA). An alert on the increasing pressure at Lake Banzena was distributed to project partners in April.

*Activity 5.2. Newsletter, blog updates, articles, talks and conference presentations. **Completed, ongoing.***

Six blog posts/newsletter items have been published on the project's website during this reporting period (<http://www.wild.org/category/blog/mali-elephants-blog/>). Presentations were given at the following events: the "[Empowering rural communities](#)" workshop at the Illegal Wildlife Trade Symposium in Oxford; the ZSL event "[Wildlife of the West African Savannah](#)"; the [Conservation Optimism Summit](#) (special workshop on community engagement); the Oxford University Alumni weekend; and at the stakeholder meeting for the proposed GEF project in Bamako, Mali.

An article was published on the [National Geographic Voices Blog](#).

*Activity 5.3. Journal papers. **In preparation.***

The community-based elephant protection and anti-poaching manual is in preparation.

2a. 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.

Insecurity and armed conflict have continued to increase across the elephant range, particularly in the Mali-Burkina Faso cross-border region in the south-east. This is thought to be linked to the increasing presence of jihadists and other armed groups that have exploited the continued absence of government to enforce their own version of law and order. Continued widespread theft and banditry might create opportunities for these groups to gain traction, and this is being

closely monitored by the MEP field team. Despite the insecurity, the MEP field team remain fully operational and the safety of the participating community members remains the top priority.

Delayed implementation of the Banzena process – As described elsewhere the focus on maintaining DNEF engagement in keeping the APU operational has delayed this, together with the lack of funds required to sink a well to replace the sabotaged boreholes. It is now a priority to try to raise the required emergency funding.

Increased conflict and pressure at Lake Banzena – Lower than average rainfall in the reporting period has resulted in very low water levels at Lake Banzena, with no more rain expected until May or June 2018. There has been low rainfall across the Sahel with [wider impacts expected across the region](#). Prior to the wet season, conflict levels were already high at Banzena and the problems are likely to be exacerbated as transhumant herders are expected to move into the area as pasture and surface water are depleted further afield. The field team have been monitoring the situation closely with assistance from local community eco-guardians, and a high level government mission is currently being planned for Q3. The situation is critical and it is hoped that this will stimulate more concerted engagement and action from the government.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS:	Yes
Formal change request submitted:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes – In process

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g., more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

3b. 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.

N/A

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document. Additionally, if you were funded under R23 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 22-035 Darwin Half Year Report**