

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	DARCC034
Project title	Vicuña management for biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods in the Bolivian highlands
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Bolivia
Lead partner	Lilian Painter [REDACTED]
Partner(s)	ACOFIVB
Project leader	Oscar Loayza Cossío [REDACTED]
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1 (1 April - 30 September 2023)
Project website/blog/social media	https://bolivia.wcs.org/

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).

Output 1. Legal consolidation of ACOFIVB and their regional associations.

The legal documentation of the 11 regional associations associated with ACOFIVB has been collected and analysed. This analysis identified the need to regularize and update this legal documentation, to varying degrees. Project staff and ACOFIVB held meetings with the regional associations, and subsequently engaged with the relevant offices of the departmental governments of Oruro, Potosí, and La Paz to regularize and update this documentation. This task will be completed by the end of November/2023. Simultaneously, a proposal for the Organic Statute and Internal Regulations of the national vicuña managers association (ACOFIVB) has been developed and will be validated in the following weeks ([ANNEX 1](#)).

Output 2. Field schools implemented by ACOFIVB with regional associations on best practices for animal welfare, population census, capture, mechanical shearing, disease surveillance, fiber selection, fiber collection and sale.

The project has held technical meetings with ACOFIVB and the Biodiversity Directorate to define the topics, contents, and operational strategies of the field schools. One of the prioritized topics was the methodology for the vicuña census. A timetable for the vicuña census was agreed upon and the regional associations of Villazón, Tomave, Wila Kollo, Apolobamba, and the vicuña management communities Quebrada Honda (Tarija) and Malla (La Paz), as well as the protected areas Sama and Sajama, prioritized for its implementation ([ANNEX 2](#)).

Field schools have been conducted to reinforce the application of the "Technical Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Vicuñas", especially in the areas of herding, capture and shearing, fleece management, health, and animal welfare in general. Weaknesses in the application of these aspects have been detected across the eleven Regional Associations; and three Field Schools conducted to address them; one in the city of Oruro, another in the city of

Uyuni (Potosí), and one in the city of El Alto (La Paz), with the participation of all regional associations and their respective communal associations ([ANNEX 3](#)).

A training course on Mechanical Shearing of vicuña took place in Abra Pampa, Argentina with the participation of 38 young shearers from each of the 11 regional associations ([ANNEX 4](#)). Mechanical shearing is key to improving the welfare of vicuñas during handling, as it directly reduces the stress levels of vicuñas by decreasing the handling and shearing time from 20-30 minutes (with scissors) to a maximum of 3 minutes. Additionally, mechanical shearing provides a uniform cut, resulting in greater commercial value, and increased yield per animal and per community. The training was carried out pro bono by the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA) of Argentina. ACOFIVB complemented this training by donating 11 shearing machines, one per Regional Association. On the other hand, the project has provided 11 power generators for the use of the shearing machines.

For the current vicuña shearing season (2023), the vicuña managers have requested and obtained authorization from the Ministry of Environment for 374 capture and shearing events. The project, in coordination with the national vicuña manager associations and biodiversity authority has organized two teams to provide support, technical assistance, and on-site training during the herding, capture, and shearing of vicuñas. The request and authorization for the shearing events are attached as supporting documents ([ANNEX 5](#)).

Output 3. Field schools implemented by ACOFIVB and regional organizations on peatland and wildlife monitoring.

A draft methodological proposal for monitoring peatlands, key habitat and wildlife has been developed ([ANNEX 6](#)).

Output 4. Vicuña regulations reviewed by ACOFIVB and revolving fund established.

An updated diagnosis of the current situation of the distribution and investment of resources from vicuña shearing and the bottlenecks or limitations for these resources to be reinvested in the activity has been carried out ([ANNEX 7](#)).

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 change in the ACOFIVB board of directors in March, coincided with the start of the project. This required investing time to inform the new board members about the proposal and leverage their support to project activities ([Press Release](#)). This year, due to the effects of climate change and El Niño, there has been a severe drought throughout the Bolivian altiplano and low temperatures. This has led to a delay in shearing to safeguard the welfare of vicuñas, at the request of some regional associations ([Letter from the Oruro Departmental Government](#)).

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: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance: No

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: £ [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: £

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?

Through this link you can access all the supporting documents of the report:

[REDACTED]

Through this link you can access all the press releases or publications on social networks that have been generated this year:

[REDACTED]

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**