

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	29-024
Project title	Investigating hunting causes and implementing community-led mitigations in the Philippines
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	the Philippines
Lead partner	Bristol Zoological Society
Partner(s)	PhilinCon
Project leader	Dr Rebecca Sargent
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2 October 2023
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100083707629525

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.

Bristol Zoological Society in partnership with PhilinCon, Inc. initiated this project on the 1st of June 2022 and has employed 35 staff to carry out its ambitious objectives. Our project is divided into 4 teams: Field and Ranger team, Community team, Market team, and Operational team. Following successful completion of the first year of data collection, the main focus of the second year of the project is the development of livelihood initiatives with our eight participating communities.

Community Team (output 1)

During April and May 2023 the community team held meetings with barangay captains within each community to discuss the implementation plan for the livelihood initiatives. Community facilitators drafted several suggested ideas for livelihoods that they felt would be appropriate and well-received with their communities. Through several community forums, these ideas were discussed and developed so that members of the communities had the opportunity to offer their own suggestions.

In June and July 2023, the proposed initiatives were finalised and the team began collecting signatures of agreement with the participating households. The team leader then began identifying appropriate resource persons to hold training events with each community. The chosen livelihoods include: broiler chicken farming (n = 1 community), vegetable farming (n = 1 community), native chicken farming (n = 3 communities), freshwater shrimp farming (n = 1 community), and cooperative shop/rice retail (n = 2 communities). The team leader consulted with experts from the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center, the Provincial Veterinary

Office Antique and the Municipal Agriculturist Office of Pandan to assess feasibility and budgeting.

In August 2023 training events began, as did sourcing of suppliers for purchase of required equipment and resources. The first training on poultry raising took place, with several representatives from the participating communities attending. In September, a training session on organic vegetable farming was conducted, as was an accounting/record keeping session run by our bookkeeper. During September, those who had attended the first poultry raising training then held 're-echoing' sessions within their communities to pass on their new knowledge to other participating households. Further training will be ongoing in the remaining months of Y2, along with final purchasing of all required start-up materials.

Field and ranger team (output 2)

From April 2023 to September 2023, the forest ranger team completed 13 patrols, amounting in total to 40 days of foot patrol inside the Northwest Panay Peninsula Natural Park (NPPNP). The field team conducted five expeditions within the Natural Park, which resulted in the surveying of a total of 17.6km of transect line and a total trekking distance of 99.6km. Throughout this period, our team carried out 14 transect surveys, strategically distributed across 11 grid cells within various areas of the forest.

Throughout April to September 2023, forest rangers and field team were able to find and dismantle 57 traps/snares for warty pigs and other wildlife including macaques, jungle fowl and monitor lizards. Notably, most traps appeared to be approximately one year old. The cutting, harvesting and collecting of agarwood appears to be the most prevalent illegal activity in the forest at this time, with 95 observations of tree cutting over the past 6 months. Slash and burn, converting land to crop plantation, and illegal cutting of native trees like Laua-an tree were also observed. Illegal activities encountered by the field team were promptly reported to the forest rangers, who subsequently conducted patrols in the relevant areas.

The ranger team have also intercepted illegal poachers inside NPPNP. Separate incident reports were submitted to the offices of our partner agencies including the Protected Area Management Board, Department of Environment, and 2nd Provincial Mobile Police Force of both Aklan and Antique. The majority of these were agarwood poachers, occasionally from other islands such as Mindanao, who have financial backing and employ local hunters as guides. In addition, several poaching camps were detected inside the NPPNP, which were promptly dismantled by the forest rangers.

Market team (output 3)

The team conducted a total of 55 surveys from April to September 2023 — 18 meat stalls, 27 restaurants, and 10 tourist shops. Results showed that there was no presence of wildlife meat in restaurants and meat stalls. An accessory with warty pig teeth was documented from a tourist shop during a festival survey, the origin of which, according to the respondent, is Mindoro or Negros Island. Moreover, chicken feathers and sea snake bones are common materials used in some souvenir items. While identifying the species from which the bones came from is not possible, most sea snakes found locally are not threatened.

To gather more in-depth data, the team started doing informal interviews with individuals who may have knowledge of wildlife trade. This included members of local police departments and community informants. However, these interviews also revealed that there are no records of illegal wildlife trade in shops and markets. In agreement with our Y1 community surveys, the informants suggest that any hunted meat is consumed at home within the communities rather than being sold for income. However, the team will continue to discuss with contacts and informants to attempt to identify additional data.

The team has also organised and facilitated some conservation-related activities, lectures, and information booths to practise community and school engagements for the upcoming Rare Pride campaign. For example, in April 2023 the team hosted a conservation booth at a tourism event on Boracay Island and conducted a lecture on the biodiversity of NPPNP for students of Mag-aba National High School. In September, they facilitated conservation-related activities for

student leaders of the Pandan Bay Institute and also ran a conservation workshop for the Supreme Learners Government Officers of Pandan.

In preparation for the Rare Pride campaign, the team leader completed an online course entitled 'An Introduction to Behaviour-Centred Design' which explored approaches and principles for designing behaviour change campaigns. The campaign planning will be the focus of the remaining 6-months of year 2, with stakeholder meetings due to be held in October 2023 to discuss messaging and target audience.

Operations team (output 4)

The operations team continues to work efficiently assisting the team with all coordination and approvals, including delivering coordination letters for ranger and field team entry into the national park and preparing contracts. Our bookkeeper assisted the community team with training on record keeping and managing finances and will aid with monitoring of the livelihoods once established. The team leader is now beginning data collection for the Y2 hunting perceptions surveys, repeating the process we conducted in Y1. Several teachers have already been interviewed and other stakeholders including members of DENR and experts involved in the livelihood projects will also be targeted.

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.

Community team

It has been a very challenging few months for the community team, having eight communities to coordinate, with many different choices of livelihood initiatives. Several issues have risen, for example:

- In the original grant submission, two alternative livelihoods were suggested: pig farming and permaculture. These had been budgeted and planned for accordingly. However, our aim was that the livelihood projects would be 'community-led mitigations', co-developed alongside communities based on their wants and needs. Having held initial discussions we discovered that pig farming is not a preferred option. In part this is in response to the ongoing African Swine Fever epidemic, making this a high-risk option. The communities then proposed several alternatives including chicken and shrimp farming. This has, therefore, resulted in a variation of livelihoods all with differing methods and costs. We have had to be flexible with our planned implementation and timeline in order to account for this and to offer training that would be useful and beneficial. A change request form was submitted and accepted in May 2023 to update the wording of the log frame to encompass a broader variety of livelihood trainings and expenditures.
- Two communities, who were initially interested in chicken farming, decided to change their livelihood choice to rice retailing/local cooperative shops. This has caused a delay in the implementation and challenges in considering how this will function. The change came as they believed that they would not make significant profit from chicken farming. One of these communities is the largest we work with (98 households) and therefore identifying an option that will work for this many people has been a challenge.
 - **Impact:** The timeline for these communities is therefore likely to be delayed as we identify appropriate training and monitoring processes. We are also concerned about how sustainable the suggested livelihood will be. We have therefore been looking at other options to diversify our assistance for these communities. For example, in Pawa many households are involved in basket and mat weaving. We would therefore like to support this by offering training and assistance with marketing to increase sales. In addition, we have met with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL)'s Philippines team to discuss the possibility of supporting our participants to introduce Community Managed Savings and Credit schemes. These would not require additional budget as they are entirely

run and managed by the community. This is something we would also like to integrate into the remaining six communities if possible, and ZSL have offered their assistance for training.

- Identifying experts to conduct training has been a challenge for both the rice retailing and native shrimp farming projects. The cost of training with contacts at the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center was too high for our budget and we have therefore had to look elsewhere. We are currently in discussion with a private company and with the Department of Agriculture to identify appropriate training.
 - **Impact:** The timeline for these communities has therefore been impacted as all training was due to be completed during the first half of year 2, but will now be shifted to the coming six months.

Field and ranger team (output 2)

The annual report review from Y1 suggested increasing law enforcement efforts, as this is having an immediate and direct benefit on biodiversity in the park. During Y1 of the project, the ranger team were conducting two patrols per month of 2-3 days each. Increasing patrol effort is challenging given that no additional budget is available, however the ranger team agreed to add additional days to their expeditions where possible. The project lead has obtained additional funding from the lead organisation to support an increase in food allowance starting from September 2023. The ranger team leader also requested the purchase of a power bank and additional batteries for handheld radios if they are to spend more time in the forest. Again, budget was successfully sourced from the lead organisation. However, the number of possible patrol days per month may still vary based on unexpected expenditures, emergencies or weather events.

The surge in agarwood poaching has led to the unfortunate disappearance of some of our camera traps, suspected to be taken by poachers seeking to conceal their identities. There is suspicion that some of these poachers may have previously been forest rangers or porters. The field team leader held information events in two of the suspected communities to discuss our use of camera traps and highlight that we are interested in capturing wildlife images, not apprehending poachers. We will monitor any further disappearances in the coming months and discuss other ways that we might conceal/protect the cameras.

Market team

As in Year 1, there have been challenges in generating significant data from regular questionnaire surveys. In response, the team started conducting informal interviews with relevant contacts. Should there still be a lack of data, the team will begin to brainstorm other methods of data collection. However, it may be the case that there is no significant illegal trade in wildlife products within the cities, as is suggested by the Y1 community surveys and the meetings with the police departments.

Looking forward to campaign preparations, the team foresees a shortage of budget allotted in Year 2. As the majority of campaign budget was requested in Y3, this leaves a limited amount for initial preparations. In particular, quotes for the price of a mascot costume amount to 60% of the budget for this year. The remaining £400 shall then be divided for campaign materials, production, grand launching, and other necessary expenses. Additional funding has been requested from the lead partner to assist with these expenses however, if this is not granted, it may be that the grand launching needs to be pushed back from March/April until April/May when the Y3 budget has become available.

Operations team (output 4)

As highlighted in our annual report, the original plan was to conduct a survey of hunting perceptions at a Protected Area Management Board meeting. However, we realised that these full day meetings were not an appropriate occasion to conduct the survey as there are many

items on the agenda and securing attendance for additional workshops is difficult. We therefore, felt that a more appropriate survey method to understand perceptions of hunting in the area, is to conduct one-on-one interviews and questionnaires. A change request form was submitted and accepted in May to update the logframe accordingly.

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: CR23-017

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)

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 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**