



**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	DARCC055
Project title	Wetland Learning Hub: empowering wetland conservationists in three key regions
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Indo-Burma, West Africa and Madagascar
Lead Organisation	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT)
Partner(s)	PRCM
Project Leader	Tina Redshaw
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31st October 2025 HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	https://wetlandlearninghub.org/ https://www.linkedin.com/company/wetland-learning-hub/

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).

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

The online Wetland Health and Vitality Course was translated into French and Portuguese and regionally relevant case studies were developed for both West Africa and Madagascar.

The West Africa course commenced in May 2025. 180 participants were recruited: 70% French, 18% English, and 12% Portuguese speakers. By September 2025, 73 participants (30% women) from 53 organisations across nine countries (Senegal, Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Guinea, and Nigeria) had completed the course. An extension of the course deadline has been granted to 12 participants who are currently still undertaking the course.

The Madagascar course launched in August 2025 with 69 participants. All applicants from Madagascar were accepted, given the limited target audience. 31 participants successfully completed the course by mid-October. An extension has been granted to all remaining participants with the aim of increasing completion rates. Despite outreach efforts, recruitment fell short due to the small national audience, and initial assumptions about the level of interest did not hold true. Nevertheless, we have already reached our overall target of training 150 conservationists across the three target regions.

In-person courses for West Africa and Madagascar were developed in collaboration with our partners, PRCM and WWT Madagascar. The in-person course for West Africa took place in the Saloum Delta in late September, attended by 23 participants. 8 participants were supported with additional IKI funding. The in-person course for Madagascar commenced on 20th October, with 12 participants in attendance. While the number was lower than anticipated, this was due to a combination of last-minute cancellations and a limited number of applications (and likely due to the political uncertainty currently prevailing in Madagascar).

Training for our partner organisations is currently underway. We launched a self-paced, online Training of Trainers Course in September 2025, attended by 8 staff members. Further training on fundraising capacity is being planned.

An online resource hub for wetland professionals hosted on the WLH website is currently being designed. We continue to have good engagement in our LinkedIn Alumni Group and a discussion forum specifically for female alumnae has been established on LinkedIn.

Our M&E systems have been established and remain appropriate for tracking participant engagement and course completion. This will be directly measured through pre- and post- course surveys in addition to monitoring workspaces and completion statistics on the learning platform.

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.

Despite outreach efforts, recruitment fell slightly short for the Madagascar course due to the small national audience, and initial assumptions about the level of interest did not hold true. This experience highlights the challenges of meeting regional training targets in countries with smaller professional networks and limited access to Internet in more remote areas.

For future courses, setting more context-specific recruitment targets and investing in deeper stakeholder engagement early in the process may improve outcomes. Additionally, regional or multi-country approaches may be more effective than single-country models in contexts with limited national reach.

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 – not necessary
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No – 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*

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)?

Yes ☐ 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 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

None

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.

Not relevant

6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please provide further information, ensuring no sensitive data is included within responses.

Suspensions or allegations related to safeguarding concerns should be reported to ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk

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.

In response to the project review, we have appointed the WLH Project Officer as the dedicated safeguarding lead within the project. The project safeguarding lead will monitor the risk of SEAH within the project and ensure mitigations are in place to keep project stakeholders safe. The project safeguarding lead will escalate any incidents to WWT's dedicated safeguarding lead.

WWT's safeguarding policy has recently been updated. A copy will be shared with the next annual report.

The following actions have been identified to ensure project participants are aware of their right to protection from SEAH and WWT's safeguarding policy:

- Participants will be made aware during online Welcome Meetings, which are also made available as recordings on the online learning platform.
- In-person course participants will be made aware again during the Welcome session.

SEAH risks have been included in the updated project risk register.

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.	Y
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	Y
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	N/A
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	Y
Submit to BCF-Reports@niras.com	Y
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Y