

## 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>	29-024
<b>Project title</b>	Investigating hunting causes and implementing community-led mitigations in the Philippines
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	The Philippines
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Bristol Zoological Society
<b>Partner(s)</b>	PhilinCon
<b>Project leader</b>	Dr Rebecca Sargent
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR3 October 2024
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/philincon.org">https://www.facebook.com/philincon.org</a> <a href="https://www.bristolzoo.org.uk/conservation/philippines">https://www.bristolzoo.org.uk/conservation/philippines</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 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.

Bristol Zoological Society in partnership with PhilinCon initiated this project on the 1st of June 2022 and has employed 35 staff to carry out its ambitious objectives. Our project is divided into 3 core teams: Field and Ranger team, Community team, and Market team. Following successful completion of the second year of livelihood implementation, the main focus of the third year of the project is the implementation of our wildlife education campaign and the continued monitoring of both the forest and the livelihood projects.

Community team (output 1)

During the first 6 months of Y3 the community team have continued with their monthly monitoring of the livelihood projects. This includes collecting data on income and expenditure and responding to any queries and issues. All 8 of our participating communities had their initial livelihood projects up and running in Y2 and some have now begun to diversify and expand

their activities based on what has worked well in their own community as well as best practices learned from other communities. For example, three of our communities opened community rice retailing stores in April-June of this year and some women's weaving groups have received training on new product development and support in providing access to tourist markets. This initiative not only safeguards cultural heritage but also creates new economic opportunities for women weavers and craft makers.

In addition, a key focus of the community team this year has been supporting the communities to independently register as People's Organisation. These are systems of community organisation and advocacy which are recognised by the government and can then therefore provide them legal recognition and thus, access to support and funding from the government and other organizations. Our team supported the communities to elect officers for their organisations and facilitated the drafting of constitutions and by-laws. These documents were then submitted to the Department of Labour and Employment and, as of September 2024, all 8 of our communities have now officially registered as People's Organisations. We have provided training for the elected officers in transformational leadership, management, and financial literacy and will continue to support the development of the communities to enable them to manage their livelihoods successfully post-Darwin.

We have also begun to facilitate the opening of bank or cooperative accounts for each community and, so far, two of the eight established People's Organisations have already opened an official association bank/cooperative account. This is to ensure transparency and accountability of officers in their financial management and thus, will promote the sustainable functioning and operation of the community associations.

The community team have now begun key informant interviews and focus groups, replicating the baseline surveys which were conducted in Y1 to measure any changes in prevalence and attitudes and are on track to have these completed within the planned timeline.

#### Field and ranger teams (output 2)

From April-September 2024 the field team completed 25 biodiversity monitoring transects within the Northwest Panay Peninsula Natural Park (NPPNP), covering a total distance of 38km. Additionally the team carried out 11 expeditions to set up an extensive camera trapping survey covering the entirety of the park. These cameras will remain in place for 3-4 months to enable a systematic survey of warty pig occupancy and distribution. During their expeditions the team report an anecdotal decrease in the signs of hunting and agarwood harvesting that they have observed, but this data will be formally analysed at the end of the project. The team have detected 112 signs of warty pig and 17 hunting traps during their transects surveys in Y3.

During the first 6 months of Y3 the ranger team conducted 14 patrols, amounting to 42 days of foot patrols within NPPNP. During the peak of summer, from April to June 2024, the forest rangers encountered several grass fires on the forest edges. These fires were likely human caused, though it remains unclear whether they were intentional or accidental, possibly sparked by discarded cigarette butts and exacerbated by the severe drought. Forest rangers appear to have observed a rapid decline in Agarwood (*Aquilaria cumingiana*) harvesting, which may indicate that the species is nearing extirpation in the area. Poachers are likely being deterred by the frequent patrols of the combined Darwin and NPPNP Protected Area Management Office (PAMO) forest rangers.

This year, PAMO expanded its team by hiring additional forest rangers and conducting regular patrols across various parts of the protected area several times a month. From September 11-13, 2024, they invited the PhilinCon Darwin Project team to participate in a protected area management planning meeting. During the event, important discussions and plans were made to ensure the park's long-term protection and sustainability. Our field and ranger teams collaborated with PAMO, sharing data on illegal activities for mapping and coordinating future patrols.

### Market team (output 3)

As stated in our Y2 report there was difficulty generating sufficient data on wild meat trade through our shop and market surveys. This aligns with the community team's surveys showing that hunting is still prevalent, but the meat is primarily for personal consumption and then shared with relatives or neighbours when there is excess. For this reason, a change request was submitted and approved to allow the market team to stop these surveys and instead focus on the implementation of the wildlife pride campaign during Y3.

During April and May preparations for the campaign were underway and we held a 'grand launching event' in one of the communities. This involved inviting various stakeholders including local schools, government officials, community members and other NGOs to introduce our warty pig mascot and run various wildlife related activities (quizzes, guided walks, arts and crafts). The team also participated in a radio interview to discuss the campaign and wider Darwin project activities. Since then, the team have organised a variety of events in two of our target communities including: a school lesson (class of 32 students), youth leader camp (20 students), tree planting (31 attendees), wildlife film showing (43 attendees), wildlife quiz night (32 attendees), and a basketball tournament (32 attendees).

The team have also collaborated with other NGOs and local offices to co-organise and participate in multiple outreach events. These include an information booth at the PAMO-hosted 'Festival of the Forest', assisting with a wildlife-themed mural contest, co-organising a 'Young Conservation Champions Summer Camp', and an information booth at a national youth event on Boracay Island. They have therefore far exceeded the objectives of the original project plan and timetable and have raised awareness of threats to local wildlife by reaching a variety of target audiences.

The team is now focussed on developing posters to place in public locations such as stores, governmental offices and markets, and calendars to distribute among households across all eight communities. These will feature key information about local wildlife and its threats, and will target specific audiences with a variety of message frames, based on the findings of the Y2 perception surveys. Additionally, the team has also started organising the culminating event for the campaign, which will include a variety of activities across the communities during the last week of the campaign and, on the final day, a music festival in the local town.

**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.**

### Community team

Due to the recent El Nino, the Philippines suffered a severe drought during the first half of 2024. This affected some of the livelihood projects (e.g. native shrimp farming and organic vegetable growing) and highlighted that some may not be climate resilient. Since the rainy season began these issues have abated, however we are assessing how to address this in future. Many communities have since diversified to allow some security at times when one activity is less profitable (e.g. by establishing community shops which sell household goods and expanding weaving enterprises). The organic vegetable farmers also reorganised themselves into cooperative groups (rather than individual backyard farmers) to ensure better care for their crops and to alternate planting seasonally. There have also been some issues surrounding disease within the native chickens and several households lost their stock. At the moment it is not clear what the disease was, and a significant challenge is widespread misconception regarding vaccination, with many believing that the use of live vaccines infects the chickens and can negatively impact neighbouring chicken farms. We are making efforts to provide education on veterinary care and recently hosted a workshop with the Department of Agriculture and the Office of the Provincial Veterinarian to discuss risks to livestock such as African Swine Fever (ASF) and Avian Influenza.

The national office of the Bureau of Animal Industry under the Department of Agriculture has also invited PhilinCon's Executive Director (community manager of the Darwin Project) together with other key stakeholders to discuss the threat of ASF to NPPNP and Central Panay Mountain Range. The forum will be co-organized with local concerned agencies and stakeholders, including the community association leaders, to strengthen the prevention of the spread of ASF among domestic and wild pigs in both areas.

Field team

The effect of the recent drought also affected field and ranger team operations as water sources largely dried up from March-June meaning it was difficult to conduct expeditions in some parts of the park. As a result, some surveys were cancelled to ensure the safety of our teams. However, the continuous data collection over the 3 years has still resulted in a large dataset which can be used to measure trends over time.

Market team

It has been challenging for the market team to conduct campaign events in all 8 target communities due to limited resources and manpower. The team thus decided to focus on 2 communities to trial initial activities. These two communities were selected based on advice from local contacts on where illegal hunting is most likely to be happening. Now that a variety of activities have been conducted in these communities and the team has gained experience in running them, we hope that it will be straightforward to expand these to other communities.

Despite these challenges the teams have continued to work efficiently and there have been no significant impacts to the project budget or timeline.

**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
Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes

Change Request reference if known: No reference number was provided, however we received confirmation by email of changes to the logframe in relation to halting the market surveys during Y3 so that the team can focus on implementing the wildlife pride campaign.

**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

**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.** Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.

No responses were requested from our most recent annual report. The reviewer highlighted the good use of project management cycles and communication and recognised the need for a change request to adapt output 3 to focus on the wildlife pride campaign (which has since been completed and approved).

Other comments included the recommendation to capture additional wellbeing benefits by evaluating the impacts of the formation of People's Organisations and capturing capacity development by measuring increased knowledge, skills, and confidence. This is something we will consider when we are creating our final surveys in the coming months. In Y1, we completed 80 surveys to assess wellbeing and gender roles. These will be repeated in the next 6 months in order to compare changes over the course of the project. We will expand these surveys to include discussion of empowerment and capacity building within the communities, in particular in relation to the People's Organisations. It is also noted that we could capture skills development of staff employed by the project as well as just communities. This is something we will consider in the coming months.

## 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)?	NA
If not already submitted, have you attached your <b>risk register</b> ?	NA
<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> ?	No feedback requested in HY report
<b>For All Projects</b>	
Include your <b>project reference</b> in the subject line of submission email.	y
Submit to <a href="mailto:BCFs-Report@niras.com">BCFs-Report@niras.com</a> .	y
Have you reported against the most <b>up to date information for your project</b> ?	y
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	NA