



**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	31-013
Project title	Habitat restoration, sustainable conservation for Niger Delta red colobus monkey
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nigeria
Lead Organisation	SW/Niger Delta Forest Project
Partner(s)	Rewild; Apoi Community Conservation Association; Apoi Community Development Committee; Partners for Red Colobus (Forest Collective)
Project Leader	Rachel Ashegbofe Ikemeh
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	28 th November 2025 (HYR2)
Project website/blog/social media	@swnigerdelta

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).

Towards output 1: An cumulative area of 1020ha have been established and designated as Gbanraun Community Conservation Area (657ha) and Kokoloama Community Conservation Area (363ha) areas and since from September to November 2025, they have been registered on the ICCA registry <https://www.iccaregistry.org/> and World Database of Protected Area (WDPA) <https://www.protectedplanet.net/>. The boundaries of these sites have been demarcated on ground and community rangers are regularly on patrol enforcing the comminsl laws protecting the site.

1.2 In the Apoi Community Conservation Area (ACCA), there has been 3 incidences of illegal logging which was discovered early and stopped by the community rangers. These incidences occurred in July and August and have led us to find solutions to improve on protection. Firstly, we have installed two rangers 21m high patrol post in two strategic locations of the forest to allow for early detection of illegal activities.

2.1 A total of 33 persons have been trained and engaged in habitat restoration efforts in the 2 local communities i.e. Gbanraun and Kokoloama are engaged in seed gathering, air-layering and raising an estimate 6,000 seedling on a monthly basis. The specific species of trees in this

tree planting efforts are *Irvingia gabonensis*, commonly called bush mango seeds and *Garcinia kola* which are important economic trees for the people and the wildlife. Also, *Prioria mannii* which is an important food tree of the Niger Delta red colobus monkey and one of the chief factors that informed the species' restricted range in this Marsh forest but unfortunately it has extinct in Gbaraun and Kokoloama forest thus reason why replanting is very critical. All three plant species are listed as either Near threatened or Vulnerable on the IUCN red list. Tree nurseries have been constructed In the communities and 8 staff called tree guardians recruited working alongside with paid adhoc staff to produce 4000-6000 seedlings monthly. No trees have been planted yet.

3.1. We have been engaging with the Bayelsa State government together with the community particularly with the technical adviser to the Governor on Entrepreneurial Development but progress has been slow. In the meantime, we are working closely with the community leadership to renovate the schools, and they have agreed to recruit teachers while we support with teachers' salaries pending when there is government support for it. We have also completed the construction of solar-powered borehole water projects in both communities with a capacity to store 10,000 litres of portable water. Since we made provision for healthcare facilities and monthly salary payments of two certified healthcare workers in Apoi community through a prior project grant with another partner organization, we are working with Gbanraun and Kokolama communities to find the best way to harmonize the healthcare provision for all three communities.

3.2. We have been trying to engage productively with both Bank of Industry especially through the Bayelsa chapter of SMEDAN <https://smedan.gov.ng/> including the government of Bayelsa State through the technical adviser to the Governor on Entrepreneurial Development but no concrete progress in this regard. This sort of slow progress is not unexpected. In the meantime, we have provided training in financial literacy, agri and fishery product sustainable harvesting, processing, preservation, packaging, marketing and branding on order to boost sales and profits for local-based MSMEs. So far, the trainees also receive technical support from us to constitute themselves into cooperatives that are now currently into diverse businesses such as vegetable, locust beans and peeled beans dehydration. fish, snail, periwinkle (i.e. brackish water snails), cassava and plantain processing, packaging, marketing and branding. This only commenced this November and impact will be monitored and measured in subsequent months.

4.1. The two focus communities in this project have successfully developed and enacted communal laws to govern the management of the community conservation area.

4.2. There are plans in place to facilitate a species action plan workshop in mid-2026.

4.3. Following a successful public forum organized in March 2025 to discuss the importance of policy to protect wildlife, we submitted a 42-page document in July 2025 which condenses the discussions and recommendations made during this public forum to the Bayelsa State House of Assembly and we have since been following up on the progress/attention given to the subject matter.

4.4. Radio show was launched in September 2024, and there has been some landmark events in the State that can be linked to be influenced by this public awareness tool.

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 slow progress we have experienced on every front of government engagement with regards to partnership in enhancing local livelihood of the communities through infrastructural development and boosting MSMEs in the communities, though seemingly not outside of the ordinary was still unexpected for us. Nearly 200 families have benefited from our support, so we still expect to meet our target by project end.

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/ No

Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes/ <u>No</u>
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes/ <u>No</u>
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.

Socio-economic baseline assessment has been completed. The complete report and analysis will be submitted as part of annexes during the next Annual report.

List tree species being raised and planted have been provided in section 1 of this report and underlined for emphasis.

Update on SME piloting and learnings have also been shared in Section 1 and 2 of this report.

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