



**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 2024

Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

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

Project reference	29-021
Project title	More bees: Supporting agro-biodiversity and livelihoods in Amhara, Ethiopia
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Ethiopia
Lead Organisation	Bees for Development
Partner(s)	Bees for Development Ethiopia, Pesticide Action Nexus Ethiopia, Pesticide Action Network UK, Bahir Dar University
Project leader	Janet Lowore
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	More Bees: Supporting Agrobiodiversity and Livelihoods in Amhara - Bees for Development

Results sharing

We held a results sharing workshop on 21 June 2024 - with the results of the IPM work from the last two seasons 22/23 and 23/24. These results showed that the average number of beneficial insects was higher in IPM plots (3 per m²) compared with the conventional, high-pesticide plots (1 per m²) and the average net income of the farmers increased by 21% compared with the conventional pesticide application in grass pea and onion. The income gain of the IPM plots is attributed to the use of low-cost and environment-friendly botanical pesticides with low spend on chemical pesticides. In the conventional plots farmers used on average 24kg/ha and 30kg/ha pesticide products or 16 kg/ha and 20.23kg/ha **active ingredients** respectively in grass pea and onion crops. This high rate of application of chemical pesticides affects the agro-ecosystem negatively and increases the production cost of the crop. According to FAOSTAT (2022), this rate of pesticide application is rated as very high against international metrics. Farmers who participated in the workshop gave feedback that vegetables produced in conventional high-pesticide systems have low market value because of the accumulation of residual pesticides on vegetable products. Customers easily notice products produced by conventional methods simply by smelling the product.

Beekeeping assessment

We conducted an assessment in August 2024 to evaluate the progress of the project intervention on the restoration of bee colonies and beekeeping livelihoods against the baseline information in the project area. The results showed that 64% of the respondent beekeepers well understand

how to manage honey bee colonies in the dearth period and are now better equipped to protect honey bee colonies from pesticides. The assessment also looked at the number of honey bee colonies kept by existing beekeepers and new beekeepers – both recorded increases. The average income of existing and new beekeepers respectively increased by £35 (70% of the target) and £11 (22% of the target) indicating the positive impact of the project on the restoration of bee colonies and beekeeping livelihoods.

Achieving wider adoption by farmers outside of IPM trials

Considering the promising results of IPM, feedback from farmers and the positive impact of the intervention on the restoration of bee colonies and beekeeping livelihoods the project is gaining government buy-in towards the adoption of IPM and reducing reliance on pesticides. Development Agents within the project area have been tasked by their line managers and senior government officials to promote IPM adoption in the 24/25 irrigation season. To realize this activity, the project distributed 200kg neem seed and 2600 neem seedlings to the farmers who are going to practice IPM in their own farm. Intensive training was offered to Development Agents on natural pesticide preparation and application methods [September 2024] that will be cascaded to farmers – including preparation of the food spray (refresher training). Government staff, in collaboration with project staff, have selected farmers who will practice IPM in their own farms in the next irrigation season.

Overall, in the last six months we have shared convincing results about the IPM trials and Farmer Field School activities with stakeholders. Based on this evidence we have developed a shared IPM adoption plan that will be implemented in farmers' fields to achieve our project outcome against the indicators. The outcome of the project against the indicators and the baseline information is promising. Many farmers are convinced of the need to reduce the application of chemical pesticides, and use cultural practices, neem extract, food spray and refuge crops to encourage a balance between crop pests and natural enemies.

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.

We have done a situation analysis and have considered the external working environment and internal situation of the project. We have reflected on the feedback received against our Annual Report. Accordingly, we have made some modifications and we submitted a Change Request on 6 August 2024.

The Change Request touched on four points.

1. Change of Outcome Indicator to be more realistic in terms of numbers of farmers who will have adopted IPM by project end.
2. Add new indicator to reflect that reducing pesticide use is work in progress and we have achieved much in terms of gaining government buy-in. New indicator will report level of government support.
3. Change of staff. One staff member in Ethiopia replaced with another.
4. Change in number of Farmer Field Schools conducted in final year.

The civil unrest which started in 2023 has continued to date. Transport restrictions are still imposed from time to time (e.g. mid-October 2024 for two weeks). This situation has impacted on project's ability to reach more farmers. We had to reduce the target number of FFS in year 2. However, it would be wrong to state that this is the only reason for this Change Request. We now have a more realistic and nuanced understanding about the process of change away from chemical pesticide use - from understanding the problem, to proving the concept, to independent adoption.

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:	No
Change Request reference if known: <i>If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome</i>	

<p>4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)</p> <p>Actual spend:</p>
<p>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 2025)?</p> <p>No</p>
<p>4c. If you expect and 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.</p> <p>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 to your project if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.</p> <p>NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.</p>
<p>5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</p> <p>No</p>

<p>6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report. If your project was subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment please use this space to comment on any changes to international human rights risks, and to address any additional mitigations outlined in your offer letters. Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.</p>
<p>Feedback Point No. 4. Consider revising indicator targets in the light of your assessment that 'we are unlikely to meet all of them by end of project' and various comments in AR2 that they could be 'improved'. This should be done as soon as possible, through the Change Request mechanism.</p> <p>This has been done and Change Request was submitted on 6/8/10.</p>

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1 st April 2024)	
Have you responded to any additional feedback (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	

For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	YES
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	