



**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	DARNV025
Project title	Improving wildlife health monitoring using community networks, screening, and immunology
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda
Lead Organisation	University of Manchester
Partner(s)	Dr. Elisa Manase from Tanzania Relief Initiatives; Mpala Research Centre; Dr. Richard Gashururu from the College of Agriculture, Animal Science, and Veterinary Medicine (CAVM), University of Rwanda; Dr. Francis Gakuya from the Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI); Bernard Bett from the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI); Dr. Folorunso Fasina from the University of Pretoria and FAO; Dr. Iddi Lipende from the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI); Dr. Drew Bantlin from African Parks; and the IMPACT initiative.
Project Leader	<i>Susanne Shults</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR2</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i>TBC</i>

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).

Between April and September 2025, the project made steady progress towards **Output 3 – evaluating the health burden of co-morbidity on wildlife and livestock in Laikipia (Kenya) and West Kilimanjaro (Tanzania)** using innovative participatory and laboratory approaches.

Headline progress

- We advanced laboratory analyses [REDACTED]
- We completed targeted field sampling in Laikipia (Kenya), held community feedback sessions in Laikipia, and conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with wildlife rangers and community animal health workers in West Kilimanjaro (Tanzania).
- We finalised ethics and research permits for expanded Kenya fieldwork in Laikipia and assembled an interdisciplinary early-career team embedded in county systems.

Progress against logframe indicators

3.1 Documentation of endemic disease burden in livestock and wildlife [DID18]

A. laboratory and analytics:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

B. Field and engagement:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

3.1.1 Co-infection and disease burden evidence for 500 livestock / 100 households [DI-B04]

- This period's contribution: [REDACTED]

3.1.2 Co-infection and disease burden evidence for 300 wildlife individuals [DI-D18]

- **This period's contribution:** [REDACTED]

3.1.3 Evidence of wildlife disease impacts from non-invasive profiling [DI-E03]

- [REDACTED]

Tanzania fieldwork (West Kilimanjaro)

- [REDACTED]

Preparations for corresponding fieldwork in Laikipia, Kenya

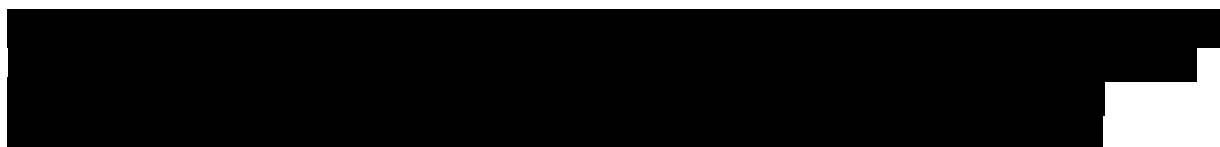
- **Start (scheduled):** FGDs and key informant interviews in Laikipia, Kenya, to begin in November .
- **Participants:** Community disease reporters, wildlife rangers, livestock owners/managers (animal health data), and community health promoters/mothers in livestock-keeping households (public health data).
- **Ethics & permits:** Additional clearances obtained from the University of Manchester, Mount Kenya University, and NACOSTI (Kenya) reflecting the approved scope change.
- **Team capacity:** An interdisciplinary team of early-career veterinary and public health professionals—many embedded in county structures—has been mobilised to strengthen One Health surveillance at the human–livestock–wildlife interface.

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.

During the reporting period, the project encountered several operational and administrative challenges, most of which have been managed through adaptive planning.

When we revised the scope of work to include public health data, we sought ethical clearance from the University of Manchester, which is a prerequisite to applying for research permits to NACOSTI in Kenya. NACOSTI recommended an additional ethics review by a local academic/research institution, so we needed to be reviewed by Mount Kenya University. The review and approval process added approximately 6 weeks to the activity timeline. We are,

however, now on track with our NACOSTI permit, and we had already assembled a team while awaiting approval.



Overall, these have been managed without significant impact on the project's delivery timeline or overall budget. The team continues to prioritise strong partner coordination, early risk identification, and adaptive management to ensure the project remains on track towards achieving its objectives.

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:	Yes/ No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes/ No
Change Request reference if known: <i>reference unknown</i>	

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)?



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

[REDACTED]

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?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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.

Reviewer comment 1 – Strengthen evidence base and visibility

The project team acknowledges the recommendation to improve documentation and visibility. In line with this, structured attendance sheets have been prepared and signed for all major capacity-building activities, including the inception and training workshops. Evidence of participant attendance, photographs, and sample materials bearing both project and funder logos have been compiled and will be annexed to the next Annual Report to demonstrate compliance with visibility and attribution requirements.

[REDACTED]

