

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

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

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2023

Project reference No	30-026
Project title	Conserving biodiversity through community engagement in Gaurishankar Conservation Area, Nepal
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal
Lead partner	NTNC - National Trust for Nature Conservation
Partner(s)	-
Project leader	Dr. Madhu Chetri
Report date and number (e.g., HYR1)	31 October 2023, HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	

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

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

Progress is outlined below based on the key milestone during this period (April to September) as in the project implemented timetable. Bold denotes activities that we aimed to undertake during this period.

0.1 Enhance the national and local capacity in mountain biodiversity conservation in Nepal through trainings, and awareness programme

1.1 Survey and monitoring training (Camera traps, GPS, data punching) to selected communities' members

Survey and monitoring training were held on September 29, 2023, at the Conservation Area Management Committee (CAMC) in Kalinchowk. The training provided community members (30 participants, 22M, 8F) with skills to use camera traps, GPS, and data recording techniques. The project has also purchase 47 set of camera traps for future biodiversity survey and monitoring.

1.2 Leadership and advocacy training to CAMCs, FMSCs and Mother groups on biodiversity conservation and its significance

One unit of Leadership & advocacy training was held on September 30, 2023 at CAMC, Kalinchowk. This program aimed to improve leadership skills, build advocacy, and promote biodiversity conservation. Sixty-four participants (43M, 21F) participated in the training. Different case studies and success stories were shared. Topics covered included the working modality of Conservation Area, legal framework, CAMC and Conservation Forest Management

Subcommittee (CFMSc) roles and responsibility. Participants gained knowledge about conservation laws and regulations.

1.3 Support to bachelor's and master's students in research and trainings

The project has funded eight bachelor and master's students (4M, 4F) from government-affiliated universities to conduct research on avifaunal, fish, herpetofauna, human wildlife conflicts, floral diversity, and medicinal and aromatic plants. The grants aim to fill the biodiversity data gap in GCA, enhancing students' skills and promoting research.

1.8 Trainings on behavioural change and attitude towards wildlife conservation (community level)

A training project was conducted in collaboration with the CAMC, Laduk on 21st September, 2023 aiming to manage human-wildlife conflict by introducing different methods. Altogether, 68 participants (32M, 36F) participated in the training sessions. The trainings focused on behavioural change and attitudes towards wildlife conservation, raising awareness about threats like habitat loss and climate change. It encouraged sustainable practices and reduced conflicts, empowering communities to actively participate in conservation efforts. The key to training is engaging the community in future conservation endeavours.

0.2 Establish biodiversity database and maintain corridors and connectivity

2.1 Conduct status research of megafauna (snow leopard, Himalayan wolf, common leopard and prey species, musk deer and Himalayan Tahr)

The Himalayan wolf, a unique species in the Himalayas, is facing rapid population decline due to habitat loss, fragmentation, and human-wildlife conflict. A grant has been provided to assess the status of wolf. The findings of this research will be crucial for developing effective conservation strategies for the Himalayan wolf.

0.3 Enhanced co-existence between humans and wildlife through awareness, revived traditional methods and implementation of mitigation strategies

3.2 Conduct awareness programmes on human wildlife conflicts at community level, especially targeting issues relating to retaliatory killings

The awareness program was conducted in CAMCs of Laduk, Marbu, Chilankha, Khare, Giddhesalleri, and Thadi from September 16 to 23, 2023, focusing on human-wildlife conflicts and retaliatory killings. The program was based on crop raiding and wildlife depredation data, aimed to address root causes of conflicts, find sustainable solutions, and prevent retaliatory killings. Program involved workshops, seminars, awareness campaigns, and community engagement sessions.

3.4 Training to encourage and support locals to continue traditional methods (shouting, beating drums and metal pots, installing scare crows, fire balls etc) against crop depredation

The program aims to train local people in Bigu rural municipality on controlling human-wildlife conflict using traditional scaring techniques. On September 24th, 2023, 74 (38M, 36F) participants attended the training session. The training is culturally relevant and aims to empower communities with the skills to use these methods.

3.5 Support on construction of predator proof coral/cattle shed

The construction of a predator-proof coral/cattle shed is a vital step in mitigating human-wildlife conflict and protecting livestock from predators. The project has completed the design and identified the high depredation sites. The identified farmers households will be supported in the 3rd & 4th quarters.

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.

Lesson learned:

As the project area has difficult geographical terrain and livelihood depending solely on agricultural activities, therefore gathering of participants for meeting, workshop and trainings is difficult. So, to overcome this well pre-planning and operative schedule will be implemented meticulously in the future.

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:

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e., from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)

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 2024)?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

4c. If yes, then you need to 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. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes 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 BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

NONE

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**