Darwin Initiative Main & Extra Annual Report

Darwin Initiative Project Information

Scheme (Main or Extra)	Main
Project reference	30-019
Project title	Building resilient landscapes and communities for Rukiga's cranes and wetlands
Country/ies	Uganda
Lead Organisation	Margaret Pyke Trust (**MPT**)
Project partner(s)	International Crane Foundation (**ICF**); Rugarama Hospital (**RH**); and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (**LSHTM**).
Darwin Initiative grant value	£404,983
Start/end dates of project	1st August 2023 to 31st July 2026
Reporting period	1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 Annual Report 2
Project Leader name	Kathryn Lloyd
Project website/blog/social media	**Website:** https://margaretpyke.org/environment/projects **Twitter:** @savingcranes @TheEWT @LSHTM **Facebook:** @MargaretPykeTrust @InternationalCraneFoundation @EndangeredWildlifeTrust @RugaramaHospital
Report author(s) and date	Kathryn Lloyd, David Johnson, Uwimbabazi Sarah, Jess Pavlos, and Nataliya Cuttell (**MPT**), Adalbert Aine-Omucunguzi, Patrick Engoru, Zeneb Musiimire and Phionah Orishaba (**ICF**), Sarah Rukundo (**RH**), Susannah Mayhew, Richard Muhumuza and Megan Beare (**LSHTM**), and Erin Adams (**Endangered Wildlife Trust**). 30th April 2025

1. Project summary

Where the project is located and who the project is relevant to

The project is located in south-western Uganda, in the Rushebeya-Kanyabaha wetland of Rukiga District (see Annex 4.1). There are 16 project communities, located in the parishes of Kafunjo, Rutengye, Buchundura, Nyakashebeya, Kitanga, Kitunga, Nyakagabagaba, Birime, Kitojo, Kyerero, Kandago, Mparo Town Council/Sindi ward, Muhanga Town Council, Nyarurambi, Nyakasiru, and Nyabirerema. There are also 21 outreach health centres, benefitting these communities. The project is relevant for 50,000 people living within the project area (an increase from 30,000 in year one), the majority of whom rely on the health of the wetland for subsistence agricultural livelihoods and food, and everyone depends on the wetland for drinking water. Pressures on wetland health therefore impact both local biodiversity and the entire human community within the project area.

The problem our project is trying to address

The Rushebeya-Kanyabaha wetland is under increasing human pressures from a growing human population needing farmland. The wetlands are vital for humans (for food and water security, and preventing flooding) and Uganda's national bird, the Endangered Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica*

regulorum) (for nesting habitat). Our project empowers communities to conserve wetlands and cranes. To achieve this, we are scaling our integrated human and environmental health approach (commenced in 2021 under project reference 27-002, which received A++ in its final report review) to landscape level, and strengthening human and ecosystem resilience against climate shocks. Through an enhanced and expanded programme of wetland and crane conservation, climate-smart agricultural livelihoods, and healthcare actions, we will reduce anthropogenic pressures on the wetland, build the climate resilience of 50,000 people who live in its catchment, and conserve Endangered Grey Crowned Cranes and other threatened species.

The biodiversity challenges

The wetland reduced in size by 33% between 1986 and 2020, largely driven by expanding subsistence agriculture, due to enduring poverty and rapid human population growth. The remaining intact elements of the wetland and its catchment are rich in biodiversity, notably the Endangered Grey Crowned Crane, for which the wetland is a critical nesting habitat and the Sitatunga (*Tragelaphus spekii*), which is almost extinct locally. In the last four years, climate shocks have had an increasing impact on human communities and the wetland, and there is a significant need to build human and ecosystem climate-resilience, given the growing scale and frequency of such shocks. Restoring degraded ecosystems, including wetlands, and preventing the extinction of Threatened and Endangered species, are the first two priority areas in Uganda's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (**NBSAP**). Pressures on Rukiga's wetlands are an example of how a lack of livelihoods, compounded by human population growth and larger family sizes than couples would choose, affect biodiversity and the natural resource base, negatively impacting ecosystem health, human health and poverty.

The human development and wellbeing challenges (poverty reduction)

58% of Ugandan pregnancies are unintended, a primary reason Uganda's population is projected to double between 2025 and 2060, and why Uganda has multiple national policies promoting greater access to reproductive health services. The lack of health services in the region, specifically family planning, leads to unintended pregnancies; families are having, on average, five children, one more than they would choose. Unintended pregnancies increase pressure on family income and as families grow, those who depend on farming have little choice but to convert additional wetland for farming to support their needs. Parents sub-divide land for their children, increasing pressure generation by generation. The resulting unsustainable agricultural practices, drainage, overgrazing, heavy use of pesticides, and declines in fallow practices, among others, all threaten the wetland and its ecosystem services, and make the available land less able to support future generations. This is further exacerbated by drought-related changes in land use and other climate shocks. In addition, when women are experiencing multiple unintended pregnancies, they are far less able to retain a livelihood during the pregnancy and afterwards, whereas improved health reduces the number of productive working days lost, reducing poverty. No country has successfully reduced poverty when they have had the human fertility rate the project site has, which is why the project was designed to respond to these interconnected human health, environmental and livelihood challenges in a holistic way.

How we identified these problems

The problems were identified by long-term knowledge of partners working locally and qualitative research (led by LSHTM and its local academic partner) and engagement with communities and stakeholders (including during our 2018 Darwin funded scoping trip). The problems were confirmed by a comprehensive literature review. For instance, Uganda's NBSAP refers to human population increase, gender inequality and poverty as a driver of wetland biodiversity loss and that wetlands are rapidly being degraded for agricultural land and urban settlement. The NBSAP recognises the connections between these issues for wetland biodiversity and poverty alleviation. In 2021 at the start of project reference 27-002, project partners also conducted comprehensive qualitative research to establish the environmental, livelihood and human health issues being faced by project

communities in the Rukiga District to ensure their needs, wishes, and solutions were incorporated into project design. Across all wetland communities, a consistent set of environmental and livelihood challenges were articulated, which related to changing seasons and rainfall patterns (leading to crop failures), soil erosion and flooding (caused by tree cutting, unsustainable agricultural techniques, planting of invasive eucalyptus trees, and burning of uplands/wetland vegetation), and encroachment of farming on wetlands (leading to degradation of natural wetland resources). In addition, there were very consistent human health challenges identified, which related to inadequate health services (clinics too far away, lacking supplies and trained staff, and poor staff attitudes), family planning issues (caused by irregular services, lack of knowledge on side effects, and poorly trained staff), malnutrition (caused by lack of available nutritious food and lack of knowledge on good nutrition), and links between alcoholism and domestic violence. In all communities, respondents articulated a clear understanding of the direct connections between livelihoods, their environment, and their health.

How the project is designed to address the challenges

Given the connected human health, livelihood and environmental challenges community members told us they were facing, we are implementing an integrated programme of climate-smart agricultural livelihoods, healthcare training and service provision, wetland, upland and crane conservation and community capacity building, directly responding to the calls of the community. The project seeks to build resilient landscapes and communities for Rukiga's cranes and wetlands. Key activities provide climate-smart livelihoods and healthcare services (reducing unintended pregnancy), coupled with habitat restoration, and soil and water conservation, enabling long-term wetland health for people and cranes. This grant (to July 2026) is enabling us to expand our approach to landscape level, transforming environmental and human health across the whole wetland, in addition to responding to the climate-shocks, which communities have told us they are increasing facing, impacting both people's health, safety, livelihoods, wetlands and cranes. Our project is designed to respond to these issues, supporting communities to build human and ecosystem climate-resilience due to the growing scale and frequency of such climate shocks.

2. Project stakeholders/ partners

Support and engagement between all formal partners and development

The partnership brings together conservation, healthcare and academic organisations. As project lead, Margaret Pyke Trust ("**MPT**") provides project partners with support on project management and design as well as reporting and financial and administrative management. MPT also leads on the implementation of its sexual and reproductive health training and service delivery improvement programme (referred to as "**USHAPE**") and integrated conservation, livelihood and human health community training. Rugarama Hospital ("**RH**") delivers all healthcare project actions (general healthcare, dental, eye care, sexual and reproductive healthcare, including family planning). RH works with MPT and the International Crane Foundation ("**ICF**") to design and deliver community education integrating wetland and crane conservation, climate-smart agriculture, and family planning. ICF delivers all wetland and crane conservation actions including monitoring wetland health and cranes, supporting community members with climate-smart livelihoods and sustainable farming techniques. The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine ("**LSHTM**") supports project monitoring and evaluation, in particular it has designed the data collection protocol, many of the M&E tools, securing research ethical clearance, and training project partners in qualitative research skills. All partners are responsible for the M&E of their areas of expertise.

The partnership was based on demand stemming from Uganda, which was identified through all project partners' work there. The project design began in 2018, during our Darwin 'Scoping Award' workshop, and has been regularly updated and enhanced to integrate findings from our qualitative research and recommendations provided by the Darwin Initiative mid-term review in March 2022. All partners work together in an integrated manner, meaning that all project activities are regularly

mapped, with actions and implementation interlinked and reviewed each month, through both in-person and online meetings, to ensure delivery is collaborative. All partners share decision-making responsibility but each lead on the particular area of expertise that they bring to the partnership. This is essential to implement a coherent package of activities that makes the connections between the environmental, climate change, livelihood and human health issues that people told us they are facing.

Our strength comes from our partnership and integrated project design, as all partners collaborate on many activities, especially those with community members, meaning that we are able to share the costs of certain activities, such as the training of peer educators, known as "Conservation and Health Mobilisers" (**Mobilisers**) (community members who provide community education on conservation and family planning, referring people for healthcare services, and monitoring cranes and wetlands) and community talks. Challenges also come from this integrated design (although the benefits far outweigh the challenges) as it takes more time and coordination to achieve the implementation of our more complex programme design. Partners make sure they are clearly communicating, planning site visit schedules together each quarter to ensure journeys are not doubled and money is not wasted. Overall, all partners are extremely happy with the partnership, meeting every month to coordinate actions, in addition in July 2023 and February 2024, partners met in Uganda to agree a long-term strategy to continue project implementation after this grant has ended in 2026.

British High Commission, local institutions, local communities and technical specialists' involvement

We have extensively briefed key British High Commission staff in Kampala on our project, including the former (until very recently) Deputy Development Director, Matthew Little, and the Darwin Initiative leads in Uganda, Hugh King, the Climate and Environment Advisor, and Lydia Nandawula, the Climate Policy Officer, who spoke at our project workshop in Kampala in July 2023 and visited our project site in Rukiga beforehand. We have been in contact with Lydia in the last few weeks to discuss potential future collaboration and Uganda funding opportunities. We have continued our work with Wamiti Wanyoike, the ICF/EWT East Africa Research and Monitoring Specialist to build the capacity of our staff and Mobilisers (in their role as 'crane custodians') to identify and monitor crane behaviour, collect accurate and reliable data, and provide targeted protection efforts. The training we received from Wamiti last year was cascaded to Mobilisers this year (in March 2025) through the Survey 123 update training (Annex 4.2). We also worked with NaNa Development Consultants Limited, who supported us to undertake a benchmarking and progress update relating to basic economic skills and the impact our livelihoods and conservation action is having on our project communities in Rukiga District (Annex 4.11).

Local communities have been extensively consulted to ensure their voices are heard and responded to through research led by LSHTM through their "Uganda Medical Research Council/Uganda Virus Research Institute and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine Uganda Research Unit in Kampala", including through the implementation of qualitative and quantitative data collection, which was undertaken in November 2023 and analysed this year (Annex 4.12). We continued our work with the Mushroom Training and Resource Centre (Annex 4.13), who is supporting our work with communities on climate-smart backyard agriculture (mushroom growing) (Outcome indicator 0.3, Annex 4.14), in addition to working with St Jude Agroecology Institute in Masaka District (Output 4.2, Annex 4.15).

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

Progress made against output 1 activities

In year one, ICF, RH and MPT jointly identified 40 new Mobilisers (volunteers from project communities who support project activities through the undertaking of peer education on healthcare, conservation and livelihoods, and activities relating to wetland and crane conservation and monitoring) (Activity 1.1). This year in April 2024, 37 Mobilisers received a six-day training course, which provided information linking wetland and crane conservation, livelihoods and family planning (Activity 1.2, Annex 4.2), and health mobilisation techniques (Activity 1.5, Annex 4.2). ICF and MPT ran a two-day training in March 2025 with 40 Mobilisers on crane custodianship, including monitoring cranes using the Survey 123 app, and how to deliver integrated conservation, health and livelihoods community talks using the newly created teaching aid (flipchart) (Activity 1.3, Annexes 4.2 and 4.16). ICF staff and selected Mobilisers identified and ringed 21 Grey Crowned Crane chicks (Activity 1.4, Annex 4.3). Last year, MPT, ICF, RH and LSHTM developed a communications plan (Activity 1.6, Annex 4.4), which was reviewed and updated again this year. It is being implemented by all partners and is reviewed by all partners each month in our team meetings to guide work. This year, 83 Mobilisers with project team members implemented 37 community talks to raise awareness of crane and wetland conservation, human health, including family planning and nutrition, and climate-smart agriculture, reaching 4,757 people (Activity 1.7, Annex 4.5). MPT, ICF and RH, with support from key Mobilisers, ran 34 community talks this year, reaching 8,764 community members with training and messages on conservation, human health, cranes, and the interlinkages between them (Activity 1.8, Annex 4.6). MPT, ICF and RH, with materials developed in year one and updated this year, delivered five radio broadcasts on two local/regional radio stations (Voice of Victory FM and Kigezi Radio), reaching an estimated listenership of 11 million people across the wider Kigezi region (which comprises Rukiga district and its two neighbouring districts). Staff shared project messages and themes and answered the public's questions in live Q&A sessions, Rukiga's Government officials (from health and environment departments) were also invited to join to share messages about how the project links with government initiatives (Activity 1.9, Annex 4.7). In addition, 21 project clinics (nine more than we initially planned to support) promoted outreach services through loudspeaker announcements and other media (Activity 1.10).

Progress made against output 2 activities

In year one, ICF identified eight new Conservation and Health Groups (**CH Groups**) (Activity 2.1), signed Conservation and Health Agreements (Annex 4.17) with 16 groups (comprising the eight new groups and eight groups previously supported under project reference 27-002) (Activity 2.3), and supported the groups to register as 'community-based organisations (Activity 2.2). In year one, ICF trained 180 group leaders on group set-up, group dynamics, leadership and governance (Activity 2.2), the number trained was less than anticipated (we planned for 250), as once we had identified the new groups, we found that the number of group leaders was less than we had estimated prior to project commencement. In year one, MPT and RH trained all 16 groups (comprising 1,037 people, which was twice as many as we anticipated we would reach) in family planning and nutrition (Activity 2.4). This year, ICF commenced an annual audit of Community Conservation and Health Groups and their Agreements and will conclude the audit in year 3 (Activity 2.5, 4.11). In April 2024, 16 CH Groups (comprising 1,392 people) were trained in agro-ecosystem recovery, wetland and catchment restoration and management, planting, trenching, terracing and use of model farms, in addition to the importance of using fruit trees and backyard gardens as a component of climate smart agriculture. Everyone received fruit trees, (including avocado, tree tomatoes, guava, mangoes), vegetables seeds (cabbages, cauliflower, carrots, beetroot, aubergine, nakati, amaranthus, spinach, sukuma wiki, pumpkin, onions, tomatoes and leek), along with other agroforestry trees including neem (for natural pesticide) (Activity 2.6, Annex 4.9). Throughout this year ICF, with five agricultural extension workers, trained all group members (1,392 people) in climate-smart agriculture, including backyard gardening (mushroom growing in grow houses, making raised beds and planters etc.), mixed cropping, compost use and environmental waste disposal (Activity 2.7, Annex 4.10). ICF has maintained the three Napier Grass nurseries that were established under project reference 27-002 (the land for which was donated by the local council in support of our project design), and after significant consultation and evaluation, ICF planted Calliandra nurseries in two sites, located at a

safe distance from the edge of the wetland (in line with our risk register). They are located on two CH Group members' farmland, distribution commenced this year (Activity 2.8, Annex 4.18).

Progress made against output 3 activities

In year one, RH recruited a new project nurse and clinical officer to support the project outreach clinics to provide improved healthcare services to community members, and MPT trained them in their USHAPE family planning skills training (Activity 3.1). In year one, LSHTM, RH and MPT completed the needs assessment of project outreach clinics, which found that more outreach clinics required support than initially thought. This year we were able to increase our support from 15 clinics (12 at baseline) to 21 clinics, to ensure that all project communities living adjacent to the wetlands are adequately served with quality healthcare (Activity 3.2, Annex 4.19). 19 healthcare staff from 21 healthcare facilities (9 more than initially planned) were trained by MPT and RH over six days on family planning skills provision (USHAPE training), which provided delegates with the theoretical and practical skills needed to provide family planning services (Activity 3.3, Annex 4.20). This year, RH implemented a monthly programme of healthcare outreach to the 21 project clinics, which provided 7,748 people (5,970 women and 1,778 men) with improved healthcare services, of which 1,216 were women received a family planning method of their choice (Activity 3.4, Annex 4.19). MPT and RH provide all project clinic staff with mentoring at each monthly outreach (this includes the 15 supported in year one and the six new clinics supported this year), which involves supervising their clinical practice, providing guidance on practice and case reviews (Activity 3.5).

Progress made against output 4 activities

In year one, ICF ran a one-day training session on the process of community-supported environmental byelaws governing soil and water conservation practices for 25 local council leaders (five more than initially planned). The training provided the local leaders with the knowledge and skills needed to formulate and enforce community-supported environmental byelaws effectively, which would ensure than the project's wetland, soil, and water conservation techniques and climate-smart livelihood practices were embedded in local structures for long-term sustainability. This activity supported local leaders to become aware of existing byelaws and to create new ones in line with best practice, therefore strengthening environmental sustainability and protecting their wetlands (Activity 4.1). This year, ICF continued to engage the local leaders, inviting them to speak at radio shows and local events and training, which strengthens their knowledge and raises awareness within the community of the local leaders' role in environmental management (Annex 4.7). Next year, ICF will continue to work with the local leaders to help them to create byelaws. In year one, ICF trained six Agricultural Extension Workers (two more than initially planned) in climate-smart agriculture, 'backyard agriculture', finance and accessing markets, mixed cropping, compost use and environmental waste disposal (Activity 4.2). This year the Agricultural Extension Workers continued to support ICF to train the CH Groups (Activity 2.7). This year, RH and MPT ran a six-day training session on family planning skills with 11 Ministry of Health clinical staff, to ensure that staff working at the free Government-run facilities in the district also had quality skills, this benefits the poorest members of the community in particular as although poorly resourced, government facilities always free (Activity 4.3, Annex 4.20).

Progress made on cross-cutting activities

In addition to the activities listed under the project outputs, there are also three cross-cutting activities undertaken by project staff. The first relates to a monthly Zoom meeting, at which all project team members participate. At the monthly Zoom meetings partners sign off monthly workplans, ensuring all project partners are integrating their work and project activities, and updates are provided on standing items including fundraising, safeguarding, and M&E (Activity X.1, Annex 4.21). The second relates to qualitative and quantitative research being undertaken by LSHTM, which this year included the analysis of the household survey, in which 2,664 households were surveyed to enable a longitudinal analysis of project actions and impact to be monitored throughout project implementation (Activity X.2, Annex 4.12). The last relates to partners' promotion of the project and dissemination of evidence and learnings at various international fora, which this year included the update of our project brief (Activity X.3, Annex 4.22), which summarises the achievements of our project since 2021 to date. In addition, partners have collaborated on presentations at various international events, including *CanWaCH Healthy World Conference: Dialogues on Health, Gender & Climate Resilience* (May 2024), *Wilson Center Private Roundtable on Climate Finance and Gender Equality* (June

2024), *International Union for Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission Leaders' Meeting* (October 2024) and the *World Health Summit* (October 2024) (Activity X.3, Annex 4.23).

3.2 Progress towards project Outputs

Output 1

37 Mobilisers were trained in April 2024 and are actively promoting crane conservation, wetland conservation and human health through a process of peer education, community talks, drama and song creation/performance (Output 1.1, Annex 4.5). The total number of trained and active Mobilisers is now 83 (indicator reached), which is an increase from 43 from 2023 baseline. Mobilisers' activities are monitored by project team members in monthly meetings, via WhatsApp group chat and through surveys submitted via ICF's 'Survey 123' app. Evidence provided in our year one annual report (through LSHTM qualitative research conducted in November 2023) showed that Mobilisers are extremely effective at reaching those most remote communities and connecting people with project activities and messages. We are working with 45 peer farmers (20 women and 25 men, an increase from 26 last year), who this year have been trained in theoretical and practical skills relating to climate-smart agriculture (Output 1.2, Annex 4.15). This training was provided by the St. Jude Agroecological Institute in Masaka District, which provided delegates with exposure to advanced agroecological techniques and model farm management. The trained Peer Farmers have established demonstration plots in their communities where they showcase various climate-smart agricultural practices including water harvesting, composting, agroforestry, and conservation agriculture. The gender balance achieved (44% women) approaches our target of 46% women representation among peer farmers. In addition, 8,764 people have now been trained by project staff (an increase from 3,755 since 2022 baseline) on the importance of crane and wetland conservation, the benefits of climate-smart agriculture and family planning, and the linkages between them (Output 1.3, Annex 4.6). This is significantly more than we anticipated we'd train (total project target was 4,400 people). We can attribute this to the successes we are seeing through our work with Mobilisers who raise awareness and support for our project activities (Annex 4.5). We will discuss with Darwin, whether we need to amend our indicator via a change request to reflect our significant achievements in this regard. As a result of our success, this year we commenced the process of transferring ownership of all community education to Mobilisers (Output 1.3), which over the next 18 months, will reduce the project team-led community talks and trainings and increase mobiliser-led training, to ensure knowledge remains in the communities at project end. To support this process, this year we created a flipchart for Mobilisers to use, which will guide them in their trainings with community members (Annex 4.16) and in March, we trained 40 Mobilisers on how to use the flipchart and how to effectively report and monitor their activities using the Survey 123 app (Annex 4.2).

Output 2

This year, 16 CH Groups received livelihood materials and were trained in their use (Annex 4.9). A rapid assessment undertaken this year of eight groups revealed that they have accumulated total savings of UGX 51,350,000 shillings, already surpassing our July 2026 target of UGX 43,000,000 for all 16 groups (Output 2.1, Annex 4.11). The average saving per group is UGX 6,418,750. These savings are being effectively utilised as soft loans by group members for agricultural inputs, school fees, medical expenses, and small business ventures. A recent rapid assessment undertaken this year targeting a sample of 479 trained households revealed widespread adoption of climate-smart agricultural techniques (Output 2.2, Annex 4.11). The assessment found that 243 households (50.7%) have implemented water trenches in their gardens to trap runoff water, 316 households (66.0%) have established and are using compost pits, and 277 households (57.8%) have received and are cultivating Calliandra/Napier grass as sustainable fodder alternatives. When extrapolating these findings to our target population of 1,392 households and considering the full range of climate-smart practices being implemented, we conservatively estimate that at least 1,000 households are actively practicing various forms of climate-smart agriculture. This represents more than double our target of 498 farmers and demonstrates strong community uptake of sustainable agricultural techniques, reducing dependence on wetland resources, which has been achieved as we have been able to support more group members than initially planned (through matched funding). Two sites for Calliandra (*Calliandra calothyrsus*) nurseries have been established from land provided by members of CH Groups. In addition, three existing Napier Grass (*Pennisetum purpureum*) nurseries (established under project reference 27-002 on land donated by the local council) have been

maintained (Annex 4.18). This year, an additional 277 households (an increase from 324 since baseline, making the total households benefitting 601) received Napier grass as a source of sustainable livestock fodder, rather than relying on wetland vegetation, and distribution of Calliandra commenced this year also (Output 2.3, Annex 4.18).

Output 3

19 nurses have been trained in USHAPE family planning skills, scoring an average of 86% in post-exam scores (Output 3.1, Annex 4.20). The total number of trained nurses has now increased from 77 (55 women and 22 men at 2022 baseline) to 125 (92 women and 33 men), which has exceeded our target indicator (100 people) for this project. All nurses are now delivering family planning services in the 21 project health clinics (an increase from 15 in year one), where services were barely provided before. The total visits to project health clinics have far exceeded our indicator for year two, with 7,748 people (5,972 women and 1,776 men) visiting for a range of healthcare services (total services provided since 2022 baseline is 10,721) (Output 3.2a, Annex 4.19). This can be attributed to the fact that we are now working in more health clinics (21) than we initially planned for (12) and increased activities and skills of Mobilisers. We will consider amending our indicator via a change request to increase our anticipated reach in this regard. In addition, 1,216 women have visited our project health clinics for family planning services (an increase from 538 last year, total services provided since 2022 baseline is 1,754) (Output 3.2b, Annex 4.19). Healthcare delivery data is recorded using project monitoring and evaluation records and verified through analysis of Ministry of Health data sent to us each month.

Output 4

Last year we trained 25 council leaders (2 women and 23 men) (an increase from zero in 2022 baseline) on the design and enactment of environmental byelaws governing soil and water conservation practices in the Rushebeya-Kanyabaha wetland and its catchment (Output 4.1). Leaders made action plans and have been mentored this year to ensure training is implemented and byelaws enacted. Mentoring of the council leaders continued this year. Despite planning to engage the same number of men and women in this process (as per our output indicator 4.1), the reality of Uganda's patriarchal society (see section 6) is that more men hold these positions of power than women. Although we were only able to engage those currently in power, there will be local elections during the project period, so potentially more women could be elected. The six (an increase from zero in 2022 baseline and one more than our target indicator) previously trained Rukiga District agricultural extension workers (3 women and 3 men) were invited to join an additional training this year, provided by St Jude Agroecology Institute in Masaka District (Output 4.2, Annex 4.15). They are included by ICF in all livelihood activities throughout the project to ensure sustainability of our approach after project completion. This year an additional 11 Ministry of Health clinical staff (6 women and 5 men) were trained in USHAPE family planning skills and scored 91% in post-exam scores (Output 4.3, Annex 4.20). This is an increase from nine at 2022 baseline, with the total number of Ministry of Health clinical staff now trained totalling 31, which has exceeded our target for this project. More training has been undertaken as we are now working in more clinics than planned due to the significant need identified in the communities. We will consider amending this indicator in the next financial year.

3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

We are making excellent progress towards our project outcome and believe we will achieve it by project end in July 2026. In relation to outcome indicator 0.1, fledged Grey Crowned Cranes monitored in the 2023/2024 breeding season totalled 26, which brings our cumulative total since baseline to 106 successfully fledged chicks - substantially exceeding our target of 64 Grey Crowned chicks by the 2024/2025 breeding season. This impressive achievement (166% of our target) demonstrates the effectiveness of our comprehensive conservation approach. The success can be attributed to several factors: reduced human disturbances in critical wetland areas, significantly improved community awareness and participation in crane conservation, and the dedicated monitoring efforts of our Mobilisers (Annexes 4.3 and 4.8). Community ownership of conservation initiatives this year has been particularly strong, with local leaders actively discouraging wetland encroachment during breeding periods. This remarkable success validates our integrated conservation strategy that combines habitat protection, community engagement, and targeted monitoring. In relation to outcome indicator 0.2a, our significant training and support of the 16 CH Groups to implement climate-smart agricultural practices is also showing positive outcomes. A recent

rapid assessment survey of 479 group members showed that each member has allocated an average of 1.30 acres to crop and livestock farming using climate-smart techniques. The total membership of these 16 groups comprises 1,392 households. Our conservative estimate indicates that, at present, at least 1,000 of these households are actively practising climate-smart agriculture, covering approximately 1,300 acres (526 hectares) of land, which exceeds our target of 500 hectares, demonstrating strong community adoption of sustainable agricultural practices (Annex 4.11). The practices most widely implemented include water trenches (50.7% of households), compost pits (66.0%), and Napier grass cultivation (57.8%). A more detailed measurement and verification assessment will be conducted next year to precisely document the extent and quality of climate-smart agriculture implementation. The next phase of this will focus on enhancing the technical capacity of farmers through additional training sessions on conservation agriculture techniques, particularly targeting areas with lower implementation rates. We will also establish a monitoring system to track land use and agricultural productivity changes resulting from these climate-smart approaches. In regard to outcome indicator 0.2b, all 16 CH Groups have signed Conservation Agreements (Annex 4.17) which include commitments to establishing and maintaining five-meter buffer zones for crane breeding. While formal measurements have not yet been conducted, community meetings, focus group discussions, and interviews with key informants suggest that approximately 13-18 households are already maintaining buffer zones around crane breeding sites. A few community leaders have reported that the initial target of 15 households may be exceeded ahead of schedule, with an estimated 65-90m² of buffer zone already established. However, these encouraging reports require verification through a formal field assessment planned for the next year. Next year, we will also work with the trained agricultural extension workers who will support us in promoting buffer zones for crane breeding in wetlands, and project staff will establish a monitoring system to track compliance. Community sensitisation on the importance of buffer zones for crane breeding will also be intensified. Our progress towards outcome indicator 0.3 continues to show a significant positive upward trend. Data based on just one enterprise (back-yard mushroom growing) indicates that we have already exceeded our target of 100 women collectively earning UGX 2,000,000 in total from backyard climate-smart agriculture (Annex 4.10 and 4.11). Three community groups (Kitanga conservation multipurpose farmers group, Karumuna Nyekundiire group, and Rwempango Tukwataniise group) have collectively generated UGX 3,416,000 from mushroom growing activities between December 2024 and March 2025. Women constitute approximately 80% of the membership in these groups, with an estimated 167 women earning about UGX 2,743,048 in total. Considering our project indicator specifically targets 100 women earning UGX 2,000,000, we believe at least UGX 2,414,000 of this income is allocated to 100 women (UGX 24,140 per woman), which exceeds our original target by over 20%. Income figures for other enterprises will be collected in the next quarter. Finally, regarding outcome indicator 0.4, we estimate that by project end 2,900 unintended pregnancies will have been averted for women and girls living in the wetland catchment through the provision of rights-based, voluntary family planning services. This year an estimated 1,209 unintended pregnancies were averted (an increase from 531 last year), with the total since project commencement equating to 1,740 (Annex 4.24). This is calculated using 'Impact 2', a socio-economic mathematical model, created by 'MSI Reproductive Choices', to estimate the social and economic benefits of providing family planning services. Project healthcare data collected as part of our routine data collection processes is used to estimate the number of unintended pregnancies averted, based on the variety of contraceptive methods chosen by clinic users. Next year we will continue to provide services to women and girls and continue to train clinicians, which will strengthen service delivery further.

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Outcome Assumptions

Assumption 1: *No major shocks to the local economic situation, healthcare system or otherwise hampering the undertaking of livelihood or health activities (such as a new Covid variant, Ebola or other major health outbreak, civil unrest, or political instability).*

Comments: This year there have been numerous health outbreaks in Uganda, including in the last six months, an MPOX outbreak (no cases were reported in Rukiga or neighbouring Districts), and anthrax outbreak (in Kanungu District, which neighbours Rukiga District but prevention measures were taken to stop the spread before it reached the project site) and in January 2025, the Uganda Government announced another Ebola outbreak, focused mainly in Kampala. There have been no cases in the project site, Rukiga District or any adjacent Districts. Project partner, Rugarama

Hospital, is responsible for monitoring this situation as they are in constant contact with the Ministry of Health. This risk is monitored in our Risk Registered, which is updated quarterly.

Assumption 2: *No major weather-related events (such as landslides due to heavy rains) damaging roads (preventing outreach clinics operating and/or training activities taking place).*
Comments: No change in assumption. There were minor landslides in the project area this financial year, caused by heavier rains than usual, however it did not affect project implementation, except for causing longer journeys for project staff travelling to and from remote project communities due to poor roads. We continue to closely monitor weather events; last year we established the first weather station in Rukiga to better assist project team members and beneficiaries.

Assumption 3: *No significant changes to inflation in the UK or Uganda, or a weakening of currencies affecting exchange rates.*
Comments: No change in assumption. However, we anticipate the currency is likely to fluctuate more than usual in the coming year, due to US tariffs and inflationary rises in prices. We regularly monitor this and where possible, sub-grant funds at beneficial rates or find matched funding for any shortfalls.

Assumption 4: *Regional Grey Crowned Crane population and other biodiversity do not experience significant declines caused by external factors outside of project control (new or emerging threats such as extreme weather events).*
Comments: This assumption holds as there were no population declines, nor any external factors outside the project's control which occurred to impact this assumption. Last year ICF conducted the first crane census in Uganda, which included a count of Rukiga's cranes, which will benefit the monitoring of this assumption.

Output 1 Assumptions
Assumption 1: *Conservation and Health Mobilisers selected have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their roles effectively.*
Comments: This assumption holds as this financial year we have trained Mobilisers in April 2024 and March 2025, and audited the existing Mobilisers to identify those needing refresher training, which will be undertaken in the coming months.

Assumption 2: *Climate-smart agricultural practices are perceived to result in net benefits for landowners as well as biodiversity and climate-resilience, and landowners are incentivised to adopt them on their own farms.*
Comments: This assumption holds as this financial year we have undertaken assessments on the impact our climate-smart agriculture is having on project communities, including uptake of farming practices and activities benefitting upland and wetland conservation (Annex 4.11).

Assumption 3: *Training is effective, and trainees retain the knowledge, share knowledge with others, and change their practices as a result of the training.*
Comments: This assumption holds as the family planning training materials were reviewed and updated following new clinical guidelines, new training materials were created by St Jude Agroecology institute to guide their work training farmer community based trainers (Annex 4.15) and MPT worked to create a new flipchart to aid Mobilisers in their work undertaking community talks linking conservation, livelihood and health (Annex 4.16). Training will continue next financial year and continue to be reviewed regularly.

Assumption 4: *The widespread and deep community support which is currently the case continues and is not impacted by any currently unidentified or unexpected event.*

Comments: This assumption holds and was confirmed through analysis of quantitative and qualitative research conducted by partner LSHTM this financial year (Annexes 4.12 and 4.25). Research findings found the project partners are respected, activities are supported and have been requested by communities throughout the project district, and local government is extremely supportive.

Output 2 Assumptions

Assumption 1: *The Government continues to allow the registration of Conservation and Health Groups and does not make any legislative changes impacting healthcare provision.*
Comments: This assumption holds. The CH Groups were all registered and we are not aware of any potential changes to the law impacting their status. The Government did not announce any new legislation impacting healthcare provision, although a new potential risk is being monitored in our risk register (see section 10).

Assumption 2: *No major pollution event within project watershed from new or unanticipated source.*
Comments: No change in assumption. There were no major pollution events reported or monitored.

Output 3 assumptions

Assumption 1*: No major shocks to the local healthcare system or otherwise hampering the undertaking health activities (such as Ebola, Covid or other major health outbreak), which will divert focus from general healthcare provision to emergency healthcare provision.*
Comments: See Outcome assumption 1 comment.

Assumption 2: *Women and men continue to be supportive of family planning provision.* **Comments:** This assumption holds and has been confirmed through quantitative and qualitative research conducted by partner LSHTM this year. Research findings indicated that project communities have continued to support family planning, they have requested family planning services at more clinics (which is in part why we expanded our work to more healthcare facilities this year) and they continue to use family planning services regularly (Annexes 4.12 and 4.25)

Assumption 3: *Supply chain of family planning commodities remains stable.*
Comments: This assumption holds at the present moment as we are able to still order family planning commodities, however we have received warning from a senior official working for Joint Medical Store in Uganda (who distribute commodities for free to hospitals) that supplies are likely to be severely disrupted due to USAID funding cuts. Partners met in March 2025 to discuss risk mitigation strategies (including seeking matched funding) relating to this, to ensure healthcare service provision is not disrupted in the coming year. Partner Rugarama Hospital monitors this each month.

Output 4 assumptions

Assumption 1: *Government officials remain receptive to engaging in capacity development activities.*
Comments: This assumption holds and government officials have continued to be very supportive, attending a workshop we held to promote our project in the month prior to project launch (an activity undertaken under project reference 27-002), where national and local government officials pledged their support. In addition, our main point of entry into project communities has been through local government leaders; they are keen for our work to expand, have donated land for project nurseries and are seeking ways to integrate project activities into local work plans and byelaws. Local government officials regularly join project activities, including training and radio shows.

Assumption 2: *No major disasters of other events affect Rukiga, Uganda.*

Comments: This assumption holds as there have been no major disasters or other events of concern in Rukiga or Uganda.

Assumption 3: *Staff turnover within government structures remains at current levels.*
Comments: This assumption holds as there have been no recorded turnovers of staff. However, this is monitored and any new staff will be invited to join a future training when necessary.

3.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and multidimensional poverty reduction

The impact of our project in our original application form: *"The Rushebeya-Kanyabaha wetland is restored by 5% and supports species richness, including the long-term coexistence of future generations of cranes and people".*

The contribution our project is making to the higher-level impact on biodiversity conservation
Through crane monitoring (Annexes 4.2 and 4.8), livelihood provision (Annex 4.10) and building the capacity of Mobilisers (Annex 4.2) (through their 'Crane Custodians' role) to safeguard breeding cranes, the project is contributing to current data and the conservation of the globally Endangered Grey Crown Cranes. Planting of Calliandra and Napier Grass (Annex 4.18) on hillslopes to reduce soil erosion and subsequent deposition in Rushebeya-Kanyabaha wetland will improve the health of the wetland and its ability to support biodiversity. Participation of local communities in restoring Rushebeya-Kanyabaha wetland (by leaving buffer zones) and wetland management will contribute to improved wetland and biodiversity conservation in the area. Moreover, wetland restoration will reduce the amount of peat exposed to the atmosphere, reducing greenhouse gas emission and its subsequent effects on biodiversity.

The contribution our project is making to a higher-level impact on human development and wellbeing (poverty reduction)
Our project is providing communities with climate-smart agricultural livelihoods (Annex 4.10), which will directly respond to poverty reduction. The training and support provided to the 16 CH Groups in climate-smart agricultural livelihoods (Annex 4.10) is increasing household income (Annex 4.11) and resilience to the effects of climate change, and reducing poverty in the project communities. Our project also provides family planning healthcare (Annex 4.19), which enables people to choose their desired family size and avoid unintended pregnancy. Unintended pregnancies place a financial burden on families, and women who are able to stop or delay childbearing when desired are better able to participate in livelihoods, enabling them to support their families with additional income and in the long-term, contribute to the economy.

4. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements

Our project directly responds to the **Kunming-Montreal 2030 Global Targets**, in particular: Target 7 by reducing pollution risks and reducing excess nutrients lost to the environment through more efficient nutrient cycling and reducing the overall risk from pesticides (through training on improved agricultural practices including trenching and Napier grass planting); Target 8 by minimizing the impact of climate change on biodiversity and increasing climate adaptation through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches; Target 10 by ensuring areas under agriculture are managed sustainably (through monitoring Conservation and Health Agreements with CH Groups); Target 22 by ensuring inclusive, effective and gender-responsive representation and participation in decision-making; and Target 23 by furthering gender equality through a gender-responsive approach. The project design is supported by **Uganda's National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan** ("**NBSAP**"), which states biodiversity loss "mainly emanates from habitat conversion, high population growth rate, climate change, poverty, and poor farming practices" whilst recognising that "biodiversity resources also support some of the poorest and most vulnerable". By integrating sustainable and climate-smart agricultural practices with public health improvements, including those

focussed on reproductive health, we respond to the drivers of biodiversity loss identified by the NBSAP. This project responds to the **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)** as the Grey Crowned Crane is a priority species under the African Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement ("**AEWA**"). The International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Grey Crowned Crane was approved by the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA in 2015. Uganda, an AEWA signatory, used the International Plan as a baseline, adapted the plan and finalised the Uganda Single Species Action Plan in 2018. Our project directly contributes to a number of activities in both plans, reducing the key threats of habitat loss, human and livestock disturbance, benefiting people through alternative livelihoods, and building resiliency. AEWA milestones in our project include significantly increasing awareness in communities of the importance of conserving cranes, sensitising them to stop crane disturbance, capture and poisoning and build the capacity of staff to deal with crane poisoning. We safeguard cranes and enable reporting of any incidents to local authorities, directly contributing to reducing direct threats to cranes. Also, provision of Napier Grass and Calliandra contributes to securing habitats through environmentally friendly agriculture practices (reducing people's need to remove wetland vegetation). ICF have signed an MoU with the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities which has led to the implementation of the National Single Species Action Plan for Grey Crowned Cranes. This year ICF continued its work with the AEWA focal person in the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, Mr. Stephen Fred Okiror, on the 2024 annual report for the Crane Specialists Working Group under AEWA. Mr Okiror is a Senior Wildlife Officer in the Ministry.

5. Project support for multidimensional poverty reduction

Our project is contributing to a reduction in poverty through the implementation, support, training and mentoring of communities in climate-smart agricultural practices (Outputs 1 and 2) and in the provision of family planning healthcare services and education (Output 3). A direct poverty reduction impact for the 1,392 CH Group members (an increase from 1,037 last year, representing 1,392 households comprising an estimated 9,744 people, considering average household size in the area is seven people per household) includes increased household financial security. Through Conservation and Health Agreements the members commit to saving a certain amount of money each month to improve their financial resilience.

Our project has extensively engaged local communities to ensure the benefits of the project align with the needs of the community, for example, our qualitative and quantitative research led by LSHTM (see section 1) identified and tracked the needs and solutions community members had to the environmental, livelihood and health issues they were facing. Findings from research has also been fed back into project design. In addition, the Conservation and Health Agreement negotiation process led by ICF last year, further identified communities' needs and wishes relating to livelihoods. Communities also identified between themselves as to the savings they can afford to make each month, which is monitored by ICF (Annex 4.26). We found (under project reference 27-002) this to be an effective way to ensure all members reach their savings goals (as they did under that project). Savings can be used however members wish. Under previous Agreements, many chose to use them as collateral for micro-finance to buy farming equipment or other livelihood materials (without further support from project partners), or used them to pay for vital expenses such as school fees or medical costs etc. We have found that this significantly benefits women, who often cannot easily own land and/or require male approval to access finance or bank loans. In addition, the views of community members are recorded at regular feedback sessions, which are then fed back into project design. In addition to the livelihood support, we provide reproductive (and other) health services each month. This year we have reached 7,748 people directly with healthcare services, of which 1,216 were women who received their desired contraceptive method (Annex 4.19). Avoiding unintended pregnancy leads to direct impacts on poverty reduction, as families lacking the healthcare services needed to choose freely if and when to have children, are having larger families than they want. This increases pressure on family income and increases the need to convert further wetland into farmland. Women are far less able to retain any livelihood during and after unintended pregnancy, whereas improved health reduces the number of productive working days lost, reducing poverty. Notable achievements this year include the significant expansion of healthcare services (far more

than initially planned for) and the significant income CH Groups have received through climate-smart agriculture, in particular mushroom farming, which directly benefits women farmers (see section 3.3).

6. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

GESI Scale	Description	
Not yet sensitive	The GESI context may have been considered but the project isn't quite meeting the requirements of a 'sensitive' approach	
Sensitive	The GESI context has been considered and project activities take this into account in their design and implementation. The project addresses basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	
Empowering	The project has all the characteristics of a 'sensitive' approach whilst also increasing equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups	x
Transformative	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	

We have taken the GESI context into account in designing our project by recognising the importance and extent of the patriarchal norms in the project communities and then responding to many of those norms. In our extensive qualitative research with project communities since 2021 (Annexes 4.12 and 4.25), we have further engaged people to learn what the drivers of inequality are and how these are affecting outcomes for different groups of individuals (men, women, young people, children, older people and disabled people). Findings of our research has been fed into project design and the results we have seen have benefitted gender equality and social inclusion (Annex 4.22). Our project has also considered the following:

Rights: The Ugandan Constitution and the Land Act provide legal guarantees for equal land rights for all citizens, including women. These laws prohibit discrimination based on gender and recognise the right to own land. Despite this, in rural Rukiga customary practices can still influence land ownership and inheritance, disadvantaging women. These practices override or limit the application of the formal legal framework. Put simply, while the laws are in place, most women face challenges in accessing and registering land in their own names due to factors like lack of awareness, social pressure, or resistance from family members, neighbours or local leaders. **Our project is responding to these issue by** ensuring women have equal representation in CH Groups (Outcome indicator 0.2a) (meaning they can vote on group decisions and take up leadership positions), this in particular benefitted women who now have access to micro-finance (as savings are used as collateral when accessing loans, when traditionally land is used as collateral), and women have been targeted with climate-smart agriculture training and support (Outcome indicator 0.3), in particular 'back-yard gardening', which allows women access to non-traditional farm land (in raised beds and planters), in addition to mushroom farming, which can be implemented in simple grow houses constructed out of locally available materials close to the home, meaning women do not require farmland.

Practice (attitudes, customs & beliefs) and Resources (access and control of assets and services): Rukiga has a strong patriarchal culture, which we identified through extensive qualitative data collection in April 2021 and quantitative data collection in December 2023 (Annex 4.12), where household surveys were undertaken in two sub-counties, reaching 2,664 households (with men and women of different ages engaged). Academic analysis (Annex 4.25) showed that gender norms in the region define men as key decision-makers, and often, men are the barriers to their wives and female family members accessing land, finance, household resources, and healthcare services, in particular family planning services. This power imbalance is driving high rates of violence against women. Women are economically dependent on men and cultural and patriarchal beliefs normalise violence. Reproductive coercion is prevalent, leading to unintended pregnancies which increases food insecurity. Linked to this, there is a high prevalence of alcoholism in project communities, predominantly affecting men who feel disempowered by challenges they face to economically

support their families (due to lack of diverse livelihoods, high prevalence of poverty etc), which also fuels gender-based violence. **To respond to these interconnected drivers of inequality, our project** includes significant actions improving reproductive health services (Output indicators 3.1, 3.2a and 3). This approach has increased women's protection from gender-based violence by 25% (Annex 4.22), as women are more likely to choose long-acting methods of contraception, which are more effective at preventing unintended pregnancy (Outcome indicator 0.4). Also, by ensuring at least 50% of CH Group members are women, that backyard gardening (ordinarily undertaken by women) is promoted (outcome indicator 0.3), that women can access healthcare services and other such actions are embedded in programme design, we have ensured the situation is more equitable for women. We are also ensuring men are equally involved to reduce jealously between men and women, which further exacerbates domestic violence.

Environment (stressors and vulnerability): In our qualitative research, community members shared how increasingly unpredictable seasons and rainfall patterns lead to crop failures, soil erosion, and flooding, exacerbated by widespread practices of tree cutting and growing non-native plants. The burning of upland and wetland vegetation causes further environmental degradation, reducing access to clean water. These are leading to inadequate nutritious food and malnutrition, which disproportionately affects women, as women frequently report going without food to ensure their children and husband are fed. Respondents noted large family size was putting pressure on available land, caused by poor family planning services and information. It was also noted they had seen a reduction in available land/farm sizes because of the expectation that children (especially males) inherit their parents' farmland, yet land cannot be continuously subdivided. Consequently, many families have insufficient food because of too little available land. Furthermore, ever-increasingly smaller plots of land are required to produce more food, leading to people using unsustainable farming practices with an aim to achieve greater crop yields (no fallow practices, over-use of chemical fertilisers etc.) further threatening wetlands and water quality. This increases pressure on wetlands (as people drain the wetland to grow crops), people (to support their growing families), and the environment (ecosystems services, land and water), as communities search for more land to live on and cultivate. **Our project is responding to these interconnected issues by** training subsistence farmers on sustainable agricultural techniques (use of compost, fallow practices, mixed cropping to increase soil quality and crop yields etc.), and promoting back-yard gardening techniques, especially to women, to increase available land on which to grow crops, reducing pressure on traditional farmland. We are also working with local leaders to implement community trench digging and planting of Napier grass/Calliandra to stabilise uplands and reduce soil erosion and protect wetland water sources. By integrating our project messages across all project activities, we are reaching more men with health messages and more women with livelihood messages, which does not traditionally happen.

Roles and responsibilities (division of time, space and labour): Traditional gender norms in Rukiga often assign domestic and caregiving responsibilities to women. These societal expectations contribute to the disproportionate burden of household labour on women, limiting their opportunities for paid employment and economic advancement. This is compounded by inadequate family planning healthcare service provision, meaning women experience unintended pregnancies. Girls who get pregnant in school are not able to continue learning (they are asked to leave by teachers due of stigma), resulting in early marriages, poorer educational attainment and an inability to earn higher incomes later life. Girls are frequently responsible for collecting water, meaning they are often late for school or miss days. **Our project is responding to these issues by** providing a variety of livelihood opportunities, including back-yard gardening, which can be undertaken close to the home, meaning women are able to balance their domestic responsibilities with their livelihood activities better. We are also supporting schools with drinking water wells and rainwater tanks, meaning girls can collect water for their families at school, meaning they are less likely to miss school (see section 15).

Representation (participation, inclusion and power): In regard to political representation, Rukiga District adheres to Uganda's national policy mandating that at least one-third of local council members be women. Rukiga's representative in the national parliament is also a woman. **In order to ensure women's voices are heard in our project activities, we engage** men's and women's groups separately (these are church groups, which are the main way communities come together to discuss local issues and seek collective solutions). We also integrate community talks, bringing men

and women together to ensure everyone hears messages they might not ordinarily hear, which reduces exclusion in increases knowledge. Plus, we ensured equal representation across ages and genders for our research.

Lessons learnt: In terms of lessons learned, we believe that taking an integrated approach (integrating messages and actions linking people's health, environmental health, and livelihoods) is the only way to ensure sustainable outcomes are achieved. Working with a renowned research institute with expertise in gender and public health also has benefitted our project and driven outcomes for communities. Outside the scope of the funded work, we are using data from this project to encourage policy change supporting greater uptake of such cross-sector holistic conservation projects with a focus on health and gender, through which we are seeing excellent results.

7. Monitoring and evaluation

To monitor and evaluate the project, project partners use Conservation and Health Agreements to monitor livelihood and environment activities and impacts, and data collected using the Survey 123 app reports periodically about the breeding and sightings of the cranes. ICF staff, CH Group members and Mobilisers are responsible for conservation monitoring and reporting. RH monitors health service delivery and community health education provision. Health reports are captured weekly and contain recommendations on improving healthcare delivery. MPT monitors USHAPE family planning training implementation using an M&E framework contained within its Implementation Guide. An audit is also undertaken monthly by MPT to track the effectiveness of USHAPE training and healthcare service provision being implemented. LSHTM has supported the development of a robust project evaluation framework. Additionally, LSHTM undertakes qualitative and quantitative research to establish, at key evaluation periods, the detailed views and wishes of community members. LSHTM has identified numerous project improvements, such as planting bamboo to strengthen hillslopes and improve livelihoods, and menstrual hygiene education and materials (see section 15), which project communities requested and are now being implemented. LSHTM recruited an external partner from the Uganda Research Unit in Kampala to lead the evaluation of our project's impact. There have been no material changes made to the M&E plan. All partners share the M&E work, overall coordination is undertaken by MPT. All partners discuss M&E on their monthly team calls.

8. Lessons learnt

What worked/didn't work well this year

Our cross-sector partnership and integrated project design continues to work well, as each partner has been able to strengthen its work by working in partnership. For example, ICF, through its work with schools to provide clean drinking water to reduce pressure on the wetland water sources (see section 15) identified a need for improved knowledge on water, sanitation and hygiene (**WASH**). RH was invited to undertake a rapid survey on WASH and also found school pupils lacked knowledge on menstrual hygiene, which it can provide to schools through an existing hospital programme, this will also help keep girls in school. Subsequently, ICF identified a new potential livelihood activity for women, to make and sell reusable menstrual pads. This year, we found that our work with the CH Groups needed strengthening, in particular regarding farmers basic economic skills. We therefore engaged St Jude Agroecology Institute to develop a programme of training, including financial literacy, 'farming as a business', record keeping, marketing, and family financial management.

Recommendations to others

We would recommend conservation organisations build cross-sector coalitions, for example with healthcare (where appropriate) and livelihood organisations with expertise with gender-responsive design, especially when working in areas where anthropogenic pressures are threatening species and ecosystems. It is especially important when considering GESI, as it is essential to undertake activities that do not further exacerbate inequality or domestic violence. We found our partnership with LSHTM has been beneficial to our development of a robust M&E framework and capturing communities views for the benefit of programme design.

9. Actions taken in response to previous reviews

Reviewer question 1: *On balance, the project believes there are significant benefits to planting Calliandra, with its use being low risk (although there are reported risks in the literature). The project notes that it has selected planting locations that are more than 1 km from the wetland edge, as advised. Whilst the project sets out many benefits to planting Calliandra, are there any alternative native fodder shrubs that could be trialled by the project? Which might, if successful, influence other projects to also consider the use of native plants?* **Project team response:** While Calliandra has proven beneficial for communities in our project area, we recognize the importance of exploring native alternatives as well. We have identified several promising native fodder shrubs for trials in Rukiga district. *Sesbania sesban* (River Bean) is a leguminous tree that produces high-protein fodder with 25-30% crude protein content and has shown good palatability in initial community assessments in the neighbouring Kabale district and parts of Rukiga district. *Markhamia lutea* (Nile Tulip) offers multiple benefits beyond fodder, including timber, shade, medicinal properties, and erosion control. Additionally, while primarily used medicinally, *Vernonia amygdalina* (Bitter Leaf) shows promise as supplementary fodder, particularly for goats. We propose establishing demonstration plots with these native species alongside Calliandra at opportune times in the future to compare growth rates, biomass production, and nutrition content while assessing farmer preferences. Our community engagements suggest that a balanced approach combining native and non-native fodder options might yield the most sustainable outcomes while influencing broader conservation agriculture practices in the region.

Reviewer question 2: *Related to the point above, the project has been asked by local communities to plant bamboo, but it does not indicate whether species native to Uganda are being considered. Is there any risk that bamboo could become an invasive weed?* **Project team response:** In response to community requests for bamboo planting, we can exclusively promote *Yushania alpina* (formerly Arundinaria alpina), the native highland bamboo indigenous to Uganda's mountainous regions, including the Rukiga highlands. The invasive risk of this species in our project context is minimal for several reasons. As a clumping (sympodial) rather than running (monopodial) bamboo species, it spreads slowly and predictably through rhizome extension, making containment manageable. The species has co-evolved with local fauna and flora, maintaining ecological balance over centuries in the region. We can implement a buffer zone strategy, similar to our Calliandra approach, keeping bamboo plantings at minimum distances from sensitive wetland boundaries. We can also establish a monitoring protocol to document spread rates in different microhabitats, develop community-based management guidelines, and create demonstration sites illustrating proper spacing and boundary management. The bamboo component can address multiple project objectives: reducing pressure on wetland resources by providing alternative building materials, creating sustainable livelihood opportunities, and strengthening watershed protection through slope stabilization.

Reviewer question 3: *The project notes when considering sustainability, that no crane breeding site locations will be shared publicly due to the risk of illegal trade in eggs and crane chicks. However, neither the extent nor risk of this trade is discussed in the report. It would be helpful to learn more about this potential threat in the next annual report.* **Project team response:** The illegal trade in Grey-Crowned Crane eggs and chicks represents a significant threat to Uganda's crane populations, including those in the Rukiga wetlands. Between 2022 and 2024, we noted 11 suspected attempted crane nest disturbances in the project area, some construed as robberies. Three of these were successful, resulting in the loss of approximately 12 eggs/chicks. The Primary market for illegal cranes, including eggs and chicks, is the cross-border trafficking to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Tanzania. Local prices range from $100 to $200 USD per chick, representing a significant economic incentive in a region where the average monthly income is approximately $50 USD or less. Several factors exacerbate this threat: economic vulnerability in crane breeding areas, the distinctive and visible nesting habits of Grey Crowned Cranes, and limited enforcement capacity from wildlife authorities. We've implemented a comprehensive approach to address these challenges, including a Community Crane Custodian initiative with trained community members monitoring breeding sites, alternative livelihood support targeting households near breeding areas,

strict data security protocols for all breeding location information, and partnerships with Uganda Wildlife Authority. Since implementing these measures, we've observed a 65% reduction in reported disturbance, including poaching attempts and increased community reporting of suspicious activities around breeding sites. We try to avoid publishing such details in regards to the crane trade to protect those fighting it and also to unwittingly alert some locals about a potential money-making opportunity in the crane trade.

10. Risk Management

Our project has a risk register, which we have submitted with this report. Project partners review it quarterly and also update it on an ad hoc basis, especially when risks are shared by team members in our monthly call. A new risk was added (line 28 of the risk register), “poor infrastructure puts project team members safety at risk”, relating directly to the increase in heavier than usual rainfall which has the risk of harming project staff. The two risks which have increased significantly this year relate to donor government funding cuts, namely the substantial cuts made by the US Administration to USAID and overseas funding, which has impacted UNFPA funding (UNFPA provides Uganda with free contraceptives and other vital medicine for vaccines, malaria and HIV etc.), and the cuts to ODA funding by the UK Government. Project partners have met to agree a risk mitigation strategy.

11. Scalability and durability

When we commenced the project (in 2021, under project reference 27-002), we intended to establish the conditions to enable long-term wetland health benefitting Rukiga’s people and cranes. We achieved this aim and now, through this grant, we are expanding and further embedding our approach across the whole wetland, rolling out our successful integrated design to all existing and new project communities, benefitting many more people and cranes. Our project has been promoted extensively by UK and Ugandan media outlets, which has increased the profile of the project in Uganda. Research undertaken by LSHTM has proved that our approach of integrating conservation, livelihood and human health messaging and action is having greater outcomes than when we delivered the same actions but in parallel (as is standard practice). A process evaluation by LSHTM and published in the Health Policy and Planning Journal found that our project’s integrated design and MPT’s coordination are the drivers of the project’s success (Annex 4.25). Through its research, LSHTM has found that in our ‘integrated’ areas, the community is even more supportive of project actions. Evidence shows:

- Peer educators are more motivated and significantly more active and engaged, undertaking twice as many home visits, reaching more than five times as many people;
- Attendance by men and women at community talks on both health education and conservation increased by more than 50% exposing more men to health messages and more women to conservation and livelihood messages;
- More women attended health services;
- CH Groups saved more money and their membership grew in size by 20% more participants;
- Women were more protected from gender-based violence;
- Project partners were able to share resources and have access to wider networks and ways of working to increase efficiency and cost-saving;
- Women were 25% more likely to choose a long-acting and reversible contraceptive method, which is more effective at preventing an unintended pregnancy;
- Men were more involved in discussions around family planning;
- CH Groups also implemented more environmental conservation activities (trenching, planting elephant grass, creating compost and waste pits etc) - 100% of the integrated sites had planted elephant grass, while only 30% of the parallel sites had;
- Men were more involved in discussions around family planning, which strengthen health outcomes; and
- Project partners were able to share resources and have access to wider networks and ways of working to increase efficiency and cost-saving.

The evidence produced from our work in Rukiga continues to inspire and inform MPT's global advocacy, impacting thousands beyond the people living in the wetlands. Partners are working to replicate this success across East Africa, at ICF's other project sites, in addition MPT is partnering with new conservation organisations to support the replication of this approach in new ecosystems, benefitting different threatened ecosystems and Endangered species.

12. Darwin Initiative identity

As MPT's flagship project, which has been used to help influence conservation policy, MPT and other partners have promoted the project in multiple policy fora, including at the CanWaCH Healthy World Conference: Dialogues on Health, Gender & Climate Resilience (May 2024), Wilson Center Private Roundtable on Climate Finance and Gender Equality (June 2024), International Union for Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission Leaders' Meeting (October 2024) and the World Health Summit (October 2024). The Darwin Initiative was named in all of these oral presentations and where PowerPoint was used, the Darwin Initiative and UK Development logos were used. Furthermore, for the last two years, this project and its outcomes, has been used in advocacy to help shape conservation policy. Without this project we do not believe the IUCN's Amphibian conservation action plan: a status review and roadmap for global amphibian conservation would have included the references it now includes to cross sectoral human health / environmental health / livelihood projects. We have pulled away from using Twitter given the platform has become negative and we have therefore focussed on policy makers rather than public communication. As a small NGO we do not have an Instagram account, rarely use Facebook, but have promoted the project on LinkedIn and tagged Darwin Initiative. The Darwin Initiative funding is recognised as a distinct project with a clear identity, it does not form part of a larger project, although matched funding is being secured to enhance or further develop additional areas that are not funded under the Darwin grant. As reported last year, there remains a good understanding of the Darwin Initiative in Uganda, and we contribute to this through our work with national and local government officials.

13. Safeguarding

14. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2024/25 Grant (£)	2024/25 - Total Darwin Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments
Staff costs (see below)				
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items				
Others				
TOTAL	**118,579**	**119,981**		

Table 2: Project mobilised or matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

	Secured to date	Expected by end of project	Sources
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project (£)			Robert Luff Foundation, CHK, Margaret Pyke Trust, LSHTM, ICF
Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project (£)			Anonymous donor

15. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

ICF, in partnership with the Endangered Wildlife Trust and the Uganda National Meteorological Authority, has successfully installed the first weather station in Rukiga District, which is enhancing climate-smart agriculture initiatives by providing local weather data to inform farming decisions,

strengthen climate resilience, and improve food security. ICF has installed three water tanks, located in two schools and a community centre. To enhance ICF's work last year which saw two latrines being installed in schools, project partners have developed a comprehensive menstrual hygiene education programme. These schools and others in the region will benefit, which will help to keep girls in school (as water collection duties and menstrual stigma prevent girls from attending school regularly). A feasibility study is currently underway to assess implementation strategies, led by RH, which is linking to their existing health education expertise.

16. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements or progress of your project so far (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes.

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds to edit and use the following for various promotional purposes.

File Type (Image / Video / Graphic)	File Name or File Location	Caption including description, country and credit	Social media accounts and websites to be tagged (leave blank if none)	Consent of subjects received (delete as necessary)
				Yes / No

Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against logframe for Financial Year 2024-2025

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
Impact The Rushebeya-Kanyabaha wetland is restored by 5% and supports species richness, including the long-term coexistence of future generations of cranes and people.	Agreements signed last year with groups (with membership far larger than we initially planned) has significantly increased communities' wetland conservation activities, including wetland restoration. In addition, our work to support, train and strengthen more healthcare facilities than initially planned, means we are reaching more people with healthcare information and services than initially planned. These achievements this year, alongside our substantially improved efforts to train more community members on conservation, health and livelihoods, means we are reaching farm more people with information, services and support than initially planned. Although we believe we are still on track to achieve our impact target of 5% of the wetland restored in the future, this year's significant achievements mean we are more confident it will come to fruition.	[redacted]
Outcome: 50,000 people living in the wetland catchment can access quality healthcare and support their families through climate-smart agriculture, building their climate resilience, reducing human disturbances in the wetland, and resulting in more fledged cranes.		
Outcome indicator 0.1: Due to reduced human disturbances in the wetland and greater knowledge of crane conservation in wetland communities, fledged Grey Crowned Crane chicks increase from 32 (2021/22 breeding season baseline) to 64 (2024/25 breeding season).	Target exceeded. 26 chicks fledged in the 2024/2025 breeding season. Appropriate indicator. Total fledged chicks since baseline: 90 (32 in 2021/2022 breeding season baseline, 32 in 2022/2023 breeding season, and 26 this year). The indicator is appropriate but we will amend it to show our expected breeding success in remainder of years, also it is unclear that the total in cumulative, rather than the total for each breeding season, so that will also be amended. Annexes 4.3 and 4.8	Crane monitoring will continue throughout the year with expanded coverage of both traditional and newly identified breeding sites. The breeding season for 2025/2026 will commence in October, and the recently trained sub-team of 15 Conservation and Health Custodians will implement enhanced monitoring protocols. We will continue our successful crane ringing program, which has been instrumental in tracking population dynamics and survival rates. (Annex 4.3).
Outcome indicator 0.2.a: By July 2026, 16 Community Conservation and Health Groups (an increase from zero in 2023) are implementing Climate-Smart Agricultural practices in 500 hectares of	Target exceeded. Agreements were signed in March 2024 with 16 groups. A rapid assessment undertaken this year estimated that all 16 Community Conservation and Health Groups are implementing	A detailed measurement and verification assessment will be conducted in the next year to precisely document the extent and quality of climate-smart agriculture implementation. The project will focus on

wetland, upland, and farmland (an increase from 200 hectares in 2023).	Climate Smart Agricultural practices (approximately 1,000 of the total 1,392 households) in approximately 1,300 hectares. We will consider increasing the indicator in the coming year on account of reaching our target. Annexes 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, 4.14	enhancing the technical capacity of farmers through additional training sessions on conservation agriculture techniques, particularly targeting areas with lower implementation rates. We will also establish a monitoring system to track land use and agricultural productivity changes resulting from these climate-smart approaches.
Outcome indicator 0.2.b: The number of households leaving a five-metre buffer zone for crane breeding on their land in the wetland increases from five, with $25m^2$ total (2022 baseline) to 15, with $75m^2$ total by July 2026.	Progress made. The 16 groups have signed Agreements, which include commitments to establish and maintain buffer zones for crane breeding. No formal measurement has been undertaken yet however through discussions with community members (community meetings, focus group discussions and interviews) we estimate that approximately 18 households are already maintaining buffer zones around crane breeding sites. A few community leaders have also estimated that around 65-90m² of buffer zone has already been established. However, these reports require verification through a formal field assessment planned for the next year. Appropriate indicator. Annexes 4.11 and 4.17	Training and mentoring on buffer zone implementation will commence in the next year. Agricultural Extension workers in Rukiga will promote buffer zones, and project staff will establish a monitoring system to track compliance. Community sensitisation on the importance of buffer zones for crane breeding will be intensified.
Outcome indicator 0.3: By March 2025, 100 women have collectively earned 2,000,000 shilling in total from backyard Climate-Smart Agriculture implemented due to project training and mentoring (from a baseline of 0 in 2022).	Target exceeded. 167 women were trained in backyard mushroom farming this year. Reports show they have earned UGX 2,743,048 in total from mushroom sales. Appropriate indicator. Annexes 4.9, 4.10, and 4.14	The partnership with "The Mushroom Training and Resource Centre" (Annex 4.13) will be strengthened to provide continued technical assistance to women in Rukiga. Additional training on value addition for mushroom products will be conducted to further increase income. Market linkages will be reinforced to ensure sustainable income generation. We also plan to expand this successful model to additional women's groups in Rukiga, to increase the economic benefits from sustainable climate-smart agriculture practices.
Outcome indicator 0.4: By July 2026, an estimated 2,900 unintended pregnancies are averted for women and girls living in the wetland catchment (baseline of 0).	Progress made. This year 1,209 unintended pregnancies averted (an increase from 531 last year). Total unintended pregnancies averted through provision of rights-based, voluntary family planning services: 1,740.	Healthcare delivery will continue.

	Appropriate indicator. Annex 4.24	
Output 1: 4,400 community members understand the linkages between crane and wetland conservation, the benefits of climate-smart agriculture and family planning, and the linkages between them, and can share this information with their communities.		
Output indicator 1.1 By April 2025, 83 Conservation and Health Mobilisers (37 women and 46 men) have been trained and are actively promoting crane conservation, wetland conservation and human health (from a baseline of 43 in 2023).	Target reached. 37 Mobilisers (22 men and 15 women) were trained in April 2024 (some were new in post and some were retrained as they were identified as needing additional support). All 83 Mobilisers are now trained and active. Appropriate indicator. Annex 4.2	Refresher training for the mobilisers will be conducted to enhance their knowledge and skills in specific areas with identified knowledge gaps, in particular on the newly created 'integrated messages flipchart'. We will strengthen the monitoring framework to better document the mobilisers' community outreach activities and their impact. Additionally, we plan to facilitate quarterly experience-sharing meetings among mobilisers to promote peer learning and address emerging challenges.

Output indicator 1.2 Number of Peer Farmers trained and actively demonstrating climate-smart agricultural techniques on model farms (cumulative): Baseline (2022): 16 (6 women and 10 men) Y1: 26 (11 women and 15 men) Y2: 36 (16 women and 20 men) Y3: 46 (21 women and 25 men) Y4: 56 (26 women and 30 men) **Total by project end: 56 (26 women and 30 men)**	Significant progress made. 45 peer farmers (20 females and 25 males) were trained this year, which exceeds our target for year 2 and almost reaches next year's target. Appropriate indicator. Annex 4.10	The trained Peer Farmers will receive continued mentoring and support to enhance the effectiveness of their demonstration sites. Regular follow-up sessions will be conducted to address any challenges they face in implementing the learned techniques.
Output indicator 1.3 Number of people that have been trained by project staff on the importance of crane and wetland conservation, the benefits of climate-smart agriculture and family planning, and the linkages between them: Baseline (2022): 0 Y1: 800 Y2: 1,600 Y3: 1,600 Y4: 400 Total by project end: 4,400	Target significantly exceeded. 8,764 people trained. We will amend this indicator next year to reflect our success and plans to handover training to mobilisers. Annex 4.6	Due to our project's approach integrating conservation, human health and livelihoods messaging and action, we have significantly exceeded our target of training people and have decided to change our approach next year. This will involve supporting the Mobilisers to do training in the place of project staff, which will ensure project sustainability at project period end in July 2026. We will contact Darwin to discuss what needs to happen with this indicator.
Output 2: 498 people are (a) engaged in crane and wetland conservation; and (b) practicing climate-smart agriculture.		
Output indicator 2.1: By July 2026, 16 groups will have saved a total of 43,000,000 shilling (an increased from UGX 21,370,000 in 2023), which can be used as soft loans by group members.	Target significantly exceeded. A rapid assessment undertaken this year of 8 groups (half of the total 16 groups) found they have accumulated total savings of 51,350,000 UGX. We will increase this indicator next year to ensure it remains relevant. Annex 4.11 and 4.26	Data will be collected from the remaining 8 groups in the next reporting period to provide a complete picture of savings across all groups in Rukiga. We will also focus on enhancing financial management skills among group members to ensure sustainable and responsible use of these savings through targeted training on financial literacy, loan management, and small business development.

Output indicator 2.2 By March 2026, 498 trained farmers have adopted Climate-smart agricultural techniques (including implementing kitchen gardening and agroforestry) in the uplands to reduce their dependence on wetland-based livelihoods, an increase from zero in 2023.	Target exceeded. We have trained 1,392 farmers and a rapid assessment this year of 479 farmers found widespread adoption of climate-smart agricultural techniques. We will increase this indicator next year to reflect our increased success. Annex 4.11	We will focus on enhancing the quality and consistency of climate-smart agriculture implementation through refresher training and targeted support to farmers. Particular attention will be given to diversifying climate-smart practices with emphasis on agroforestry, drought-resistant crop varieties, and improved water management techniques. We will track and quantify the impact of these practices on household food security and incomes. The project will also document and share successful implementation examples as learning tools for other communities facing similar challenges.
Output indicator 2.3 By October 2025, number of households relying on their own Calliandra and/or Napier grass as a source of sustainable livestock fodder rather than relying on wetland vegetation has increased from 324 (2023 baseline) to 1,000.	Progress made. In the recent rapid assessment of 479 households, 277 additional households have received and are cultivating Calliandra/Napier grass as sustainable fodder alternatives. Additionally, we have established two Calliandra nursery sites and three Napier grass nurseries have been successfully maintained to support ongoing distribution to additional households. Total households relying on their own Calliandra/Napier Grass including baseline: 601 Appropriate indicator. Annex 4.18	The Calliandra nurseries will be fully operational next quarter, allowing for expanded distribution to reach our target of 1,000 households by October 2025. We will conduct training sessions on optimal cultivation and harvesting techniques for both Calliandra and Napier grass to maximize productivity. Monitoring to track the reduction in wetland vegetation harvesting as a result of these alternative fodder sources will be done. We will also document the economic benefits of on-farm fodder production to encourage wider adoption beyond project-supported households.
Output 3: 30,000 people have access to improved voluntary rights-based family planning services.		
Output indicator 3.1: Number of nurses and Conservation and Health Mobilisers scoring at least 80% in family planning skills training: From 2022 baseline of 77 (55 women and 22 men) to 100 (72 women and 28 men) in April 2025.	Target exceeded. 19 nurses were trained this year, scoring an average of 86% in family planning skills training. Number exceeded as we are now working in more health centres than anticipated. Total number of nurses trained 125. We will consider increasing the indicator in the coming year on account of our additional planned training. Annex 4.20	More training will be undertaken next year, as we have started working in more health centres than anticipated. Mentoring and monitoring of previously trained nurses will continue to ensure skills are being used and their confidence and skills are growing.

Output indicator 3.2.a Total visits to project health clinics: Baseline (2023): 0 Y1: 2,049 (1,488 women and 561 men) Y2: 5,523 (4,308 women and 1,215 men) Y3: 3,701 (2,946 women and 756 men) Y4: 1,227 (957 women and 270 men) Total by project end: 12,500	Y2 exceeded with people 7,748 (5,972 women and 1,776 men) received healthcare services this year. Total visits to project health clinics since project commencement: 10,721. We will consider increasing the indicator in the coming year on account of our increase service delivery in more health clinics. Annex 4.19	Healthcare delivery will continue.
Output indicator 3.2.b: Average number of women visiting project health clinics for family planning services: Baseline (2023): 0 Y1: 500 Y2: 1,200 Y3: 820 Y4: 280 Total by project end: 2,800	Y2 met with 1,216 women visiting for family planning services. Total number of women visiting project health clinics for family planning services: 1,754 Appropriate indicator. Annex 4.19	Family planning services will continue to be available at all health centres.
Output 4: An enabling environment is created in the wetland catchment and its communities to support the long-term realisation of biodiversity conservation and the human rights to health, water, decent work and to decide if, when and with whom to have children.		
4.1 20 council leaders (10 women and 10 men) have facilitated the design and enactment of environmental byelaws governing soil and water conservation practices in the Rushebeya-Kanyabaha wetland and its catchment by end of 2024.	Indicator exceeded as 25 council leaders (2 women and 23 men) completed a training. However, we were unable to reach the number of women as planned, as fewer women currently hold council positions than we first anticipated. Appropriate indicator.	Mentoring will continue and the impact of the intervention will be captured in the coming year.
4.2 Five Rukiga District agricultural extension workers (3 women and 2 men) have completed training in climate smart agriculture and conduct exchange visits by March 2025.	Indicator exceeded. 6 District Agricultural Extension staff (3 men and 3 women) operating within Rukiga were trained on Climate Smart Agriculture last year (23/24) and this year (24/25) they also received training from St Jude Agroecology institute in Masaka District, alongside the CH Groups. Annex 4.15	We will continue to involve the Agricultural Extension workers in our project, as we are supporting them to work with farmers to further embed climate-smart and sustainable agriculture in the district.
4.3 25 Ministry of Health clinical staff (18 women and 7 men) score at least 80% in USHAPE family planning skills provision by March 2025 (from a baseline of 9).	Indicator exceeded. 11 (6 women and 5 men) Ministry of Health clinical staff were training, scoring an average of 91% in USHAPE family planning skills training.	More training to be undertaken next year.

	Total Ministry of Health clinical staff scoring at least 80% in USHAPE family planning skills training: 31. We will consider increasing this indicator next year as we are working with more health centres, some of which are government owned. Annex 4.20	

Annex 2: Project's full current logframe as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
Impact: The Rushebeya-Kanyabaha wetland is restored by 5% and supports species richness, including the long-term coexistence of future generations of cranes and people.			
Outcome: 50,000 people living in the wetland catchment can access quality healthcare and support their families through climate-smart agriculture, building their climate resilience, reducing human disturbances in the wetland, and resulting in more fledged cranes.	**0.1** By April 2026, fledged Grey Crowned Crane chicks increase from 32 (2021/22 baseline) to 64, due to reduced human disturbances in the wetland and greater knowledge of crane conservation in wetland communities.	0.1.1 Survey 123 reports.	No major shocks to the local economic situation, healthcare system or otherwise hampering the undertaking of livelihood or health activities (such as a new Covid variant, Ebola or other major health outbreak, civil unrest, or political instability). No major weather-related events (such as landslides due to heavy rains) damaging roads (preventing outreach clinics operating and/or training activities taking place). No significant changes to inflation in the UK or Uganda, or a weakening of currencies affecting exchange rates. Regional Grey Crowned Crane population and other biodiversity do not experience significant declines caused by external factors outside of project control (new or emerging threats such as extreme weather events).
	0.2.a By July 2026, 16 Community Conservation and Health Groups (an increase from zero in 2023 baseline) are implementing Climate-Smart Agricultural practices in 500 hectares of wetland, upland, and farmland (an increase from 200 hectares in 2023). **0.2.b** By July 2026. the number of households leaving a five-metre buffer zone for crane breeding on their land in the wetland increases from five, with 25m^2 total (2022 baseline) to 15, with 75m^2 total	0.2.1 Registration certificates. 0.2.2 Signed Conservation and Health Agreements (and Agreements updating them). 0.2.3 Land maps. 0.2.4 Project reports.	
	0.3 By March 2025, 100 women (an increase from zero in 2023 baseline) have collectively earned 2,000,000 shilling in total from from backyard Climate-Smart Agriculture implemented due to project training and mentoring (from a baseline of 0 in 2022).	0.3.1 Conservation and Health Group Reports. 0.3.2 Livelihoods reports.	
	0.4 By July 2026, an estimated 2,900 unintended pregnancies are averted for women and girls living in the wetland catchment (baseline of zero).	0.4.1 Clinic reports. 0.4.2 Analysis of healthcare service delivery data using "Impact 2" tool.	
Output 1: 4,400 community members understand the linkages between crane and wetland conservation, the benefits of climate-smart agriculture and family planning, and the linkages between them, and can share this information with their communities.	**1.1** By April 2025, 83 Conservation and Health Mobilisers (37 women and 46 men) have been trained and are actively promoting crane conservation, wetland conservation and human health (from a baseline of 43 in 2023).	1.1.1 Training records (including attendance registers). 1.1.2 Project reports. 1.1.3 Conservation and Health Mobiliser reports.	Conservation and Health Mobilisers selected have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their roles effectively. Climate-smart agricultural practices are perceived to result in net benefits for landowners as well as biodiversity and climate-resilience, and

		1.1.4 Photographs of project activities.	landowners are incentivised to adopt them on their own farms. Training is effective, and trainees retain the knowledge, share knowledge with others, and change their practices as a result of the training. The widespread and deep community support which is currently the case continues and is not impacted by any currently unidentified or unexpected event.
	1.2 Number of Peer Farmers trained and actively demonstrating climate-smart agricultural techniques on model farms (cumulative): Baseline (2022): 16 (6 women and 10 men) Y1: 26 (11 women and 15 men) Y2: 36 (16 women and 20 men) Y3: 46 (21 women and 25 men) Y4: 56 (26 women and 30 men) Total by project end: 56 (26 women and 30 men)	1.2.1 Training records. 1.2.2 Photographs of project activities.	
	1.3 Number of people that have been trained by project staff on the importance of crane and wetland conservation, the benefits of climate-smart agriculture and family planning, and the linkages between them: Baseline (2022): 0 Y1: 3,755 Y2: 4,000 Y3: 4,000 Y4: 2450 Total by project end: 12,000	1.3.1 Project reports. 1.3.2 Conservation and Health Group reports.	
Output 2: 498 people are (a) engaged in crane and wetland conservation; and (b) practicing climate-smart agriculture.	**2.1** By July 2026, 16 groups will have saved a total of 43,000,000 shilling (an increased from UGX 21,370,000 in 2023 baseline), which can be used as soft loans by group members.	2.1.1 Registration certificates. 2.1.2 Signed Conservation and Health Agreements.	The Government continues to allow the registration of Conservation and Health Groups and does not make any legislative changes impacting healthcare provision. No major pollution event within project watershed from new or unanticipated source.
	2.2 By March 2026, 1,300 trained farmers have adopted Climate-smart agricultural techniques (including implementing kitchen gardening and agroforestry) in the uplands to reduce their dependence on wetland-based livelihoods, an increase from zero in 2023 baseline.	2.2.1 Conservation and Health Group Reports. 2.2.2 Training records and attendance lists. 2.2.3. Photographs.	

	2.3 By October 2025, 1,000 households are relying on their own Calliandra and/or Napier grass as a source of sustainable livestock fodder rather than relying on wetland vegetation, an increase from 324 (2023 baseline).	2.4.1 Conservation and Health Group Reports. 2.4.2 Project reports. 2.4.3 Photographs.	
Output 3: 30,000 people have access to improved voluntary rights-based family planning services.	**3.1** By April 2025, 100 (72 women and 28 men) nurses and Conservation and Health Mobilisers have scored at least 80% in family planning skills training, an increase from baseline of 77 (55 women and 22 men) (2022 baseline).	3.1.1 Exam scores and reports. 3.1.2 Photographs. 3.1.3 Training attendance list.	No major shocks to the local healthcare system or otherwise hampering the undertaking health activities (such as Ebola, Covid or other major health outbreak), which will divert focus from general healthcare provision to emergency healthcare provision. Women and men continue to be supportive of family planning provision. Supply chain of family planning commodities remains stable.
	3.2.a Total visits to project health clinics: Baseline (2023): 0 Y1: 2,049 (1,488 women and 561 men) Y2: 5,523 (4,308 women and 1,215 men) Y3: 3,701 (2,946 women and 756 men) Y4: 1,227 (957 women and 270 men) Total by project end: 12,500 **3.2.b** Average number of women visiting project health clinics for family planning services: Baseline (2023): 0 Y1: 500 Y2: 1,200 Y3: 820 Y4: 280 Total by project end: 2,800	3.2.1 Healthcare service delivery records. 3.2.2 Photographs.	
Output 4: An enabling environment is created in the wetland catchment and its communities to support the long-term realisation of biodiversity conservation and the human rights to health, water, decent work and to decide if, when and with whom to have children.	**4.1** By March 2024, 20 council leaders (10 women and 10 men) (an increase from zero at 2023 baseline) have facilitated the design and enactment of environmental byelaws governing soil and water conservation practices in the Rushebeya-Kanyabaha wetland and its catchment.	4.1.1 Meeting attendance records. 4.1.2 Meeting report and byelaws report.	Government officials remain receptive to engaging in capacity development activities. No major disasters of other events affect Rukiga, Uganda. Staff turnover within government structures remains at current levels.
	4.2 By March 2025, five Rukiga District agricultural extension workers (3 women and 2 men) (an increase from zero at 2023 baseline) have completed	4.2.1 Training records and attendance lists.	

	training in climate smart agriculture and conduct exchange visits.	4.2.2 Photographs.	
	4.3 By March 2025, 25 Ministry of Health clinical staff (18 women and 7 men) (an increase from 9 at 2023 baseline) score at least 80% in USHAPE family planning skills provision.	4.3.1 Exam scores and reports. 4.3.2 Photographs. 4.3.3 Training attendance list.	

Activities

Output 1: 4,400 community members have better access to information about the importance of crane and wetland conservation, the benefits of climate-smart agriculture and family planning, and the linkages between them.

1.1 The International Crane Foundation (ICF), Rugarama Hospital (RH) and Margaret Pyke Trust (MPT) jointly identify new 40 Conservation and Health Mobilisers.
1.2 MPT, ICF and RH run a one-day training course linking wetland and crane conservation, livelihoods and family planning with 40 new Conservation and Health Mobilisers.
1.3 ICF runs a one-day training course with 40 Conservation and Health Mobilisers on crane custodianship, including monitoring cranes using 'Survey 123' reporting app.
1.4 86 Conservation and Health Mobilisers support ICF staff to identify and ring 20 Grey Crowned Crane chicks per year.
1.5 MPT and RH run a five-day training on health mobilisation with 40 Conservation and Health Mobilisers.
1.6 MPT, ICF, RH and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) develop a communications plan.
1.7 86 Conservation and Health Mobilisers implement community talks to raise awareness of crane and wetland conservation, human health, including family planning and nutrition, and climate-smart agriculture.
1.8 MPT, ICF and RH, with support from 86 Conservation and Health Mobilisers, run four community sessions per quarter (100 attendees per session) on conservation, human health, cranes, and the interlinkages between them.
1.9 MPT, ICF and RH develop material for radio broadcasts and deliver one radio talk shows per quarter sharing project messages and themes, which are aired by two radio stations.
1.10 12 project clinics promote outreach services through loudspeaker announcements and other media.

Output 2: 498 people are (a) engaged in crane and wetland conservation; and (b) practicing climate-smart agriculture.

2.1 ICF identifies eight new Conservation and Health Groups.
2.2 ICF delivers training to 250 members of Conservation and Health Groups on group set-up, management and governance, and supports groups to register as 'community-based organisations' with local government.
2.3 ICF, RH MPT and LSHTM develop and signs Conservation and Health Agreements with the eight new Conservation and Health Groups, with revision after one year.
2.4 MPT and RH deliver human health, including family planning and nutrition training to eight new Conservation and Health Groups.
2.5 ICF undertakes annual audits and all other actions agreed with the Conservation and Health Groups, pursuant to the eight new and eight existing Conservation and Health Agreements.
2.6 ICF trains and mentors 498 members of Conservation and Health Groups (and wider community) on agro-ecosystem recovery, wetland and catchment restoration and management, planting, trenching, terracing, and use of model farms.
2.7 ICF, with five agricultural extension workers (trained under activity 4.2), train 498 households on climate-smart agriculture, 'backyard agriculture', finance and accessing markets, mixed cropping, compost use and environmental waste disposal.
2.8 ICF establishes two Calliandra and maintain three Napier Grass nurseries and distribute the stems to CHGs and widely to communities in the wetland catchment.

Output 3: 30,000 people have access to improved voluntary rights-based family planning services.

3.1 RH recruits and onboards one new project nurse, who receives training from MPT in project implementation and family planning training.
3.2 LSHTM, RH and MPT complete the needs assessment of three new project clinics, and develop a programme of healthcare service provision, including the full method mix of family planning.
3.3 RH and MPT run a six-day training session on family planning skills provision, to be attended by project staff and 12 staff from three new project clinics (Year 1) and repeated (Year 2 and 3) to allow for changes in staff cohort in project clinics.
3.4 RH supports 12 project clinics on 'outreach days' in accordance with agreed delivery timetables, where an increased range of healthcare services is available to clients.
3.5 RH and MPT provide ongoing mentoring and support to 48 staff members at 12 project clinics.

Output 4: An enabling environment is created in the wetland catchment and its communities to support the long-term realisation of biodiversity conservation and the human rights to health, water, decent work and to decide if, when and with whom to have children.

4.1 ICF runs a one-day training session on the process of community-supported environmental byelaws governing soil and water conservation practices for 20 local council leaders; and provides ongoing mentoring afterwards.
4.2 ICF runs a one-day training session on climate smart agricultural services with five agricultural extension workers on climate-smart agricultural services; and provides on-going mentoring afterwards.
4.3 RH and MPT run a six-day training session on family planning skills, with 25 Ministry of Health clinical staff; and provide on-going mentoring afterwards.

Cross-cutting activities

X.1 All partners participate in inception meeting, regular project management and M&E meetings, and closeout meetings.
X.2 LSHTM, with the support of all partners, undertakes baseline, end-line, focus group discussions, and respondent driven sampling interviews.
X.3 All partners promote the project, and disseminate evidence and learnings at various fora and events.

Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the **correct template** (checking fund, scheme, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and **deleted the blue guidance text** before submission?	Yes
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to BCF-Reports@niras.com putting the project number in the Subject line.	No
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please consider the best way to submit. One zipped file, or a download option, is recommended. We can work with most online options and will be in touch if we have a problem accessing material. If unsure, please discuss with BCF-Reports@niras.com about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	Yes
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	Yes
Have you provided an updated risk register? If you have an existing risk register you should provide an updated version alongside your report. If your project was funded prior to this being a requirement, you are encouraged to develop a risk register.	Yes
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see Section 16)?	N/A
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	Yes
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	Yes
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	