Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity: Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the "Project Reporting Information Note":
(https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources/information-notes/).

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 20 pages** in length, excluding annexes)

Submission Deadline: 30th April 2025

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Darwin Initiative Project Information

Project reference	DARCC039
Project title	Empowering East African Universities to build national conservation capacity & capability
Country/ies	Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda
Lead Organisation	WildTeam
Project partner(s)	Natural State
Darwin Initiative grant value	£73,500
Start/end dates of project	1/4/2024 - 31/3/2026
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2024 – Mar 2025) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	April 2024 – March 2025, Annual Report 1
Project Leader name	Alison Skeats
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.wildteam.org.uk/trainers-network
Report author(s) and date	Alison Skeats, Lucy Boddam-Whetham. 30 April 2025

1.   Project summary

Urgent action is required to empower local conservationists and organisations in response to climate change and biodiversity loss. Essential skills like project management and fundraising are often lacking in conservation education. Our project trains East African university instructors (please note we know refer to instructors as trainers) to deliver practical conservation courses, equipping the next generation of conservationists for career progression and enhanced conservation efforts.

We believe that the people living closest to the conservation situation are the ones best placed to run the most effective conservation projects. Skills such as project management and planning are pivotal for project success, yet there is a lack of opportunities for conservationists to acquire these skills. They are typically not included in university conservation programs and online courses are often inaccessible to due to cost. In our global conservation training needs survey, less than 3% of respondents could afford the full cost of a typical online conservation course yet most respondents said that they would like to have skill-based training to help them effectively address complex conservation challenges. With additional barriers of power and internet issues, conservation career advancement is hindered in many East African nationals, particularly

women, disenfranchising them from participating in and influencing conservation efforts within their countries.

Our project intends to address this training need and capacity gap by building a network of conservation trainers, across East Africa, who can train others so that all conservationists can access the vocational skills taught in WildTeam's best practices. The project holds particular relevance to small conservation NGOs, local initiatives, and conservationists in regions where online training is not feasible for everyone. The project seeks to actively develop the skills of women, who face further barriers to training, due to social and gender inequalities.

To create a more inclusive, effective, and locally-led conservation workforce, we're building the Conservation Trainers Network as a "train the trainer" model to place training skills and abilities in the hands of nationals and national institutions. By enabling classroom-based teaching, we can reach conservationists who would otherwise not be able to access our online training courses. This will create a more inclusive, effective, and locally-led conservation workforce, addressing career progression, income and wellbeing as well as biodiversity targets.

Sub-Saharan Africa boasts remarkable biodiversity, and the region's wildlife plays a pivotal role in driving economic growth. East Africa, however, is vulnerable to escalating threats to human health, food security, social stability, and livelihoods due to climate change and ongoing biodiversity loss. With the biodiversity being such a valuable asset, we believe that the conservation challenge there require immediate attention. Therefore, this project works across 14 countries (Figure 1) in East Africa to empower people and institutions to gain the skills needed to lead conservation initiatives to protect the region's unique natural heritage.

Figure 1. Fourteen countries across East Africa which are the focus of this project

2.   Project stakeholders/ partners

Natural State (who are based in Kenya) are our formal main partner on the project. WildTeam have been working with Natural State, over the last few years developing courses on nature restoration planning, conservation finance, and organisational development based on consultations with East African NGOs and university staff. The main role of Natural State was to help with the creating a community network to help provide funding, job and collaboration opportunities for the trainees that have been trained by trainers in the target East African countries. As there has been a delay with this output so far (as explained in the progress section), Natural State have continued to assist with the management of the project on a regular basis and been advising us on the project, such as with planning and trainer recruitment, as experts in nature restoration, especially in East Africa.

A new partner, WCAP (Western Chimp Action Plan) Network, has been proactively involved and helped us to translate our Project Management for Wildlife Conservation best practice manual (and training materials) into French, and have also had two if its members successfully complete their trainer training and have already delivered training themselves. A pro-bono translation organisation also helped with French translation, overseen by WildTeam's course creation expert (she is also a French speaker) who also made sure that the translations included gender inclusive vocabulary in order that the materials are inclusive to all (the translations included both masculine and feminine throughout the manual and supporting documents).

A UK-based university- Nottingham Trent University, also helped to test out the Project Planning for Wildlife Conservation training materials and have taught these courses in person as part of their curriculum in the last year, which has helped strengthen the materials and process.

Our current trainers and trainers-in-training from the target East African countries, include conservationists from NGOs, networks, independent consultants and conservationists. Please see activity progress for more detail regarding recruitment of potential trainers, in summary the Conservation Trainers Network is open to anyone anywhere in the world, (some existing training experience and/or access to potential trainees is preferred to increase the likelihood of the trainer going on to deliver training and thus have the desired outcome for the project). The opportunity to both train as a trainer is widely advertised on our website, our online community WildHub and via our social media channels and newsletters, and via existing partners and trainee alumni, as well as the opportunity to apply for our extensive bursary scheme.

3.   Project progress

3.1   Progress in carrying out project Activities

Activity 1.1: Trainee community support. A facilitated online community WildHub (wildhub.community) is a member-led international community of conservation professionals. Which provides a space to exchange ideas, create new solutions, and make new partnerships to enable better, faster, and cheaper conservation that helps save more wildlife. In addition to conservationists working around the world, WildHub provides peer and expert support to help trainees who have been taught by WildTeam via online courses, progress their career and conservation work and provides collaboration and network opportunities.

Part of the project aimed to create a support group for the Conservation Trainers Network trainees in East Africa. For those who have been trained in-person by Network trainers (not online by WildTeam staff) The group is to give access to additional employment, funding, training, and collaboration opportunities (Project Output 1). This group will have members from the 14 countries targeted by this project, in order that geographically localised career advice and conservation opportunities can be shared.

Natural State, who are the partner organisation based in Kenya, were to lead on delivering this activity, originally starting in the second half of 2024 (project year 1). However, the workstream leader responsible for this has left the Natural State and they are in the process of recruiting a replacement (as per our change request in Dec 2024). This activity has also been delayed until we have a higher number of trainees trained by non-WildTeam trainers, so as to have a more active and diverse online community, with higher interactions with posts and online community events. This online community group will be launched by Q2 2025.

Activity 2.1 and 2.2: online training delivering vocational conservation skills. In total, WildTeam have conducted 16 online training courses for 1,273 trainees from around the world (trainees representing 155 countries) in this reporting period, and 671 trainees have gained certification by passing an exam. Our bursary scheme enables trainees from underrepresented countries to participate, and during the reporting period the equivalent of 709 full bursaries were provided.

For this project's original target countries in East Africa, in the reporting period, 97 conservationists have passed their exams and been certified (via WildTeam's online training courses), of which 57% were listed as female/non-binary and 43% male. These trainees were from 8 East African countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda).

Activity 3.1 Creation of a network to support trainers. An online community room on WildTeam's Networking platform, WildHub, and initial posts and activities has been set up, to provide support for the trainers (instructors) (once they have completed their Trainer training with WildTeam). This is designed for trainers as a place to get peer and WildTeam support, to access materials, collaborate and to share lessons from teachings. The community room will be launched by Q2 2025, so that we have a sufficient number of trained trainers in the scheme to make this online community space as active as possible.

Activity 4.1 - Instructor (trainer) engagement. This activity was to identify, contact, select and recruit trainers from East Africa. To help with recruitment of potential trainers and foster a sense of community, we named the initiative within WildTeam as the "Conservation Trainers Network". We held a webinar in Q3 2024 to introduce potential trainers to the project and invite them to start their journey towards becoming a trainer. 178 people attended and it was a very well received and interactive session. The webinar was recorded and hosted on our website with a comprehensive FAQs document and a sign-up form for people to register their interest to become a trainer and to be contacted by us. This was pushed across social media channels. A follow up email with active next steps to become a trainer had 90 respondents (49 female, 39 male, 2 preferring not to say). Since the webinar, the recording is also sent to any new interested potential trainers to introduce them to the network. We continue to recruit potential trainers interested to become a trainer.

Activity 4.2 – Instructor (trainer) training. Those becoming trainers are required to take WildTeam's online versions of the courses which they then want to go on to deliver themselves, so that they are able to understanding the best practice topics and go on to teach in that knowledge base, as well as experience WildTeam training approach and facilitation.

We have delivered online courses this grant year to 1,273 trainees globally. Of these global trainees, 71 were trainers-in-training who successfully completed the online training, passing the exam to become certified, so are now considered able to deliver training as Conservation Trainer Network trainers to their own trainees. Nine of these are trainers from the planned East African target countries, with four of those completing training and being certified in more than one subject. A further 29 people, globally, are currently in training to become trainers. Of those, 18 people (8 female, 8 male, 2 chose not to disclose) are from the target countries in East Africa (see Outputs table 1 for country breakdown). Globally, 21 more people are enrolled on courses we'll be delivering later in 2025; they are just starting their training journey.

Activity 4.3 Class-based teaching materials creation. This activity includes adapting WildTeam's existing online training materials so that they can be used in a class-based setting

and be tailored to how the network trainer wants to deliver those trainings. Training materials have been created for our vocational wildlife conservation courses in the following subjects: Project Management, Project Planning, Stakeholder Engagement, Grant Writing and Monitoring & Evaluation. These are being developed by the course leaders, who normally teach online, and the materials are suitable to be taught in a classroom setting, with or without computers, online or offline. They include PowerPoint presentations with notes, and exercises to apply and discuss the approach, that can be done on print-outs or on a black/white board for low-tech options, and the same exercises that can be done on Google Drive or offline worksheets for students with internet and/or computers.

3.2   Progress towards project Outputs

Progress towards Output 1: Trainees have access to additional employment, funding, training, and collaboration opportunities.
The dedicated WildHub group for WildTeam online training course alumni has grown by over 200 people since the start of this project. This group allows learners who took our online courses to support each other to apply their learning and improve the effectiveness of their conservation work, the alumni include trainees from the target East African countries who have been trained online by WildTeam, as well as trainers in training. Each WildTeam online training course, also has a dedicated community room that is active during the 6-week online training courses to increase network opportunities as well as enhance trainees learning experience, Trainees also have access to WildHub's online community in general where regular posts, articles, opportunities are posted and online socials offered. Practitioners and students of each of the different best practices can work together to apply their skills in collaboration, and share employment, funding, training, and collaboration opportunities with other career starters.

As outlined in section 3.1, this output aimed to create a support group for the Conservation Trainers Network trainees in East Africa. For those who have been trained in-person by Network trainers (not online by WildTeam staff). This is due to start in Q2, 2025, to specifically provide a tailored online community space for conservationists working in East Africa. With us measuring the success of this but the engagement rates and attendance of online events, as well as an online survey of community members.

Progress towards Output 2. Trainees skilled in vocational conservation skills.
We measured the number of online course attendees, and 1,273 people globally have attended a WildTeam online training course to improve their vocational conservation skills and enhance their CVs. A review of the exam results of these trainees shows that 700 people have become certified in the last year, of which 67% identify as female or non-binary.

The project under this grant, aimed for 140 East African trainees to pass the exams and become certified, and we are currently on track to meet this target. We will continue to prioritise recruiting trainees from the target East African countries to take part in our online training courses. Other trainees globally include conservation professionals, career switchers and those who are unemployed or at the start of their career. Although not a metric measured for this output, the certification of these trainees also contributes to the project's objective to increase vocational skills in the conservation sector and thus increase the wider impact of the project, as well as enhancing the networking and collaboration opportunities for conservationists working in similar themes or working to reduce similar threats. We will continue to review and analyse course sign ups and exam results to obtain this data.

Progress towards Output 3. Instructors deliver vocational conservation courses to trainees.
Four trainers who have completed their training with WildTeam, have already delivered training to others. Two are teaching in the UK (at universities), and two across a network of NGOs in West Africa (countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone). We have reviewed the exam results of their trainees and 88 trainees passed so far (31 failed, with retakes planned).

These trainers taught WildTeam's Project Planning and Project Management best practices, in both English and in French.

The target is to have 14 people teaching by the end of the second year. Although we are not halfway to this target by the end of year one, we are on track because of the number of people who are currently undergoing their trainers' training at the moment (see output 4 below) and therefore hope our wider impact to be larger for this output, and having trainers in more countries than originally planned.

The project intended to improve the capability and capacity of 14 national institutions. So far, we have increased the capacity of two universities and one NGO Network. This NGO Network serves chimp conservation NGOs across those countries in West Africa. Our original focus was intended for East African countries, and we have been able to expand this to countries in West Africa too through the enthusiasm and commitment from the Western African Chimp Network-which has therefore widened our impact.

Progress towards Output 4: Instructors (trainers) skilled in delivering vocational conservation skills

Instructor (trainer) engagement. In year 1 of the project, we have engaged 147 people registered on the scheme (Conservation Trainers Network) from 49 countries. Our objective under this grant. Was originally to recruit and train trainers from 14 countries across East Africa (Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda). Of the trainers engaged (which means in training), so far 18 people are from these target countries, as shown below.

Table 1: Trainers in-training across East Africa.

Country	Number of trainers engaged
Ethiopia	1
Kenya	9
Rwanda	1
Tanzania	3
Uganda	3
Zimbabwe	1

Across the intended Geographical representation, we intended there to be at least one university instructor engaged from each of the 14 East African countries. Our progress here is not yet as intended; with 6/14 countries. We believe this is because English is not widely spoken across all countries, and most of our training materials are in English. We have partially addressed this by translating our material into French, to serve other countries, and the wider West Africa and Central African regions. We are still optimistic that we can reach the project target of 14 trainers trained and delivering training themselves, although we may not achieve representation for all of original target East- African countries by end of year 2, but we have already widened our Trainer representation into West Africa.

Trainer training. Of the 72 people who have completed their Trainer training with WildTeam so far (they are certified in one or more WildTeam best practices) and therefore eligible to go on to deliver training to others, 59% are female and 41% are male. Other stages of trainer-in-training, by gender, are shown in the table below.

Gender	Enrolled on upcoming Trainer training courses	Trainer training in progress	Trainer training completed
Not answered	5	11	10
Female or non-binary	10	9	37
Male	6	9	24

This gender-based output, shows progress towards our Gender representation objective that a minimum of 50% of the trainers engaged are female or non-binary. When considering only the original target East African countries, 6 females and 3 males from these countries have completed their Trainer (instructor) training so far. This is particularly significant as an indicator that our project is contributing to help overcome a gender-based barrier to learning opportunities.

Training materials creation. Classroom-based teaching materials have been completed for two of the five best practices. These are WildTeam's "Project Management for Wildlife Conservation (PMWC)" and "Project Planning for Wildlife Conservation (PPWC), our most popular courses. Additionally, the PMWC best practice, supporting tools and training materials have been translated into French which has enabled two trainers so far to deliver training to their own Trainees in West Africa. Teaching Materials for Grant Writing and Stakeholder Engagement are near completion. Monitoring and Evaluation teaching materials will be completed int he next 6 months; this progress is behind schedule. However, there are no trainers intending to teach this yet, so these are the lower priority materials.

3.3   Progress towards the project Outcome

Project outcome: Trainees apply skills to conserve and restore East African biomes

Indicators for measurement.
The project's success is being monitored through a range of quantitative and qualitative indicators that measure both outputs and outcomes including meetings, skills assessments, and follow up online surveys.

Skills assessments currently show that overall, in the reporting period, on average we have a minimum of 56% trainees passing the exam at the end of the online courses. This also varies between subjects, with Project Management having a higher completion rate. At WildTeam we are continually looking to improve completion rates and make our learning and certification process as accessible as possible. One of those improvements has been to extend the time period that trainees are able to take their exam, as well as access to training materials, which means there is sometimes a lag between completion rates (e.g. some trainees that took the online courses in year 1- went on to pass the exam in year 2). We also offer a free and accessible retake process. However, some trainees choose not to take the exam, but are still active in the course and absorb the theory and take part in the online sessions and exercises. As well as some trainees, do not manage to complete the course because of fitting it into a an already busy working life. We also offer free transfers to trainees who would like to restart the course.

Our completion rates and activity levels on our online courses demonstrates the effectiveness of the learning materials towards the outcome that trainers and trainees have skills to conserve and restore East African biomes. We are planning to enhance our data analysis so that we can track and monitor completion rates broken down by the target counties for the project, as well as by trainees taught by WildTeam and those trained trainers during the grant period. Our online community activities will also help to increase the chance of trainees successfully completing the courses and going on to apply what they have learned in their conservation work. Our best practices and training courses are also designed to be as practical and applicable as possible. For WildTeam's online courses, we also have a comprehensive evaluation form to help us

continually assess the quality of our courses, as well as the confidence levels of trainees to go on to apply their learning. We are encouraging the trained trainers to carry out similar evaluations.

An online survey of trainees is scheduled for later in 2025, and will be specifically refined to assess the number of people who are applying their skills, and the approximate area under improved conservation management as a result of them applying their vocational skills.

<u>Progress towards outcome achievement.</u>

We are making good progress, although currently behind with having active trainers delivering to their own trainees in the target East African countries, but we ae hopeful that we can still reach the target number over a wider geography and from different sectors working in conservation, especially as we have a lot of people currently in training to be trainers. We envisage we will also continue to exceed the number of active trainers after the project end especially as this grant is part of a wider initiative by WildTeam, thus increasing the reach of our capacity building, for those trained to apply skills to conserve and restore East African biomes, and biomes in other parts of the world too.

3.4   Monitoring of assumptions

We reaffirm the following assumptions that still hold true.

Assumption 1: At least 10 % trainees will apply new vocational conservation skills for the benefit of their career/work.
Assumption 2: The funding, job, and collaboration opportunities sourced by WildTeam will be accessible to trainees and useful enough to keep them participating in the community.
Assumption 3: Each instructor has at least 1 laptop or phone and sufficient internet access to enable the students to take exams

The below assumptions have some updates, see comments below.

Assumption 4: The instructors can incorporate vocational conservation courses into university schedules.
Comments: The project originally intended to focus on recruiting university staff across East Africa to be trainers, as it was assumed that they would be more "ready" to deliver training, have access to interested students, as well as existing venues to deliver the training courses. However, conversations with academics showed that many of them do not have sufficient control over the degree courses which they teach, to introduce new modules, and it can be a long process to introduce new subjects. This sits at the level of the institution and in some countries, the state education departments. Therefore, we widened the focus to include non-academic conservationists who wished to use the material to train others via their existing NGOs, networks, projects and conservationists in their local area. We have independent consultants, NGO project leads, and admin staff on the register of trainers. This will allow the skills to spread more widely than just targeting university staff, as the materials can now be taught within interested organisations so that all staff are using a standardised best practice to deliver their conservation project.

Assumption 5: The instructors have sufficient interest and motivation to start/finish online courses.

Comments: The majority of trainers have completed the training, and we are working to increase completion rates as much as possible in general (as previously outlined). Initially we did also have interest from people that were keen to get a free online training course place, but actually are not ready or able to deliver training themselves anytime soon, so where needed we signpost these conservationists to our general bursary scheme to obtain a free place that way.

Assumption 6: Instructors will deliver one+ class-based version per course/year, 20+ students/year.
Comments: This will vary depending on the trainer, and for example if they are a trainer within an NGO or NGO network, depending on the size, the trainings may be a one off- or when new staff join. Some trained trainers do go on to realise that they currently don't have the capacity or time to deliver the training themselves at the moment. We are also working to help support trainers with other barriers (please see the lessons learnt section).

Additional new assumption 7: That instructors from the 14 target countries would be able and willing to both learn and teach English language materials.
Comments: The assumption was based on our online courses (in English) having participants from across the world. However, the intended outcome of the project was that conservationists who could not normally access our online courses would be given improved vocational skills though learning in-person, in-country locally. This created a dependency that there would be materials available in their language for those that did not have English as a second language. Early on in the project, a Network focussed on Chimp conservation expressed an interest in training conservationists across their network of NGOs. However, most of the NGO staff only spoke French. We worked with the international staff from this network to develop the PMWC best practice manual and all the training materials into French. These French materials have been used by trainers within this network, and are available to all other trainers under the creative commons licence for free.

3.5 Achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and multidimensional poverty reduction

This project aims to help 14 East African countries, all of which have signed up to the CBD, overcome major challenges to implementing it by:
Contributing towards Goal D and targets 21-23 and by (a) increasing capacity to document and understand biodiversity, its value, threats to it, and (b) building adequate expertise/experience in biodiversity planning, management and sensitive use of natural resources to both alleviate poverty and protect ecosystems (Target 12).
UNFCCC - Due to their location, dependence on rain fed agriculture and ongoing conflicts, East African countries are more vulnerable to and have far less capacity to manage the harmful effect of climatic events.

The project also aims to address:

- SDGs 4 & 5 (4:3 & 5:5): Ensuring equal access for women and men to quality technical, vocational training. >50%
- those trained will be women, with a further 100% actively involved in management of activities.
- SDG 8: A highly skilled, equality focused workforce, contributing to the growth of the conservation sector alongside creating sustainable growth in the local economy).
- SDG 10: (10.1) by providing 100% training opportunities to people from communities in low-income countries (poorest 40%), to enable them to achieve and sustain improved/higher than average income levels.
- SDGs 14 & 15 Reducing pressure on biodiversity: The creation of a highly skilled conservation workforce will enable environmental organisations in East Africa to ensure the survival of essential ecosystems.

The project originally aimed to enable 14 East African university instructors to deliver vocational conservation courses to conservation professionals and students. Since the project started, and based on learning, we have opened this up to non-academic wildlife conservationists, so that consultants and NGO staff can also qualify to become trainers (instructors). For all trained trainers, their subject expertise will be improved and their professional network expanded. Regardless of whether they are an academic, consultant or NGO staff, their career prospects will be enhanced, potentially leading to promotions and additional job and income opportunities, and

our vocational training courses will hopefully reach more people and have a wider impact on reducing pressure on biodiversity, by improving wildlife conservationists to be more effective.

East African conservation trainees will receive training in various vocational conservation skills, from the trainers who we train. Through learning in this train-the-trainer model (rather than online from WildTeam), the trainees will gain learning in their own country (and in some cases their first language), with the subject matter being tailored to their wildlife conservation specialism. This will improve their access to local career opportunities and relevant peer support. These will boost their employment and training prospects giving positive social and financial impacts on this group and their families. Our trainer selection, online training initiatives and bursaries aim to ensure that at least 50% of direct beneficiaries are women and/or non-binary individuals.

Over the five years following the project's conclusion, upskilled trainers will continue delivering training courses. Consequently, East African nationals will have greater control over conservation capacity building in their communities. They will lead and develop conservation NGOs with local workforces, offering them paid employment opportunities. This project will foster a more inclusive and effective conservation workforce in East Africa, capable of designing, funding, managing, and evaluating projects that achieve measurable conservation impact, benefiting both biodiversity and people. Our translation, so far, of 40% of our materials into French, will allow wider long-term reach.

Within five years of the project's completion, conservation organisations that benefit from these enhanced professional skills should be better equipped to mitigate threats to biodiversity in their locality. for the benefit of wildlife and people alike.

4. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements

In addition to the above, increasing training capacity of national institutions, networks and NGOS will support East African Countries to meet the strategic objectives of NBSAPs. For example: Uganda NBSAP II (2015-2025): "*To put in place measures to reduce and manage negative impacts on biodiversity*" and "*To facilitate and enhance capacity for research, monitoring, information management and exchange on biodiversity*". This project has three people from Uganda registered and in progress to becoming trainers. The subsequent teaching done by these people, in Uganda, will contribute towards the Ugandan NBSAP II.

Rwanda's aim to "*enhance NBSAP implementation through biodiversity knowledge management, participatory planning and capacity building*" is supported through the one person who from Rwanda who is in the process of leaning to become a Trainer in Project Management for Wildlife Conservation.

5. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

GESI Scale	Description	Put X where you think your project is on the scale
Not yet sensitive	The GESI context may have been considered but the project isn't quite meeting the requirements of a 'sensitive' approach	
Sensitive	The GESI context has been considered and project activities take this into account in their design and implementation. The project addresses basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	
Empowering	The project has all the characteristics of a 'sensitive' approach whilst also increasing equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups	X
Transformative	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	

The aim is to create a more inclusive, effective, and locally-led conservation workforce by empowering local conservationists, especially those who are female or non-binary, to deliver more effective conservation projects. The fact that "in sub-Saharan Africa, 89% of learners do not have access to household computers and 82% lack internet access". These barriers hinder career advancement and disproportionately affect East African nationals, particularly women, disenfranchising them from participating in and influencing conservation efforts within their countries. By developing teaching materials that can be used in in-person settings, we allow these people access to learning and opportunities to teach others.

This project is helping to address:
- SDGs 4 & 5 (4:3 & 5:5): Ensuring equal access for women and men to quality technical, vocational training.
- SDG10 (10.1): by providing 100% training opportunities to people from communities in low-income countries (poorest 40%), to enable them to achieve and sustain improved/higher than average income levels.

The focus on lower-income countries in East Africa will mean that instructors, trainees and wider society will receive the social, financial, and biodiversity benefits generated by the project. In addition, this project seeks to remedy disparities within the conservation sector by addressing uneven access to training and capacity building. It focuses on both geographic and gender-related inequalities, aiming to promote greater equity in conservation leadership.

Gender equality. Student enrolment in East African higher education and the region's conservation sector is currently male biassed due to a range of social and economic barriers. In Kenya- women account for 30% of PhD candidates, and 40% of degree and Masters students. In addition, male instructors make up the majority of teaching staff in East African higher education. Therefore, there was a risk that more male instructors would apply to participate in this project, than females. We have worked to address this imbalance by prioritising providing full bursaries for online training opportunities for women and non-binary learners. 145 people who identify as Female have completed courses funded by a bursary in this reporting period, addressing equity in social status and gender.

Social inclusion. We also recognise that many conservation students in East Africa do not have access to computer equipment and/or internet which are often a course requirement. To alleviate this, our course materials have been designed to be delivered in a classroom/in-person setting, without internet. Two out of five of our best practices have been taught like this in the last year, reaching people who might have otherwise been excluded from learning due to due to their location or financial means or other barriers.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

The project's progress and success is monitored through a range of quantitative and qualitative indicators that measure both outputs and outcomes (see impact section). We track trainee and trainer sign-ups analysed by various demographics, and learning journey progress, activity during our online courses, and course completion for both WildTeam online training courses and network trainer courses via completion of an online exam assessment and evaluation forms. There are also regular monthly management team meetings and partner progress meetings, to discuss progress, project achievements, risks and issues and lessons learnt. Overall project progress is also reporting on a monthly and quarterly basis to WildTeam's senior management team.

For the Conservation Trainers Network trainers, we track trainer engagement and progress at each stage, from initial engagement, training in progress, training completion and when they start to deliver training themselves to others. Methods include trainer meetings, community meetings, skills assessments and follow up online surveys.

Exam completion is also an important indicator, not just for WildTeam's own online trainees, but the exam results of the trainees who were taught by our trained trainers. Indicative of how effective the materials and the teaching were.

Qualitative data will be collected in 2025 from all trainers, to see how they found using the materials. As well as qualitative data collected from all trainees about how useful they think the best practices and what they learned on the training courses will be to their work and the impact of those applied skills, will be collected later on in 2025.

We still ascertain that the target indictors as outlined in the project log frame are suitable for demonstrating the attainment of each output.

7. Lessons learnt

Lesson learned 1: Less recruitment of academics

As previously described in the assumptions section. It has been harder to recruit academics as per the original plan. Since deciding to focus on a wider scope of conservationists to potentially become trainers, we're getting a wider range of people now who have more flexibility in what and how they can teach – not controlled by a curriculum. People teaching directly within their NGOS or existing networks means skills are immediately applicable, as opposed to teaching students who are not yet working in conservation, thus hopefully leading to better conservation impact. It is hoped as the Conservation Trainer Network grows and its reputation increases, then more academics and universities will also be interested in infusing WildTeam's courses into their curriculum, thus providing learning opportunities to university students in the target countries and those at the beginning of their careers, as well as existing conservation practitioners.

Lesson learned 2: General recruitment of potential trainers (instructors)

At the start of the project, the project manager reached out individually to those who had completed an expression of interest survey proved to be time consuming, with many of the same questions being raised in each conversation. We addressed this with the webinar in order to

address many potential trainers at once and created a generic Frequently Asked Questions supporting information. Following this webinar, admin such as emails, signup forms and course enrolment has been largely automated, increasing the capacity of staff to concentrate on relationship development for engaged and selected trainers and the overall establishment of the trainer network.

What has been working well, is that those potential trainers who are more ready to train and are engaged with the project, have been more likely to complete the online courses so that they are then able to go on to train others, as well as having existing capacity and networks to deliver training. Our project manager is thus able to spend targeted time to develop and encourage these trainers.

We are also reaching out to existing and new partners to help with trainer recruitment, and our main project partner Natural State continues to assist with this. Especially as the number of trainees trained by the network trainers, can only increase once we have more active trainers ready to deliver to their own trainees.

There also continues to be a large interest and satisfaction in WildTeam's online training courses, with many people both applying for our bursaries and signing up to become a trainer, often coming from personal recommendations from previous alumni, which hopefully shows that our best practices are a useful vocational and capacity building knowledge and skills base.

Lesson Learned 3: Barriers for training delivery by trainers

Although we identified various barriers to people accessing training before this project started, and indeed this project was designed to address some of those barriers (the main ones being people not being able to attend WildTeam's existing online training courses, due to various factors such as access to internet/computers, and language barriers, and this project was aimed at skilling up trainers outside of WildTeam, to deliver in person). We have also identified various other barriers within this project which are sometimes limiting people's abilities to deliver training themselves and we have been trying to help address some of these.

Barriers that potential trainers have told us about include things like cost and finding a suitable training venue, as well as recruiting their own potential trainees (if they don't have access to existing networks etc). Some people have also asked us for financial support to advertise and secure a teaching space. We have also had requests for laptops, because although the teaching materials are class-room based, the trainers still need laptops and sufficient data to download them and to get the trainees to take the exam (exam is not currently classroom-based). The support group we are starting on WildHub is a solution to some of the barriers to this because it allows networking and a wider peer support and therefore advertising space for teachers to recruit students, and the potential for people to co-deliver and share teaching spaces, and support to overcome barriers together.

8. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

n/a

9. Risk Management

No new risks since the last report.

10. Scalability and durability

After the project ends, trainers will be able to continue delivering vocational conservation courses for their trainees. WildTeam also plan to continue the Conservation Trainers Network and will seek funding for further support of this initiative, and help to facilitate the maintenance of the online community rooms set, encouraging peer-to-peer support and active member engagement to sustain and feed the activity of the communities.

This project continues to have huge potential for replication/expansion due to the potential number of Trainers who could participate, either from academic institutions, NGOs, networks or independent consultants. Scaling up the impact of this project would entail engaging more potential trainers across more countries and translating courses into different languages. The project model could also be scaled up through the new courses developed and distributed through the trainer network. These courses could initially be developed by WildTeam and Natural State. However, we expect that the trainers in the network will also develop and share their own training courses, based on their knowledge, experience and specialisms. For example, an instructor in Uganda could develop a climate change adaptation course and share that with instructors in Kenya and Tanzania.

WildTeam has been using our existing networks, partners, existing trainee alumni and training course recruitment to advertise the projects opportunities, helping us to scale up and spread the awareness of this training opportunity. We have also reached out to other NGOs and networks to help with both trainer and trainee recruitment. The plan is also for our partner Natural State-who are based in East Africa to continue to help with trainer recruitment.

It is hoped, that as we are providing the training courses and materials free of charge, and through the training of trainers, the sustainability of this project will continue and last past the end of this grant period. WildTeam also continue to be committed to making our knowledge bases and skills training as accessible as possible, whilst empowering and skilling up local wildlife conservationists.

The network of the Western Chimp Action Plan (WCAP) has assisted the project into scaling into West Africa with both their enthusiasm for the project and their work to help with the French translation of both our knowledge base that one of our most popular training courses is based on (Project Management for Wildlife Conservation best practice manual) as well as all of the translated training materials, which has helped to reach a wider geographic area in West Africa through their network. As well as WildTeam's capacity to provide this information for other Francophone countries around the world.
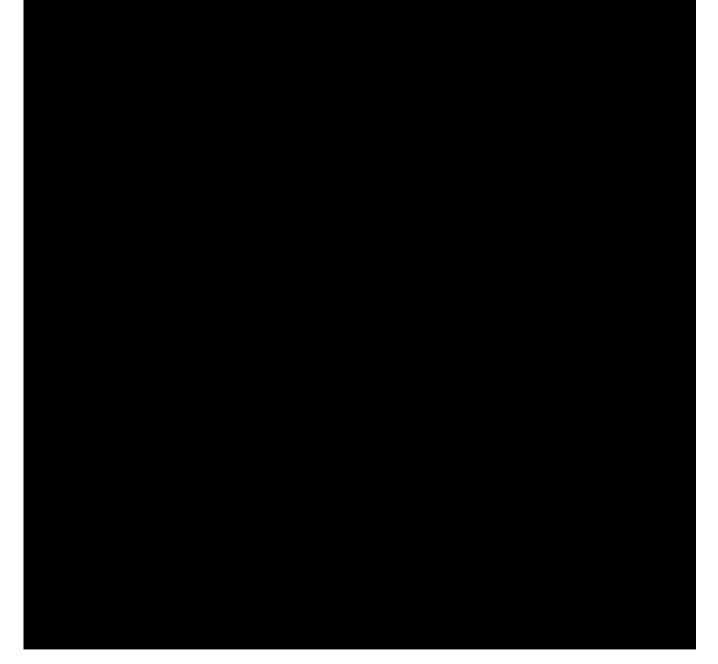
There also continues to be a large interest for both the WildTeam's Conservation Trainers Network and attendance of our online courses and bursary applications. There is also previous and current interest in the use of WildTeam's best practices in various NGOS so a standardised approach is implemented across an organisation, project or network.

11. Darwin Initiative identity

The funding from this Darwin Initiative grants has been recognised via WildTeam's website and communications around the Conservation Trainers Network, which has enabled WildTeam to focus resources and build up this capacity building initiative. It has been communicated in general, and to trainers, that those recruited from East Africa, that this opportunity has been made possible by funding from Darwin.

As the project achievements start to ramp up and our trained trainers start to deliver training themselves in the target countries, we will make sure these activities are linked to the funding from Darwin Initiative, as well as increasing our own communications of this support.

12. Safeguarding

13. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2024/25 Grant (£)	2024/25 Total Darwin Initiative Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)				
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items (see below)				
Others (see below)				
TOTAL	£36,750	£30,750		

Table 2: Project mobilised or matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

	Secured to date	Expected by end of project	Sources
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project (£)	███	███	Private donors, Grants (The Van Neste Foundation, Allan & Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust, anon grant makers)
Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project (£)	███	███	n/a

14. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

We are currently discussing with our partner Natural State, what their involvement with the project will look like in year 2. Originally it was planned mostly for Natural State to focus on Output 1: Trainees have access to additional employment, funding, training, and collaboration opportunities, but due to the dependency on being able to deliver on this once Output 3 has more trainers delivering training, their focus may be more on helping recruitment of Trainers and the support community for those Trainers in training (Output 3).

15. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements or progress of your project so far (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes.

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds to edit and use the following for various promotional purposes.

In this section you have the change to let us know about outstanding achievements for your project or significant strides towards attaining a particular goal so far that you consider worth sharing with the wider BCFs community.

Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against Indicators of Success for Financial Year 2024-2025

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
Outcome: Trainees apply skills to conserve and restore East African biomes		
Outcome indicator 0.1: Number of people reporting that they are applying new capabilities (skills and knowledge) 6 (or more) months after training.	No data yet	Planned skills and impact survey to be conducted in 2025 as annual survey.
Outcome indicator 0.2: Total £ in conservation funds raised by trainees as a result of applying their vocational conservation skills.	No data yet	Planned skills and impact survey to be conducted in 2025 as annual survey.
Outcome indicator 0.3: Reported total km2 of area under improved conservation management as a result of applying their vocational skills.	No data yet	Planned skills and impact survey to be conducted in 2025 as annual survey.
Outcome indicator 0.4: Area of degraded or converted ecosystems that are under active restoration.	No data yet	Planned skills and impact survey to be conducted in 2025 as annual survey.
Outcome indicator 0.5: Drivers of biodiversity loss assessed to have been reduced or removed	No data yet	Planned skills and impact survey to be conducted in 2025 as annual survey.
Output 1: Trainees have access to additional employment, funding, training, and collaboration opportunities		
Output indicator 1.1: The % of trainees that report accessing additional funding opportunities as a result of project support.	No data yet	Online survey of trainees to be conducted in 2025
Output indicator 1.2: The % of trainees that report accessing additional training opportunities as a result of support.	No data yet	Online survey of trainees to be conducted in 2025
Output indicator 1.3: The % of trainees that report accessing additional collaboration opportunities as a result of community support.	No data yet	Online survey of trainees to be conducted in 2025
Output indicator 1.4: The number of online training webinar attendees	1,273 people attended an online training course in this reporting period. This data is collected for every course, each year.	Annually collected attendance records for online trainings 2025
Output indicator 1.5: The number of (trainee) households reporting improved livelihoods.	No data yet	Online survey of trainees and community members, conducted in 2025

Output 2: **Trainees skilled in vocational conservation skills**		
Output indicator 2.1: Number of university students passing standardised exams.	700 people globally passed the exams in this reporting period. 97 trainees were from the target East African countries. Data was not segregated into student / non-student.	Annual review of exam results for all courses taught
Output 3: **Instructors deliver vocational conservation courses to trainees**		
Output indicator 3.1: Number of trainers trained reporting to have delivered further training by the end of the project.	Four trainers have delivered training to others in this reporting period. Their students passed exams, so they are considered certified trainers.	Annual online trainer survey, and review of exam results to confirm training completion
Output indicator 3.2: The number of vocational conservation courses delivered.	Two best practice courses (Project Planning and Project Management) have been delivered to 3 cohorts of trainees (three individual courses).	Annual online trainer survey, and review of exam results to confirm training completion
Output indicator 3.4: Number of national organisations with improved capability and capacity as a result of project.	No data yet.	Review of university or organisational affiliations of trainers who have been confirmed as having delivered a training course.
Output 4: **Instructors skilled in delivering vocational conservation skills**		
Output indicator 4:1 Number of university instructors passing standardised exams	72 people who have completed their instructor training (by passing the exam,) and therefore eligible to teach others. Four of these people have taught the material to their students / within their organisation	Ongoing review of instructors' training and their teaching of others.
Output indicator 4.2: Number of best practice guides and knowledge products published and endorsed	Two / Five best practice subjects have a complete suite of training materials for use in classroom training. Training materials for three remaining subjects are in development and are near completion.	Review of existing a class-based training materials and publication of new best practices and associated training materials.

Annex 2: Project's full current Indicators of Success as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification
Outcome: Trainees apply skills to conserve and restore East African biomes	0.1 Number of people reporting that they are applying new capabilities (skills and knowledge) 6 (or more) months after training (DI-A04). 0.2 Total £ in conservation funds raised by trainees as a result of applying their vocational conservation skills. 0.3 Reported total km2 of area under improved conservation management as a result of applying their vocational skills. 0.4 Area of degraded or converted ecosystems that are under active restoration (DI-D12). 0.5 Drivers of biodiversity loss assessed to have been reduced or removed (DI-D18).	0.1 - 0.5 Online survey of trainees, conducted annually.
Output 1 Trainees have access to additional employment, funding, training, and collaboration opportunities.	1.1 % of trainees that report accessing additional funding opportunities as a result of project support. Project target: 25% 1.2 % of trainees that report accessing additional training opportunities as a result of support. Project target: 25% 1.3 % of trainees that report accessing additional collaboration opportunities as a result of community support. Project target: 25% 1.4 Number of webinar attendees (DI-C13). Project target: 10% 1.5 Number of (trainee) households reporting improved livelihoods (DI-D16). Project target: 25%	1.1-1.5 Online survey of trainees community members, conducted annually. 1.4 Webinar attendance records.
Output 2 Trainees skilled in vocational conservation skills	2. 1 Number of university students passing standardised exams. Project target: 140	2.1 Review of course(s) exam results
Output 3 Instructors deliver vocational conservation courses to trainees	3.1 Number of trainers trained reporting to have delivered further training by the end of the project (DI-A05). Project target: 14	3.1-3.2 Online trainer survey, conducted annually and review of exam results to confirm training completion. 3.3 Review of university affiliations of trainers (gathered through initial engagement survey) who have been

	3.2 Number of vocational conservation courses delivered. Project target: 14	confirmed as having delivered a vocational conservation course.
	3.3 Number of national organisations with improved capability and capacity as a result of project. Project target: 14	
Output 4 Instructors skilled in delivering vocational conservation skills	4.1 Number of university instructors passing standardised exams. Project target: 14	4.1 Review of course exam results
	4.2 Number of best practice guides and knowledge products published and endorsed (DI-C01). Project target: 5	4.2 Review and reference to finalised sets of class-based training materials

Activities (each activity is numbered according to the output that it will contribute towards, for example 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are contributing to Output 1)

1.1 Trainee community support: A facilitated online community will provide peer and expert support to help trainees progress their career and conservation work.

2.1 Online training for female and non-binary students.

2.2 Certification processing: Creating and managing course exams, followed by assessing results and issuing individual certificates.

3.1 Instructor community support: A facilitated online community will provide a space for university instructors to share lessons learnt and receive help adapting the courses.

4.1. Instructor engagement: Identifying, reaching out to, selecting, and meeting with East African conservation instructors.

4.2 Instructor training: Participating university instructors will take the online versions of the courses they want to deliver themselves.

4.3 Class-based training materials creation: Adapting the online training materials for each course so that they can be used in a class-based setting.

Important Assumptions:

1: At least 10% trainees will have the opportunity to apply their new vocational conservation skills for the benefit of their career and work.

2: The funding, job, and collaboration opportunities sourced by WildTeam will be accessible to the trainees and be useful enough to keep them participating in the community.

3: Each instructor has at least 1 laptop or phone and enough internet access to enable the students to take the online exams.

4: The instructors are able to incorporate vocational conservation courses into university schedules.

5: The instructors have sufficient interest and motivation to start and finish the online version of the courses,

6: Instructors are motivated to deliver at least one class-based version per course each year. Each university cohort has an average of 20 students or more

Table 1   Project Standard Indicators

Please see the Standard Indicator guidance for more information on how to report in this section, including appropriate disaggregation.

DI Indicator number	Name of indicator	If this links directly to a project indicator(s), please note the indicator number here	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
DI-A01	Number of people in eligible countries who have completed structured and relevant training	2.1	People	Total: Women Men	97 55 42			97	140
DI-A03	Number of local or national organisations with enhanced capability and capacity.	3.4	Organisations	n/a	6				14
DI-A04	Number of people reporting that they are applying new capabilities (skills and knowledge) 6 (or more) months after training.	0.1	People	Total: Women Men					No data yet
DI-A05	Number of trainers trained under the project reporting to have delivered further training.	4.1	People	Total: Women Men	2			2	14
DI-C01	Number of best practice guides and knowledge products published and endorsed	4.2	Products	n/a	2	3			5

Table 2   Publications

Title	Type (e.g. journals, best practice manual, blog post, online videos, podcasts, CDs)	Detail (authors, year)	Gender of Lead Author	Nationality of Lead Author	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online)
WildTeam Conservation Trainers Network Information Webinar	Video recording of online webinar	WildTeam UK, 2024	Female	UK		https://www.wildteam.org.uk/trainers-network
WildTeam Project Management for Wildlife Conservation best practice manual (in French)			Female	UK		WildTeam UK
WildTeam Conservation Trainers Network class-based training materials	Materials in PowerPoints, pdfs, google docs etc	WildTeam UK, 2025	Female	UK		WildTeam UK

Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the **correct template** (checking fund, scheme, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and **deleted the blue guidance text** before submission?	
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please consider the best way to submit. One zipped file, or a download option is recommended. We can work with most online options and will be in touch if we have a problem accessing material. If unsure, please email to BCF-Reports@niras.com putting the project number in the Subject line.	
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with BCF-Reports@niras.com about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	
Have you provided an updated risk register? If you have an existing risk register you should provide an updated version alongside your report. If your project was funded prior to this being a requirement, you are encouraged to develop a risk register.	
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 15)?	
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	