



**BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



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

Half Year Report

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

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 2025

Please note all projects that were active before 1st October 2025 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	29-018
Project title	Promotion of coexistence in human-elephant conflict hotspots in Northeast India
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	India
Lead Organisation	British Asian Trust
Partner(s)	Aaranyak
Project Leader	Belinda Stewart-Cox
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	1 April 2025 - 30 September 2025 HYR4
Project website/blog/social media	N/A uses British Asian Trust and Aaranyak socials

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

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) 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.

During the reporting period, the project made significant progress in strengthening community-based human-elephant coexistence (HEC) initiatives across Assam and Meghalaya.

Output 1: Profiling the problem and building evidence

The team continued monitoring HEC incidents and elephant movement through Village Champions (VCs) and Rapid Response Units (RRUs). Between April and September, 24 incidents of crop damage, 22 of property damage, and one human injury were recorded, alongside one suspected electrocution-related elephant death. Findings were analysed and shared during 20 village meetings held across eastern Assam and Meghalaya to inform local stakeholders and guide ongoing interventions.

Output 2: Promoting security for people and elephants by raising awareness

Awareness and capacity-building activities were expanded through three Gajah Kotha events and 27 other outreach sessions, reaching over 2,700 participants, including 1,295 students. Eleven VCs from Assam and Meghalaya participated in an exposure visit to the Kaziranga–Karbi Anglong landscape to learn from indigenous communities about eco-tourism, agroforestry, and craft-based livelihoods.

Media engagement remained strong, with HEC mitigation workshops for journalists and radio collaborations with All India Radio Jorhat and DD Assam to disseminate conservation messages. The project also marked key environmental observances including World Environment Day, International Day for Biological Diversity, and World Elephant Day through community-led events, school programmes, and wall-painting campaigns to celebrate coexistence.

Output 3: Protecting livelihoods and assets

RRUs are now active in 58 villages, sharing 46 timely alert messages that helped communities avoid conflict. Five out of fifteen solar fences were operational, protecting 32.9 acres of farmland valued at INR 121.4 lakhs, while ten are under maintenance. Biofencing now covers a total of 19.3 km in all, which includes 3.5 km lost to floods and other causes; 740 metres have already been restored, and additional repairs are underway. The project also distributed 50 torchlights to local communities, forest officials, and police to support night-time response efforts.

Output 4: Promoting supplementary livelihoods

In Assam, 439 participants (252 women & 187 men) earned a combined INR 18.96 lakh, while 57 beneficiaries (40 women & 17 men) in Meghalaya earned INR 1.86 lakh. Many participants reinvested part of their income in raw materials, and 218 weavers received yarn support to strengthen production. Five district-level buyer–seller meets connected 84 producers (79 of whom were women) to markets, enhancing income opportunities and visibility for local enterprises.

Output 5: Sharing knowledge and building capacity

Twenty joint village meetings were organised to review progress and share lessons. Additionally, the team presented findings at the 'Elephants of Assam VI' symposium, highlighting best practices in human-elephant coexistence.

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.

Severe floods during the reporting period disrupted plans to hold the final project workshop in June 2025, which was intended to bring together community representatives, government departments, and other agencies from across India where HEC is an emerging issue. Many key stakeholders were engaged in flood relief efforts, and travel to affected areas remained difficult. To ensure full participation and meaningful knowledge exchange, rather than holding a token event, we requested a no-cost extension until December 2025. This will allow sufficient time to complete pending activities and deliver the final workshop under more stable conditions, ensuring the event's quality and impact can be maximised.

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
Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes
Change Request reference if known: Accepted via email on 23/06/2025	

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025) Actual spend: [REDACTED]	
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 2026)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Estimated underspend: £	
4c. If you expect an underspend, then you should 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, and not later than 31st December. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes to your project 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 BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures? Suspicions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk	
No	
6. Project risk management 6a. If your project has an Overseas Security and Justice assessment, please provide an update on any related risks, and any special conditions in your award paperwork if relevant for your project.	
N/A	
6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

If yes, please provide further information, ensuring no sensitive data is included within responses.

Suspensions or allegations related to safeguarding concerns should be reported to ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk

7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent Annual Report. As a reminder, all projects that were scored as 'Not Yet Sensitive' in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment of their latest Annual Report should demonstrate how they are meeting the minimum GESI-Sensitive standard.

Reviewer has suggested that all comments and queries on AR3 be addressed in the final report of the project due in March 2026.

Checklist for submission

Have you responded to **feedback from your latest Annual Report Review**? You should respond in section 6, and annexe other requested materials as appropriate. Yes

Have you reported against the most **up to date information for your project**? Yes

Have you **clearly highlighted any confidential information** within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website? Yes

Include your **project reference** in the subject line of submission email. Yes

Submit to BCF-Reports@niras.com

Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report. Yes