



**BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects

Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus

Half Year Report

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

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

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2025

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

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	DAR31009
Project title	Fostering human-wildlife coexistence in a biodiversity hotspot in southern Guinea-Bissau
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Guinea-Bissau
Lead Organisation	University of Exeter (UK)
Partner(s)	Institute for Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP, Guinea-Bissau) ONG Palmeirinha (Guinea-Bissau) Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Portugal) Centre for Research in Anthropology (CRIA, Portugal)
Project Leader	<i>Dr Kimberley J. Hockings</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	27/10/2025, HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	<i>www.cantanhezchimpanzeeproject.com</i>

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 Enhanced understanding of the drivers of human-wildlife coexistence, including conflict levels

Data collection for Output 1 is progressing well. All data are being collected by four DPOs and 10 DFOs using the KoboToolBox suite, which enables **the near real-time progress monitoring** by the DRF (Dr Elena Bersacola). A report outlining the data collection progress overall and specifically in each focal community was written up by two IBAP DPOs and shared with all project partners in September 2025.

Refresher training on socio-ecological data collection tools (Kobo, GPS, cameras) and field strategies (grid-based camera deployment, timeline, questionnaires) was conducted by the DRF for the field team (DPOs and DFOs) in May and June 2025. **Camera trap deployment** to monitor human-wildlife interactions began in March 2025 and was completed in June 2025, with a total of 102 camera traps installed across five focal chimpanzee communities. Additionally, three camera traps were set up in a separate area within Cantanhez following three incidences of chimpanzee attacks on children occurring between February and May 2025. These were installed to identify the demography of individual chimpanzees roaming in the area, which is typically infrequently used by chimpanzees. Camera trap monthly checks and data retrieval have commenced, and so far, 21 medium-large sized mammals have been identified within the dataset by the DPOs. **Plant phenology** data collection started in April 2025, with monthly monitoring of 23 wild plant species (from 855 individual plants) and 10 cultivated species (from 355 individual plants) known to be consumed by chimpanzees. Implementation of a short **questionnaire** to monitor human-wildlife interactions, based on local reports of direct sightings, vocalisations, and observations of wildlife signs, has also begun across the five chimpanzee communities. So far, 353 questionnaires have been implemented (N July=80, N August=96 and N September=177). In cases of reported negative interactions, such as crop damage or wildlife attacks, more detailed **interviews and participatory mapping** are conducted. Questionnaire data will be used to quantify the frequencies and types of interactions over time in relation to changes in wildlife behaviour, ranging patterns, and the availability of wild and cultivated food resources (**Indicator 1.2, DI-C08**). Assumptions still hold.

Output 2 Strengthened biodiversity conservation capacity through improved multi-stakeholder understanding of laws and regulations and the establishment of a systematic conservation surveillance system

The **systematic terrestrial conservation surveillance protocol** (CS Protocol) was fully drafted in Y1 and partially implemented in Y2Q1 (**Indicator 2.2**). In May 2025, the DRF presented the results of the spatial analysis of forest loss between 2000 and 2024 (**Indicator 2.1**) and the CS Protocol to 28 stakeholders during the Cantanhez Management Council meeting.

In preparation for the implementation, the DRF presented and discussed the new patrolling strategy with eight guards and the management staff (Park Director and Vice-Director). Training in data collection using KoboToolBox was provided to park guards and management staff by IBAP's GIS team and the DRF in April and May 2025. Baseline data on the technical capability of eight park guards to conduct terrestrial patrols were collected in May 2025 (**Indicator 0.2**). Further baseline data questionnaires will be administered to assess additional indicators of capability and capacity to conserve core areas in Y2. These data will inform the design of subsequent training sessions for the broader conservation surveillance team planned for Y2.

Full execution of the CS Protocol is planned to coincide with the implementation of the **new Cantanhez National Park Management Plan (CNP-MP)**, expected in 2026. The development of the new CNP-MP was led by external consultants with the participation of key stakeholders, including IBAP and our project team. Throughout Y2Q1-2, the DRF (Dr Elena Bersacola), Project Leader (Dr Kimberley Hockings) and local researcher DFO (Mamadou Cassamá) have continued to engage with key stakeholders, including IBAP, local representatives, and the consultant team responsible for the CNP-MP. The DRF and PL contributed extensively to the

revision of the new Management Plan by sharing up-to-date data, refining conservation zone boundaries, improving clarity in conservation regulations, and ensuring the inclusion of a gender-responsive strategy to enhance women's participation in park management. In total, the DRF and PL commented on three versions of the CNP-MP.

The new CNP-MP contains a **revised patrolling strategy** considering financial and logistical components, including time allocation of available park staff for different MP activities. The DRF and IBAP are in the process of revising the CS Protocol for it to align with the CNP-MP and ensure its long-term sustainability. The new CNP-MP also contains **new regulations and borders for conservation zones** for CNP. Once the CNP-MP is finalised and data are shared, full training for the surveillance team under the new regulatory framework can commence (**Indicator 2.3**). See **Section 2** for anticipated changes to **Indicators 2.4** (conservation rules outreach) and **2.5** (patrolling time and coverage).

In April-May 2025, IBAP's Head of the Department of Protected Area Conservation and Governance (João Sousa Cordeiro), IBAP's General Director (Aissa Regalla de Barros) and the DRF met to outline a new approach for building local capacity in terrestrial surveillance data processing and GIS-based analysis. This **new approach aims to strengthen in-situ capacity for near real-time detection of illegal activities** (**Indicator 0.2**). It was agreed that the **Darwin team** would support Cantanhez as a **pilot site** for this strategy, with a view to scaling it up across all national protected areas following evaluation.

In June-July 2025, the DRF began training the CNP Vice-Director and developed a **workflow protocol for data visualisation and processing in QGIS and reporting strategy**. This protocol will be finalised by the end of Y2 and prepared for national scaling-up in Year 3 (Y3). Assumptions still hold.

Output 3 Co-developed and community-led sustainable livelihood initiatives

Progress in Y2Q1-2 towards this Output has focussed on the co-development of two sustainable livelihood initiatives across 10 villages (**Indicator 3.2**). The two initiatives are: (1) **Sustainable Vegetable Gardens**, and (2) **Tree Nursery and Reforestation Leaders**, both of which involve women's groups collaborating in community gardens and tree nurseries.

Throughout Y2Q1-2, Palmeirinha DPOs continuously engaged with communities across the selected villages, carrying out **22 meetings** with 300 women, as well as village chiefs, youth association representatives and local men who volunteered to contribute knowledge, land and/or labour. At each meeting and activity, basic information (n of participants, sex, age, etc) and notes of discussions and decisions made are collected by Palmeirinha DPOs for M&E. **Group outings for seed and seedling collection** in forest areas began with 11 groups of women, involving 12 outings with between 5 and 17 participants each. Initiative members have also begun opportunistic seed collection. Data to monitor plant collection, development and survival in tree nurseries are collected using KoboToolbox. To date, over 1700 seedlings and seeds from 16 wild tree and liana species have been collected and are being maintained in temporary community nurseries. In addition, more than 350 saplings and seeds from seven cultivated tree species have been added to these nurseries. The selection of permanent tree nursery sites for each women's group is underway, with nursery preparations scheduled to begin in November, at the onset of the dry season.

In September 2025, 23 initiative members from across six villages participated in reforestation activities led by IBAP and carried out in degraded core forest areas.

The **Memorandum of Understanding** (evidence for **Indicator 3.2**), outlining the initiatives' objectives, the roles and responsibilities of partners and local communities, and the implementation timeline, has been drafted by the DRF and will be finalised with initiative members and partners in Y2Q3. Palmeirinha's expertise in environmental education and sustainable development will support social mobilisation and knowledge-sharing, including

overseeing external trainers and facilitating peer learning between villages through exchange visits, mentorships, and local training hubs. IBAP's involvement is essential for community-led reforestation, providing technical training from seed collection to reforestation, using the park headquarters nursery as a training site and engaging with community nurseries to offer expert guidance. IBAP will also work with women to select reforestation sites and implement planting activities. By combining IBAP's expertise with the active participation of women and other community members, the initiative will strengthen stakeholder relations and promote women's leadership in conservation.

A document outlining the strategies and implementation plans for both initiatives is also being developed. This builds on documentation from the co-development process and initial activities.

Training needs identified through consultations during Y1–Y2 will be addressed in Y2Q3–Y3Q2 (**Indicator 3.3 DI-A04**), coinciding with the vegetable garden and tree nursery & reforestation cycles.

Assumptions still hold.

Output 4 Building national expertise and promoting collaborative processes in conservation decision-making

The DPO training programme (**Indicator 4.1**) continued in Y2. From 2 to 4 April 2025, three DPOs received training from IBAP staff (GIS technicians Eliseu Benante and Samuel Ledo Pontes) on the use of drones for land cover monitoring, which included hands-on practice in operating the equipment. In May 2025, a new Palmeirinha DPO, Rosa DaSilva Cabral, was recruited to replace Euclides Gonçalves Monteiro, who obtained a scholarship to pursue a Master's degree in Portugal. The DRF trained Rosa in social science data collection using qualitative methods, essential for the development of initiatives under Output 3, as well as in biological and social data collection methods and tools used in socio-ecological research (Output 1), including camera trap deployment and maintenance, plant phenology monitoring, GPS use, and KoboToolBox.

Refresher training was provided to all DPOs by the DRF in May and June 2025, covering the full implementation of socio-ecological research, including data visualisation, processing, and summarisation. The DRF continued to mentor DPOs throughout Y2Q2, supporting the coordination of activities and research teams, as well as scientific report writing. In June 2025, all four DPOs enrolled in an interactive online English programme for Portuguese-speaking students (K.Education). In August 2025, the DPOs also enrolled in an online course on Project Planning for Wildlife Conservation organised by the Western Chimpanzee Action Plan Implementation Committee.

The new CNP Management Plan introduces a revised structure aimed at strengthening collaboration with local communities (**Indicator 4.5**). Management will be decentralised into four units to maximise participation and better address area-specific challenges and needs. Regular meetings will be held within each of the four areas and will incorporate new approaches, including the development of mini action plans, to ensure that issues raised by community members lead to concrete follow-up actions. This new structure provides a valuable opportunity to build trust and reinforce cooperation among stakeholders.

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

The revised Management Plan is expected to have a positive impact on both biodiversity conservation and human wellbeing in CNP. The Darwin team has contributed substantially to its development, including through data sharing (land use analysis, mammal distribution, abundance and conservation status) and by participating in several rounds of revisions to the plan. These contributions have helped ensure an evidence-based approach to conservation planning and that the rules are clearly defined to facilitate effective communication to park residents. We have ensured that the plan incorporates an active strategy to enhance women's participation in conservation.

The new CNP Management Plan (CNP-MP) and the associated Action Plan for its implementation were finalised at the end of September 2025, providing us with the opportunity to align the project's targets (indicators) and strategies. This will facilitate the long-term sustainability of key surveillance system components, including terrestrial patrols and the communication strategy. In doing so, we anticipate requesting amendments to the logframe for two indicators:

Indicator 2.4 Increased stakeholder access to co-designed, audience-targeted information on the boundary zones, and rules and regulations of each conservation zone in at least 800 households across 80 villages, with access to information evaluated in 150 households (baseline: established in Y1 via semi-structured interviews with 150 households. Project target 50% of respondents across 150 households in 10 villages report increased access to sources of information on rules/regulations by end of Y3Q3).

Changes expected: Timing and number of villages. The delivery of information on the new rules and boundaries of conservation zones is planned to start in 2026 and involve outreach activities in 63 villages. This means that we may need to change the wording from 80 to 63 villages and move the evaluation period to Y3Q4.

Indicator 2.5 A terrestrial conservation surveillance system is implemented and evaluated across CNP (baseline zero as no systematic terrestrial conservation surveillance is implemented). Project target: surveillance system covering 540 km², 80% of the terrestrial accessible land (660 km²), see *Figure 2b*, patrolled every 3 months by Y2Q3. Surveillance system fully evaluated by end of Y4Q1.

Changes expected: Zone-based priority coverage. The new CNP-MP and its implementation Action Plan prioritise two of the three conservation zones for terrestrial patrols, namely, the core zones and buffer zones. The patrolling strategy, based on a grid design and outlined in the CS Protocol, will be updated by the end of Y2Q3. It is possible that, following the adjustment of conservation zone boundaries, the total area covered every three months will differ from that currently stated in the indicator.

As IBAP is still developing a more detailed implementation timeline (the current Action Plan outlines annual activities from 2025 to 2034), no formal changes will be requested at this stage. We will review progress over the next six months and anticipate submitting a change request by the end of Y2.

We contacted NIRAS by email on 25 April to enquire whether changes to the logframe were required for Outputs 1 and 3, specifically relating to timings and sample sizes. NIRAS replied that our queries would be attached to the Y1 annual report and forwarded to the reviewer for consideration as to whether a formal change request was necessary. As per subsequent email communication with the BCF administrator, we were waiting to hear if any of the proposed adjustments required formal approval. We plan to submit a formal change request by the Y2 annual report, once the indicators have been aligned with the new Management Plan and a revised timeline has been formulated.

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, email sent on 25 th of April 2025 (see above)
Formal Change Request submitted:	No, planned to be submitted by end of Y2
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	NA
Change Request reference if known: <i>If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome</i>	

Guidance for Section 4: The information you provide in this section will be used by Defra to review the financial status of projects. This review will identify projects at random for spot checks on financial management and will include requests for evidence of the actual spend information provided below. Please ensure the figures you provide are as accurate as possible and that you have the evidence to support it. You do not need to provide it now.

<p>4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)</p> <p>Actual spend: [REDACTED]</p>
<p>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)?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Estimated underspend: £</p>
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.</p> <p>NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.</p>
<p>5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</p> <p>Suspensions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk</p>
<p>6. Project risk management</p> <p>6a. If your project has an Overseas Security and Justice assessment, please provide an update on any related risks, and any special conditions in your award paperwork if relevant for your project.</p>

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.

The Y1 Annual Report Review provided the following feedback:

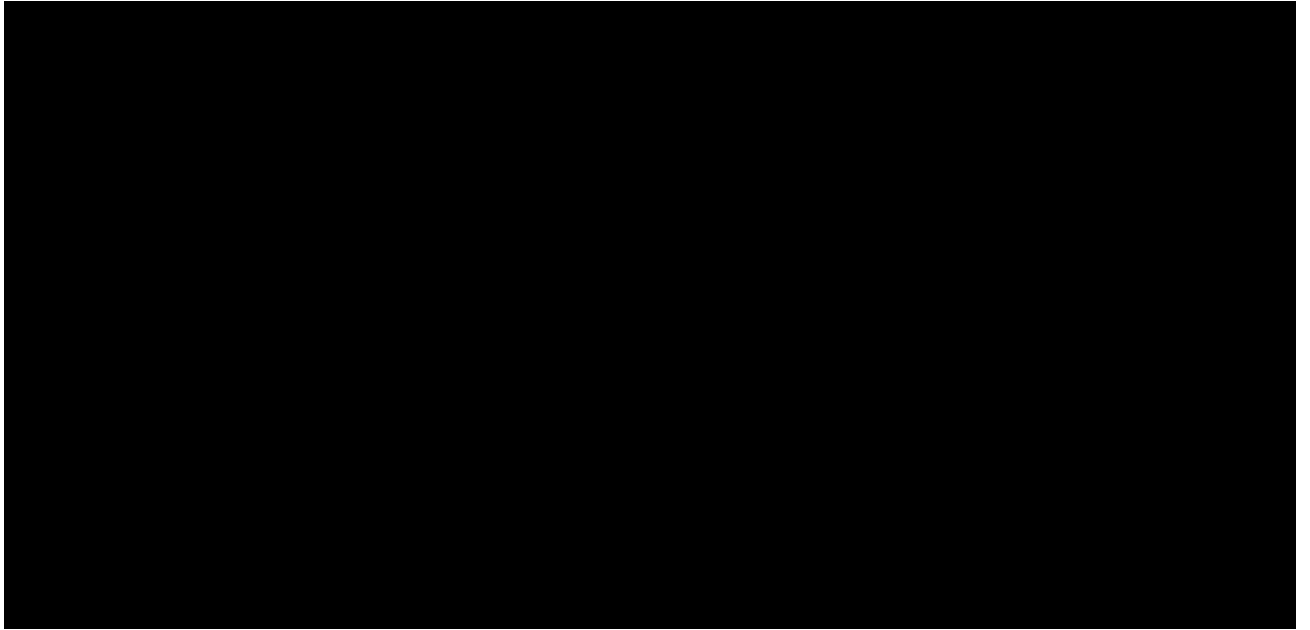
The policy found on <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/safeguarding/> is not suitable for the international aid context. Please describe how the project will adopt a policy that specifies protecting all stakeholders from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. If another policy is in place please provide a copy.

Please describe how project participants and other stakeholders are made aware of the complaints and feedback response mechanism.

The risk register needs improvement by providing specific mitigations to ensure all stakeholders to prevent and protect people from SEAH.

Ensure that 100% of staff have adequate protection from SEAH training. Provide details of the training and updated numbers and percentages of staff trained.

All project staff employed in the field (DPOs and DFOs) are contracted through our partner organisations, IBAP and Palmeirinha, both of which have established safeguarding and code of conduct policies. These policies explicitly prohibit verbal and physical violence, sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment, and discrimination, and apply to all staff and interns. The project operates under these partner safeguarding frameworks. All staff are made aware of the codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms as part of their recruitment and induction processes. Copies of both organisations' **safeguarding policies** and **codes of conduct** are available and can be provided upon request.



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.	X
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	X
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	X
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	X
Submit to BCF-Reports@niras.com	X
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	X