



**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	DARNV011
Project title	A new tool for advancing locally led conservation
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal, Philippines, Uganda, Kenya
Lead Organisation	International Institute for Environment and Development
Partner(s)	RECOTFC Nepal, Bukidnon University, Philippines CORDIO, Kenya Makerere University, Uganda
Project Leader	Phil Franks
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR3 April 1 st 2025-September 30 th 2025
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.iied.org/sage-gt-for-enhancing-power-indigenous-peoples-local-communities-area-based-conservation

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).

See Annex 1 for logframe with slightly revised activities reflecting an adjustment to the scaling up strategy of the project. There is no change to activities 1.1 to 2.3 and all of these have now been completed, but activities 2.4 and 2.5 have been replaced by a new activity 2.4:

2.4 Incorporate a SAGE-GT module in the methodology of the SAGE tool and the new SAGE manual to be published in March 2026.

This activity reflects the change in strategy that was approved in our change request submitted on 22/9/25. Scaling up will now be achieved through our Darwin Extra “Scaling up Equitable Governance project” where the tool developed by this project will become a) an add-on to our standard SAGE tool with the same objective of shifting the balance of power in governance,

and b) a standalone tool for assessing the actual governance type of a protected or conserved area , assuming this is approved in a change request to be submitted in early December.

- 3.1 Conduct applied research on impact pathways and enabling conditions for roll out based on focus groups and key informant interviews with actors at testing and other sites, and higher levels.

This has been completed and reports produced for sites in Nepal, Uganda and Kenya. At the remaining site in the Philippines there has been some delay but the work will be completed by end of November.

- 3.2 Prepare an IIED Working Paper and Briefing on experience and results that validate the tool, make recommendations for scaling up, and support advocacy on the importance of PCA governance type and quality for conservation effectiveness and equity and promoting IPLC-led conservation

Writing of this report and briefing led by the Project Leader will commence at the start of November and be published by the end of December.

- 3.3 Prepare and update a communication plan including plan for the World Parks Congress 2024 (funded by co-financing from GIZ).

This was incorporated in the overall communication plan for IIED's engagement in WCC.

- 3.4 Prepare a WCPA publication on the revised framework of PCA governance type, PCA governance quality and their inter-relationship illustrated with results from using the new tool for governance type and SAGE for governance quality. (funded by co-financing from GIZ).

This proposal to revise the existing IUCN framework of PCA governance types was discussed with a number of members of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) who expressed concern that this would be a contentious and thus lengthy process as some key WCPA members do not see the need to change the current framework. So the plan was modified to conducting a consultation with key WCPA members to elicit their views in a more systematic way. The report was finalised in October 2024 but we overlooked it in the last Annual Report because it was not Darwin funded but supported by co-financing from GIZ. We are including it here as annex 3. In terms of this project, the key finding is that the majority of key informants who were consulted advise against revising this framework at this time but rather suggest that the priority should be enhancing understanding of why equitable governance, including PCA governance quality and type, and reporting of it, is important, and how to progress towards it at site, subnational and national levels. In other words, focus on getting better understanding of the relevance of governance type based on the existing framework that is widely recognised, and more accurate reporting of governance type to the World Database on Protected Area, before trying to change the framework. See Annex 3.

- 3.5 Prepare and publish a policy brief on why IPLC-led conservation needs attention to PCA governance type and governance quality alongside financing (funded by co-financing from GIZ).

This will be completed and published by December 31st.

- 3.6 Events at the World Conservation Congress (WCC) 2025

The main event at WCC relevant to this project was a presentation to the steering committee of the IUCN WCPA on shared governance of Protected and Conserved Areas including the need for a tool to assess the governance type of a PCA and, within shared governance, the balance of power/authority/influence in governance between community and non-community (mainly government) actors. WCPA has now decided to establish a Task Force to revitalise shared governance of PCAs which, according to the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) has declined to 2% of all PCAs worldwide and yet is key to progress on the equitable governance element of Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework. The assumption is that use of a lite version of the tool developed by this project for rapid determination

of the actual governance type of a PCA will show that there are currently a lot more PCAs with shared governance than is being reported to the WDPA (ie much more than 2%), and that the percentage of PCAs with shared governance will substantial increase over the next five years.

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.

Nothing significant

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 N/A

Formal Change Request submitted:

Yes/ No N/A

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

Yes/ No N/A

Change Request reference if known: [We submitted a change request on 22/9/2025 for a no cost extension of 3 months to December 31st 2025. I am informed by my colleague Nwanneka Onwuka that this has been approved but I do not have the approval letter.](#)

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:

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

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.

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.

With the 3 month no-cost extension we will produce an end of project report in January 2026. Feedback on our year 2 report identified the following issues to be addressed in this final report.

No.	Comment	Discuss with BCFs Admin	Final Report	No response needed
1	The field work to deliver activities 3.2 to 3.6 will be carried out by the Task Force and GIZ as an in-kind contribution. The value of this work should be quantified/estimated and reported in the expenditure section of the final report.		X	
2	Please ensure you include SEAH risk in your project risk register. Currently the risk register only identifies risks relating to health, safety and security.		X	
3	Please clarify staff SEAH training numbers- all staff should have protection from SEAH training so the aim should be 100%. Provide an update on training in the Final Report. Include an outline of what the training entails and number of staff who have received training		X	
4	Please describe how communities and project participants are made aware of your commitment to PSEAH.		X	

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.	