

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus

Half Year Report

This report is expected to 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	29-028
Project title	Linking science to management: restoring community forests in Nepal
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal
Lead Organisation	ForestAction Nepal
Partner(s)	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) UK, Kathmandu Forestry College (KAFCOL), Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal (FECOFUN)
Project leader	<i>Naya Sharma Paudel, PhD</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR3</i>
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.facebook.com/JalthalBiodiversity/ https://twitter.com/BiodiversityNep

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.

We started this project in July 2022 and now the project is in the last (year III) of its implementation. This report presents the project progress of April-September 2024. Activities in different outputs are presented. The number in the parenthesis represents the activity number from the agreed implementation timetable and supporting reference. Supporting reports will be attached separately while submitting the report.

Output 1: Forest ecosystem restored and biodiversity conserved in Jalthal community forests

Interaction programs were organised with CFUGs and stakeholders to review year two progress and plan for year three in CFUGs of Bhadrapur municipality (1.1, 1.2, Doc 01, Doc 02). An interaction program with civil society organisations including leaders of different political parties from project site was organized in May 2024 (1.1, Doc 2). A workshop on forest operational plan (OP) for the newly revised OP of six CFUGs was organized to discuss on integration of biodiversity and restoration in these plans (1.1, Doc 2). User awareness and degraded forest patch restoration planning program for CFUG leaders and forest patrol teams was organized in Ratmate CFUG to rescue, protect and nurture the natural regeneration of trees (1.1, 1.3, Doc 02). More than 3200 seedlings of rare and threatened species of Jalthal Forest were grown in the Community Nursery established in Pathibhara Kalika CF out of which more than 1500 seedlings were transplanted in a suitable habitat of seven Community Forest of Jalthal (1.4, Doc 02). Rare and threatened species seedlings plantation and identification program was organized in the demonstration block of Durgabhitta CF involving CFUG members, local users, neighbouring CF representatives, Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal (FECOFUN) Jhapa members and local government representatives (1.4, 1.9, Doc 02). Several conservation and environmental awareness programs were organised with students, local people and stakeholders by marking World Biodiversity Day, Environment Day and Elephant Day (1.6, Doc 01, 02). An experiment on temperature measurement to demonstrate the roles of trees in buffering extreme heat was organized with eco clubs involving students of Eleven public and private schools situated around Jalthal Forest (1.6, Doc 1, Doc 2). More than 900 clumps of banana and 1300 clumps of bamboo was planted in four CFs of Jalthal to improve elephants' habitat and fodder availability (1.7, Doc 02). An awareness and interaction program to minimize human-elephant conflict and conserve the Wild Elephant was organized in Moti Higher Secondary School and Abhimukteshor CFUG on World Elephant Day (1.9, Doc 02). Information boards on the protection of natural regeneration, rare species and important features of Jalthal forest were prepared and installed in different activity sites of Jalthal forest (1.3, 1.9, Doc 02).

Output 2: Local governments and stakeholders take strong measures, both policy and operational, to control existing and newly reported invasive alien species

Over a half dozen meetings were organized to discuss and plan for Mikania and other invasive species management (2.1, Doc 01). Invasive species from 32 hectares of invaded forest was removed thereby rescuing More than 22,000 individual native seedlings (2.1, Doc 01, 02). We facilitated Invasive species management workshop organized by Kamal RM Jhapa and introduced different invasive species including newly invaded *Mimosa diplotricha* (2.3, 2.6, Doc 2). A user awareness program on Invasive species management was organized in Ratmate CFUG informing and introducing the newly invaded *Mimosa diplotricha* as an invasive species of the region (2.3, 2.6 Doc 4). Invasive species including *Mimosa diplotricha* and Mikania were discussed as the major environmental problems in formal and informal meetings with Bhadrapur Municipality and Haldibari RM (2.3, Doc 1). Invasive species management was integrated in the operational plans of CFUGs (2.6, Doc 02).

Output 3: Income and employment of forest-dependent poor increased and improved through better management of land and bioresources

Turmeric cultivation under agroforestry was implemented in Pathibhara Kalika CFUG allocating 1 ha land area to 24 local users of disadvantaged households (3.1, 3.2, Doc 01, 02). Participatory

monitoring and seedling protection in previously implemented agroforestry sites was carried out in three CFs of Jalthal (3.3, Doc 02). About 30 Tons of compost was produced in two CFs (Bishal and Diyalo) and distributed among users and local markets (3.4, Doc 02). More than 4500 native fodder seedlings were planted in four CFs of Jalthal in invasive species cleared and agroforestry site (3.5, Doc 02). More than 900 seedlings of fodder have been distributed to farmers in Pathibhara Kalika CF and more than 800 native fodder seedlings were provided to women beneficiaries of goat farming (3.6, Doc 2). An experiment on compost decomposition has been carried out in Diyalo CF (3.8, Doc 02).

Output 4: Long-term restoration of forest mainstreamed through knowledge management, capacity building and enabling policies

A blog titled "Footprint of Development on Remnant Forest Distorted Demography of Iconic Latahar Tree" was published by Forestaction Nepal for the conservation of the Latahar tree. A newspaper article on the urgency of forest restoration for a sustainable future was published in Online Khabar. The draft of a technical note on germination and nursery management of rare and threatened species of Jalthal was prepared. A communication material on invasive species management and forest restoration was published and disseminated to forest users (4.4, Doc 02). Capacity-building training was provided to over 50 users on forest restoration and rare species conservation (4.5, Doc 02). Community forest operational plans (CFOPs) are local policies managing forests and these documents have integrated forest restoration in their activities. In additions, CFs have included restoration-related activities in their annual plans as well (4.2, Doc 02).

So far the progress is satisfactory. We are gradually planning to complete field activities. Our indicators are adequate and project monitoring plan is progressing as planned.

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 project is running as planned and currently we do not have plan for changes in activities and budget. We are gauging a couple of project indicators and will discuss with NIRAS about those in November first or second week.

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: *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

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?

We do not have specific issues now. However, we are interested to discuss some issues regarding consolidation of our Darwin project outputs. We may approach to you during second week of November.

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.

Reviews have some suggestions for this report.

1. Regarding safeguarding training: We are planning to organise safeguarding training to safeguard responsible person as well as other staff. We are discussing these safeguard issues across the projects and these engagements has enhanced our understanding about safeguard measures.

2. Revolving fund: We discussed revolving funds with CFUGs and they mentioned that they will allocate funds from their income to sustain the agroforestry.

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.	
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If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	
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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.	X
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For All Projects

Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	X
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	X
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	X
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project?	X
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	X