



**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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025**

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

**Submit to: [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line.**

<b>Project reference</b>	DARCC017
<b>Project title</b>	Strengthening a leading NGO for conservation and development in Senegal
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Senegal
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Association Nature Communautés Développement (NCD) BirdLife International
<b>Project Leader</b>	Wenceslas Gatarabirwa
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	31 October 2025, HYR3
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://ncdsenegal.org/projet-darwin/">https://ncdsenegal.org/projet-darwin/</a>

**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).**

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

***Output 1. NCD stronger as an institution through improved financial management and governance, and greater capacity***

**Financial management**

Significant progress has been made towards stronger financial management during the past 6 months. 25% of NCD's financial data from the previous financial system has been transferred to the new system TomPro. The data migration was planned to be completed by the end of June 2025, but was delayed whilst the NCD Finance team, assisted by TomPro consultants, were setting up and testing the coding system to handle large datasets for the next 5-10 years. The full migration will be completed by 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025 and NCD will continue using the TomPro software as part of its routine financial management processes. With the TomPro updated, a financial audit can take place and a certificate is expected to be issued to NCD annually by the end of May.

The updated financial management manual is almost ready, with the exception of some minor refinements. The final version will be approved at the meeting of the Executive Committee (COMEX) taking place on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2025. It should be noted that the COMEX meeting involves the Board, Staff and Heads of Poles and is the main governance meeting of NCD outside the AGM.

One full day of training on the new financial management guidelines was provided to NCD staff including at least 1 representative from each NCD pole. In total, five men and six women were trained and regular but shorter refresh sessions will be organised alongside NCD management meetings.

**Sustainable financing strategy**

On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 a workshop was held between staff of NCD and the BirdLife International West Africa Sub-regional Office (WASRO) to develop a sustainable financing strategy for NCD. The document has been drafted and is in a final stage of consultation. The final version will be presented at the COMEX meeting. It should be noted that this can be considered a working document and will provide input into the NCD updated institutional strategy which will be approved and put into force in early 2026.

**Institutional strategy**

An online meeting with leaders of poles was held in early July to launch the consultation for the development of the institutional strategy. This followed visits from the President of NCD (Col. Adboulaye DIOP), in his acting CEO capacity, to the Committees of all the Poles, except Ferlo, during August and September to explain the vision and explore priorities to be included in the new strategy. A few weeks' window is now open for Poles to input into the drafting of the new NCD strategy. The resulting strategy will be signed off and implementation commence by the end of Q1 2026. It should be noted that a finalised new institutional strategy was not a planned output of this project, but the project has been contributing to its preparation.

***Output 2. NCD is taking a lead in building capacity in Senegal for identifying and monitoring KBAs and promoting stakeholder involvement from national to grassroots levels***

**IBA monitoring**

A setback to project progress arose due to the departure of the IT/Communications Officer whose position was replaced in September 2025 (see Section 2). NCD has been reviewing BirdLife's IBA monitoring guidelines and the new IT/Communications Manager has been

working with the Conservation team to update the database with new fields to incorporate the monitoring of threats to sites and conservation actions.

Training on updating the BirdLife IBA database has been provided to NCD by both BirdLife and RSPB staff. One IBA (Niayes) has been updated, which includes 2 sites that are monitored by NCD. IBAs in Senegal are very large and monitoring of hotspots within them is the best practical approach. Updates for two more IBAs which comprise 5 more sites are in process.

### **Training of Local Conservation Groups**

A capacity-building workshop for the Bailla GLS on bird monitoring and identification is planned for December 2025. This co-funded activity is part of the Black-tailed Godwit Protection project in partnership with VBN and BLI.

### **KBA assessments**

A KBA assessment process was undertaken at Lac de Guiers – a large IBA which comprises two sites monitored by NCD; Tocc Tocc and Lac de Guiers. The proposed boundary is expanded from the original IBA to include Koyli Alpha, another site monitored by a Local Conservation Group recently set-up by NCD. A list of potential KBA trigger species including birds, reptiles and mammals has been identified. The final report is still under review and the results of the survey have been used to complete a KBA assessment form, which will be reviewed by the KBA National Coordination Group (see below).

NCD is supporting the formation of a National Coordination Group (NCG) for KBAs in Senegal, following the project's KBA training workshop in February 2025, comprised of the many of the workshop's participants. A structure of the NCG and representation have already been proposed, comprising a Steering Committee (NCD supporting government bodies), Scientific Committee (more academic bodies) and Implementation Committee (including NCD and other NGOs). NCG will present KBA assessment data to the NCG and seek approval prior to submission to the World Database on KBAs, following the preferred process recommended by the KBA Secretariat. NCD will prepare data for two more assessments in addition to Lac de Guiers using currently available data to present to the NCG. The establishment of an NCG goes beyond the expected results within the project time frame and the successful engagement of the Senegalese government in the KBA process as a result of NCD advocacy is a commendable output of this project.

### **Annual report on site monitoring**

A report has been drafted covering outputs of the last two years of site monitoring by NCD. This is currently under review and revision and will draw from the above.

### **Output 3: NCD can better demonstrate effective involvement of local communities in support and deriving benefits from IBAs/KBAs**

A comprehensive Ecosystem Service Assessment was conducted at the Technopole site (more formerly known as La Reserve Naturelle Urbaine de la Grande Niayes de Pikine et Dépendances). A validation workshop is planned in partnership with the technical services. The next steps will consist of advocating for greater protection of the site. NCD intends to be involved in the implementation of the Reserve's Development and Management Plan, particularly in the bird monitoring, administration and the promotion of ecosystem goods and services through the NCD Local Conservation Group.

A 20-minute film was produced by a film maker from Dakar compiling footage of interviews with local people and local officials of two sites; Tocc Tocc and Technopole. The RSPB is currently supporting to recompile the footage as two five-minute films, one for each site. Messaging will draw from the KBA assessment of Lac De Guiers for Tocc Tocc and the Ecosystem Services Assessment at Technopole.

**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 health situation of the previous NCD Executive Director didn't improve, with bouts of ill health continuing, and during June 2025 he stepped down from the role. The project continued to be implemented through the shared leadership of the 3 women who were recruited at the beginning of the project alongside their usual roles, whilst the RSPB further maintains regular contact with the President of NCD to monitor overall institutional health. As a result, a short no-cost extension to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025 was requested and accepted.

A recruitment process for a new Executive Director was conducted, with support from the RSPB, and a new Executive Director has just been recruited this month. This enables the Executive Director to be in place as the project comes to an end, provide input into the next strategy and carry forward with the work put in place by this project.

The previous IT/Communications Officer left NCD on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025 to take up another position. He remains in liaison with NCD as an NCD member and volunteer. His departure left a gap and delayed progress in implementation of activities around IBAs and KBAs. His position has since been filled and been upgraded to a managerial role overseeing Communications, IT and Data Management with a more qualified individual who started in early August 2025 and whose expertise will help to strengthen NCD in these areas.

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

Discussed with NIRAS:

No

Formal Change Request submitted:

Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

Yes

Change Request reference if known: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome*

**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.

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

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 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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?**

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

No

**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.**

N/A

**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 feedback to the 2025 annual report requested responses by the half year report to the following comments:

**Comment 6** *Provide an update on community engagement. Does this include informing communities and project participants about acceptable behaviour from project staff and how to raise concerns or give feedback on the project?*

The beneficiaries of this Darwin project are NCD staff, regular volunteers and leaders of regional Poles. They are all aware of the content of the NCD Safeguarding policy document, that outlines the code of conduct of NCD staff.

**Comment 7** *Provide a copy of the updated RSPB Safeguarding policy (HYR)*

The January 2025 update to the RSPB Safeguarding Policy is provided with this report.

## **GESI**

The previous annual report scored the project as Empowering under GESI.

Taken together, out of 34 leadership, management and officer positions at NCD, 17 are filled by men and 15 by women, with two vacancies to be filled. At national governance level, there are 4 men and two women and two vacancies. In the regions, there are 10 men and 4 women either president or secretary of poles. This trend is reverse when it comes to staff where 9 are women and three men as of 20<sup>th</sup> October 2025.

As well as the 3 senior managers of NCD, who are all women, and who have driven the project in the absence of the Executive Director, the newly recruited Executive Director is also a woman.

## Checklist for submission

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