



**BIODIVERSITY  
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



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

### Half Year Report

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

**If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.**

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

**Please note all projects that were active before 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025 are required to complete a Half Year Report.**

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

<b>Project reference</b>	30-019
<b>Project title</b>	Building resilient landscapes and communities for Rukiga's cranes and wetlands
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Uganda
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Margaret Pyke Trust ( <b>MPT</b> )
<b>Partner(s)</b>	International Crane Foundation (" <b>ICF</b> "); Rugarama Hospital (" <b>RH</b> "); and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (" <b>LSHTM</b> ").
<b>Project Leader</b>	Kathryn Lloyd
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR3
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<b>Website:</b> <a href="https://margaretpyke.org/environment/projects">https://margaretpyke.org/environment/projects</a> <b>Twitter:</b> @MargaretPyke @savingcranes @TheEWT @LSHTM <b>Facebook:</b> @MargaretPykeTrust @InternationalCraneFoundation @EndangeredWildlifeTrust @RugaramaHospital

**1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end of September).**

**Activity 1.2 & 1.5:** Work has continued on the distribution of our 'integrated messages flipchart' to our trained Conservation and Health Mobilisers. Mobilisers have now taken over leadership of the delivery of community talks within project sites as part of our exit strategy to keep knowledge within communities after project end. Planning has also commenced on refresher training for the mobilisers, to strengthen this process, taking place in the next period.

**Activity 1.4:** During this breeding season, ICF ringed 6 additional chicks. Of these, 5 have been resighted through fixed route surveys and routine monitoring by custodians.

**Activity 1.6:** Partners have reviewed and revised the communications strategy to include the use of mobile loudspeaker announcements (advertising project activities taking place nearby on certain days) which have significantly increased turn out at community events and health clinics.

**Activity 2.5, 2.6 & 2.7:** All 16 Conservation and Health Groups received capacity building on basic economic skills, conservation (including Grey Crowned Crane and wetland conservation), and climate-smart agriculture. The trained peer farmers are actively supporting individual members to adopt these practices at the household level. The integrated land use demonstration sites and three mushroom demonstration sites are performing well and attracting significant interest from both group members and the wider community. Visitors are observing and replicating various sustainable agriculture and conservation practices on their own farms, effectively extending the project's impact beyond the initial 498 trained members to the broader community.

**Activity 2.8:** ICF established two nursery beds and distributed 33,723 Calliandra seedlings to 80 farmers and 7,350 Grevillea seedlings to 122 farmers in the previous reporting period, successfully meeting and exceeding the distribution target. During this reporting period, the intervention continues to generate spillover impacts as beneficiary farmers actively share cuttings and seedlings with their neighbors. This community-led propagation is organically extending the reach of the planting materials beyond the original 202 beneficiaries, amplifying the interventions impact across the wetland catchment. The three rehabilitated Napier grass nurseries remain well-maintained, with distribution planned for the next reporting period.

**Activity 3.3:** RH and MPT ran a six-day USHAPE sexual and reproductive health training for 12 project staff and health centre staff, in addition to running a five-day training for new trainers to support the delivery of future USHAPE training and mentoring. These 10 new trainers replace those who have left the hospital to take up posts in other health facilities (see section 2 re 'USAID cuts').

**Activity 3.4 and 3.5:** RH have supported 21 project clinics on monthly 'outreach days' in accordance with agreed delivery timetables, and provided staff with ongoing mentoring and support. A total of 3,902 received healthcare services, of which 488 were for family planning services.

**Activity 4.1 and 4.2:** Leaders received guidance on implementing environmental bylaws with a focus on enforcement strategies and community engagement in previous reporting periods. Five agricultural extension workers were also supported to attend hands-on training sessions outside the district to broaden their knowledge. During this period, ongoing support continues as leaders apply the existing environmental bylaws in their communities and the trained extension workers disseminate the knowledge and skills gained to farmers across the wetland catchment.

In addition, we have undertaken a number of 'cross-cutting activities' including:

**Activity X.1:** Partners have continued to collaborate on matched funding applications to enhance the scope of the project, responding to community need (specifically around maternal health and community-based trainers), in line with our fundraising plan. Partners also meet online each month to provide updates on activities and to identify opportunities for collaboration.

**Activity X3:** MPT promoted the project at events including those held in Bonn, Germany, as part of a "roundtable" at the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SB 62) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (June) and as the focus during an International Conference on Family Planning webinar on midwives and climate change (August).

**2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

Unexpected positive developments (secured through matched funding) include:

- Community capacity building: At least 1,200 community members benefited from training on basic economic skills, conservation (including health and wetland conservation), and community health, delivered by community-based trainers.
- Mushroom demonstration sites: Each of the 3 mushroom demonstration sites received a 3,000-litre water tank to support production activities.
- Girls' sanitation facilities: Two girls' washrooms were upgraded with handwashing facilities and each equipped with a 2,000-litre water tank.
- Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) sites: The 6 CSA demonstration sites received water tanks to enhance irrigation and site productivity - 4 sites were equipped with 3,000-litre tanks and 2 sites with 20,000-litre tanks.

Unexpected negative developments include the devastating USAID cuts that have impacted project supported health centres, in particular in relation to staffing, which has also had implications for fundraising and resource mobilisation:

- Staffing: All health facilities in Uganda have been affected by USAID cuts, including those Darwin supported health centres and our project partner, Rugarama Hospital, which saw some staff losing their jobs overnight (those in posts directly funded by USAID). Although this didn't directly affect staff paid for by the Darwin Initiative, what did affect our project team was the sudden departure of some staff, as they resigned in order to take up higher paid government jobs, which were set up soon after the USAID cuts by the Ugandan Government in a rush to backfill these vacant positions. We have dedicated much time this period to retraining staff (especially those USHAPE trainers we lost) and mentoring staff to minimise impact and ensure project delivery remains unaffected.
- Fundraising and resource mobilisation: As USAID previously funded the distribution of vital medicines in Uganda (family planning, malaria, diabetes, TB, vaccines etc.), there have been significant stock outs of some vital medicines. Project partners met regularly, discussing issues as they arose and mobilised quickly to secure matched funding to ensure that healthcare services paid for by Darwin Initiative have been able to continue undisturbed (without the need to divert some funds from service delivery to medicine purchase, which was what we thought might need to happen to ensure services continued uninterrupted).

**3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?**

Discussed with NIRAS:

No

Formal Change Request submitted:

No

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

No

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

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

Actual spend: £ [REDACTED]

**4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2026)?**

Yes ☐ No ☒ Estimated underspend: £

**4c. If you expect an underspend, then you should consider your project budget needs carefully.** Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

**If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible, and not later than 31<sup>st</sup> December. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes to your project if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.**

**NB:** if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

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

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

No thanks

**6. Project risk management**

**6a. If your project has an Overseas Security and Justice assessment, please provide an update on any related risks, and any special conditions in your award paperwork if relevant for your project.**

N/A

**7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent Annual Report. As a reminder, all projects that were scored as 'Not Yet Sensitive' in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment of their latest Annual Report should demonstrate how they are meeting the minimum GESI-Sensitive standard.**

We had four comments in our last annual report but the reviewer requested we respond to them in our next annual report, not this half year report.

## Checklist for submission

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