



**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 2025

Please note all projects that were active before 1st October 2025 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>DARCC040</i>
Project title	<i>Forest law enforcement capacity building for biodiversity protection in Cameroon</i>
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	<i>Cameroon</i>
Lead Organisation	<i>Zoological Society of London</i>
Partner(s)	<i>Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOW), Cameroon</i>
Project Leader	<i>Armstrong Mba Acha</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR2 October 2025</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i>https://www.zsl.org/</i>

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).

Output 2. Operational guidance for auditing SIFE requirements has been developed

2.1. Develop operational guide for MINFOW for the monitoring and evaluation of SIFE, and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) grids

Ind 2.1) Guidance for improved assessment of the SIFE requirements is drafted and distributed to >100 stakeholders from government, civil society and private sector by end of Y1Q3 [ZSL]

Validated version of revised SIFE, Operational guide and MEL grid are now available and currently undergoing legal conformance at the level of MINFOW. Stakeholders across the sector shall receive copies once it is terminated.

2.2. 2nd Stakeholder consultation to review operational guide and MEL tools with stakeholders.

-Organisation of the second session to review the revised forest intervention standards, the operational guide and the monitoring and evaluation grid on Thursday 05 June 2025, in room 635 of the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife

2.3 Conduct 3x monitoring field missions to forest management companies to evaluate adherence to legal SIFE requirements in production forests.

- From 21 July to 09 August 2025: Organisation of 03 test missions on the use of the monitoring and evaluation grid and the operational guide in the 03 main forest regions of Cameroon (Centre, East, South and Littoral).

2.4 Produce field mission report providing learnings to MINFOF on auditing SIFE requirements in a field context

-Terms of Reference were developed for the field trips. A General Mission Report was drafted as a synthesis report from the 03 field reports produced for the 03 regions with accompanying attendance sheets attendance sheets

2.5 3rd Stakeholder consultation to disseminate learnings and gather feedback on field mission element

-From 15 to 17 October 2025: Organisation of the second and third extended stakeholder consultations to review and validate the revised forest intervention standards, the operational guide and the monitoring and evaluation grid, and to share the lessons learned at the end of the monitoring and evaluation mission.

2.6 Publish operational guidance for auditing SIFE requirements.

- Revised and validated SIFE, Operational Guide, and MEL grid are undergoing legal conformance and formatting and shall be published immediately thereafter.

2.7 Obtain MINFOF recognition and adoption of operational guide for implementing SIFE audits.

-Once the legal conformance and formatting is completed, the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife will sign it into order with immediately applicability. We are hoping for this will be latest in the month of November.

2.8 Drafting of training content for sensitisation of guidance

-Draft training modules for the guidance have been developed and under consultation with the university of DSCHANG, the Mbalmayo forestry school and the department of studies at the ministry of forestry and wildlife.

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.

-Developing the operational guide amidst legal reforms was particularly challenging. The context had changed significantly and needed to be aligned with the new forestry legislation with important implications on methodology, time and resources. New thematic had to be included in the SIFE altogether for coherence and consistency. Overall, it enabled the improvement of the SIFE, Operational Guide and Monitoring and Evaluation Grid with stakeholders cheering the novelties as revolutionary in the forest sector.

- It was tricky to use terminologies which are current and pertinent but which the forestry legislation did not provide for. In lieu of IPLC for example we settled on Indigenous and Local Riverine Communities but essential gave the content to safeguarding their interests.

-It is not an easy ride working with public administrators in a context of political activities. It was National electoral season, and most public administrators are partly politicians. It was not easy mobilising them or getting them to convene meetings. They were over carried by political activism. As such we decided on bring a list of activities for them to adopt and commit to, to enable us catch up with time.

-Participatory deliberative processes could be complex at reaching consensus but required to get ownership of the process and product.

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

Guidance for Section 4: The information you provide in this section will be used by Defra to review the financial status of projects. This review will identify projects at random for spot checks on financial management and will include requests for evidence of the actual spend information provided below. Please ensure the figures you provide are as accurate as possible and that you have the evidence to support it. You do not need to provide it now.

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

Actual spend: [REDACTED]

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2026)?

☐

No

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Estimated underspend: £

4c. If you expect an underspend, then you should consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible, and not later than 31st December. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes to your project if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Suspensions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk

n/a

6. Project risk management

6a. If your project has an Overseas Security and Justice assessment, please provide an update on any related risks, and any special conditions in your award paperwork if relevant for your project.

n/a

7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent Annual Report. As a reminder, all projects that were scored as 'Not Yet Sensitive' in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment of their latest Annual Report should demonstrate how they are meeting the minimum GESI-Sensitive standard.

n/a

Checklist for submission

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