

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	29-006
Project title	People, Primates, Plants: Co-managing Biodiversity and Improving Livelihoods in Vietnam
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Vietnam
Lead partner	Botanic Garden Conservation International (BGCI)
Partner(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International Center for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), World Agroforestry – Vietnam 2. Center for Highland Natural Resource Governance Research (CEGORN) – Vietnam 3. Langur Voluntary Conservation Group (VCG), Tuyen Hoa district – Vietnam
Project leader	Joachim Gratzfeld
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 st October 2023 (HYR2)
.	<p>BGCI: https://www.bgci.org/our-work/projects-and-case-studies/people-primates-plants/</p> <p>ICRAF: https://worldagroforestry.org/project/people-primates-plants-co-managing-biodiversity-and-improving-livelihoods-vietnam</p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/groups/ICRAFFvietnam</p> <p>CEGORN: https://www.facebook.com/cegorn/</p> <p>Langur Voluntary Conservation Group (VCG) fanpage: https://www.facebook.com/Hatinhlangur</p>

Responses by the Project Team to the Annual Report 1 Review (AR1R)

Section 2, No.2: Provide an explanation for the delays in completing Activity 1.3, commencing Activity 1.4, and launching the ToT mentorship group (Activity/Output Indicator 3.1) in Y1, and how the project plans to stay on track in Y2.

Response: The long process in recruiting the market researcher had a direct impact on the commencement of Activities 1.3 and 1.4. Following the recruitment in early March 2023, the market researcher conducted surveys to select potential products for market and value chain development. Studies on value chains for three products (based on pomelo, chicken, and honeybee) were conducted in May 2023 and a further study on fish-based value chains was completed in August 2023. Despite the delay, the project achieved significant progress in the first 6 months of year 2 that will ensure the achievement of the project milestones for the year.

Section 2, No.4: No Activity, Output, or Outcome-level indicator to track VCG activities - consider adding these to the log frame.

Response: The log frame was revised; we contacted BCF in this regarding revision ([Annex 1](#)).

Report on activities initiated during the reporting period (April-Sept 2023)

Overarching, project management level: A project steering committee will be established to oversee project implementation, monitor progress and enable adaptive management.

During the first and second quarters of year 2, the Project Management Team (PMT) held two meetings in June and September 2023 to address reviewer comments on the annual year report (AR1) and discuss the implementation of year 2 activities ([Annex 2](#)). Further technical meetings including on the market survey (28 April), agroforestry pilots (2 Jun), TOT training (10 Jul), as well as on zoonotic disease risks and public awareness activities (27 Jun, 20 Sep, 12 Oct) were also held to review progress ([Annex 3](#)).

Output 1. The socio-economic status, income sources and market situation of households in Tuyen Hoa district are assessed and market-based agroforestry practises are established.

1.1. Design and conduct household surveys to characterise and assess the project's impacts on local livelihoods, farming systems, and forest uses (years 1 and 3).

The baseline survey was completed in year 1 (AR1); the endline survey will take place in year 3.

1.2. Characterise good local agroforestry practices in the 4 communes of Dong-, Son-, Thach- and Thuan Hoa, as options for agroforestry interventions (year 1).

The agroforestry characterisation survey was completed in year 1 (AR1).

1.3. Design and conduct market opportunities and value chains, with a special focus on gender roles and equality, of at least 4 key agroforestry products (year 1).

Between May and August 2023, the project collaborated with the Agricultural Service Centre in Tuyen Hoa district to conduct value chain studies for pomelo-, chicken-, honeybee- and fish-based products. A total of 45 farmers, 20 local traders, 75 consumers, 2 cooperatives, 6 agricultural officials representing the district Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and 4 communes participated in the survey. The draft value chain report on value chains for pomelo, chicken and honey products is currently under revision ([Annex 4](#)), and the value chain of fish-based product is in the data analysis stage.

1.4. Implement participatory development of market-led agroforestry pilots with local communities in the 4 project communes (years 1-2).

Between May 13th and 20th, 2023, we collaborated with the People's Committees of four project communes to conduct a preliminary survey to identify suitable households for market-led agroforestry pilots ([Annex 5](#)). The primary criteria for selecting pilot households are (i) households that are directly impacted by the establishment of special-use forests (SUF), and (ii) households that demonstrate a strong desire and commitment to participate in the project (both criteria must be met). Additional selection specific criteria include household land size, land tenure rights, and co-contribution of farmers in the pilots. All eligible households were invited to a meeting conducted by the project team and respective Communal People's Committees for an

introduction about the project, the benefits and responsibilities of households participating in the pilots, and the selection criteria. Households signed up for pilot activities were then invited to a meeting to share successful agroforestry models identified in an agroforestry characterization survey conducted by the project (Activity 1.2) to help them choose suitable trees/ crops for their agroforestry pilots ([Link](#)). The most preferred models related to those integrating fruit trees (pomelo, orange, guava) with chicken rearing, apiculture and growing annual crops, such as spring onions and turmeric. These models were assessed based on cost, suitability to local conditions, productivity, resilience to climate extremes, price, market, and labour requirements.

To address market access challenges and small land sizes, farmer groups were established in each commune in the meeting with pilot farmers on August 3-4, 2023. Initial group members are those who participate in the agroforestry pilots. Farmer groups will serve as valuable platforms for mutual support and experience sharing throughout the project implementation. In the long term, the farmer groups will also help their members with better price negotiation, reduced transaction costs and facilitated market access.

The project plans to start with free-roaming chicken rearing in early November 2023, followed by tree planting and beekeeping in January-February 2024, keeping the establishment of market-led agroforestry pilots on track in year 2.

1.5. Provide ongoing support to local communities for monitoring and evaluation of agroforestry pilot farms (years 2-3).

Monitoring and evaluation indicators for agroforestry pilots have been defined. These indicators encompass aspects such as the growth, yield, survival rate, and diversification of pilot components, as well as farm input costs, income generation and livelihood improvement. Climate resilience and gender-disaggregated time allocation will also be assessed. Human resources for monitoring at farm level were selected, including Heads of 9 villages, 2 staff from Commune People's Committees and the district Department of Rural Development and Agriculture (DARD). In addition, the project recruited one field assistant to support periodic monitoring of AF pilots ([Annex 6](#)). All field monitoring staff, supporters at villages, and households participating in the project will be trained in pilot monitoring in November 2023.

Output 2. The SUF community co-management plan is jointly developed and implemented with community members and local authorities.

2.1. Organise multi-stakeholder, participatory workshops (years 1-3) to develop the community co-management plan, including options for ecological connectivity of SUF patches as a key measure to regenerate the Hatinh langur's habitat.

In June 2022, Tuyen Hoa District People's Committee (DPC) observed Decision No. 999/QĐ-UBND to regulate the coordination mechanism in management, conservation, and development of biodiversity in the planned special-use forest in Tuyen Hoa district (noted in AR1). This Decision creates a crucial and necessary foundation for VCG to continue monitoring and protecting langur in the SUF. However, since the Decision has been issued, the DPC has not organised any review on the implementation of the regulation. The project team plans to work with the DPC to organise a workshop in 2023 which will include the review of the implementation of the co-management regulation, and develop the 2024 co-management plan. The workshop is expected to take place in December 2023 with the participation of VCG, DPC, DARD, District Forest Ranger, CPC, CEGORN, and ICRAF.

2.2. Carry out an eco-geographical survey of the SUF and surrounding areas (year 1).

The botanical survey undertaken in May 2023 found 577 plant species in the SUF, 33 species classified as rare and precious species, of which 5 species are recorded on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (2021), 11 species in the Vietnam Red Book (2007), 21 species in the Decree 84/2021¹, and 20 species on the CITES annexes (2023) ([Annex 7](#)). During the survey, we found one new species; this has been published in Taiwan ([Link](#)). During the same period, a soil survey was also conducted with the results becoming available in November 2023.

2.3. Assess the potential of human-langur interaction and associated risks of zoonotic infection (years 1 and 2).

The human-langur interaction and associated risks of zoonotic infection were assessed through local interviews and field surveys from May to August 2023. While the probability of direct disease transmission between humans and Hatinh langurs is generally low (average distance of 145 m; closest encounter recorded was 10 m), goat herds and langurs get closer (2 m) and they also share some common food sources. Disease transmission through vectors like ticks, mosquitoes, and bats further raises the potential for infections. Particularly, the survey indicated that most local officials and residents are not concerned about the issue of infectious diseases between humans and animals, and hunting and trapping small birds, bats and mammals (such as squirrels) for food are still practised in some areas ([Annex 8](#)). Hence, raising awareness on infectious disease transmission is crucial for local communities. In year 2, a contract with an expert on zoonotic diseases and transmission was signed to develop and implement public awareness and training activities.

2.4. Carry out forest restoration (years 2 and 3) engaging local communities and local authorities, including enrichment planting with native tree species raised in the new nurseries to demonstrate implementation of the SUF co-management plan.

CEGORN informed the Communes' People's Committee about registration for tree planting with native tree species in plantation forests and home gardens. To date, 131 households have registered for planting of 61.78 hectares (or some 68,637 trees). Based on this registration, CEGORN has worked with communal People's Committees and district forest rangers to appraise 13 registered households, eight of whom meet the requirements for planting of native tree species (totalling 27 hectares or 30,219 trees) ([Annex 9](#)). It is planned that planting materials will be provided in November 2023 to allow eligible households to start with tree planting during the winter-spring season (see 3.4 below).

2.5 Generate periodic reports on Langur poaching to be presented by VCG at the multi-stakeholder workshops as per activity 2.1 (years 1 - 3)

The Langur Voluntary Conservation Group (VCG) sends their monthly reports to the Forest Ranger and CEGORN. Their work from April to September 2023 achieved the following results:

- 77 patrols undertaken.
- 3 cases of bird trapping and 1 case of hunting reported.
- 1 case of livestock encroachment into special-use forest prevented.
- 5 awareness sessions in village meetings conducted, reaching 135 participants.
- 7 baby Hatinh langurs discovered.
- 2 regular meetings held in second and third quarters of 2023.
- An illegally captured golden monkey was found in Thuan Hoan - Dong Hoa village and relocated to the wildlife rescue center of Phong Nha - Ke Bang national park in August 2023 ([Link](#) and [Annex 10](#)).

Output 3. Knowledge of and capacities and capabilities of local communities in Tuyen Hoa district in forest restoration, sustainable and income generating agroforestry, small-scale farm businesses, and prevention of zoonotic diseases from close animal-human interaction, are increased

3.1. Conduct a gender disaggregated needs-assessment, and develop training materials and programmes for training of trainers (TOT) and farmers engaged in new agroforestry models development (years 1 and 2).

At the workshop held in May 2023, participants discussed the necessary contents for TOT training, including skills on and techniques of pomelo cultivation, chicken raising, beekeeping, etc; wildlife disease prevention; business and market development skills; and nursery management (techniques of potting, selecting varieties, irrigation). Based on the outcomes of these discussions, CEGORN and ICRAF are developing materials for TOT training ([Link](#)).

3.2. Provide TOT training for community representatives and local officials on market, small-scale farm businesses, forest restoration and sustainable agroforestry (years 2 and 3).

Two TOT sessions were held for local officials and VCG members:

Course 1 (Aug 8-10, 2023): Integrated agroforestry models with 30 participants ([Annex 11a](#));

Course 2 (Oct 3-6, 2023): Beekeeping and poultry farming with 29 participants ([Annex 11b](#)).

A third course on agricultural business development is planned for year 3. These courses enhance knowledge among trainers in agroforestry, beekeeping, and poultry farming; specialised trainer groups were formed for future community training sessions.

3.3. Support TOT participants to provide on-site trainings for community members on forest restoration and sustainable agroforestry (years 2 and 3)

The project is working with Tuyen Hoa Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to develop a detailed training plan for households participating in agroforestry pilots. The first training will focus on poultry farming techniques in early November 2023, before the project initiates the distribution of poultry breeds to the pilot households. Training on apiculture and fruit tree cultivation techniques will be conducted in November and December 2023.

3.4. Establish and maintain 2 community-based nurseries for the production of seedlings of native tree and crop species, and assess their market potential (years 1-3).

CEGORN is working with an expert and the Agricultural Production and Conservation Cooperative of Hatinh Langur to establish two nurseries:

Nursery 1: Located in Thuận Hoan village - Đồng Hoá Commune, with an area of 1,200 square metres. Currently, the nursery holds 20,200 seedlings, which are in the preparation phase for planting in the winter-spring season ([Annex 12](#)).

Nursery 2: Located in Thuận Tiến village - Thuận Hóa Commune, with an area of 500 square metres. This nursery specialises in producing medicinal plants and native tree species for reforestation activities across the four buffer zone communes. Currently, the basic infrastructure for nursery operations has been completed, including the construction of shade structures, procurement of materials such as bags, nets, and fertilisers, in preparation for production in early November 2023.

Additionally, the Hatinh Langur Cooperative has set up a demonstration and sales point for nursery-produced seedlings in Zone 1 of Đồng Lê Town, covering 100 square metres. Approximately 40% of the cooperative's seedlings will be distributed from this point ([Annex 12](#)).

3.5. Undertake public awareness campaigns using local and national outreach channels on SUF biodiversity conservation needs and opportunities, and prevention of diseases from zoonotic transmissions (years 1-3).

Public awareness strategies ([Annex 13](#)) and planned activities ([Annex 14](#)) were elaborated. Project activities were also uploaded to the CEGORN website ([Link](#) to agroforestry TOT, [Link](#) to beekeeping and chicken raising) and local government [website](#). Activities of the VCG are also updated on VCG's [fanpage](#).

Output 4. Best-practice of development and implementation of community-based management of SUF, including forest ecological restoration and sustainable agroforestry models, is promoted for integration in national and sub-national policies by the end of the project (2025)

4.1. Conduct participatory suitability mapping for upscaling sustainable agroforestry models from the project site to the district scale (years 2 and 3).

Data on growing conditions of fruit trees including pomelo, and guava were collected. Habitat suitability mapping will be conducted during Q3 and Q4 of year 2.

4.2. Document project best practices of community-based management of SUF, and incorporate in the SUF co-management plan (year 3).

No scheduled action during the reporting period.

4.3. Produce policy recommendations for local, provincial and national authorities on community-based management of SUF, as well as public awareness materials, and share them widely through local and national media channels (years 2 and 3).

Action plans for the development and dissemination of public awareness materials and strategies through local and national media channels are scheduled to be released in the second part of year 2.

4.4. Promote the integration of policy recommendations on best-practice models for SUF community co-management in ongoing and future policy frameworks and strategies for sustainable forest management at meetings with local, provincial and national authorities (years 2 and 3).

With the ongoing revision of the 2013 Land Law², the project team has been involved in various meetings at the national level. Community-based langur conservation as promoted by the project has been used for lobbying at the national level (e.g. at meetings with the Ethnic Minority Council of the National Assembly in Gia Lai province in April 2023 and in Ha Noi in June 2023). It is also incorporated in the report that ICRAF Country Coordinator co-authored to be submitted to Ethnic Minority Council in October 2023.

Similarly, ICRAF and CEGORN have also been using the case of community-based langur conservation to lobby for SUF biodiversity conservation needs in the revision of the Government Decree guiding the implementation of the 2017 Forestry Law³, e.g. at a meeting organised by Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) on 14 September 2023.

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.

Over the past six months, the project faced significant challenges related to extreme weather, including intense heat from May to August, and subsequent tropical flooding. These conditions rendered the planting of fruit trees and annual crops difficult. Despite these challenges engendered by extreme weather events, planned year 2 activities are nevertheless anticipated to be implemented by the end of March 2024.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: Not applicable

Formal Change Request submitted: Not applicable

Received confirmation of change acceptance Not applicable

Change request reference if known: Not applicable

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?

No.

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**

¹ Government's Decree 84/2021/ND-CP of Vietnam Government on Management of Endangered, Rare and Precious Species of Forest Fauna and Flora and Observation of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

² The new land law will take effect from 1 July 2024 and will replace the current land law of 2013. The new land law will introduce some major changes affecting the land pricing system, access to land to ethnic minorities, the land use rights of foreign-invested economic organizations, and the conditions for transferring assets attached to land

³ Decree 156/2018/NĐ-CP dated 16 November 2018 guiding the implementation of 2017 Forestry Law is being revised. It is expected that the revised Decree will be approved at the end of 2023.