



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	<i>This should be the project reference provided in your offer paperwork and <u>not</u> your application number</i>
Project title	Improving integrated landscape management on the Zunil - Atitlán - Balam Juyu biocultural corridor
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Guatemala
Lead Organisation	The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
Partner(s)	Asociación Vivamos Mejor (VMA)
Project Leader	Jorge Cardona (TNC)
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>October 30th 2025</i> HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	

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.

Despite staff changes in local government offices the project will meet the project's goals and the indicators.

Output 1. Over the Executive Secretariat of the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) issued Resolution 189/2025, which legally recognizes the Support Platform for the Joint Administration and Shared Management of SIGAP in natural areas of importance for biodiversity conservation in the Central Highlands Region of Guatemala. The platform was established on April 25, 2024, and legalized on August 2025. (Indicators 0.1, 1.1 and MV 0.1.1, 1.1.1: [Link](#)). This platform will serve as the coordinating body for actions within the corridor in the long term. The latest meeting of the platform brought together 41 participants, representing over 20 conservation areas with representatives of all sectors of society. (MV 1.1.2 and 1.1.3: [Link](#)). The platform continues to use these meetings as spaces for institutional strengthening (MV 1.2.1).

A workshop on gender equity in forest landscape management and restoration was conducted with the participation of 51 individuals (10 women and 41 men). (Indicator 1.3, MV 1.3.1 and 1.3.2: [Link](#)).

Camera traps were installed in the ecological monitoring plots of Payajut and Lomas de Atitlán. Additional monitoring activities—including the collection of climatic, avifaunal, and tree data—are scheduled later in the project. (MV 1.4.1 and 1.4.2).

Update of the management plan for the biocultural corridor is planned between October 2025 and March 2026 (MV 1.5.1). Conservation efforts have been strengthened across 4,000 hectares of key ecosystems within the corridor (Indicator 1.7). Two follow-up meetings were held with the technical and legal teams of the Municipality of Sololá to advance the declaration of a new conservation area (Jaibal). Progress has focused on the review of property records and polygon definition (Indicator 1.7, MV 1.7.1 and 1.7.2: [Link](#)). A draft technical file for the proposed protected area is 95% complete, though the polygon boundaries may still be adjusted ([Link](#)).

Four conservation areas currently have updated management plans. Of these, two are in the final approval phase (PRM Rey Tepepul and PRM Xiquichoy) (MV 1.7.3 and 1.7.4: [Link](#)).

Output 2. The Integrated Fire Management Strategy has been approved and validated by all Departmental corresponding agencies. (Indicator 2.1, MV 2.1.1: [Link](#)).

The Technical Working Group will utilize and monitor the strategy through the inter-institutional coordination space under CODEMA (MD 2.1.2 – will be shared in annual report). The strategy has been disseminated across multiple platforms([Link](#)).

300 individuals (255 men and 45 women) were trained in the Basic Techniques for Forest Fire Control (TBCIF) course. 166 participants (154 men and 12 women) received certification from CONRED. During this reporting period, 53 individuals (47 men and 6 women) were trained, and all received certification (MV 2.2.1 and 2.3.1: [Link](#)).

A protocol has been developed to provide personal protective equipment on a temporary basis to local, municipal, and departmental brigades (MV 2.3.2: [Link](#)).

Output 3. 87.89 hectares were restored with native species within the core and buffer zones of the ZABJ Corridor. Of these, 85.26 hectares were incorporated into the Forest Incentives Program (PROBOSQUE) (MV 3.3 [Link](#)) (Indicator 3.4, MV 3.4.1).

In CEDRACC, 85,000 seedlings of 44 native forest species have been delivered. Of these, 50,000 seedlings were delivered in this period. The project has met its target of producing at least 30,000 seedlings (36.5%) of endemic, endangered, or ecologically important species (MV 3.4.1, 3.4.2 : [Link](#)). Commitments to post-project maintenance are supported through agreements with project participants (MV 3.1.2: [Link](#)).

A capacity-building workshop was conducted for silviculturists on Forest Landscape Restoration with a Sustainability Focus. 55 project participants attended (21 women and 34 men): [Link](#).

Output 4. 390 families have improved or are projected to improve their income through beekeeping, coffee cultivation, and household savings from reduced firewood consumption. 51 beekeepers (10 women and 41 men) completed training and certification by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food (MAGA) in "Sustainable production practices and honey commercialization." These beekeepers are from 5 municipalities of Sololá. Nine of them hold the Beekeeper and Apiary Registry (REGAPI), which allows them to commercialize and transport apicultural products nationwide (Indicator 4.1, MV 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 [Link](#)).

59 coffee growers have implemented better practices in their organic shaded coffee production units. Two conservation agreements were signed with two local indigenous organizations Members (20 women and 39 men) have renewed plantations covering seven hectares and adopted sustainable coffee production practices (Indicator 4.2, MV 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 [Link](#)). An analysis made in the project, reports greater efficiency and savings in firewood use and household economy (Indicator 4.3, MV 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 [Link](#)).

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.

Activities that depend on government approval have experienced delays due to the need for authorization by authorities. Additionally, the frequent staff turnover within state institutions and the project itself have caused some delays which don't pose a problem for the fulfillment of the project. The inter-institutional collaboration brought about by the project, has built trust with beneficiaries and enabled more efficient fieldwork.

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: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome*

Guidance for Section 4: The information you provide in this section will be used by Defra to review the financial status of projects. This review will identify projects at random for spot checks on financial management and will include requests for evidence of the actual spend information provided below. Please ensure the figures you provide are as accurate as possible and that you have the evidence to support it. You do not need to provide it now.

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)

Actual spend: £ XXXXXXXXXX

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 X 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.

NA

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.

Given the focus of activities under Output 2 on capacity building, we are considering an alternative indicator which measures project achievement against factors more directly within the project's control. We are considering using an alternative indicator which consists of number of brigades for prevention forest fires both community and municipal analyzed against forest fires reported in the area of the Biocultural Corridor. Additionally, the capacity building carried out through the elaboration of the Department Strategy of Forest Fires of Sololá will strengthen the institutionality for the prevention and combat of forest fires. We will send a Change Request as soon as possible.

During fiscal year FY25, TNC delivered its annual Ethics and Compliance training to 100% of the staff in Guatemala BU. The training was structured in two parts, aiming to strengthen the organizational culture based on integrity, respect, and shared responsibility.

Part 1, launched in February, covered key topics such as ethical decision-making, conflicts of interest, diversity equity and inclusion, youth safety, and respect for human rights. Part 2 focused on reporting and protecting against harassment, discrimination, and retaliation, promoting a safe and respectful work environment for all.

Finally, according to the feedback provided, we are attaching a workplan which shows progress up until the end of the project

Checklist for submission

Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, and annex 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?	No
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	ok
Submit to BCF-Reports@niras.com	
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	