

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	29-023
Project title	Community-based conservation of snow leopard and its habitat in Pakistan
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Pakistan
Lead Organisation	Snow Leopard Foundation
Partner(s)	Snow Leopard Trust
Project leader	<i>Snow Leopard Foundation</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	30 October 2024, SLFHYP 1
Project website/blog/social media	www.slf.org.pk

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).

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

Sr. No.	Activities planned as per Project Implementation Timetable	Progress from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024
Output 1. Conservation and income-generating initiatives including livestock vaccination, predator-proof corrals, livestock insurance, and handicrafts enterprises established in 17 valleys.		
1.1	Attend already established Valley Conservation Development Organization (VCDO)/Community-based Organization (CBO) meetings,	During the reporting period, the project team attended 100 meetings of the VCDOs/CBOs in 17 project sites and provided guidance for community mobilization and gender

	guide community mobilization and gender empowerment	empowerment during the community learning sessions.
1.2	Establish new VCDOs and CBOs as per project requirements and attend meetings to guide community mobilization and gender empowerment	All the VCDOs and CBOs were established in 2022. The CBOs were guided to develop informed attitudes toward the conservation of biodiversity and associated natural resources through community learning sessions during the reporting period.
1.3	Identify and procure vaccines as per vaccination protocol and medicine for ectoparasites as per feedback from the GB Livestock Department.	The Livestock and Dairy Development Department, Gilgit-Baltistan, recommended vaccines against Black Quarter (BQ), Enterotoxaemia, Foot and Mouth Disease, Caprine Pleuropneumonia (CCPV), Sheep & Goat Pox and Lumpy Skin Diseases for the Autumn 2024 vaccination drive. The vaccines identified were procured and delivered to the program office for onward distribution in the program sites.
1.4	Vaccinate 50,000 cattle/ yak and 100,000 goat/sheep for Black Quarter, Enterotoxaemia, Foot and Mouth, or other necessary vaccines recommended by the Livestock Department and protection of animals against ectoparasites like Mange.	The spring vaccination campaign 2024 launched at Darwin sites in collaboration with the Livestock and Dairy Development Department, Gilgit-Baltistan, and the CBOs of program sites was completed. A total of 148,945 livestock of 5,307 households were vaccinated, including 31,865 cattle, 8,281 yaks, 50,919 goats, and 57,880 sheep, against Black Quarter, <i>Haemorrhagic Septicaemia</i> , Enterotoxaemia, Foot and Mouth Disease, and Sheep & Goat Pox. The autumn vaccination drive just started and results will be reported in the next report.
1.5	Monitor, collect, and compile data and payments to Ecosystem Health Workers	A total of 45 Ecosystem Health Workers (EHWs) administered the vaccines in their respective villages during the spring vaccination campaign. Data received from the field were verified and payment was made to the EHWs for their services to the local communities.
1.6	Approve selected sites, prepare feasibility and cost estimates for the construction of 23 predator-proof corrals	Sites were selected and feasibility and cost estimates for the construction of 7 additional predator-proof corrals one each in the Ghulkin, KVO, Qurqulti (Naz Bar), Qurumbar, Sikander Abad, Chipurson, and Hanzal Valleys were prepared.
1.7	Sign agreements with the VCDOs/CBOs for the construction of Predator-proof corrals	Agreements for the construction of seven new predator-proof corrals were drafted, discussed with the VCDOs, finalized, and signed during the reporting period.
1.8	Provide payment to the account of VCDO/CBO in installments for corral construction	The first installment was released to the VCDOs/CBOs of Ghulkin, KVO, Qurqulti (Yaseen), Qurumbar, Sikander Abad, Chipurson and Hanzal Valleys. The second installment was released to the CBO Hanzal for the construction of a predator-proof corral.

1.9	Monitor construction of corrals by the VCDO/CBO	SLF team monitored the construction of 17 (newly initiated and ongoing) predator-proof corrals being constructed by the VCDOs.
1.10	Prepare completion report of corral construction	Corral in Hanzal and Naz bar Valleys were completed and a completion report was prepared. So far 12 predator-proof corrals have been completed out of the 24 predator-proof corrals to be developed by the end of the project.
1.11	Monitor collection of community share by the VCDOs/CBOs for LISs	During the reporting period, the Passu and the Qurumber communities deposited PKR 700,000 and PKR 200,000 in the respective LIS accounts as a community share in the LIS Fund as per agreements.
1.12	Form committees for the provision of compensations to community members for livestock loss due to predators	The committees were formed for the provision of compensation to community members for livestock loss due to predators. The committees of the Qurumber, Khyber, and Chipursan approved 44 claims of 39 farmers' compensation out of the LIS Funds. Overall, a compensation of PKR 568,000 was made to the 39 predation-affected families.
1.13	Develop and provide selection criteria for different trainings of men and women community members of VCDOs/CBOs to identify the relevant community members	The reconnaissance survey format for Snow Leopard Enterprises (SLE) training in Qurumber Valley was developed, and based on that, 35 women were identified for training scheduled in November 2024.
1.14	Provide training to women for SLE	So far, 75 women have been trained across six program sites. The next training session is scheduled for November 2024 for 35 women from the Qurumber Valley.
1.15	Place orders for SLE products to the trained women, collect products twice/yr. and bring them to the SLF office to ship to the SLT/private companies	The Khyber Valley artisans sent their prepared items to the SLF program office in Gilgit. Some of the product items were shipped to the SLT office in the USA to evaluate market demand for the products. The majority of the products were marketed at the SLE outlet in Gilgit city.

Output 2. Effectiveness of conservation initiatives on livestock losses, household income increased, attitudes towards conservation including gender effects are improved in 12 valleys and a new Protected Area added.

Sr. No.	Activities planned as per Project Implementation Timetable	Progress from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023
2.1	Monitor corral usage on an annual basis	The corrals in Gulmit, Thoi, Darkut, and Khyber Valleys remained in use during the summer of 2024.
2.2	Provide profit of SLE products to communities' women	A profit of PKR 37,000 earned on the product sale was provided to the respective artisans.
2.3	Monitor poaching of snow leopard and its prey and predation on livestock through interaction with VCDOs/CBOs and GB Wildlife Department	The SLF Gilgit-Baltistan team collects data on the poaching and predation incidents that occur within Gilgit-Baltistan, from both communities and the Parks and Wildlife Department. In a successful operation in August 2024, the Gilgit-Baltistan Parks & Wildlife

		<p>Department rescued a 2 ½ month-old snow leopard cub from the black market. The cub has now been safely transferred to the Snow Leopard Rehabilitation Centre in Naltar Valley developed by the SLF in 2016.</p> <p>The Snow Leopard Foundation Pakistan is working closely to ensure the cub receives proper care and rehabilitation.</p> <p>During this reporting period, 18 households suffered the loss of 56 livestock due to predation by carnivores, including 34 sheep, 7 goats, and 15 yaks.</p>
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Output 3. Capacity of 20 community activists built for community/ financial management and record keeping, 24 26 teachers, 200 students for conservation, 8 members of academia, 22 Wildlife Department staff and 28 community members for survey techniques through training and provision of resource material.

3.1	Establish Nature clubs in 13 valleys	All 13 nature clubs have been established, and their members are actively celebrating environmental days at the school level.
3.2	Arrange 2-day nature study camps for 200 students (100 boys and 100 girls)	Two nature camps have been planned: one at Khunjerab National Park (KNP) for 55 students in the last week of October 2024, and another in Qurumber Valley for 65 students in the first week of November 2024.
3.3	Arrange a day workshop for 28 male members of CBO, 8 members of academia (4 men & 4 women), and 22 Wildlife Department staff in Wildlife survey techniques	A training session was arranged for 12 members of the Parks and Wildlife Department, GB, in wildlife monitoring techniques during the reporting period.

Output 4. Impact of conservation initiatives on the abundance of wild ungulates and Snow leopards understood.

Sr. No.	Activities planned as per Project Implementation Timetable	Progress from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023
4.1	Provide relevant equipment/materials and conduct ungulate surveys through trained persons	The trained personnel were engaged in the wild ungulate surveys.
4.2	Analyze the ungulate survey results and prepare the report	The data from ungulate surveys during 2023-24 was analyzed, and a report was developed and published.
4.3	Prepare 2 scientific papers and send them to scientific journals for publication	One paper titled: " <u>Next-generation snow leopard population assessment tool: multiplex-PCR SNP panel for individual identification from feces</u> " was submitted and pre-print is available online
4.4	Respond to the queries of scientific journals	Comments from the reviewers on the aforementioned paper are awaited.

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.

The primary challenge we face is the adverse climatic conditions prevailing in the project sites. All program sites are located at high altitudes, limiting the window for field activities such as constructing predator-proof corrals. This makes large-scale construction efforts particularly difficult. The program operates across the Ghizer, Hunza, Nagar, and Gilgit districts, and the wide geographical spread of these sites complicates the gathering of participants for centralized training sessions. As a result, most trainings are held in Gilgit city, which significantly increases the overall budget.

Despite these challenges, we are pleased to report that the project remains on track and has successfully met all its planned targets.

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
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Formal Change Request submitted:	√Yes/ No
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Received confirmation of change acceptance:	√Yes/ No
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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*

Approval of the change request was received through email dated 12 March 2024.

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?

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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.

The feedback of NIRAS on the annual report is as follows

“16. General assessment

The project has made solid progress this year, with planned milestones achieved. The project has made impressive progress towards its intended Outcome and is well-positioned to achieve its targets by the end of the funding period. The evidence of increased community engagement, reduced livestock losses, enhanced livelihoods, and stable wildlife populations is demonstrative of this. Reporting for this project was very clear and well-evidenced.

Achievement of Outputs/Outcome Score: 1

Reporting Quality and Evidence Provision Score: 1”

The other points raised in the review are as follows:

- The project should continue to invest in strengthening CBOs and building their capacity to manage conservation initiatives.
- Economic losses from livestock attacks have been reduced, while new income sources have been created, contributing to poverty alleviation. Capacity building and attitude change are enabling a new generation of conservation champions. Stable or increasing wild ungulate and snow leopard populations suggest ecosystem recovery. Whilst early results are encouraging, achieving population-level recovery of snow leopards and sustained poverty alleviation at scale will require continued efforts and running beyond the lifetime of the project.
- The project contributes to the CBD, articles 1,8,10,12, and 17 through its work, and its focus on conserving a vulnerable species is in line with CITES and the CMS. The project's ecosystem-based conservation approach is also relevant to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, given the role of healthy ecosystems in mitigating risks from natural hazards. Snow leopards are listed as vulnerable on the IUCN red list. Has the project had any contact with the CITES focal point?
- The project's key poverty reduction achievements this year include the expansion of livestock protection measures, the establishment of women's handicraft enterprises, and the income gains realized by women. These initiatives have directly benefited the livelihoods of project households. To further enhance its contributions, the project could consider setting explicit poverty reduction targets and tracking progress against them using robust indicators and conducting a more systematic poverty and vulnerability assessment to identify the poorest households and tailor interventions accordingly.
- The project has rated itself as gender empowering, which the reviewer is largely in agreement with, given the project is not only addressing women's basic needs and vulnerabilities, but actively increasing their access to assets, resources, and capabilities. However, the project could demonstrate further support to youth and other marginalised groups.
- The risk register has not been provided, and the project has not commented on any new risks or significant adaptations to address changes to risk levels.
- The Darwin Initiative logo was used in the publication of backdrops for training workshops, five posters, and 20 standees published using project resources, but evidence has not been presented in support of this. The project should provide additional evidence in this section of reporting for the next AR.
- There is a small variance across all budget lines bar capital items, but no detail has been provided as to why these variances occurred.

Our Response:

We agree with all the points raised. The project conducted several meetings with the CITES focal point in the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Government of Pakistan. As guided in the annual review, we will provide the following needful information in the next annual report:

1. Additional evidence in support of Darwin Initiative Identity.
2. The risk register, and the comments on any new risks or significant adaptations to address changes to risk levels.
3. Reports of meetings/ contacts with the CITES focal point?

Furthermore, progress against poverty reduction targets will be described in the next annual report. In addition to women, we will provide further support to youth and other marginalized groups.

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?	There is no confidential information
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.	√