



**Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects
Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus**

Half Year Report

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2025

Project reference	DARCC041
Project title	Ranger Empowerment: Strengthening Skills in Kenya's Conservation Areas
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Kenya
Lead Organisation	Zoological Society of London (ZSL)
Partner(s)	Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Kenya Forest Service (KFS) Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA), Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI), Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA), WWF-Kenya, Game Rangers Association of Africa (GRAA), Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR),
Project Leader	Gurveena Ghataure
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.zsl.org/what-we-do/projects/kenya-conservation-work Twitter: @ZSLAfrica

O1: Activity 1.6. Experts prepare a comprehensive report highlighting training gaps, based on the review of training materials, meetings, surveys, and focus group findings.

This activity is now complete. Following the KFS and KWS curriculum review workshops held in March, expert conducted curriculum and gap analyses mapped to the URSA Global Ranger Competence Register and informed by ranger surveys and community focus group discussions. The findings were synthesised into consolidated reports outlining priority training gaps and recommendations, along with a proposed module development plan (Annex 1a–b). KFS initially had eight priority gaps and KWS five; after validation workshops, these were refined to three priority gaps for each agency (Annex 2a–b).

Activity 1.7. Expert group develops draft comprehensive training curricula based on the identified gaps.

The priority gaps for each agency informed the development of new and enhanced training materials. For KFS, modules were developed on Participatory Forest Management, Basic Forest Management, and Basic Wildlife Management. For KWS, modules focused on Community Engagement, Human Rights and Ethics, and Human–Wildlife Conflict Mitigation, alongside a full review and improvement of the wider curriculum. Draft module frameworks were co-developed through collaborative workshops with both agencies, following the Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) / TVETA approach (Annex 3–5). Subject matter experts then produced detailed training notes, with contributions from the Kenya Forestry College, WRTI, KNCHR, URSA, and ZSL. These materials have been reviewed by the core drafting team and are now in near-final form (Annex 6–7). They will be refined further following feedback from the ToT participants during and after their training programmes.

O2: Activity 2.1. Recruitment of a cohort of 20 ToTs from KWS and KFS, following identification and assessment of providers

The project team and ranger workforce agencies agreed on the criteria for identifying and selecting Trainers of Trainers (ToTs) for the Training Programmes, with these discussions forming part of the workshop sessions.

KFS selected ToTs from mid- to senior-level staff based at the Forest Law Enforcement Academy (FoLEA) and the Kenya Forestry College (KFC), the Service's academic division. Gender and age representation were key considerations, with one-third of the FoLEA cohort and half of the KFC cohort being women. Selection also accounted for institutional knowledge, future tenure, and the likelihood of transfers or future leadership roles in regional training centres currently under development or expansion in Baringo, Soysambu, and the Coast region, to ensure long-term sustainability. A total of 13 KFS ToTs were recruited for the training programme (see Annex 8a).

KWS selected ToTs from the Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) rank, prioritising trainers from conservation areas identified as HWC hotspots, in line with the curriculum focus. Where possible, two representatives were chosen from each hotspot, covering seven regions across Kenya, with an additional three representatives drawn from the Law Enforcement Academy (LEA), the central ranger training school, to strengthen institutional sustainability. One representative from the Problem Animal Management Unit (PAMU) was also included to build capacity within this specialist HWC response unit. Recent and potential future transfers were taken into consideration, alongside gender

and age balance, resulting in five female participants out of 17, a higher proportion than the current national ranger workforce average of 10–15% female representation (see Annex 8b).

In total, 30 ToTs were recruited across both agencies for these milestone Training of Trainers Programmes, exceeding the original target of 20 by 50%, and strengthening the foundation for long-term capacity building within both institutions.

Activity 2.2. Deliver training on new training modules to ToTs to equip providers with knowledge, skills, and materials to deliver high-quality training. A two-week Training of Trainers (ToT) Programme for KFS was delivered from 29 September to 10 October 2025 at the Kenya Forestry College, Londiani. The programme covered the newly developed modules, ranger mental wellbeing, and CBET-based training delivery (see Annex 9a and 9c). Practical sessions took place at the Soysambu Field Training Centre (Annex 9b) and included a community engagement visit with a local CFA. The training was facilitated by experts from the Kenya Forestry College, Strong Ranger Resilience, WRTI, and ZSL, and was formally opened and closed by senior KFS leadership, demonstrating strong institutional commitment. An 8-day ToT Programme for KWS was delivered from 20 to 26 October 2025 at the KWS Law Enforcement Academy, Manyani. Participants undertook sessions on ranger wellbeing, CBET familiarisation, and the revised curriculum materials (see Annex 10a and 10c), with practical group-based exercises including community engagement and conflict de-escalation simulations (see Annex 10b). The training was facilitated by Strong Ranger Resilience, WRTI, PAMU, KNCHR, ZSL, and KWS trainers, and was officially opened and closed by KWS LEA leadership, reinforcing alignment with the KWS Strategic Plan and commitment to cascading the training

Activity 2.3. Selection and confirmation of mentors from partner organisations who possess the expertise and experience necessary to guide and mentor ranger trainers effectively. Key collaborators with strong knowledge of the project's objectives, along with subject matter experts, were drawn from partner organisations including WRTI, Strong Ranger Resilience, URSA, KNCHR, Equilibrium Research, and the two lead agencies. Experts were selected based on their experience, technical expertise in the subject areas covered by the new training materials, ability in adult learning delivery, career guidance, and field application. Additional consideration was given to their understanding and promotion of a human rights-based approach and awareness of mental health, ensuring a holistic mentoring experience. A total of 13 mentors was selected, with some supporting both ToT cohorts (see Annex 11). Gender balance was also prioritised, with 6 (approximately 50%) of the mentors being women.

Activity 2.4. Design and execute a structured 3-month mentorship programme for the 20 ToTs, providing valuable insights, knowledge, and best practices to enhance their training capabilities. Mentorship sessions for both the KFS and KWS ToT's cohorts were designed to be delivered in a blended format, in person (coinciding with the ToT's Training Programmes) and virtually (post-training) for mentors unable to participate physically. Each mentor received clear guidance on the objectives of the sessions through mentorship agreements, which provided direction and ensured alignment on mentorship goals between the lead agency, ZSL, and the individual mentor (see Annex 12a for an example). The in-person mentorship sessions have been successfully completed (see Annex 12b for a sample deliverable), while the virtual sessions are scheduled to take place between November 2025 and January 2026. Initial feedback from participants has been very positive, with ToT's expressing strong interest in seeing mentorship programmes institutionalised within their agencies.

Activity 2.5. Run pre- and post-training and mentorship questionnaires for ToTs to understand gain in knowledge, understanding and confidence. Pre- and post-training questionnaires were developed in collaboration with a consultant (see Annex 13), incorporating feedback from the project team and tailored separately for the KFS and KWS ToT cohorts. The questionnaires were designed as self-assessment tools to evaluate participants' knowledge of the new and enhanced topic areas, as well as their confidence in delivering the material (see Annex 14a-b and 15a-b). The pre-training questionnaires were administered using the Survey CTO app to enable instant data collection. These were conducted at the beginning of the ToT Training Programmes, immediately before training on the new content and the start of the in-person mentorship sessions (30th September for the KFS cohort and 20th October for the KWS cohort). The post-training questionnaires will be administered 4-6 months after completion of the mentorship programme.

Activity 2.6. Make revisions to the training curricula incorporating feedback from ToTs. Each ToT cohort received a programme overview and expectations presentation from the Project Manager (see Annex 16). A key expectation communicated was for ToTs to critically review the training materials presented during the programme, from the facilitator led sessions and the shared training notes, and then provide constructive feedback to inform future revisions. The KFS ToTs have already received copies of the training materials and are in the process of reviewing them. The KWS ToTs concluded their Training Programme recently and will shortly receive the materials.

O3: Activity 3.1. Plan for the delivery of these training modules across 10 conservation areas in Kenya, benefiting both state and conservancy rangers. Initial discussions have been held with project collaborators from both agencies to identify suitable pilot training sites, based on curriculum focus areas, ranger availability, logistical considerations, and institutional operational priorities. Further meetings are planned in the coming weeks to finalise the selected sites, training dates, and ranger cohort numbers. The KFS pilot trainings are tentatively scheduled for December 2026.

M&E Summary: Timebound and the organisational providers of ToTs indicators will need to be revised, as detailed in Section 2. Additionally, Indicator 3.2 should be adjusted downward from 10 ranger training sites to reflect logistical

constraints within both ranger agencies and the project's limited resources. Please refer to the updated Project M&E Tool for the current status (see Annex 17).

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.

Ambitious objectives: The project has had to balance the scope of delivering two concurrent curriculum reviews for two separate national ranger agencies within a limited timeframe, at a time when its objectives are particularly significant and expectations are high regarding its potential impact on institutional reform. KWS has identified Human-Wildlife Conflict management and human rights as organisation-wide priorities, while KFS has emphasised the importance of improving community relations as central to achieving the national tree-planting initiative. Consequently, the project's expected outcomes and impact have expanded beyond the original scope. This presents both a challenge (to meet these elevated expectations), and an opportunity to build on the successes achieved so far and scale up the project's impact with a future phase.

Activity timeframe: Delays in earlier phases have affected the project's ability to meet key time-bound indicators linked to measuring impact six months after ToT and ranger training. Since the outcome and output indicators require evidence of improved confidence and effectiveness at this stage, concluding in March would not allow sufficient time for proper follow-up and data collection through end-line surveys.

Organisational protocols: Unforeseen procedural requirements have emerged regarding the formal integration of the new modules into the ranger curricula. For KFS, the final training materials must receive approval from the organisational board before being incorporated into the Forest Ranger Recruits Curriculum. It remains uncertain whether this process will be completed within the project timeframe or if approval will be granted, given the fixed duration available for delivering the ranger curriculum and existing internal sensitivities between KFS FoLEA and KFC. Similar approval processes are anticipated for KWS.

Change request: We will submit a Change Request by December to request an extension to the project deadline from 31st March to June 30th, 2026. This extension will allow sufficient time to complete post-training impact questionnaires and other timebound activities. It will require the transfer of some funds from Year 2 to Q1 of Year 3, following a budget reforecasting exercise. Changes will be made to the log frame indicators, specifically to the six-month post-training impact measurement period and to revise the number of ranger training providers to two (KWS and KFS), recognising them as the sole national level ranger training and ToT institutions. The 0.1 and 2.1 indicators will be updated accordingly, with WRTI and KWCA removed.

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/ No

Formal Change Request submitted:

No

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

N/A

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*

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 ☐ 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.

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures? Suspicions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk

No
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.
For general reference, please refer to the updated Risk Register (see Annex 18).
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.

