



**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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025**

Please note all projects that were active before 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

Submit to: [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line.

<b>Project reference</b>	DARCC052
<b>Project title</b>	Small but mighty: Empowering Tajik conservation organisations through capacity building
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Tajikistan
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Fauna & Flora International (FFI)
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Center for the Support of Specially Protected Natural Areas of Tajikistan (CSSPNAT) Tourist of Mountain Maschoh (ToMM) Youth Group on Protection of Environment (YGPE)
<b>Project Leader</b>	Mr Ubayd Gulamadshoev
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	N/a

**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).**

During the reporting period from April to September 2025, the project made solid progress in line with the agreed implementation timetable. In total, 25 participants (6 F / 19 M) from three CSOs, two Forest Service Units (FSUs) and Fauna & Flora (FFI) Tajikistan took part in capacity and capability-building activities, contributing to enhanced organisational competence, stronger peer collaboration, and improved understanding of people-centred conservation approaches.

**Output 1. Three Tajik biodiversity conservation CSOs build their institutional capacity through a tailored training programme.**

In April, a 5-day **Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop** (*Activity 1.7*) was delivered to prepare a group of facilitators capable of leading subsequent training modules on: *ToT, Project Design & Social Equity, Donor Research & Proposal Writing, and Good Grant Management*. The ToT brought together representatives from three CSOs and FFI Tajikistan, focusing on participatory training techniques, adult learning principles, facilitation skills, and integration of social equity

considerations. The session established a foundation for peer-to-peer learning, with a total of 8 ToT graduates later co-facilitating training module delivery (*Indicator 1.4*).

Between May and July, three 3-day training modules were delivered: The **Project Design & Social Equity module** (*Activity 1.8*) introduced participants to key concepts of logical framework development, theory of change, and integration of social equity in conservation project planning. The **Donor Research & Proposal Writing** (*Activity 1.9*) training helped participants improve their understanding of donor priorities, identify potential funding opportunities, and develop strong, evidence-based proposals. The **Good Grant Management** (*Activity 1.10*) module provided practical guidance on financial accountability, reporting, and compliance with donor requirements.

In total, 16 (4 F /12 M) people from three CSOs, two FSUs and FFI Tajikistan completed structured and relevant training on institutional and technical capacity for biodiversity conservation (*Indicator 1.2 and 1.3*). The sessions combined theory with interactive exercises, case studies, and peer discussions, helping participants strengthen their project design, fundraising, and grant management capacities.

**Output 2. Three Tajik conservation organisations and at least six CSO staff demonstrate increased capacity to fundraise for biodiversity conservation projects.**

During this period, mentoring support to partner CSOs intensified (*Activity 2.2*), running in parallel with the training series. FFI Tajikistan provided individualised guidance to each organisation on developing small grant proposals under the project's regranting mechanism. This process included joint brainstorming during and after the trainings, one-to-one coaching sessions, and remote follow-up by phone. As a result, three CSOs successfully developed and submitted full proposals (*Indicator 2.1*), which were reviewed and approved with input from FFI Tajikistan and Cambridge teams. The FFI technical specialists also ensured that all proposals met appropriate social safeguarding standards and that budgets followed project guidance.

The three approved small grants (up to £3,300 per CSO) (*Activity 2.3*) are:

- ToMM – *Establishment of an apple orchard in Mountain Mastchoh to restore traditional and climate-adapted fruit varieties and improve local ecosystems.*
- C SSPNAT – *Conservation of the Amu Darya trout (Salmo oxianus) in the private reserve "Temurdara."*
- YGPE – *Organisation of the 12th Environmental Youth Camp "Our Green Home – 2025" in Sughd region.*

Implementation of these grants (*Activity 2.4*) began during this period and is ongoing.

Continuous mentoring (*Activity 2.5*) has supported progress tracking, problem-solving, and adaptive management, helping to improve CSOs' capability and capacity on project fundraising (*Indicator 2.2*). The first monitoring visit under *Activity 2.6* was carried out to YGPE's project, which has already successfully completed its activity.

**Output 3. Three conservation CSOs strengthen their institutional capacity and comply with government regulations to operate in Tajikistan and collaborate with government.**

As part of the project's efforts to strengthen the enabling environment and collaboration among CSOs, two capacity-building workshops were conducted during the reporting period.

In August, a Legal Workshop (*Activity 3.1*) was held in collaboration with FFI legal specialist and a national taxation expert. The session aimed to increase participants' understanding of environmental legislation, NGO registration procedures, and the legal basis for community engagement in biodiversity conservation. It also provided a platform for open discussion on challenges CSOs face in meeting legal requirements and maintaining compliance and laid the groundwork for the development of a practical legal guide for CSOs in the next reporting period. In September, a Communication Workshop (*Activity 3.2*) was organised in Dushanbe to strengthen CSOs' communication skills, visibility, and collaboration. The workshop focused on enhancing participants' skills in storytelling, message development, visibility planning, and social media use for outreach and advocacy. It also fostered peer-to-peer exchange and encouraged ongoing collaboration among participants. CSOs expressed interest in continued mentorship and joint communication initiatives to sustain collective learning.

In total, 13 participants (2 F / 11 M) completed training on government stakeholder engagement and compliance and 11 participants (5 F / 7 M) completed training in communications and

media skills (*Indicator 3.1 and 3.2*), including representatives from the three CSOs, two FSUs, NGO Zam-Zam (FFI partner) and FFI Tajikistan.

**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.**

**Trainer readiness, commitment and learning curve:**

The ToT highlighted that not all selected participants had prior training experience or confidence to facilitate sessions. While this limited the immediate effectiveness of the workshop's "train-the-trainer" model, it provided insight into how to better sequence capacity building, for example, combining foundational training in facilitation skills with gradual practice opportunities. For modules 2 and 3, two more experienced trainers mentored two less experienced ones, helping to ensure consistent quality of the training delivery, whilst building further confidence and capacity across CSOs. While such model helped enhance ownership and sustainability, it demanded substantial time commitment from the more experienced trainers in preparing, delivering, and reporting on multiple workshops. To acknowledge this, we recently submitted a Change Request proposing to allocate a small training fee, helping ensure that partners remained motivated and committed to project activities.

**Motivation and leadership impact through training and mentoring:**

The ToT and follow-up mentoring have already shown positive behavioural shifts within participating CSOs. For instance, participants who were initially less engaged in their organisations became more proactive and motivated after discovering their ability to apply new tools and approaches. Parallel mentoring and training have proven highly effective for reinforcing learning and ensuring immediate application. However, this approach also demands careful coordination and workload management for the FFI Tajikistan team, which continues to balance training delivery, mentoring support, and grant management responsibilities.

**Unexpected changes in some project costs:**

Following delivery of initial training modules and workshops, our project team noted higher-than-expected workshop costs. Additionally, the visa for one planned UK-based ToT trainer could not be processed in time, resulting in refund of the original flight costs and a lower-than-expected international travel costs. As such, we recently submitted a small budget re-alignment request to help accommodate these changes and support delivery of remaining activities.

Despite these minor challenges, all planned activities are proceeding according to the timetable, and there are no expected delays or major project implications.

**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

Formal Change Request submitted:

Yes

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** ☒ 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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](mailto:fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk)

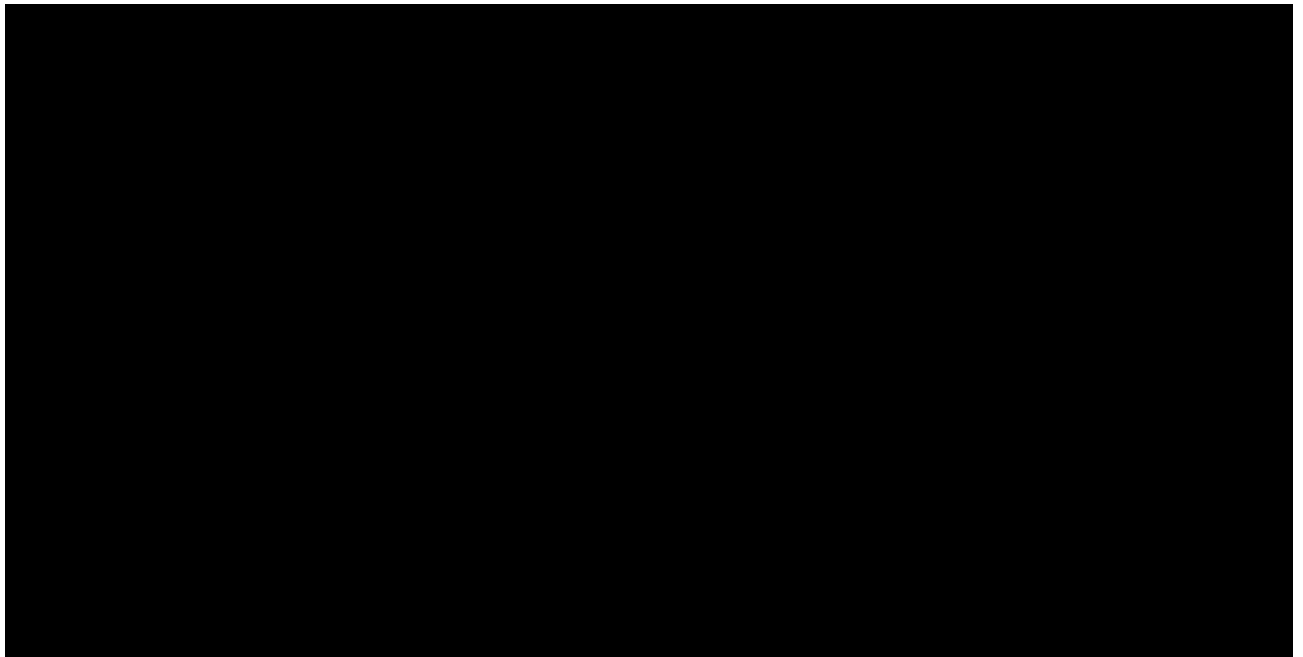
N/a

**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.**



## Checklist for submission

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