

## 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: 31<sup>st</sup> 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](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line.

<b>Project reference</b>	29-022
<b>Project title</b>	Community-led fisheries management in the Mara Wetlands, Tanzania.
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Tanzania
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	WWF-UK
<b>Partner(s)</b>	WWF-Tanzania, IHE Delft, Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute (TAFIRI), Victoria Farming and Fishing Organization (VIFAFIO), Lake Victoria Basin Water Board (LVBWB), Mara Regional Administration and Local Government Authorities
<b>Project leader</b>	Tanya Smith
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	31 October 2024 HYR3
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://www.wwf.org.uk/what-we-do/projects/sustainable-fisheries-mara-wetlands">https://www.wwf.org.uk/what-we-do/projects/sustainable-fisheries-mara-wetlands</a>

**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 from start up to end of September).**

#### **Output 1 - Fisheries and wetlands co-management**

**Activity 1.1.2** Fish market surveys, socio-economic surveys: number of fishers by gender/age/location/tenure; the work done through the consultancy on gender dynamics have produced very relevant results on how value chains operate at the community level and the gendered dimensions of that. Further analysis is required but some highlighted findings from the assessment include 1) The importance of education traders on the demand strategies; and increasing cash income of women can trigger negative responses from husbands that can outweigh benefits if not specifically dealt with; and 2) The advice to CMUs to consider the role of fisheries within the community, not just fisherfolk members.

**Activity 1.1.3:** IHE Delft has processed the drone data collected in February 2024, and updated the data and analysis collected from satellite imagery. This has produced two reports:

1) Remote Sensing Analysis of the Mara Wetland, Tanzania. *Focus on wetland extent and vegetation dynamics*; and 2) Analyses of the dynamics of the Mara Wetland, Tanzania, combining data obtained from field surveys, UAVs and satellites. These confirm the dynamic nature of the wetlands over shorter- and longer-term periods. These have been presented to the steering group, and a draft publication of the data processed by IHE is under development

The invertebrate samples collected by the joint TAFIRI/IHE field expedition in December 2023 have been processed and the data shared. This data formed the basis of a data processing workshop planned for October 2024.

**Activity 1.2.1 & 1.2.2:** Between July and September 2024, TAFIRI led the implementation of capacity-building activities under the development of the Mara Wetland Fisheries Co - Management Plan. In July, 27 community members from five districts were trained as 'training of trainers' (ToTs). These ToTs later conducted community training, reaching over 510 fisherfolk. Monitoring efforts ensured the quality and effectiveness of the training, with participants applying sustainable fishing practices and using local monitoring methods to identify illegal fishing gear and juvenile fish. The co-management plan (awaiting government approval) is in place and the CMUs and BMUs are already using the plan to manage the fishing practices at their locality. The initiative has strengthened local capacity and fostered sustainable management of the Mara Wetlands, supporting both ecological conservation and community resilience.

**Activity 1.3.2:** WWF-Tanzania and LVBWB strengthened the capacity of 39 citizen scientists, from two Water User Associations (WUAs) in the north and south Mara, in River Health Assessment (RHA) data collection. Monthly monitoring of the Mara River is now conducted across 18 sites. Key achievements include enhanced capacity for data interpretation, contributing to early pollution detection and improved wetlands fisheries resource management. Challenges include limited technical skills and software issues. There are plans for ongoing training and collaboration with authorities to address these gaps.

**Activity 1.3.3:** In August 2024, a training session was held in Musoma to enhance the capacity of enumerators and stakeholders involved in the electronic Catch Assessment Survey (eCAS) for the Mara Wetlands. A total of 16 enumerators, along with 6 CMU/BMU members, were trained in using the eCAS application for data collection. This session improved participants' skills in data entry and smartphone use, while also disseminating eCAS research findings to ensure transparency and accuracy. The monitoring practice established a plan for correcting data inconsistencies with local fisheries officers who are custodians of fishery data.

### **Output 2: Build capacity for sustainable fishing practices and co-management plans**

**Activity 2.2.3:** In August 2024, TAFIRI, in collaboration with WWF and local government authorities, facilitated a gear exchange programme in Kwibuse village. Fifty fishers from four villages (i.e., Kwibuse, Kirumi, Kongoto and Magatini) voluntarily surrendered a total of 290 illegal nets, which were replaced with 50 legal fishing nets. The event included a public meeting to distribute legal gear and destroy the improper gear, promoting compliance with sustainable fishing practices. Despite budgetary limitations that restricted the number of legal gears distributed, the willingness of fishers to exchange illegal gear remained high. Plans for scaling up this programme to other villages are underway, recognizing the demand for legal gear and the success of the initiative in fostering sustainable fishing practices.

### **Output 3 - Fisheries value chain to improve local livelihoods**

**Activity 3.1.1:** From July to August 2024, VIFAFIO, in collaboration with WWF-TCO, conducted a value chain analysis to identify opportunities for women to strengthen their economic returns in the fisheries sector. The activity involved visits to 20 women fishmonger groups, comprising 385 members, to assess their operations and provide training on savings,

loans, and post-harvest processing techniques. Key achievements include capacity building for 76% of the women members on improved record-keeping, and other economic opportunities, such as processing and market expansion to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Additionally, women have begun diversifying income through handicraft production from water hyacinth and papyrus.

**Activity 3.3.1:** WWF, in partnership with VIFAFIO, has continued to support 22 women's groups in the Mara Wetlands through Village Community Banks (VICOBA). Of these, 19 groups are actively engaged in savings, loans, and small business investments, with three groups (the Kitakwa, Lyamisanga, Kirumi fishers) growing revolving funds of TZS 11.7, 9.8 and 6.7 million respectively. Capacity assessments were conducted to identify challenges and opportunities with plans to provide seed funding to the strongest groups. The strong women groups have agreed to mentor the weak groups as a way forward to motivate them. This activity has strengthened local women's financial management skills and promoted sustainable livelihoods, contributing to enhanced economic resilience in the community.

#### **Output 4: Enabling conditions for scaling up**

**Activity 4.2.3:** WWF, in collaboration with the Local Government Authority (LGA), has facilitated the development of constitutions and by-laws for the Community Management Units (CMUs). Additionally, the LGA's fisheries division is ready to support CMUs effort of collecting fees from landing sites and to allocate 10% of income generated from respective landing sites. The CMUs have also established sustainable financing mechanisms, including fees from local fishermen and landing site collection fees, ensuring their continued operation even after the project's conclusion.

In October 2024, the team will be holding a sustainable exit planning workshop which will focus on Output 4 and developing a clear exit plan for the project.

#### **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.**

Over the past six months, the project encountered several notable challenges and unexpected developments, which have implications for the implementation and outcomes of our activities.

**Data quality issues were encountered during the implementation of electronic Catch Assessment Surveys (eCAS).** During training sessions, data inconsistencies were identified in the eCAS database, which posed a risk to the reliability of project findings. In response, fisheries officers were granted access to correct these errors, and refresher training was provided to enumerators to improve the accuracy of future data collection efforts. This corrective action is ongoing, and we will ensure that future eCAS data is reliable and can support sound decision-making for fisheries management.

Similar issues are evident arising from the difficulties of collecting samples in a consistent way from the wetland, so that they can be comparable across temporal and spatial scales. Therefore, careful and ecologically sound interpretation of data are needed. Reliably identifying critical breeding sites and ecological refugia for rare species has been difficult, although data on fish larvae distribution provided some progress on this. More work on these points is needed for effective management planning.

**Inconsistent participation and attendance of stakeholders at training sessions also posed challenges, particularly in larger and more dispersed communities.** To address this, the project team implemented follow-ups through phone calls and established a WhatsApp group to facilitate communication and maintain participant engagement. Although there were some delays due to network challenges, this approach has helped verify attendance and build stronger relationships between trainers and participants.

Additionally, during gear exchange and enforcement activities, concerns arose regarding the risk of using excessive force by CMUs and BMUs, especially with the upcoming **local government elections**. To mitigate this, the Regional Fisheries Officer has overseen the gear exchanges and reiterated the importance of non-violent enforcement to maintain community relationships, and ongoing efforts are being made to ensure a balanced approach to enforcement actions during sensitive periods.

The project has learned that **community trust and local ownership are crucial** for the success of conservation initiatives. Building trust with fishers during the gear exchange programme significantly improved participation. The project team will continue to address these challenges to minimise disruptions to project activities, ensuring that timelines are adjusted appropriately and that additional resources are sought to meet growing needs.

**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:

NA

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 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?**

Although the % spend is slightly lower than the expected 50% at this stage, the project team is confident that all BCF funds will be spent by the end of the project.

**6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report.**

The feedback or request for clarification during the last year review was around the following points:

1. The *lack of Darwin Initiative Standard Indicators* for the reporting is because at the time of the proposal the Standard indicators were not compulsory, however the team reported against some of the standard indicators retrospectively in Y1 and Y2.
2. *Why the project did not provide as many nets as originally promised* - The project was unable to provide the originally promised number of nets due to budget constraints. As a result, we had to utilise matching funds in this financial year to purchase additional fishing nets.
3. *How to deal with the exchange of 6 nets for one illegal net*, which is an illegal practice in the wetland. The fishermen were educated before the fish net exchange, and they were explicitly informed that joining multiple nets together would render them illegal. They agreed to these terms, and the Community Management Units (CMUs) were assigned the responsibility of monitoring and ensuring compliance
4. A solution to the *number of days spent for the collection of eCAS*. All enumerators are fishermen who voluntarily collect eCAS data during their fishing trips. WWF and TAFIRI conducted a workshop with the enumerators, where it was agreed, and formalised through signed agreements, that each enumerator would participate in data collection three times per week.

## Checklist for submission

<b>For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024)</b>	
Have you <b>responded to any additional feedback</b> (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 <b>risk register</b> ?	
<b>For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024)</b>	
Have you responded to <b>feedback from your latest Annual Report Review</b> ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	X
<b>For All Projects</b>	
Include your <b>project reference</b> in the subject line of submission email.	X
Submit to <a href="mailto:BCFs-Report@niras.com">BCFs-Report@niras.com</a> .	X
Have you <b>clearly highlighted any confidential information</b> within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	X
Have you reported against the most <b>up to date information for your project</b> ?	X
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	X