

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	DARCC017
Project title	Strengthening a leading NGO for conservation and development in Senegal
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Senegal
Lead partner	The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Partner(s)	Association Nature Communautés Développement (NCD) BirdLife International
Project leader	Wenceslas Gatarabirwa
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/ social media	Not available yet

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).

In April 2023, RSPB, NCD and BirdLife International held an online event to formally launch the project and its implementing started in earnest. NCD proceeded with the appointment of three senior staff who are tasked to work on the Darwin project at 50% of FTE each. Despite the change of project leader at RSPB and political unrests in Senegal [see section 5 below], all the partners are hopeful that all activities for the project will be back on the track by the end of the first year.

NCD's financial management system assessed by RSPB: From the 7th to 11th August the Project Leader and Finance Management Adviser from the RSPB visited NCD for five days, hosted by in-country Project Lead and worked with NCD staff working on the project for four days at NCD HQ and one day hosted by BirdLife International at “*La Maison de la Conservation*” in Dakar. An audit spot check performed at NCD offices, which shows the funds are being spent appropriately. A follow up review of some additional paperwork will be completed post visit before the final audit spot check report is finalised.

NCD supported to improve and develop its finance procedures and staff trained:

Following the first visit to Senegal to assess the infrastructure in place, it was agreed that a combination of online training and regular visits to Senegal, consultant's services won't be required. Instead, part of this budget line will be repurposed to fund capacity development on the conservation team of NCD (change request to follow).

Purchase of new accounting and HR software for NCD: A new accounting and HR software purchased and installed during the reporting period. Mrs Ndiaye is very familiar with the use of the software and she's capable to train other staff who will have a need to use it.

Recruitment for three new senior positions at NCD to build staff capacity:

Three well qualified staff were recruited in April 2023 to strengthen the senior staff at NCD:

- Mrs Diakhère NDIAYE, Finance & Admin Manager
- Miss Ramatoulaye DIALLO, Conservation Manager
- Miss Thérèse Fadieye NDIAYE, Monitoring Manager

All three new colleagues were employed full time, with 50% allocated to delivering this project.

Training on safeguarding and communication.

The Finance & Admin Manager, Mrs Diakhère NDIAYE was appointed by NCD as their chief safeguarding officer. She is assisted by the CEO in this role. The training material from BOND (UK) and BirdLife was supplied. A review to update NCD’s safeguarding policy and procedures will be completed in Q4.

In September, RSPB recruited an outreach officer who’s also capable to deliver communication training in French. Once his inductions are completed, coaching and mentoring sessions with NCD’s communication team, will start in January 2024.

NCD staff develop communications and training materials for members and staff.

This activity is yet to be started due to the delay in finding the right capacity at RSPB through recruitment of the Outreach Officer. This will start in Q4.

Establishment of a new pôle of NCD in the Ferlo savannah region.

Negotiations between NCD and traditional leaders, youth leaders and local government officials to establish the latest pôle of NCD to coordinate LCGs in the area are progressing well. If all goes well, the Pôle Ferlo (incl. Koyli Alpha LCG) will be launched before the end of year 1.

Establishment of new Local Conservation Groups (LCGs) at IBAs/KBAs.

NCD’s Conservation Programme and Executive Director’s teams are actively working with the six existing pôles across Senegal to establish new LCGs around IBAs and KBAs. It is too early to estimate how many groups will be fully fledged by the end of the project in March 2025.

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.

Senegal suffered serious political unrests during the months of June and July 2023, following the jailing a leading opposition leader and subsequent dissolution of his political party. NCD and BirdLife teams kept working often remotely to avoid travelling to work, and the original visit by RSPB’s team in late June was delayed until early August.

Mr Paul Insua-Cao’s (original Project Leader) employment with the RSPB ended on 30th April 2023. Paul has continued to advise the project in a private capacity and negotiations are progressing to secure his input to the project for about 2months a year as an independent consultant. A change request will be submitted in due course.

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: DIR29CC/1190 ie DARCC017(Change of Project Leader)

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: £

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

According to FCDO Travel Advice, *political demonstrations are likely to increase in the run up to presidential elections in late February 2024. These demonstrations usually take place in Dakar and other major cities; and occasionally they can turn violent.* We will continue to monitor how the situation evolves. However this will make early booking to save money on flights for RSPB staff to travel to Senegal in Q4 challenging.



IMAGE 1: Opening slide of the Online Launch Ceremony for the Project

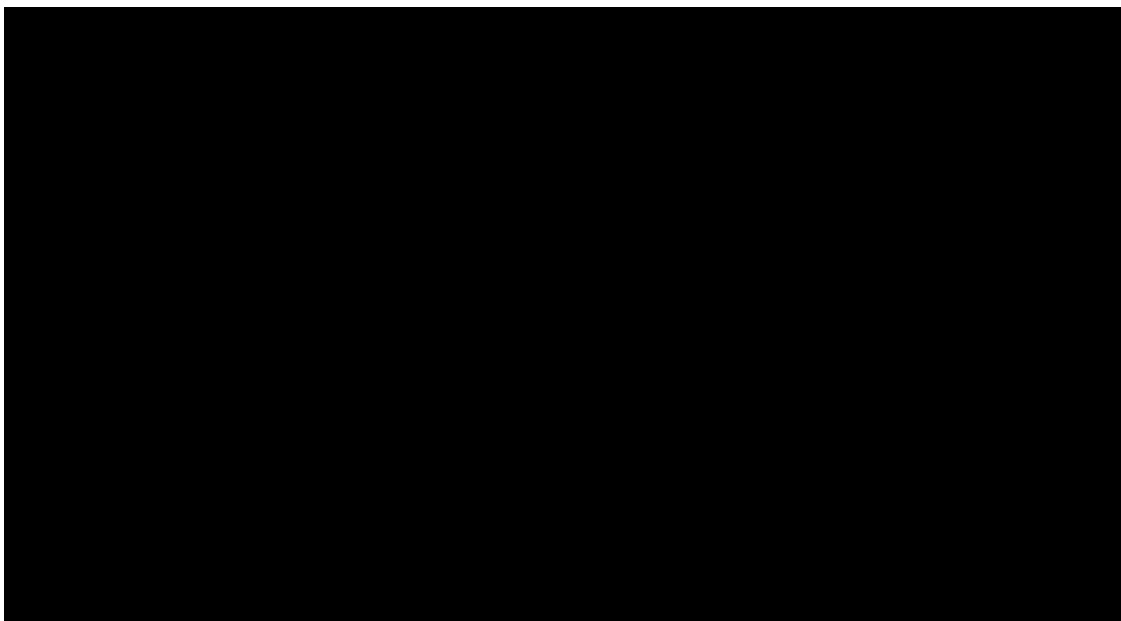


IMAGE 2: Current Project personnel as of 30th September 2023