



**BIODIVERSITY  
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



## Projects funded by the Biodiversity Challenge

Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus

### Half-yearly report

This report is expected to be a maximum of 2 to 3 pages.

If the report contains confidential information that you do not want shared on our website, please be sure to clearly indicate this.

Submission deadline: October 31, 2025

Please note that all projects that were active before October 1, 2025 are required to complete a semi-annual report.

Send it to: [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) with your project reference in the subject line.

Project reference	31-014
Project title	Community Engagement for the Conservation of Mount Béro
Country/ territory (ies)	Republic of Guinea
Main organization	Birdlife International
Partners)	Guinea Ecologie
Project Manager	George Ilebo
Date and number of report (e.g. HYR1)	2025 HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	<a href="https://radioenvironnementguinee.org/archives/9179">https://radioenvironnementguinee.org/archives/9179</a>

**1. Describe the progress made over the past 6 months (April to September) against the agreed project implementation schedule (if your project started less than 6 months ago, please report from the start to the end of September).**

Although we are not seeking specific reporting on your indicators, please take this opportunity to review the adequacy of your monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report on your standard indicators, are your assumptions still true?). Guidance is available on the resources page of the relevant fund's website.

The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) systems in the log frame are generally appropriate, featuring SMART indicators that align with key conservation and community development objectives and indicators that effectively measure biodiversity conservation, stakeholder engagement, and sustainable agriculture, and are cross-referenced with established Darwin Initiative Project standard indicators.

Since key assumptions, such as political stability, stakeholder engagement, and data availability, are still relevant and crucial for project success, the project team continually monitored the situation by conducting regular reviews of the MEL framework, implementing ongoing stakeholder feedback mechanisms and a risk management plan to address potential challenges. Overall, maintaining flexibility and adaptability in the MEL systems has been vital for navigating changing circumstances.

**Output 1: Multi-stakeholder engagement and governance structure for Béro Classified Forest.** Five Community Advisory Committees, consisting of 15 members each (10 men and 5 women), were established in the Koropara, Lainé, Womey, Boola, and Foubadou communities. Notably, two of these committees are chaired by women, specifically in the Koropara and Lainé communities. As a result, Community Advisory Committees have now been established in all 25 villages surrounding Mount Béro. In addition, 79 leaders (56 male and 23 female) comprising of Community Advisory members and Presidents of local communities from the 25 villages were trained on participatory governance, conflict management, local resource mobilization, and community conservation. Following this training, the participants developed internal regulations and designed local action plans centered on three priority areas: conservation, awareness raising, and conflict resolution. Each committee was provided with registers to record meetings and decisions.

**Output 2: Sustainable agriculture livelihood interventions implemented in 10 adjacent villages benefitting 1,500 people, while facilitating knowledge transfer and capacity building to extend these sustainable practices beyond the targeted villages.** Ten village groups have been formed in Kabieta, Foozou, Saadou, Manghana, Tokpata, Kpinita, Mananko, Boola, Saoulo, and Lomou. Twelve participants—comprising five males and five females from the local communities, along with one representative from the CFZ and one from Guinée Écologie—completed a one-month Training of Trainers (ToT) on modern market gardening, banana cultivation techniques, compost production, organic fertilizer production, tree nursery establishment and management, animal prophylaxis, and vegetative propagation. Each ToT participant will train ten additional members in their village to facilitating knowledge transfer and capacity building to other local community members. In addition, local agricultural tools, including boots, gloves, machetes, motor pumps, sprayers, wheelbarrows, shovels, and rakes, were provided to the 10 villages to support sustainable agricultural production.

**Output 3: 100 ha of degraded areas in Mount Béro Classified Forest and in direct periphery (within the buffer zone) actively restored using native/endemic trees, 10 ha under piloted Assisted Natural Regeneration, and more than 7,000 socio-economically valuable tree species planted in the surrounding areas.** Assisted Natural Regeneration was piloted on 10 hectares in Kabieta village, resulting in the planting of 5,200 tree seedlings. This included 4,000 seedlings of native species (*Carapa procera* and *Heritiera utilis*) and 1,200 seedlings of socio-economic value, such as *Garcinia kola*, *Beilschmiedia mannii*, *Terminalia superba*, and *Xylopia aethiopica*. These species are well-adapted to Mount Béro and are listed on the IUCN Red List. These species were planted alongside cocoa and palm oil trees to promote integrated ecological restoration, reconciling biodiversity conservation with improvements in local livelihoods. In addition, a local community monitoring system has been established in Kabieta village, where volunteers living near the reforested site are assigned specific areas to monitor for threats. This initiative, led by the local advisory committee and the district president, reflects a strong commitment to preserving reforestation efforts.

**Output 4: Increased awareness of 7,500 community members on the ecosystem services provided by Mount Béro through participatory analysis and educational programs.** To understand and value the ecosystem services of the Mont Béro Classified Forest, a workshop was held to introduce the Toolkit for Ecosystem Service Site-Based Assessment (TESSA). The workshop aimed to raise awareness of provisioning, regulating, and cultural services while equipping participants with the necessary tools for measurement and interpretation. Designed as a participatory process, the workshop attracted 44 participants, including 29 males and 15 females, comprising village advisory committee members, local authorities, and community representatives. Together, they assessed the ecological, social, and economic contributions of Mount Béro. As a result, preliminary data on floristic composition, water quality, and resource availability were collected, fostering understanding of the links between agricultural practices and forest conservation.

**Output 5: Success stories and evidence-based interventions are widely disseminated in the Guinée Forestière region and the wider Guinean Forests of West Africa (GFWA) biodiversity hotspot.**

An online database has been established, and all CFZ and GE reports, files, maps, georeferenced photographs, and awareness videos have been uploaded. Additionally, during the 30<sup>th</sup> International Primatological Society Congress held in Madagascar in July 2025, the project's participatory governance model was showcased as a best practice in community conservation, while the ecological inventories conducted in partnership with the L'Occitane Foundation that confirmed the presence of chimpanzees in Mount Béro, were also highlighted, underscoring the biological importance of the site.

**2. Provide details of any notable issues or unexpected developments/lessons learned that the project has encountered over the past 6 months. Explain the impact these might have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and schedule of project activities.**

The following are the challenges and lessons learned over the past six months.

- a) **Simbamou village youth refusal** to continue their collaboration with Guinée Écologie and the N'Zérékoré Forestry Center (CFZ), stemming from rumors of land dispossession spread by a local resident, temporarily slowed down activities in the area. However, the overall project schedule was not significantly impacted. The project addressed the issue by strengthening its awareness-raising efforts and systematically involving customary authorities in local negotiations. This incident highlighted the crucial importance of effective communication and grievance redress mechanism.
- b) **Variable germination rates:** Community nurseries exhibited highly variable germination rates, ranging from 62% to 95.6%, due to differences in substrate quality, shade, and water availability. These discrepancies prompted Guinea Ecologie and CFZ to enhance technical supervision and recommend exchange visits between high-performing and low-performing villages to share best practices.
- c) **Bushfires:** Recurring bushfires around Mont Béro pose a persistent threat to survival of planted trees in restoration sites. This situation has reinforced the necessity of training communities in fire management and participatory forest monitoring to mitigate these risks.
- d) **Community monitoring initiative:** The village advisory committee initiated a community monitoring system, involving residents near the forest boundary. This spontaneous approach demonstrates growing ownership of the project and will be integrated as a pilot model of environmental governance.
- e) **Multi-stakeholder collaboration:** The collaboration between Guinea Ecologie, CFZ, Kew Gardens, and the National Herbarium of Guinea has facilitated the expansion of planting and research activities, including the planting of 1,200 socio-economically valuable tree species (*Garcinia kola*, *Beilschmiedia mannii*, *Terminalia superba*, and *Xylopia aethiopica*). This synergy exemplifies the effectiveness of the multi-stakeholder partnership model advocated by the project in leveraging resources.

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

Discussion with NIRAS:	Yes
Official change request submitted:	Yes
Confirmation of acceptance of the modification received:	Yes
Change request reference if known: CR24-077	

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

**4a. Please confirm your actual expenditure during the current financial year (i.e. from 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025)**

Expenses real: £

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

Yes ☐ No ☒ Estimated underspending: £

**4c. If you anticipate underspending, you must carefully consider your project's budgetary needs.** Remember that any funds agreed for that fiscal year are only available for the project during that fiscal year.

**If you anticipate significant underspending due to justifiable changes within the project, please submit a budget change request as soon as possible, and no later than December 31st. There is no guarantee that Defra will accept a re-budget, so 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 anticipate underspending, do not claim more than you expect to spend for that financial year.

**5. Are there any other issues you would like to raise regarding the project or the FBC's management, monitoring or financial procedures?**

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

None.

## **6. Project Risk Management**

**6a. If your project is subject to a foreign security and justice assessment, please provide an update on the associated risks and any special conditions in your grant documents, if applicable for your project.**

Not applicable

**7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided during your project confirmation or your most recent annual report. As a reminder, all projects that were rated as "Not Yet Sensitive" in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment of their most recent annual report must demonstrate that they meet the GESI-Sensitive minimum standard.**



## Submission Checklist

Have you responded to the <b>comments made during your last review of the annual report?</b> You must respond to section 6 and attach any other requested documents, if applicable.	Yes. The comments on section 7 of the annual report have been addressed.
Have you submitted reports based on the most <b>recent information for your project</b> ?	Yes
Have you <b>clearly highlighted</b> confidential information in the report that you do not want shared on our website?	There is no confidential information
Include your <b>project reference</b> in the subject line of the submission email.	Yes
Submit to <a href="mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com">BCF-Reports@niras.com</a>	Yes
Please ensure that claim forms and other communications for your project are not included in this report.	Yes