



**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	30 - 011
Project title	Living with large carnivores – Integrative coexistence through community empowerment
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	India & Nepal
Lead Organisation	North of England Zoological Society (Chester Zoo)
Partner(s)	Wildlife Trust of India & National Trust for Nature Conservation
Project Leader	<i>Dr. Mayukh Chatterjee</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 st October 2025; HYR-3
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.chesterzoo.org/conservation-science-education/global-conservation-programmes/mainland-asia/living-with-large-carnivores

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).

Activity 1.4, 1.5 & 1.6 – Project teams in India and Nepal continue to see active participation by the Primary Response Teams (PRTs) constituted and trained over the last two years. In the past six months, PRTs in and around the project villages have reported and attended to nine large carnivore related interactions along with monitoring of sloth bear and gaur movements near villages and the rescue and relocation of an Indian rock python and an Indian flapshell turtle. They reported one human (adult male) injury by a leopard in an agricultural field, and two injuries and four deaths of goats (free ranging) by tigers. PRT members offered additional support to the local forest department officials by patrolling the area for monitoring the movement of large carnivores and raising awareness amongst villagers to prevent further mishaps and supporting the bereaved to file applications for compensation with the government department. In India, a purchase order has been placed for providing the PRT members with field gear and equipment such as rain jackets or windcheaters, balaclava/ warm hats for protection in winter months, headlamps, caution tape and snake rescue kits.

In efforts to promote peer and community support and cohesion, the project team organised day-long conservation awareness programmes which were conducted by the PRT members

across six locations in the project area in Nepal, on the 15th, 16th & 17th of June '25 and 5th, 6th & 7th of September '25. These programmes were organised for students of five schools and three village communities of the Madi valley. The PRTS of *Ayodhyapuri* and *Panchpandav* spoke about their activities and role in mitigating negative interactions between humans and wildlife, information on behaviour and ecological importance key wild animals in the region such as tigers, leopards, rhinoceros, bears and elephants emphasising the precautionary measures while entering the forest or during a chance encounter. These workshops were attended by a total of 418 school students (G – 215, B – 203) and 149 villagers (W – 85, M – 64).

Activity 2.5: An assessment of approximately 40% (~249 units) of predator proof pens (PPPs) build under this project, was carried out by the project teams in India and Nepal. The beneficiaries responded to a short questionnaire to assess, among other parameters, their satisfaction with and their ability to maintain the PPPs, and to report instances of predation by large carnivores. While a comprehensive report is being prepared, preliminary analyses show that 111 beneficiaries have reported seeing leopards or their pug marks around their PPPs with unsuccessful predation of the goats within. These beneficiaries also claim peace of mind as they feel less stressed about the safety of their livestock especially at night. Livestock depredation by leopards has been reported from neighbouring areas where such interventions have not been implemented, although there was no indication that this had increased.

Activity 2.8 & 2.9: The eye-cow experiment is ongoing with the project teams in India and Nepal carrying out 'eye' and 'X' stamping on hindquarters of the livestock from participating households. Since the start of the experiment, 256 cattle received an initial or 1st stamping. The field teams have since repeated their initial stampings five to nine times across all participating livestock. While the field teams are dedicatedly carrying out stampings and are overcoming challenges posed especially in the monsoon period (June-September), they continue to monitor and collect data from each beneficiary on grazing frequency and location livestock loss or injuries on a monthly basis. Some of the other challenges faced include the selling of livestock, or cattle owners who rescind permission for stamping due to poor health (skin ailments) of their cattle or fear of rejection to mounting by bulls at time of mating. No livestock deaths or injuries due to large carnivores have been reported in livestock which are participating in the experiment.

Activity 2.11 & 2.12: In India, the volunteer trained as the artificial insemination (AI) technician has received support for refilling of liquid nitrogen cannisters for appropriate storage of semen samples. During this reporting period he has conducted artificial insemination of 23 livestock. In the coming months, the project teams will be conducting a rapid survey to assess AI breeding improvement success and stall-feeding practice; preliminary data collected from Madi veterinary centre in Nepal (recipient of support from the project), shows a 65% success rate of calving in cattle that were artificially inseminated last year.

Activity 3.4: In India, 50 women beneficiaries received improved cookstoves (ICS) in the village of *Dhumatand-Jasauli* during this reporting period. In Nepal, 80 beneficiaries (M -32, W - 48), received liquid petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders, along with cookstoves, and accessories such as gas pipes, connectors and lighters. A total number of 483 ICS (including five biogas systems) have been installed in the Indian project villages and 417 LPG cookstoves and cylinders have been distributed in Nepali project villages since the start of the project.

Activity 3.6: In India, the project convened a meeting between mushroom farming experts Mr Paras Nath Singh and Mr Sanjay Kumar, and Mr Vivek Pandey, proprietor of mushroom house construction agency, along with eleven trained beneficiaries of mushroom farming in *Dumari* village to discuss the technical aspects of construction to maintain the environmental variables suitable for mushroom farming. The mushroom house was constructed by erecting bamboo walls plastered with mud by the beneficiaries. Windows and storage racks have been installed along with a hand pump for water supply.

The project also continued its collaboration with the organisation *PashooPakshee* to train women beneficiaries in handicrafts making. Prior to training, locally available raw material such as grasses, viz. *Munj* (*Saccharum munj*), and *Kharaj* (likely, *Dichanthium annulatum*); bamboo

containers, dyes and grass cutting equipment, were sent to PashooPakshee for pre-training tests of feasibility as raw materials, before planning the training. The training is scheduled for after the end of the festive season in India, in Nov-Dec.

During the reporting period, 119 goat feeder stands were distributed to beneficiaries in *Dhumatand-Jasauli* and *Purainia-Manpur* villages in India.

To further promote benefits of stall feeding of livestock, in India the project teams having conducted workshops on nutrient-rich fodder last year, and this year have supported 13 households across the three project villages to set up *Azolla* (mosquito fern) beds. The *Azolla* beds installed in April germinated successfully, and beneficiaries have started feeding their livestock along with mineral mixture for better reproductive health and milk production. To support the nursery propagator who were trained earlier this year, the project has supported them by supplying and distributing 1000 Moringa saplings in project and adjacent villages where PRTs have been instated. Information leaflets on benefits of Moringa and Mulberry have been developed for distribution with samplings.

In Nepal, after consultation with the Madi Municipality, the project has supported The *Fulbari Ama* Group, based in Madi-8, Ayodhya Marg, Chitwan, with a *Duna-Tapari* (leaf plate and cup) making machine. With the recent ban on plastics by the municipality, the 35 women beneficiaries of the *Fulbari Ama* group will manufacture plates and cups from the dried *Sal* leaves which will be collected from community forests. The project has secured required permissions and no-objection certificates from all concerning administrative bodies.

Activity 3.7: Monitoring and evaluation surveys are periodically carried out by project teams as well as the project manager who visited various project beneficiaries in September '25. The data collected from these surveys, along with that of the project manager's survey of field activities is being collated. Some initial observations and findings are as follows -

In September '25 one bio-gas unit beneficiary reported reduced fuel generation. To address this, and for an inspection of all 5 bio-gas units, a visit by the bio-gas technician was arranged. The beneficiaries reported steady and uninterrupted bio-gas fuel flow during a three-week follow-up. In Nepal, the green-livelihood beneficiaries who received 190 goats initially have reported births of goat kids, and therefore an increase of 37 goats till now. They have also reported generating a cumulative income of approximately £ [REDACTED] (NRs. [REDACTED]) after sales. Eleven of the 50 beneficiaries who received ducks for supporting an alternative livelihood, reported die-offs of 55 ducks due to disease and predation by jackals. The remaining 39 households have reported 120 hatchings which should be ready for sale in the coming months. Beneficiaries engaged in wool-spinning have reported spinning a total of 499.5kg of wool since receiving their training late last year resulting in cumulative earnings of [REDACTED] (NRs. [REDACTED]). Individual monthly production ranged from 3kg to 15kg per participant.

Activity 4.4: The project is developing a 'media toolkit' to support local media personnel in delivering impactful reporting on dynamics of human-wildlife interactions and conservation. The draft is currently under review.

Activity 5.2: The mental health survey in India has now been completed where 221 respondents participated in the survey. The data from India and Nepal, has been collated and is being analysed.

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.

The project manager travelled to Nepal on 8th September '25 for a scheduled field visit for project monitoring and evaluation. She travelled to National Trust for Nature Conservation's (NTNC) Biodiversity Conservation Centre in Sauraha via land-route from the Indo-Nepali border unawares of the civil unrest and upheaval in the capital. Apart from the meeting with the project partners at their offices the project manager was unable to carry out the planned M&E due to

curfew restrictions. Four days later, after restrictions were lifted, she was able to travel back to India. While the political unrest in the country impacted the planned M&E, our partners at NTNC have assured us that this has not impacted our project's ongoing activities in the project region and that field teams were able to resume work within a short period.

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:

Not required

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

Not applicable

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: [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. 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?

Suspensions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk

No.

6. Project risk management

<p>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.</p>
<p>No. Although there was some civil unrest in Nepal, this has not impacted the work in anyway as the unrest was in Kathmandu and not the more remote areas that the project focuses on.</p>
<p>6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please provide further information, ensuring no sensitive data is included within responses.</p> <p>Suspicious or allegations related to safeguarding concerns should be reported to ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>The relevant comments and queries based on last annual report, have been earmarked for discussion and clarification in the next annual report (2025-26) as per the reviewer's feedback report.</p>

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.	No (Has been requested for next annual report)
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?	NA
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.	