

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	DARCC033
Project title	Marine Preservation & Coastal Poor Livelihood Betterment Through Sustainable Fishing
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Lebanon
Lead partner	Friends of Nature
Partner(s)	Ghadi
Project leader	<i>Myrna Semaan</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media	Insta: fonlebanon, X:@FONLebanon, fb:Friends Of Nature FON

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).

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E 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.

Under output 1:

In smart indicator 1.1, Friends of Nature has committed to design the first vocational course on sustainable fishing in the first 5 months of the project. The task is completed and the vocational course has been produced. We have prepared a formal curriculum for 4 days of intensive learning.

- The first two days focus on capturing biodiversity and ecosystem significance of marine environments, the importance of conservation as a tool for preservation of the marine living beings including the edible ones, sustainable fishing aspect and importance, the fish species of Lebanon,...
- Participants take away an assignment to practice making knots on hooks. For that, we provide them with a tool kit, and we developed instructive videos to guide them to train at home prior to the practical workshop days, which will save them time to concentrate on acquiring the fishing techniques and capture the information.
- We developed a set of information that will be provided to participants for guidance. These will be the first messages they will receive on their what's app group which combines the participants of one engaged location. The information includes: 1- a figure of the parts of fishing tools, 2- a figure of the types and sizes of fish permitted for fishing under Lebanese law, 3- a scanned copy of knowledge on fish types, and 4- the hook knotting videos. Whenever a participant needs to refer to any of this information will scroll to the beginning of the group conversation.
- For evaluation of the course material, FON held an internal course trial. The developers of the course material presented to the FON unit to test the level of information for

beginners, the clarity and usefulness of information and how the information serves the objective of the course and the learning of participants. Discussions were held to review the criteria and characteristics of the course material and recommendations were taken into consideration shaping the final version of the course.

In smart indicator 1.2, FON committed to connect within 6 months from the start of the project with at least 15 communities of the coastal poor who will be engaged on the project.

- In line with the methodology presented earlier, FON first started by contacting local authorities of municipalities and mayors in the coastal regions, then we progressed to inquiring about the most active local entities as known persons, active figures, local NGOs, and other. All the contacts are tabulated into an excel sheet with the necessary information on the level of engagement of the entity; this is an important guide for the level of effort we want to invest in order to support further follow up or search for new contacts in the target community.
- After initial meetings with stakeholders, FON also prepared a set of documents to help the contact entity have a description of the project in hand; thus, we prepared 1- a letter about FON history, 2- a letter addressed to the contact person providing project details, its objective and significance, 3- a flyer to disseminate and provide the active community contact with a mean to reach out further to the prospected participants.
- FON has prepared an application form with the required information to select the appropriate target group in the community. The applications are filled by the applicant or we provide assistance depending on the level of education of the applicant.

Under output 3:

In smart indicator 3.1, FON committed by mid of year 1 of the project to conduct field surveys and stakeholder engagement of the 3 newly established MPAs.

- Stakeholder feedback: FON visited the responsible party for the management of the MPAs. Thus, we visited the municipality of Abbassiyeh, the municipality of Byblos and the municipality of Enfe. The three municipalities were welcoming and supportive of the project; they provided FON with the data they have on the reserves, which is not much. They gave us the maps of the reserves and supporting documents. They are anticipating enthusiastically the outputs of the project to help them in their reach out and engagement of visitors and communities, as we explained in the project document.
- Field Surveys: The surveys were commenced in the 3 MPA. The terrestrial part is reviewed and the marine waters are screened for habitats and biodiversity. The information is fundamental for the development of the management plans that will follow.
 - One development that influences this output will be discussed below.

Under output 4:

We are working toward indicator 4.3 to build the knowledge system and database. The IT database consultants preferred that we define the categories of information that we want to incorporate on the topic and the different variable measures. This would help them translate our vision into the database. We are working on that now and we are also collecting marine organisms photos to introduce in the database.

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.

A- Conflict Developed

September 2023 witnessed armed conflict in the region of Saida, one of our target coastal communities. The conflict arosed in the Palestinian camp next to the city, which necessitated caution visiting the city or traveling on the main highway that connects the South of Lebanon. We had visited Saida prior to the conflict and managed with local stakeholders to connect to the local community. A group of 20 beneficiaries were registered primarily for taking the vocational course. Similarly, FON visited another coastal town, Adloun, to the south, where we filled applications for about 80 persons to follow the training; the applications were to be reviewed and the neediest selected. The armed conflict obliged us to defer the training of these

communities. The issue was resolved and the situation normalize again; however, in October, the South of Lebanon also grew in tension over the conflict in Gaza. This also forbade us from reaching the coastal towns for training as well as the Abbassiyeh MPA to continue the survey.

Impact on the project

- 1- *Impact on vocational course training:* The strategy we are adopting for now is to concentrate on conducting project activities north of Beirut. We conducted the first vocational course in Chekka coastal village in October; other regions will follow. An impact that will necessitate a change in budget or timetable is not foreseen yet; a better impact evaluation could be generated toward the end of Q3. If the situation quells, we will resume with higher concentration to the south.
- 2- *Impact on project activities with the MPAs:* only Abbassiyeh MPA is found in South Lebanon, its surveying will be delayed while we concentrate and advance activities on the northern MPAs. We are still within the capacity for manoeuvrability within Q3. We have till end of Q4 to present the outputs of MPAs.

B- Compliance with the new standard indicators

FON was advised to strengthen the logframe presented in the project document. We received the set of standard indicators in due time to modify the logframe in concordance with the indicators. It was beneficial and also a good learning to comprehend the indicator spectrum envisaged by Darwin Initiative to be informative. We presented the modified logframe accordingly and was accepted.

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 for the logframe / No for the conflict

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes for the logframe / No for the conflict

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes for the logframe

Change request reference if known:

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)

Actual spend: £ ██████████

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: £

4c. If yes, then you need to 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. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes 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 BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Financially, we have not spent the anticipated budget in Q2 because of the need to modify our strategy of prioritizing geographical regions due the conflict. We will divide the community engagement and training commitments between Q3 and Q4. We will work with the accessible communities. We are redistributing the expected expenditure to Q3 and Q4.

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**