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	DAREX011
Project title	Scaling up Equitable Governance of Protected and Conserved Areas (SEGA)
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal, Madagascar, Kenya, Tanzania, Bolivia
Lead Organisation	IIED
Partner(s)	RECOTFC - Nepal, MNP - Madagascar MV - Madagascar KWCA - Kenya Honeyguide - Tanzania ACEAA - Boliva
Project Leader	Phil Franks
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	*HYR2* April-September 2025
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.iied.org/scaling-equitable-governance-area-based-conservation-sega

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).

Annex 1a is the original workplan and Annex 1b a plan with some rescheduling of three activities under output 1 which as approved through a change request earlier this year.

1.1. Provide training, technical and financial support for the SAGE preparation and assessment phases (steps 1.1-2.4) at four demonstration sites per country (six in Madagascar).   As shown in the revised workplan (annex 1) this activity 1,1 was due to be completed by June 2025. By September 2025 all partners had, as expected, exceeded the target of 4 sites (2 for Madagascar Voakajy - MV) for at SAGE step

2.3 with the exception of Madagascar National Parks – 3 completed against a target of 4- who got off to a very slow start in year 1 but is now catching up.

Country	Partner	Number of sites that have reached this step of the SAGE process with some level of support from SEGA							
		1.1	2.2	2.3	3.1a	3.1b	3.1b target by March 26	3.2	3.3
		Introducing SAGE	Assessment by actors	Synthesis	Prioritisation	Planning	Planning	Action implementation	Progress monitoring
Bolivia	CA	4	6	6	5	5	8	5	0
Kenya	KWCA	6	6	6	6	6	8	4	1
Madagascar	MNP	5	3	3	3	3	8	0	0
Madagascar	MV	3	3	3	3	3	4	2	0
Tanzania	HG	4	4	4	4	4	8	4	0
Nepal	RECOFTC	8	8	8	8	8	8	4	2

1.2. Provide training, technical support and limited financial support for the action phase of SAGE (steps 3.1-3.4) at four demonstration sites per country (six in Madagascar). This action phase when stakeholders at site level plan (step 3.1) and implement actions to improve governance (step 3.2) started in October 2024 and is now one year into this phase. At this point all partners should have at least 4 sites at this stage except MV for which the target is 2, making a total of 6 in Madagascar. As shown in the table above, all partners are on track with the exception of Madagascar National Parks but they have planned to catch up by the end of March and will shortly be starting SAGE assessments at three new PAs with support from the German Agency GIZ. Alongside the work at country level, we in this reporting period been developing an analytical framework for characterising the different types of actions to improve governance that are being developed and then implemented at each SAGE site. We are fortunate in having a big dataset of actions to improve governance that were proposed at 37 different SAGE assessments during the period 2020-2023. The analysis of this data, the analytical framework and some observations on emerging patterns will be published in an IIED Working Paper that was completed in September and will be published in December.

1.3. Provide training and technical support (but not financial support) for the use of SAGE (steps 1.1-3.4) at four additional sites (six in Madagascar). This is the first cycle of scaling up where a SAGE process starts at 4 new sites without being funded by the project, making a total of 8 sites per partners (4 for MV). As shown in the table above, at this point midway through year 2 RECOTFC in Nepal has already reached 8 sites, and KWCA in Kenya 6 sites and MV in Madagascar 3 out of 4 sites. Thus three partners are on track, CA in Bolivia is slightly behind, and HG in Tanzania and MNP in Madagascar have not yet started their first round of scaling but plan to do so in the period November-March. This activity is key test of the projects theory of change – that SAGE will be taken up at new sites funded by other organisations/projects. As noted above, MNP has planned for at least a further 3 sites by end of March with funding from GIZ. Our concern here is with Honeyguide in Tanzania and we have agreed that they will increase their capacity to facilitate SAGE with effect from January either by assigning another staff member to SEGA or with a consultant for which we will submit a change request by the end of November.

1.4. Develop and test tools to improve SAGE, notably for action planning (step 3.1) and monitoring progress (step 3.3), and update the SAGE manual. This activity of piloting and improving key elements of the phase 3 of the SAGE methodology has been ongoing since October 2024 and is on track to be concluded by March 2026. In the last 9 months since January we have further developed and rolled out new guidance for planning (step 3.1) at a total of 29 sites and are confident that we now have a very strong method. Progress monitoring which takes place c 6months after

planning is only just starting at a few sites. One site in Nepal has piloted a new improved method in June, and at the time of writing this report the number is now 3 with the addition of 2 sites in Kenya. As with all steps of SAGE, methodology development is a joint effort with partners and IIED staff have attended all three pilots to date, discussing with partner in advance how to adapt the method to their context and then reviewing with them their experience. At the time of writing this report we now have a method that can move from piloting to rolling out to all sites, and included in the new SAGE version 3 users' manual which will be published in April 2026.

1.5. Develop and deliver training on key governance and equity issues for actors at each site, e.g. respect for rights, participation in decision making, transparency/accountability and benefit sharing, grievance mechanisms, leadership. This activity is three months behind schedule, starting July 2025 rather than April 2025. All partners are currently in the process of developing their training modules on the governance topics that are most relevant to the needs emerging from the initial SAGE assessments. To support this development of training modules IIED has, as planned, contracted experienced governance trainers to develop generic modules for participation in decision-making, transparency and dispute resolution which are now being shared with partners to provide input and inspiration for their country-specific modules. As I write this report, RECOFTC has just sent a photo on the SEGA group chat of training on participation and transparency.

2.1. Facilitate a community of practice at national, regional or landscape level for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and motivation, including thematic workshops, exchange visits, social media and other online knowledge sharing platforms and tools. The community of practice (CoP) is for participants in SAGE and SAGE facilitators who have begun the taking action phase of SAGE. Tanzania is the furthest ahead in this regard and held a first meeting of their community of practice in May 2025 with 35 participants. No other countries had CoP workshops in this reporting period but all will hold one by March. Overall, this activity is about 6 months behind schedule though still within the financial year in which it has been planned and budgeted (year 2). The delay is largely because partner staff have been preoccupied with supporting SAGE processes under output 1.

2.2. Develop country-specific guides for addressing specific governance and equity issues of that country drawing on knowledge and learning emerging from the community of practice. This activity is tied to the CoP workshops where we plan to have a governance expert participate with the specific mandate to document learning emerging from the workshop process on 1-2 key themes. This was not done at the first CoP meeting in Tanzania as the facilitation team were preoccupied with the piloting the workshop process but will start with the next CoP workshop in Kenya in January/February 2026.

2.3. Develop and promote innovative schemes to motivate site-level actors to improve governance and equity including showcasing success and linkage to IUCN Green List. Not yet started due to capacity constraints in IIED but will start in April 2026 (year 3).

2.4. Support a global scheme to promote and recognise excellence in improving PCA governance and equity, building on any existing schemes. Not yet started due to capacity constraints in IIED but will start in April 2026 (year 3).

3.1. Evaluate the conservation and social outcomes of using SAGE, and impact pathways, using outcome harvesting, process tracing and other relevant impact evaluation methods. As planned, this will start with research design in October 2026.

3.2. Analyse processes of adoption of SAGE by sites additional to demonstration sites, including enabling conditions and barriers, and apply this to accelerate uptake of governance assessment and action in each country. During this reporting period we have focused on developing the approach for this action research. Whereas in the

project design we assumed that the main focus on the research would be studying the process of scaling out (replication), we have concluded that before we get to this stage we should be looking at the theory of change at a site level which assumes that stakeholders participate in a SAGE assessment process that develops action plans to improve governance, then implement these action plans leading to improvements in governance. Whether organisations working at other PAs choose to use SAGE will depend on whether they are seeing evidence of success where it is already being used which in turn depends on how well the process is going in terms of our site-level theory of change.   The first phase of the research is focusing on this aspect with particular attention to barriers that may be impeding or preventing the effective implementation of some actions. This begins with a researcher participating in progress monitoring meetings starting with a meeting in Nepal in early November. Relative to the workplan in annex 1b, this activity is about 6 month delayed, mainly by the fact that the first phase is linked to the progress monitoring meetings.

3.3. Generate and share at national, regional and global levels knowledge on improving PCA governance and equity at scale and pathways to conservation and social outcomes. Within this reporting period of April to September that have not been any events at regional or global levels where experience of this project has been presented but preparation tool place for a number of events at the World Conservation Congress which took place in October 2025, including an [amazing interactive poster](#). More on this is the annual report.

At national level in the five countries there have been a number of events where staff of the project partners have presented and discussed SAGE experiences and results. This relates directly to M&E indicator 3.3. See the table below.

Country	Event
Nepal	• Presentation to 11 parliamentary committee reviewing national conservation policy and law • Presentation to provincial authorities reviewing provincial level forest policy • Presentations at 2 national level forest conferences
Tanzania	• Presentation on SAGE to workshop of the national level community of practice on governance of protected and conserved areas
Kenya	• ……………………
Madagascar	• ……………………
Bolivia	• Presentation to **Red de Espacios de Conservación de Pando** annual conference 2025

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.

1. **Staffing constraints with national level project partners**. As the project moves in year 2 from supporting SAGE assessments in year 1 to supporting planning and implementation of actions in year 2 alongside scaling up assessments to new sites, we are finding that capacity of partner staff to support both and associated learning processes is the primary constraint that is leading to substantial delays and the underspend on field activities that we are expecting. We are now reviewing the situation with each partner and will submit a change request in late November requesting - for some partners - reallocation of some operating cost to staffing to redress the imbalance.

2. **Political instability in Nepal and Madagascar** in the last six months leading to insecurity and the need to suspend field work for a couple of weeks and change in President and many ministers in government. In October Tanzania has experienced the same with all field work being disrupted for up to 4 weeks in some areas and the possibility of further disruption in coming months in a country that has never before seen such a situation. This further contributes to the underspend we are currently expecting, and as above aim to at least partly mitigate through addressing staff capacity bottlenecks.

3. **In terms of learning**, as more and more sites using SAGE start planning and implementing actions to improve governance we are seeing a need and substantial value in, at overall project (ie IIED) level, putting more effort into collating and analysing information on the different types of actions that are being planned and implemented at different sites and information from the progress monitoring that takes place after 6-12 months. To this end in January 2025 we in IIED have taken on a part-time junior research consultant as M&E assistant, a task that requires collecting and analysing a lot of data that is additional to the project M&E plan and therefore not planned for in the IIED budget. To this end we will request a small increase in the consultancy budget line in the forthcoming change request.

3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with NIRAS:	Not yet but will shortly submit a change request to address these issues
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*	

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

Actual spend: ██████████████████

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?

Suspicions 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.

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.

The feedback on our annual report is all marked as to be addressed in the next annual report.

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.	Yes
Have you reported against the most **up to date information for your project?**	Yes
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.	Yes
Submit to **BCF-Reports@niras.com**	
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	