



**BIODIVERSITY  
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



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

**Half Year Report**

**Submission Deadline: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025**

**Submit to: [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line.**

<b>Project reference</b>	<b>30-005</b>
<b>Project title</b>	Protection to Community Engagement: Managing Nepal's youngest transborder National Park
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Nepal
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Zoological Society of London
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Environment and Rural Development Centre (ENRUDEC), National Trust for Nature Conservation Nepal (NTNC), Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC, Government of Nepal) and Banke National Park
<b>Project Leader</b>	<i>Dr. Bhagawan Raj Dahal</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>HYR3</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	

**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).**

**Output 1:** In the first half of Year 3, Milijuli Alternative livelihood group (ALG) demonstrated strong continuity and growing impact, building on the foundations laid in previous years with four meetings held in Rapti Sonari-1, Gavar (*Annex 2*). These meetings engaged 93% women and 64% individuals from indigenous and marginalized communities underlining the project's commitment to inclusive financial empowerment. NPR 345,000 was disbursed to 12 members (92% women, 83% from marginalized groups) to support income-generating activities such as goat farming (8), buffalo rearing (3), and agriculture (1). A few repayment delays from earlier loans surfaced, but with timely follow-up and open dialogue, these were quickly resolved. Seed fund has increased by 10.48 % (NPR. 95,520) in Milijuli ALG and 13.53 % (NPR. 126,000) in Fulbari ALG through monthly saving and interest collection. Similarly, Fulbari ALG also welcomed three new CB members, reflecting growing trust and interest in the model. Through regular meetings, the team continued to track loan use carefully, support to maintain documentation, and support members in managing repayments effectively. Further, responding to donor feedback from the previous annual report, the project also rolled out a new community bank monitoring template to strengthen outcome tracking as it moves toward a responsible phase-out.

Following the approval of the Education Fund Mobilization Guideline by the School Management Committee of Shree Rastriya Secondary School, Kalimati Rural Municipality–07, Ghuiyabari, an education fund of NPR 520,000 has been established during this reporting period (*Annex 3*). This fund is dedicated to supporting the education of children from families affected by Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC). As a result, vulnerable students who were at risk of dropping out due to financial hardship now have access to education, helping ensure continuity in their learning as the scholarships help cover essential costs such as school fees, books, uniforms, and supplies, easing the financial burden on affected families.

To promote sustainable land use and reduce pressure on forest resources, two training on agroforestry events were conducted at project sites (one in each site) engaging 64 beneficiary household including 40% women and 45% belonging to indigenous and marginalized group (*Annex 4 and 9*). Further 820 fruits sapling and 1291 fodder saplings were distributed to 243 Households (44% women and 51% belonging to indigenous and marginalized group).

**Output 2:** A total of 74 camera traps were deployed from March to June 2025 in the Strategic locations of Banke National Park (BaNP). Cameras were purposefully deployed at selected sites including artificial waterholes, grasslands, riverbanks, and animal trails where high wildlife movement is anticipated (*Annex 5*). The deployment sites were selected based on field observations, indirect animal signs, and proximity to water sources. Cameras were mounted on trees or poles at the height of 40-50cm and an angle to capture clear images of medium to large-sized mammals effectively. Regular checks were conducted for data retrieval, battery replacement, and camera maintenance. During the monitoring period, eight camera traps were reported lost due to theft and damage by wildlife.

Moreover, in order to support the park for efficient habitat management of activities related to conservation, the project provided financial assistance for regular tractor operation and (fuel and maintenance) costs to BaNP (*Annex 6*). The tractor has been a vital asset for the Park Management, especially under harsh field conditions where regular vehicles cannot operate efficiently, as it plays a crucial role in transportation and maintenance support, reducing dependency on external resources therefore enhancing operational readiness during emergencies or seasonal challenges like monsoons and bush overgrowth.

Likewise, ZSL Nepal, with logistical management support from Aaranyak, organized a transboundary exposure visit from 6-12 May 2025 to Kaziranga and Manas National Parks in India to strengthen cross-border conservation collaboration and exchange best practices in protected area management (*Annex 7*). Key learnings emphasized the importance of species-specific habitat management, hydrology-conscious planning, community engagement, ethical tourism, and transboundary cooperation. The integration of indigenous communities and conservation-linked livelihoods was highlighted as a model for enhancing ecological resilience and community stewardship in Nepal. Participants from Nepal included high level officials including joint secretary of Ministry of Forests and Environment, and it is believed that the learnings from the visit will help streamline protected area management policies.

The overall progress under Output 2 and tracking the output indicator, indicate that the project is well on track to achieve the intended outcome.

**Output 3:** Continuing the effort to reduce wildlife trespassing into agricultural farmlands by promoting non-palatable crops, the project distributed 554 saplings of non-palatable crops to 213 households (43% women, 55 % indigenous and marginalized group). Once matured, these crops will not only create a barrier to wildlife but also support the livelihoods of local families (*Annex 8*).

**Output 4:** An agreement established with Youth Media Hub, a local media outlet, to broadcast the documentary once a week in Y2, has been extended till December 2025 (*Annex 10*) for the continued dissemination of key messages on wildlife conservation, community engagement, and sustainable tourism within and beyond the BaNP. Further continuing the effort to promote tourism in BaNP, mounted posters of wild animals found in the park were prepared and will be distributed to Hoteliers, Homestay, tourism stakeholders, Protected areas, BZUCs and Local governments (*Annex 11*).

A Training of Trainers (ToT) on Behaviour Change Campaigns were conducted to enhance the capacity of selected teachers from 10 government schools in and around the project area. These trained teachers will be mobilized to implement school-based programs focused on raising awareness and promoting positive behavioural changes among students (*Annex 12*). Similarly, a separate ToT was organized for community change agents to strengthen their ability to lead behaviour change initiatives. These selected agents are now actively engaged in implementing community-level programmes aimed at fostering awareness and encouraging positive behavioural shifts among local residents (*Annex 13*). Both groups will continue to play a vital role in educating the community on biodiversity conservation beyond the project span. Furthermore, the project also observed the Global Tiger Day, celebrated at BaNP on 29 July 2025, themed "Co-existence and Income Generation: Change Human Behaviour for Tiger Conservation," emphasizing sustainable livelihoods (*Annex 14*). The event featured an art competition among the school going students and stakeholder interaction program in line with theme of the day.

In addition, 13 members of Community-Based Anti-Poaching Units (CBAPUs) under the Rapti Buffer BZUC participated in refresher training aimed at strengthening their capacity in wildlife protection and community-based conservation (*Annex 15*). Following the training, the CBAPUs actively continued patrolling their respective buffer zones, conducting four patrols in total (*Annex 16*). Furthermore, five coordination meetings were organized with CBAPU and BZUC representatives to enhance collaboration, improve information sharing, and strengthen links with the Protected Area authority (*Annex 17*). Similarly, a total of 18 individuals from six Buffer Zone Community Forests (BZCFs) of BaNP participated in a comprehensive capacity-building program. The training aimed to strengthen their skills and knowledge in sustainable forest management practices as well as financial management related to the BZUC (*Annex 18*). Through this initiative, participants gained practical insights into effective forest conservation techniques, record keeping, fund utilization, and transparent financial reporting, all essential components for promoting community-led resource management and accountability within the buffer zone.

**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 a few unexpected challenges. The tourism stakeholder meeting planned for the second quarter had to be postponed because key participants were unavailable it has been rescheduled for a later period to ensure relevant stakeholders to contribute to a meaningful discussion on community-based tourism. Similarly, the grassland and Fireline management in BaNP area was delayed by the monsoon and now rescheduled for the winter season when conditions are more suitable. Around the same period, unexpected Gen-Z protest disrupted daily life, further challenging the implementation of planned activities. Rescheduling adjustments were made however it has not affected the project's budget or overall timeline, but they serve as a reminder of the importance of staying flexible and responsive to seasonal and scheduling realities.

**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: <i>N/A</i>	

**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 ☐ No ☒ Estimated underspend: £

**4c. If you expect an underspend, then you should consider your project budget needs carefully.**

*N/A*

**5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

Suspensions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to [fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk](mailto:fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk)

*N/A*

**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* With the formation of an interim government and the national election scheduled for February 2025, the project anticipates challenges in community mobilization. As a result, all community-level activities will be completed prior to the election period.

**6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months?**

Yes ☐ No ☒

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](mailto: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.**

**Checklist for submission**

Have you responded to <b>feedback from your latest Annual Report Review</b> ? You should respond in section 6, and annexe other requested materials as appropriate.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have you reported against the most <b>up to date information for your project</b> ?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have you <b>clearly highlighted any confidential information</b> within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	n/a
Include your <b>project reference</b> in the subject line of submission email.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Submit to <a href="mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com">BCF-Reports@niras.com</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>