



**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 2024

Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

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

Project reference	<i>DARCC029</i>
Project title	Strengthening capacities for biodiversity management in Thailand community's forests.
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Thailand
Lead Organisation	RECOFTC
Partner(s)	The Zoological Society London (ZSL)
Project leader	<i>Warangkana Rattanarat</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR2</i>
Project website/blog/social media	Project page on RECOFTC's website: https://www.recoftc.org/projects/biodiversity-management-capacities/about/about-biodiversity-management-capacities RECOFTC Thailand facebook: https://www.facebook.com/recoftcinThailand/ Citizens' Forest Database: https://thaicfnet.org/

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).

Overall progress:

The project was started its implementation in April 2023. This report covers the period of April to September 2024. In the last 6 months, the project implemented activities as table below. The activities that have no progress or were not conducted in this reporting period are not reported here.

Output	Progress
1.Capabilities built for improved policies and systems	
Activities	
1.1 Review and gap assessment of biodiversity elements within community forestry policies, regulations and procedures	Completed: The reviewed information was shared with the relevant stakeholders and inform the proposed action, which is to improve the elements in CFMPs.
1.3 Develop a guideline or framework on biodiversity conservation to CF management plan development proposed to the CF National Policy Committee	On Process 70%: Building on Activity 1.1, the proposed CFMP form is 70% completed, along with the draft manual for CFMP development guideline.
1.4 Organise policy dialogue between the CF NET leaders and the CF National Policy Committee and related line agencies (Royal Forest Department) to propose national guidelines on biodiversity conservation for CF management	On Process 70%: The policy dialogue will be organized in November 2024 to submit the form, along with recommendations for improving biodiversity conservation to the CF National Policy Committee in December 2024.
1.5 Improve www.thaicfnet.org to create functions for incorporating biodiversity data and its reporting system	On Process 50%: The information structure and wireframes for biodiversity data and reporting functions in www.thaicfnet.org were completely designed, and UI elements like buttons and menus are in progress. Mockups are being designed, with the next step to run an interactive prototype and testing.
Output 2: Community level capacities for biodiversity assessment, monitoring and reporting	
2.1 Initial rapid community assessment (including landscape mapping, biodiversity related capacity needs assessment, socioeconomic profile and documentation of existing CF fund structure and management practices) and community consultation (Day 1) and combined general biodiversity training for approx. 15 community members in each of 20 CFs (Day 2).	On process 80%: After the workshop was conducted in Year1 and the CDNA summary was completed, the individual socio-economic profiles for each community forest are still being finalized. Once completed, these profiles will support the development and implementation of each community's forest management plan.
2.3 Community biodiversity monitors trained in biodiversity survey methods (1 training) (ca. 40 CF members, 40% women) in Y1 and Y2, and apply biodiversity survey outputs directly into CF management plan	Completed 80%: The CF Master capacity development process includes four trainings. The first and second trainings were completed in Year 1. In Year 2, we conducted the third training on Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP) development across five regions in Thailand. Feedback from these sessions was used for improving the CFMP development manual. We will conduct the last training on monitoring in January 2025.
Output 3 Capacities built for improving livelihoods through sustainable biodiversity use	

3.2 Conduct business plan development workshops for at least 3-5 CFs to draft business plans related to biodiversity and scoping exercise in 3.1	Completed 70%: In Year 1, a study identified four potential business opportunities. While the initial drafts were completed, they still require community consultation. In this reporting period, there was no progress. The community consultation will be in January 2025 to finalize the business plans.
3.3 Facilitate meetings between potential private sector and CFs for at least 3 business plans to identify opportunities for investment and cooperation	Completed 15%: The private sector consultations will be conducted in conjunction with Activity 3.2. The business plans prepared by the CFs will be shared and exchanged with potential private sector to assess their interest and potential cooperation.
Output 4 Knowledge management and learning exchange	
4.1 Document learning process and experiences on biodiversity conservation from 30 target CFs	Completed 80%: Footages and photos of the CF Master capacity development process have been collected and video production was almost completed. The video will be finalized in early-October for using at the national knowledge exchange forum. It is expected to be published on RECOFTC Thailand Facebook page by 31 October 2024 and also disseminated through RECOFTC YouTube channel and RECOFTC regional Facebook page later. The video content will capture the CF Masters' key learning process and showcase their positive impacts on biodiversity management and conservation in Thailand.
4.2 Develop communication products based on 4.1 and dissemination plan for reaching wider CFs in Thailand	Completed 80%: Building on activity 4.1, the project has prepared summarized content and used some of the collected photos to produce roll up banners (for indoor use at events) and vinyl banner (for field visits) to explain the CF Master capacity development process in an easy-to-understand manner. They will be completed in early-October for using at the national knowledge exchange forum, where participants include representatives from other community forests and relevant governmental and civil society organizations. It is expected that these banners, combining with field visit experience, will introduce them to the concepts and process of the CF Master capacity development.
4.3 Conduct (1) national level knowledge exchange event for CFs in Thailand to learn from best practices in the target CFs	Completed 80%: The activity is scheduled for October 2024 and is currently in the coordination and inspection phase. Plans are underway to combine this event with a field visit at a pilot site at Prachuap Khiri Khun Province.
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.	
Lessons learnt/Challenges	
Key lesson learned from this project is that capacity building is at the heart of its success. Therefore, having an effective evaluation process is essential to identify	Impact This could limit the project's potential for continuous improvement and adaptation, reducing the overall effectiveness of its

gaps and track progress. Gathering feedback from participants in the training is crucial. The challenge lies in designing an evaluation method that accurately captures this feedback and ensures it directly addresses the areas that need improvement, providing the most relevant insights for further project development.	capacity-building efforts and hindering the long-term sustainability of its objectives.
A key challenge was the withdrawal of Nong Tao community forest in Chiang Mai due to internal conflicts among leaders, which led to a drop out from the process. Despite efforts by local civil society to mediate, the withdrawal occurred mid-project, making it impossible to replace the site. Leaders completed the learning process but couldn't finalize a community forests management plan without community support.	This led to the lower achieved targets. The conflict undermined local participation, delaying long-term goals for sustainable management and biodiversity conservation. While mediation efforts failed, the challenge offered important lessons on managing leadership conflicts and community dynamics for future projects.
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: NIRAS has approved by email on 08/03/2023 and on 10/10/2024.	

<p>4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)</p> <p>Actual spend:</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 2025)?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>4c. If you expect and 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. 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.</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 BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</p>

No other issue for this reporting period.

6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report. If your project was subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment please use this space to comment on any changes to international human rights risks, and to address any additional mitigations outlined in your offer letters. Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.

Responding to the annual report review year 1;

Feedback 1) Delay in Biodiversity information upload. The planned uploading of biodiversity information by the end of year 2 has been pushed to 2027.

Answer: It must be a typo of the year. It should be by the end of March 2025.

Feedback 2) How the capacity improvements are applied in CFMPs and how this will have a wider influence on conservation practices in the other CFs in Thailand and in neighboring countries.

Answer: The project integrates capacity improvements into Community Forest Management Plans (CFMPs) by training local leaders (CF Masters) to implement biodiversity conservation practices. This enhances forest management in 28 CFs and sets the stage for wider adoption across Thailand's 11,000 CFs and potential this can be a case study for sharing with neighboring countries. The CFMPs development manual will be translated into English as well, hence it can be used in knowledge sharing at regional forums.

Feedback 3) It would be valuable to have a stronger justification of the role that Output 3 has in supporting poverty reduction, given the need to incentivize communities to adopt new practices. It may also be useful to consider other sources of income for conserved areas, such as biodiversity or carbon credits.

Answer: The output 3 of the project seeks to enhance the economic value of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), creating new income streams for the communities involved. By identifying market opportunities and developing biodiversity-based business plans, communities are better positioned to generate income from forest products.

Feedback 4) Knowledge and Information Exchange for sustainability.

Answer: As concern about the sustainability and the plan roll out for year 2, we will document process of learning and cases of how communities can take a leading role in biodiversity conservation. I

Feedback 5) Staff Costs Overspend: There was a 43% overspend on staff costs in Year 1.

Answer: There are several tasks that need support from staff. Currently we requested for adjustment of budget reallocation for Year2, and it has been granted. We will be careful planning and close monitoring of staff time to prevent further overspending, ensuring that tasks are aligned with available resources.

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1st April 2024)

Have you responded to any additional feedback (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at	
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HYP (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	Yes
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	Yes
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	Yes
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Yes