

## 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. Confidential information is marked in blue.*

**Submission Deadline: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022**

<b>Project reference</b>	27-012
<b>Project title</b>	Promoting Human-Elephant Coexistence Through Education and Seasonal Fencing
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Myanmar
<b>Lead partner</b>	British Asian Trust/Elephant Family (BAT/EF)
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Grow Back For Posterity (GBP), Myanmar Compass Films (CF), France
<b>Project leader</b>	Belinda Stewart-Cox
<b>Report date and number</b>	HYR3 (Apr-Sept 2022) This is the 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the extended year 2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="http://www.britishasiantrust.org">www.britishasiantrust.org</a> ; <a href="http://www.elephant-family.org">www.elephant-family.org</a> ; <a href="http://www.growbackposterity.com">www.growbackposterity.com</a> ; <a href="http://www.compassfilms.net">www.compassfilms.net</a> ; <a href="http://www.britishasiantrust.org">www.britishasiantrust.org</a>

### **1. Outline progress in last 6 months (April-Sept) against agreed project implementation timetable.**

The project continues to adapt to political realities on the ground to ensure safe implementation and the project remains largely on track as per the Change Request in April 2021 following the Coup in Myanmar in February 2021. Yangon and Ayeyarwady regions remain largely unaffected, but the authorities are on high alert and the situation remains challenging. Support for the project by relevant authorities continues to be positive, but their involvement is restricted to local or provincial level. There remains huge demand from villagers for fencing and the only way for the Forest Department to satisfy this need is to support the project and partners Grow Back for Prosperity (GBP), as they themselves cannot help.

#### **Output 1 - Saving Lives:**

Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) awareness events scheduled for the northern provinces of Magway/Sagaing were moved to new areas of Ayeyarwady/Yangon. The team conducted elephant safety education presentations in 40 villages, directly reaching 1,316 people in this reporting period (taking the total reached by the project to 95 villages and over 9,000 villagers overall). Because this year's monsoon has been so severe, the education workshops were halted in July and August, but this has not had an impact on the project delivery which remains on track. Every participant received an educational kit and 700 survey forms were completed, representing 54% of participants. We already know that participants share their knowledge and materials with at least three friends/family members, so the total number of people reached directly and indirectly in the last 6-months is around 5,000.

During this period, 61 elephant sightings were recorded by community members, as well as 46 HEC incidents. Most of these were near traditional bamboo fences and involved 1-8 bulls. Two human deaths were reported in areas of Ayeyarwady province where GBP has not yet provided education, but no human deaths were reported in area where HEC awareness has been raised. No elephants were killed by people in this reporting period and no poaching has been reported in project areas for 3-years.

At the end of this year, we aim to start working in Southern Rakhine state - an additional HEC hotspot that is mostly free of rebel activity and therefore accessible. The necessary groundwork to establish

contacts with regional officers and villagers has already begun.

### **Output 2 - Protecting Lives & Livelihoods:**

The fence training programme continues in new areas of Yangon and Ayeyarwady. Plans to expand to Magway were cancelled when serious fighting occurred. As with the HEC-education programme, the Forest Department fence trainees come from the Elephant Emergency Response Units (EERU). EERU staff are mandated to deal with HEC and are more acceptable to villagers/pro-democracy supporters.

In Ayeyarwady region, two training courses were held and two fences installed by 15 farmers on each course. The same numbers were applied to Yangon region, making a total of four training courses and four fences installed by 60 trainees. One of the workshops held in Yangon region involved women only, both as trainers (two women who were certified as fencers in 2021) and trainees. This was the first time that 15 women completed an electric fence training course.

All 60 participants on these courses attained the necessary standard to be certified. As noted in Yr1's reports, fence training courses are limited to 15 people because of Covid (rather than the 30), but a higher-than-expected percentage of trainees are being certified (100% as opposed to 30%). GBP is now compiling the feedback surveys for the next annual report, and delivering printed certificates to trainees.

In the original plan, one training fence and 2-3 community fences were to be installed in the first half of Yr3. So far, we have installed 4 training fences and 4 new fences were set up independently by certified trainees. This indicates that farmers are willing to invest their own funds to purchase fencing equipment and provide labour to set up their own fences – contributing to our exit strategy and long-term goal.

A total of 18 fences are now operational: 4 new ones erected by certified trainees, 4 training fences, 6 revived fences left over from the Smithsonian/USFWS pilot project, 3 permanent fences around government elephant sanctuary sites, and one fence independently installed by an untrained farmer who learned from a friend who was trained. The project team is monitoring and advising the owners and operators of all 18 fences on best practices for safety and maintenance.

The fencing protocols, instruction manual and data collection forms, drafted in English and translated into Burmese in YR1, are now being used. Two versions of the manual exist, a fully comprehensive version for fence trainers and government associates and a slightly simpler one for trainees.

The online activity reporting system has been tested over the last 6 months by the education and fencing team. Because of logistical constraints in remote areas, the fencing team still handwrites its training, monitoring and survey records, whereas the education team is now compiling activity data online from settlements. The fence training and monitoring logs will be digitized by year end.

An exit strategy is being developed whereby villagers cover the field allowance of the under-funded EERU teams, enabling them to continue to provide fence training and HEC mitigation support. GBP is trying to ensure that its safe fencing programme can continue in future without NGO involvement.

### **Output 3 - Building capacity:**

Compass Films (CF) was finally able to spend 5-days in person with GBP staff at the very end of this reporting period, and a face-to-face M&E workshop with BAT and CF representatives is planned for January 2023. Dozens of online capacity-building sessions have been held in the last 6-months between CF and GBP (averaging once a week). Topics ranged from reporting activities, improving the data logging system, reviewing the impacts of Covid and the Coup, and planning the HEC education and fence training. Much progress was made in tracking and accounting for expenses. The new system has been fully adopted by all GBP staff. The system for logging photos with associated captions has also been improved.

Historical HEC data (activity 3.2) is becoming available, and current HEC data is also being logged. This exercise resumed post-monsoon, once GBP could again visit villages. It is now also possible to evaluate the education workshops and get fence training feedback. Data will be available at the end of this year.

We have also developed the capacity of local government representatives (EERU, GAD, FD) who participated in the HEC presentations, helping to deliver the workshops as trainee trainers. The salaries of the EERU trainees are paid by MTE/FD, but field costs are currently covered by GBP. In effect, EERU staff have been seconded to GBP so that the education programme can continue as planned with a local, low key government presence – a benefit in these tense times. EERU's participation in all education and

fencing activities, including monitoring, as trainee trainers is key to the project longer-term sustainability.

#### **Output 4 - Sharing knowledge**

As noted in the Yr2 annual report, this output has been impacted by the coup; partly because the government has shut down social media and partly because people are unwilling to use it as they know it is monitored by government. It is still not safe or effective to post online. The project has shifted to a low profile, low media presence, while remaining active in villages. Knowledge is being shared directly, as evidenced by the independent installation of fences by untrained farmers.

#### **2. Detail notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt in last 6months. Explain what impact these may have and whether changes will affect the budget or timetable of project activities.**

Issues relating to the Coup in Myanmar continue to govern project activities. The project strategy has had to be adapted, as well as activities, in an evolving situation. GBP has been able to operate effectively by keeping on the right side of the coup authorities as well as the pro-democracy movement, a skilful balancing act. To make travel safer, GBP leased a vehicle, but this has limited the team's flexibility. When roads become passable post-monsoon, motorbikes will be leased.

All lessons listed in last year's reports remains valid. Chief among these is the value of the highly positive, trusting relationships established during our previous Darwin project between GBP and villagers, as well as with the government's Elephant Emergency Response Unit (EERU). These established relationships make it possible for GBP to adapt to the difficult circumstances imposed by the coup.

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

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS:	Yes
Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes
Change request reference if known:	CR21-013

#### **4a. 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: £

**4b. 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.**

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

N/A

**If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), 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.**

**Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with NIRAS-LTS International 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](mailto: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**