



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

Half Year Report

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2025

Project reference	31-006
Project title	Equitable Responses to Illegal Wild Meat Hunting in Tsavo, Kenya
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Kenya
Lead Organisation	Zoological Society of London (ZSL)
Partner(s)	Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association (TTWCA), Tsavo Trust (TT), University of Wyoming (UoW), Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI)
Project Leader	Gurveena Ghatare
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2 31st October 2025
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.zsl.org/conservation/regions/africa/kenya-conservation-work Twitter: @ZSLAfrica

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).

Output 1 Activity 1.1: Completed in Y1 (Refer to Annual Report 1)

Activity 1.2: Regular snare patrols with TT to remove threat and provide data on snaring trends and monitoring trends

Tsavo Trust maintained consistent de-snaring patrols across Tsavo West National Park (TWNP), with a focus on the Intensive Protection Zone (IPZ) and southern sectors. Patrol teams Tembo 5, 6, and 9 demonstrated strong operational coverage despite funding constraints, completing 183 patrol days each and covering 12,156km, 17,609km, and 16,033km respectively. The de-snaring results revealed varying snaring pressure across zones: Tembo 5 recovered 41 snares, Tembo 9 recovered 180 snares, while Tembo 6, operating in the park's central area, encountered none. Wild meat recovered included 25kg of dik-dik and waterbuck meat, and a total of seven dik-diks and one waterbuck were confirmed poached using the lamping method. Monthly de-snaring and arrest reports, alongside detailed patrol maps and snare GPS data continue to provide valuable insights into hotspots and habitat coverage across diverse ecological zones ranging from dry woodlands to riverine forests (Annex 1, 1a, 1b).

Activity 1.3-Activity removed in the log frame following DEFRA feedback.

Activity 1.4 - In collaboration with KWS, conduct quarterly outreach meetings to build positive people-park relationships and educate communities on penalties and fines prescribed by Wildlife Act 2013.

ZSL, in partnership with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and the Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association (TTWCA), continued to conduct quarterly community outreach meetings across the Makueni and Taita Taveta project sites. In Makueni County, meetings were held in Nthongoni, Kathekani, and Mtito Andei, engaging over 470 participants from hotspot villages. In Taita Taveta County, similar sessions in Njukini, Mwakitalu, and Kamtonga reached over 350 community members. The gatherings brought together key stakeholders, including KWS officers, Assistant County Commissioners, Chiefs, TTWCA, ZSL, and Tsavo Trust representatives. Discussions focused on the Wildlife Act (2013), highlighting penalties for offences such as illegal hunting, possession or trade in wild meat and trophies, and trespassing in protected areas. The sessions also addressed the health risks of wild meat consumption, including exposure to zoonotic diseases such as anthrax, brucellosis, and Ebola, while encouraging poultry, goat, and fish farming as safer, sustainable sources of protein. Each meeting concluded with participants reaffirming their commitment to working closely with KWS, ZSL, and partners to reduce wild meat hunting and trade in their communities. Evening video shows were also

organized in Mtito Andei and Nthongoni to emphasise anti-bushmeat messages through the screening of a film on bushmeat, which received strong community participation and positive feedback (Annex 2, 2a).

Output 2 Activity 2.1&2.2: Completed in Y1 (Refer to Annual Report 1)

Activity 2.3 Develop culturally sensitive, targeted messaging to discourage wild meat use, aligned with local values and motivations identified in 2.2, highlighting negative impacts of wild meat.

Significant progress was made in developing and rolling out the Behaviour Change Campaign (BCC), which focuses on promoting culturally sensitive and targeted messaging to discourage wild meat use. The process was highly participatory and community-driven, led by a Behaviour Change Consultant hired by ZSL to design and guide the entire process—from formative research to training and campaign development. The consultant began by reviewing the data collected through the project's baseline survey on drivers behind wild meat hunting and consumption, which he used as a basis to delve deeper during focus group discussions (FGDs) in May 2025 across wild meat hotspot villages. During FGDs, community members contributed ideas and locally relevant slogans, which became the foundation for the campaign's messaging themes. Building on these insights, the consultant facilitated larger co-design and validation meetings in June 2025 (details in Annex 2, 2a), bringing together community representatives, local leaders, and government officials. These sessions provided an opportunity to refine and validate the proposed messages, delivery channels, and visual approaches to ensure they were relatable and acceptable to diverse audiences. Using this feedback, the consultant developed the campaign strategy, implementation plan, and monitoring and evaluation framework, followed by delivery of a joint training for ZSL and TTWCA to strengthen their capacity to deliver the campaign effectively. ZSL and TTWCA began implementation of the campaign in August, which involved finalising the messaging framework and communication channels to be used including radio talk shows, roadshows, school outreach and visual materials (Annex 3, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d).

Activity 2.4: Run monthly programs on community radio stations and quarterly community outreach meetings to raise awareness of wild meat trade impacts and Wildlife Act 2013.

The campaign was launched through radio talk shows on Ene FM, a popular local station with wide coverage across Makueni and parts of Taita Taveta counties. In Makueni, the campaign featured live radio shows that allowed community members to call in, share experiences, and ask questions. The sessions were highly interactive and well received, with discussions focusing on wild meat-related health risks, wildlife laws, and the need for alternative livelihoods. The first three episodes reached an estimated 800,000–900,000 listeners per show, according to Ene FM's audience data. Each session generated strong engagement, with 135–286 SMS messages and several call-ins received within a five-minute slot. Listener feedback described the programmes as "very good" and "educative," with many appreciating the open dialogue and clear explanations of wildlife laws and penalties for wild meat possession. The recordings have also been shared on Ene FM's YouTube and Facebook platforms, extending their reach beyond live broadcasts to over 892 people. In Taita Taveta, our partner TTWCA produced pre-recorded radio talk shows that will begin airing in October. In addition to the radio activities, the campaign expanded into school outreach engagements through the Tsavo Conservation Education Programme implemented jointly by ZSL and KWS. The school programme was designed to reach young learners in hotspot villages and equip them with knowledge about wildlife conservation, the dangers of wild meat consumption, and the legal penalties outlined in the Wildlife Act. The sessions used interactive storytelling, role play, and short cinema screenings showing the dangers of wild meat handling and its link to zoonotic diseases. So far, the initiative has reached 7,020 learners and 364 teachers across 26 schools, sparking lively classroom discussions and influencing positive attitudes both in schools and households. As the campaign continues to build momentum, preparations are underway to produce additional campaign materials such as posters, infographics, and branded items that will be used in hotspot community roadshows planned for October (Annex 4, 4a).

Activity 2.5: Support KWS to convene quarterly stakeholder meetings on emerging conservation challenges including bush meat trends and engage stakeholders to create synergy in resolving identified challenges.

ZSL and TTWCA supported KWS to convene two quarterly stakeholder meetings in June and July to discuss emerging conservation challenges, particularly wild meat trends, and to strengthen coordination among landscape partners. The June meeting, held in Voi and attended by 16 representatives from KWS, local administration, Tsavo Trust, TTWCA, and ZSL, focused on sharing updates from ongoing project activities. Members also reviewed the BCC FGDs findings on wild meat behaviour change messaging and suggested refinements to make the health and food safety messages more relatable to communities. The July stakeholder meeting, held at the Tsavo West Education Hall, brought together a broader representation of 46 partners, including KWS, ZSL, Tsavo Trust, TTWCA, WRTI, the National and County Governments, the Offices of the Senator and MP, and community representatives. The meeting provided a platform for partners to share progress on various interventions—ranging from behaviour change campaigns and VSLA group formation to conservation education and desnaring patrols. Stakeholders acknowledged the progress made in addressing wild meat challenges and commended the integrated, multi-sectoral approach. Participants also called for

stronger youth engagement in conservation through mentorship, social media campaigns, and school-based programmes, noting that youth remain central to reducing wild meat hunting pressures (Annex 5, 5a, Annex 13).

Activity 2.6 - Completed in Y1 (Refer to Annual Report 1)

Output 3 Activity 3.1- 3.3: Completed in Y1 (Refer to Annual Report 1)

Activity 3.4 Monitor, support and coach established VSLAs to track their performance and progress including collecting monthly data on number of shares purchased.

The project team continued to provide close monitoring, mentorship, and coaching support to all established VSLAs across the two project sites. These follow-up visits aimed to strengthen group governance, promote regular savings and loan repayments, and ensure transparent record-keeping. The activity also focused on collecting monthly data on share purchases, assessing group performance, and addressing emerging challenges that could affect group sustainability. A total of 20 VSLA groups (437 members, 319F, 118M,7PWD) were actively supported during the reporting period, from Nthongoni, Kathekani, Mtito Andei, Maktau, and Njukini. The groups demonstrated commendable progress in cultivating a strong savings culture and responsible loan management. From April to September, the groups cumulatively saved KES 1,341,350 (~£7,798 GBP) and took 739 loans worth KES 1,281,065 (~£7,448 GBP). Women accounted for more than 70% of the borrowers, underscoring the model's positive contribution to women's financial inclusion and empowerment. Members used loans primarily for farming, petty trade, school fees, and household needs, with several reporting tangible benefits such as improved farm productivity and increased ability to meet family expenses. In addition to financial tracking, each visit integrated awareness sessions on safeguarding, gender inclusion, and the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) to promote members' rights and ethical conduct (Annex 6, 6a).

Activity 3.5 Provide training and resources for other income-generating activities identified during 3.2.

Between May and October 2025, the project team implemented a series of trainings and assessments to strengthen community capacity in income-generating activities identified through earlier consultations. The process began with Business Model Canvas (BMC) training, held in May for VSLA groups (320 participants, 249F,71M, 6PWD). The sessions introduced the concept of viewing their preferred livelihood options as business enterprises rather than subsistence activities. Using the BMC framework, participants analysed different value chains—including goat, sheep, and poultry rearing based on profitability, market potential, risk, and their ability to reduce reliance on wild meat. Each household then selected one enterprise for focused support under the project. Following this, the project then conducted 'livelihood needs assessments' across all VSLA groups to

better understand existing practices, challenges, and capacity gaps in the chosen enterprises. Goat rearing emerged as the most dominant livelihood option, selected by over 70% of participants due to its adaptability, market demand, and nutritional value. Sheep and poultry farming were also identified as promising but underdeveloped enterprises, while smaller numbers of participants opted for beekeeping and animal feed distribution. Common challenges identified included limited technical knowledge, poor feeding practices, inadequate housing, and limited access to veterinary and extension services. These findings informed the design of tailored training modules for each enterprise. In September and October, the project, in collaboration with the County Departments of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries in Makueni and Taita Taveta counties, delivered a comprehensive training on livestock husbandry and enterprise management for VSLA members across both sites (437 members, 299F, 138M,6PWD). The training combined theoretical lessons with hands-on demonstrations covering animal selection, feed formulation, housing design, pest and disease control, record keeping, and business development. These demonstrations equipped participants with practical skills to improve livestock productivity, health, and profitability. The training also emphasized commercialization and market linkages, encouraging participants to adopt collective marketing strategies through VSLA networks and cooperatives. Participants reported improved knowledge of livestock management at the end of the training, with average pre- and post-test scores increasing from 0% to 76 % among participants in Makueni and from 12 % to 94% among participants in Taita. The next phase of this activity will be the distribution of start-up resources which is scheduled for November 2025 (Annex 7,7a, 7b, 7c,7d,7e,7f,7g,7h,7i, Annex 13).

Activity 3.6, 3.7 (not in this timeframe)

Output 4 - Output 4 and associated activities have been removed following the most recent approved change request (CR25-068).

Output 5 Activity 5.1 Implement park-wide camera trap surveys to estimate the distribution, occupancy, and status of large carnivores and their ungulate prey, including proportions with snare-related injuries.

Between May and September, ZSL, in collaboration with University of Wyoming and KWS, conducted a large-scale camera trapping survey across Tsavo West National Park (9,000 km²). The survey aimed to estimate the distribution, occupancy, and status of large carnivores and their prey species, as well as the prevalence of snare-

related injuries and the impacts of ongoing de-snaring efforts. Using a systematic grid design (5x5km), approximately 80 camera traps were deployed each time across southern, central, and northern park zones, each operating for around 30 days before relocation. The survey collected ~3.5 million images (including false triggers) over 3,377 camera-trapping days (i.e. days in which the cameras were actively operational in the field). The cameras recorded key large carnivore species—lion, leopard, cheetah, spotted hyena, and African wild dog—alongside major herbivores such as zebra, eland, giraffe, and oryx. Data classification using the AI-based “TrapTagger” software is ongoing. Once completed, we will conduct occupancy analysis and produce a comprehensive report on species distribution, abundance, and snare-related injuries (Annex 8).

Activity 5.2 Conduct line transects using distance sampling to measure ungulate densities and distribution.

Line transect surveys were conducted across Tsavo West National Park to estimate the density and distribution of key ungulate species that serve as prey for large carnivores using distance sampling method (Annex 9). This data will be used to evaluate the prey's response to de-snaring efforts carried out by our partners, KWS and Tsavo Trust. We anticipate a positive correlation between prey densities and de-snaring initiatives. Annex 9 presents the densities of various species that had sufficient sightings for the distance sampling analysis during the monitoring period from April to September. Among these, zebra and hartebeest exhibited the highest average prey densities with 8 individuals/km² and 2 individuals/km², respectively. Zebras constituted most of lion kills (49%, n=19). We recorded two zebra snare-related cases in Luallenyi ranch (southern part of TWNP).

Activity 5.3-5.6 Delayed due to delays in obtaining a capture permit from KWS. Refer to section 2 below.

Activity 5.7 Use visual observations and camera trap images of known animals to quantify variation in lion numbers and demography over time and space.

GPS-collared lion prides (ID 8528, 8529, 8530, and 8531) were monitored weekly to determine the prides' demographics and check for any snare-related cases. One case of injury was reported from one of the females from pride 8529; however, the cause of the injury was unknown, and we could not ascertain if it was snare-related or not. Since the collaring occurred between September and December 2024, these collars have generated ~20,000 GPS fixes, providing an understanding of the prides' movements and home ranges (Annex 10).

Activity 5.8 This will commence next quarter following changes agreed in the recent change request (CR25-068).

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.

Over the last six months, the project has encountered several challenges that have impacted its timeline and ultimately required the submission of a change request in September. These challenges have been detailed in depth in the recent change request (CR25-068), which has now been approved by Defra. Another challenge we experienced was the delay in obtaining the animal capture permit from KWS for output 5. Two permits were required to undertake activities 5.3–5.6: a research permit from the Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI) and an animal capture permit from KWS. While the WRTI research permit had been secured earlier, the KWS capture permit faced delays due to lengthy approval processes. However, by the time of preparing this half-year report, we are pleased to report that the capture permit has now been successfully obtained, and we shall proceed with the planned activities in November 2025.

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

Discussed with NIRAS:	Yes
Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes

Change Request reference if known: **CR25-068**

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

Actual spend: £ XXXXXXXXXX

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

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

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

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

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

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures? **No**

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

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.

Yes, we received Defra's request for additional information regarding our OSJA, the project team reviewed the associated risks and submitted a detailed response addressing human rights considerations linked to de-snaring patrols with Tsavo Trust and KWS. The response outlined our risk assessment, mitigation measures, and justification for the assigned risk rating. For full details, please refer to Annex 12- email correspondence with Defra (dated 23 May 2025), which provides a comprehensive update on our OSJA assessment and related safeguards.

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.

Feedback from our AR1 requested that the project report on the status of approval for collaring African wild dogs, and indicate any expected changes to outputs, outcomes, or the log frame if approval was not granted. However, we are pleased to report that by the time of preparing this report, the capture permits had been obtained, as explained in Section 2 above.

Checklist for submission

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