

## 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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023**

<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>	HYR4 (Apr-Sept 2023)
<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>

**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 project continues to adapt to political realities on the ground to ensure safe as well as effective implementation and remains largely on track.

### **Output 1 – Saving lives:**

The team held human-elephant conflict (HEC) awareness-raising events in 87 villages across Ayeyarwady, Yangon, Bago and Rakhine states, directly reaching 8,993 people in this reporting period. So far, the project has reached 260 villages and around 22,000 villagers overall. Every participant received an educational kit and 1,203 survey forms were filled in (M: 454; F: 747). We already know that participants share their knowledge and materials with at least three friends/family members, which means the total number of people reached directly and indirectly in the last 6 months is around 26,000. At every workshop, training session or awareness-raising event, GBP senior staff continued to train trainers. [DI-A04]

Although political tensions have eased in areas around Yangon, it seems likely that Mandalay and Sagaing will not be safe to visit during the remaining project period. We will therefore submit a change request application as recommended by the Yr2.2 annual report reviewer.

During this period, 204 elephant sightings were recorded by community members, as well as five human deaths – two near project villages, three near other villages. The two deaths in the project area both involved drunk men encountering elephants at night and reacting ill-advisedly. In one day, near an elephant camp, a wounded wild elephant killed a mahout who was trying to chase

it away and then killed the villager who tried to help him. It is not known why the elephant was wounded.

### **Output 2 – Protecting livelihoods:**

The fence training programme continues in new areas of Yangon and Ayeyarwady. 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 and pro-democracy supporters.

Eight 4-day fence training courses were implemented in this period with a total of 105 participants (M:90; F:15) being trained [DI-A05]. GBP set up one sample fence in Bago division and another in Rakhine after getting the necessary local government approvals.

From 14-22 August 2023, GBP and Compass Films led the first international training workshop in Nepal for 26 participants and installed two pilot fences around 12ha and 32ha fields. This initiative was organised with the Nepal Trust for Nature Conservation, with support from USFWS. Another training is scheduled for late October. Although not supported by a Darwin grant, it is part of the H.E.I.P programme's scale up plan of this initiative, as is a similar project being implemented in Sri Lanka.

In the last 6 months, 44 private fences were installed: 3 in Ayeyarwady protecting 23 acres and 41 in Yangon protecting 1,183.7 acres [DI-D16]. Of the 41 fences in the Yangon region, 23 have been installed by certified trainees for their own purposes and 18 were installed by certified trainees for other people. Another 8 fences were installed by untrained people, which is dangerous, so GBP has offered to train these fence operators to assure proper installation and safety. A total of 66 fences have been installed since project start, covering a total of 2,052 acres.

### **Output 3 – Building capacity [DI-A06]:**

Before this project started, many farmers in target areas had either stopped or greatly reduced their agricultural activities because so much of their crop was lost to elephants. Now farmers know that solar-powered seasonal fencing provides an opportunity for them to resume farming and produce a staple crop for themselves. They also understand how quickly they can get a return on their investment by installing these fences and buying an energizer. Nowadays, local EERU and FD personnel are also keen to participate in fence training, as they are rarely called out to chase elephants away from fields once effective fences are installed. Better still, the regional government is considering supplying energizers to farmers.

The project field teams continued their regular patrolling and monitoring of fences – including ones not installed by project trainees. 278 monitoring trips were undertaken during this period and maintenance advice was given to farmers in each area. Historical HEC data (activity 3.2) is being collected to establish a baseline in each area, with current HEC data being logged at the same time. We have also accumulated enough data to evaluate the education workshops and get fence training feedback. Data will be fully logged by the end of this year so that it can be analysed in time for the next annual report.

### **Output 4 – Sharing knowledge:**

Because of political concerns, the project had shifted to a low profile, low media presence, while remaining active in villages and maintaining contact with project participants. Knowledge was shared via Facebook and texts as evidenced by the independent installation of fences by untrained farmers. However, GBP has resumed updating its Facebook page with information about HEC education and fence training and other elephant-related information [DI-C12]. In part this was to stop other people reporting inaccurately on their behalf or taking credit for activities that GBP is implementing. The Myanmar National TV also broadcast programmes about GBP's activities on wildlife over 12 times during this period [DI-C15]. GBP is encouraging its trainees and workshop participants to follow the H.E.I.P Facebook page for advice and practical reminders.

While avoiding engagement higher up the government hierarchy, GBP continues to engage actively with local Forest Department teams for HEC awareness, mitigation, and fence training [DI-A07].

**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 team continues to adjust to adapt to the political climate to deliver the project. While we continue to work in villages across Ayeyarwady, Yangon, Bago and Rakhine, it now seems likely that Mandalay and Sagaing will not be safe to visit during the life of the project. We will now submit a change request to reduce the number of regions to four from six.

**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 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?**

N/A

**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](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**