

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 2024

Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	<i>This should be the project reference provided in your offer paperwork and not your application number</i> 29-009 / DIR28S2\1073
Project title	Empowering Cabo Verde communities towards responsible practices in artisanal fisheries
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Cabo Verde
Lead Organisation	BirdLife International
Partner(s)	<i>Biosfera, Associação Projecto Vitó (APV), Associação Projeto Biodiversidade (APB), Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds (SPEA), University of Oxford (UO)</i>
Project leader	<i>Tabea Zwimpfer</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31/10/2024 HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	

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).

Governance

The project's governance structure remained effective over the last six months. The coordination team, led by the BirdLife International Project Manager, who, with support from a dedicated team of BirdLife experts, continued to hold monthly coordination meetings with implementing partners, providing necessary support for activity execution and proactively addressing challenges.

The Scientific Expert Committee (SEC) held its third meeting in June 2024 offering scientific guidance, data analysis, and expert advice to strengthen the implementation of conservation activities. Additionally, thematic working groups (Data Collection and Management, Labelling, Engagement with Fishing Communities/Guardians of the Sea (GOS) Program, and Social and Behavioural Change) continued to meet regularly, fostering in-depth discussions on specific aspects of the project and ensuring adherence to the objectives and goals set. Consultations regarding the labelling process were held during parallel meetings at the REDUCE (Reducing the Bycatch of the Threatened Megafauna in the East Central Atlantic) project presentation on Santiago Island, engaging around 20 participants from various public sectors and NGOs. Furthermore, the project coordination team visited Sal to oversee project activities and

prepare for upcoming initiatives, such as the scarybird trials, while maintaining ongoing exchanges with local partners. These communication and governance channels have been essential in maintaining steady activity execution and tackling emerging challenges throughout this period.

Implementing projects actions

Output 1: Increased conservation capacity built amongst 3 civil society organizations and 170 Guardians of the Sea (GOS) members; including behaviour change, sustainable fisheries labelling, and voluntary stewardship.

The initial survey on behavior change aimed at understanding behaviours leading to seabird bycatch analysed the patterns and impacts of such fishing in Cabo Verde. A significant component of this effort was the behavior change field coordinator's visit to the University of Oxford from 25th march to 24th April 2024, where training on social science methods and behavior change techniques was provided to her. This training enhanced our team's ability to facilitate effective interventions and fosters the necessary skills among local stakeholders to drive sustainable practices.

Training sessions have been conducted across several target islands, to equip local fishers (GOS) with essential skills. Topics covered include data collection, first aid, fisheries legislation, fish conservation, financial literacy, freediving techniques – to enhance their at-sea survival skills, handling of sea turtles and seabird bycatch, safe handling practices, and marine pollution. Currently, about 150 GOS have been trained and equipped for marine megafauna monitoring, with over 30 additional fishermen interested in the program and preparing for upcoming registrations and training sessions (this will bring the number of GOS members to 180). In addition, a total of 17 radio programs have been implemented to raise awareness among local communities, including fishermen and fishmongers. These initiatives engage stakeholders in discussions about sustainable fishing practices and marine conservation, promoting a collaborative approach to fisheries management.

Despite initial delays caused by the departure of the contracted communication technician, TAOLA+ is progressing in finalizing its website with support from a new technician. The Facebook page is active, and the team has commenced the development of a new strategic plan that incorporates a communication component. A workshop focused on this strategic plan is scheduled for November and will involve all network members.

A regional exchange visit took place in September on Sal Island with BirdLife partners from West and North Africa, to foster exchanges and collaboration while enhancing the capacities of technicians from state organizations and civil society in seabird conservation across the region. This initiative focused on creating a framework for mutual learning and establishing a network of stakeholders dedicated to seabird conservation. The visit facilitated discussions and workshops that strengthened participants' skills and fostered collaboration among conservation practitioners.

Output 2: A pilot participatory local labelling scheme for sustainable fisheries is implemented by fisheries value chain stakeholders (fishers, fishmongers, restaurants, and consumers) in six islands (Sal, São Vicente, Santo Antão, São Nicolau, Fogo, and Brava).

The Code of Conduct for awarding the "Sustainable, from the Sea to Plate" has been successfully concluded and shared/socialized with direct partners. Currently a total of 10 restaurants in São Vicente have joined the labelling process while discussions are ongoing with 14 additional restaurants in Fogo. However, concerns have arisen among restaurants regarding price competitiveness due to inflation and the associated extra fees for fishermen providing sustainable fish. Despite these challenges, restaurant partners have expressed their willingness to support the initiative, exploring new benefits such as potential contributions from their annual profits and the installation of donation boxes to aid fishermen. To bolster the implementation and promotion of the labelling, a marketing campaign is currently in development. A meeting is scheduled with restaurants across all project sites to formalize the Code of Conduct and discuss further support for fisher's associations (FAs).

After an in-depth analysis of the second approach of the labelling process (fishing products) by IGQPI, this option is being reconsidered due to the high costs (between 80,000 to 100,000 CVE) which exceed the average income of the artisanal fisherman.

Based on the initial survey the islands of Sal, Fogo, and São Vicente were selected for co-design workshops involving around 31 fishers, aimed at collaboratively developing behavior change interventions and understanding how priority groups perceive current solutions and collaborate on intervention prototypes. Following these recent co-design workshops, the team is currently processing the gathered

information to develop a social marketing strategy. While the data analysis is being finalized, a peer-reviewed publication is also in preparation with the data from the baseline survey, with the next step involving consultation with local partners.

Output 3: Bycatch mitigation measures, including safe release, protecting seabirds and sea turtles and that do not adversely affect other vulnerable species (sharks, rays) are deployed by 600 artisanal fishers around 6 islands and show a 25% reduction of estimated total bycatch of seabirds (compared to Y1 baseline), and 50% of fishers safely release captured seabirds and turtles by Y3 Q3.

The scarybird device has been identified as the most promising seabird bycatch mitigation technique in the Cabo Verde hand line artisanal fisheries, while emphasizing the safe handling and release best practices trainings, to decrease the fisheries bycatch of seabirds and sea turtles in Cabo Verde. So far, the project has introduced 66 scarybirds across the various target islands of Cabo Verde. This will lead by the end of the project to the use of this device by more than 180 fishers (considering that there are 2 or 3 fishers per boat). At the same time, more than 200 fishers have been trained on safe release and handling of bycaught animals across the islands of Sal, Fogo, Sao Vicente, Brava, Boa Vista and Santiago.

These combined efforts have led to interesting results in term of decrease of bycatch events and post release mortality as shown by the preliminary analysis of the self-reporting forms and of the first data of the mitigation trials. For example, in Fogo Island, in 6 fishing trips observed, no seabirds were captured while using the scarybird device, compared to 5 seabirds captured during control trips. Meanwhile, on Sal Island, the trials of the scarybird which involve 6 boats have garnered positive feedback from both fishermen and technicians, with over 50 trial trips observed. The in-depth analysis of these data is ongoing and will provide, in the coming months, a better understanding of the effectiveness of the scarybird including the environmental and operational obstacles for its use by fishers.

Overall, the percentage of fishers reporting seabird bycatch in Sal decreased over the past six months relative to baseline figures (data analysis for other islands is still ongoing). Interviews are being prepared to be run by December-January across all islands to assess the decrease of the bycatch of seabirds compared to the baseline in year 1.

In addition, the co-design of the social marketing campaign has been finalised and the implementation that is about to start will provide key elements to address the main identified social, economic, environmental, and political barriers for a sustained reduction of the bycatch of seabirds and sea turtles in the targeted islands.

Output 4: Knowledge on nature and extent of interactions between seabirds and sea turtles in artisanal fisheries is improved and informs bycatch mitigation policies and solutions being used by artisanal fishers in Cabo Verde and in the wider West Africa region by EoP.

The study on the interactions between seabirds, sea turtles, and artisanal fisheries in Cabo Verde has started. All available data from partners collected in Cabo Verde during the past 10 years have been identified and secured to be used by the team of consultants. Preliminary analysis will be available in Q1 of 2025.

Also, efforts to understand seabird and sea turtles' movements are still ongoing through placement and recovery of the GPS devices, capture and ringing of seabirds and sea turtle monitoring. 961 tracks of sea turtle have been collected during this last nesting period around Fogo Island.

Additional GPS devices were deployed on the artisanal fishing boats to identify fishing hotspot around Sao Vicente and Santa Luzia. All these data collected have been shared with the consultants who are leading the study on the interactions between seabirds, sea turtles, and artisanal fisheries.

To understand the movements of and opportunities for collaborative efforts for Cabo Verde seabirds in the region, a regional exchange visit was organised on Sal Island, bringing together representatives of NGOs and governments agencies from Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and partners from Cabo Verde, to share knowledge about seabird conservation in the region.

Output 5: At least 70% (n=370) of pilot participatory sustainable fisheries labelling scheme participants (260 people, ~35% women) directly benefit from a 10% increase in income (compared to baseline) by joining the scheme and co-create livelihood benefits, shared amongst the communities for approx.1,200 people with increasing equitability across genders.

Project partners have made significant strides in supporting local fishing communities through various initiatives aimed at sustainability, empowerment, and economic development.

- In Sao Vicente, Biosfera has provided important incentives to local fishermen, including a total of 300 kg of ice across 3 outings for the GOS with the kits (rotating between GOS members) for data collection, along with other sustainable fishing gear such as lifejacket and fishing kits, to improve fish quality and reduce costs, while actively seeking funding to strengthen the GOS network and develop community-based tourism opportunities.
- Concurrently, APB has been progressing with the installation of solar panels for fishermen's associations, as contracts are signed, and materials are ready for installation. The initiative will have significant impacts by promoting sustainable fishing practices, increasing ice accessibility, and enhancing the financial sustainability of the association, while also reducing electricity costs, benefiting the entire community, especially fishers and fishmongers. Additionally, APB is facilitating the formation of the Fishmongers' Association on Sal Island, empowering 20 women, and implementing a project funded by the *Canada Fund for Local Initiatives* to foster market resilience for fishmongers and explore alternative product presentations. Recently, they conducted a three-day workshop on best practices for fish product diversification, with 30 participants (26 woman and 4 men), focusing on adding value to fishery products.

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.

Challenges and potential impacts

The project continues to face key challenges impacting the progression of conservation efforts: One of the main issues lies in implementing labelling schemes for sustainable fishery products and restaurants. While these schemes are vital for promoting sustainable fishing practices, they face economic hurdles; restaurants are generally unwilling to pay the additional costs for certified sustainable fish, and the high fees for fishery labelling are prohibitive for many artisanal fishers.

Another pressing challenge is sustaining fishers' engagement in data collection and bycatch mitigation efforts. Although workshops and trainings have been conducted, many fishers still lack the technical capacity, despite the training provided, or couldn't manage the time at sea to collect precise data required by protocols, especially for bycatch events and bycatch mitigation measures trials like the scarybird. With limited staff available to offer continuous support, ensuring consistent data quality remains a concern, despite positive initial responses from GOS teams.

Lessons learnt

The introduction of mitigation measures, such as the use of the Scarybird device, has been particularly well received by fishermen, who reported a significant reduction or complete absence of seabirds during fishing activities. This acceptance illustrates the potential for innovative solutions to align with local practices and preferences.

Despite facing challenges like delays and resistance to changing traditional fishing habits, we discovered a **willingness among fishermen and communities** to embrace new techniques gradually. This positive attitude reflects a growing understanding of the need for sustainable practices and better management of marine resources, particularly on Sal Island. The community's support for project initiatives highlights the effectiveness of involving local stakeholders in the decision-making process.

Significant insights gained regarding behaviour change components inform research coordination across different islands and partners, by recognizing the unique profiles of each island and the capabilities of local partners, we've enhanced our research coordination and developed effective engagement strategies that involve fishermen in collaborative planning, strengthening our conservation efforts.

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

Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No
Change Request reference if known: <i>If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome</i>	

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)
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 2025)?
Yes **No** Estimated underspend: £

4c. If you expect and 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. 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 BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?
 No

6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report. If your project was subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment, please use this space to comment on any changes to international human rights risks, and to address any additional mitigations outlined in your offer letters. Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.

We received feedback following the last annual report concerning staffing indicating that the name of the Project Leader on the report does not match BCF records. However, a change request was submitted and approved by NIRAS in this regard on 16 May 2023 (see e-mail exchange attached). Please let us know in case of any additional questions.

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to any additional feedback (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1st April 2024)	

Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	