

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	30 - 011
Project title	Living with large carnivores – Integrative coexistence through community empowerment
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	India & Nepal
Lead Organisation	North of England Zoological Society (Chester Zoo)
Partner(s)	Wildlife Trust of India & National Trust for Nature Conservation
Project leader	<i>Dr. Mayukh Chatterjee</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>31st October 2024; HYR-2</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i>https://www.chesterzoo.org/news/living-with-large-carnivores/</i>

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).

The project is on track. Backlogs and underspends were anticipated due to festivities and official financial year end in the second quarter and are planned for picking up pace over the next quarter.

Activity 1.2, 1.4 & 1.5: The project has constituted Primary Response Teams with 39 (F – 10; M – 29) and 24 (F - 4; M - 20) community volunteers, respectively. Eight new volunteers (F -5, M - 3) were inducted in India, and nine new members (F – 4; M – 5) in Nepal.

The project also conducted meetings and training workshops for PRT members. In a meeting held on the 14th of September 2024 in Nepal, 24 PRT members (F - 4, M - 20) received field apparel, while snake-rescue equipment and protective gloves were given to experienced members who have been handling and rescuing snakes. PRTs rescued and treated a rhino attack victim in this reporting period, besides carrying out maintenance of solar fences, documenting livestock losses due to large carnivores and crop damages due to wild herbivores and supporting victims to file applications for compensation/relief with the government department.

In India, PRTs received metal chests for safe keeping previously received field equipment. On the 7th & 8th of September'24, First Aid training workshops were held for 17 PRT members (F - 7, M - 10). All attending PRT members were certified (Level 3) to administer first aid. Two human fatalities (adult men) due to attacks by tigers were reported from nearby villages. PRT members responded by visiting the conflict sites, offering support and assistance to the bereaved to help

with documentation for government ex-gratia, and raising awareness to prevent such incidents in the future. Additionally, four livestock deaths due to predation attempts by tigers were reported in project villages and vicinities. PRT organised an event on International Tiger Day in India, engaging 127 villagers, including women and children in the activities.

Activity 2.1 & 3.1: The pending data collection of 369 households from control villages in the Chitwan landscape were collected in April. The data was entered in the database and analysed.

Activity 2.2, 2.7, 2.10 & 2.11: A livestock farming practice workshop was held on 4th September 2024. 62 potential beneficiaries (F - 2, M - 60) attended. It promoted benefits of improved livestock breeds, stall feeding and good manure management. The need, systematic methodology to be used for stamping and monitoring of 'eye-cow' experiment was also discussed. Also, two PRT members trained in artificial insemination (AI) techniques for livestock, and livestock care, received their certification along with necessary equipment and materials. In a similar workshop in India on May 2024 with 50 participants (F – 5; M - 45), six livestock farmers consented to adopting improved livestock breeds. In Nepal, the Veterinary Centre of *Madi* and *Rewa* Buffer Zone User Group Committees (BZUC) were provided necessary AI equipment on 14th August 2024.

Activity 2.4: In Nepal, agreements with 100 beneficiaries of the predator proof pens (PPPs) were signed and necessary building materials were procured. On 30th August'24, each household received Corrugated Galvanised Iron (CGI) sheets, metal wire meshes, and additional building materials such as nails, door latches and locks. To date, 40 PPPs have been constructed in the Indian, and 28 in the Nepalese project villages, bringing the total PPPs constructed to date, to 50 in India, and 198 in Nepal. In India, the next instalment of materials to be distributed after the rainy season, were also procured.

Activity 2.6: The first set of trials conducted in the 1st year prove the paints used to have a short lifespan after being stamped and the stamps prepared were also found to be too large to allow for clean impressions. Therefore, a new set of smaller 'eye-cow' and 'X' stamps were manufactured and sent to in-country partners. Project teams are conducting trials of the new stamps and varieties of paint to test longevity after stamping.

Activity 3.4: In India, a total of 180 improved cookstoves have been installed since April'24. Since the start of the project to date, the total number of cookstoves installed in the India is 300. In this reporting period, 114 households where ICS were installed last year, were surveyed for usage and beneficiary feedback. In Nepal we distributed LPG cookstoves and cylinders to 110 beneficiary households on 30th August'24, bringing the total households who have been provided with LPG based ICSs in the Nepalese side of the project to 210.

Activity 3.5: In India, the beneficiaries practicing mushroom farming in the Indian project villages experienced a failed crop due to poor care and maintenance during summers. In September'24, a refresher training programme was organised to discuss the issues and guided 12 women beneficiaries on practices to avoid future failure in mushroom farming. In Nepal, three training programmes on 19th June and 14th & 15th July'24 were organised, where scientific goat farming practices along with benefits and methods of building predator proof pens for safe keeping, were imparted. The training programmes were attended by a total of 142 villagers (F - 44, M - 98).

Activity 3.6: 40kgs of mushroom spawn was provided to beneficiaries (all women) practicing mushroom farming in India. Further, 88 beneficiaries (all women) were given feeding stands for goats, with training on maintenance of the stands. In Nepal, 58 improved-breed goats were distributed among 29 beneficiary households of the *Panchpandav* BZUC.

Activity 3.7: A biannual self-reporting system to review the usage of ICS and green livelihood options is being readied for deployment. In the meantime, WTI have surveyed 50 households in *Dumari* village; 25 households using traditional cookstoves and the other 25 using improved cookstoves, to understand the efficacy of ICSs.

Activity 4.1: The data collection on media coverage has been ongoing and to date, around 739 Hindi newspapers and 54 English news articles have been scanned spanning across last 4 years. Preliminary observations show that around 173 articles shortlisted as per selection criteria, with 76 articles being negative in portrayal while 93 were positive. Only 61 of this involved information around large carnivores.

Activity 4.2: In India the survey data for 45 staff of the forest department was analysed and preliminary analyses of their knowledge and perceptions generated. Similar data and analyses from Nepal are awaited and expected to be generated by next quarter.

Activity 4.4: In India, various veterinary medical equipment were provided to the Forest Range for management of conflicts. An event was organised to demonstrate some of these equipment and their uses especially during instances of human - large carnivore conflict. Dr Sanjeev Ranjan, veterinarian, Valmiki Tiger Reserve conducted this demonstration to the Forest Department staff present. Further, 14 Forest Staff (M - 14) attended a First Aid training programme conducted on the 7th and 8th of September 2024. The forest staff all received certification in level 3 - First Aid.

Assumptions Revisited

Output 3

1. *After adopting improved cook stoves and non-forest-based fuels, beneficiaries will completely cease fuelwood collection for other purposes (additional cook stove, for heating water for bathing, etc.).*

We are currently evaluating this in greater detail, but it is expected that behaviour change will occur slowly over a length of time as people realise their reduced need to go and collect fuelwood from forests undertaking risks of interacting with dangerous wild predators. As the baseline data shows, prior to project start around 68 households in the three project villages in Nepal were already using LPG based cookstoves, and only two of these households reportedly used fuelwood as a secondary fuel source. The project targeted the group of 1072 households who were dependent on forest-based fuelwood primarily, by prioritising the neediest 400 households from this lot with the hope that in time majority of them will also cease going to the forest.

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.

1. Under the eye-cow related work, last year the need for smaller 'eye-cow' & 'X' stamps was evident in the trials of the first set of stamps. The resized stamps were manufactured and shipped to project sites only by the onset of monsoons. While this has delayed the start of stamping, we feel confident of completing it in 3rd and 4th quarters this year, especially as some activities earmarked for Q3 have either already been completed or are underway, allowing the teams some leeway to devote more time to this.
2. The failure of mushroom yields this year presented the beneficiaries an opportunity to learn and rectify the methodology for its farming. Despite the setback and knowledge that this year their annual income may not be supported by income from sale of mushrooms, the women's groups were keen for retraining and restarting with new mushroom spawn.

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:	N/A

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?

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.

1. “Concerns include the quality of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI): are women just being included as participants in training or activities, or are they being encouraged to speak out to voice their needs and make decisions to improve their well-being in the household and community?”

Response: The project involves women on many fronts, many of whom are influential locally. For instance, some of the projects’ women beneficiaries are also community mobilizers under the JEEViKA programme – a World Bank-supported rural livelihood project initiated by the government of India (<https://brlps.in/>). Yet other community liaisons are women who are also elected members of the respective wards in their village under the village councils. Several women beneficiaries are also members of the EDCs or BZUCs constituted in the villages. Moreover, the project also makes additional efforts to include more women in every facet of its implementation as far as possible, providing equal opportunities for voicing concerns, ideas, and feedback, and also providing agency through the project team itself.

2. “Also are the beneficiaries, mostly women, already in existing groups, or will the project facilitate group formation? This reviewer would like to suggest that if groups are registered with municipal governments in Nepal, they can access funding for future projects, promoting the sustainability of the project outcomes and supporting the Exit Strategy.”

Response: Most women beneficiaries are associated with the Self-Help Groups formed under the JEEViKA. Our ICS-trained women, *Pashu Sakhi* members, and Mushroom Group members may be formed into separate groups. Since the women have prior experience functioning and managing community-based organizations, we have an advantage in operating the groups under the project. We are exploring all possibilities to make the groups sustain and continue the interventions.

2. **“While the report discusses gender, it did not elaborate on any support provided to ensure the participation of disadvantaged and marginalised groups, such as Dalits and indigenous people in the project areas of Nepal and India. It could promote greater equity by ensuring that it includes such groups in activities.”**

Response: All the people in the project villages belong to one or another indigenous group, and any segregation is reflected in formation of hamlets with members of a similar caste or social group living in the same hamlet. The project has not witnessed any marginalisation of groups in the project villages. The project, in all its focal villages, has ensured representation and participation from all existing hamlets within them, and our beneficiary selection has been inclusive and unbiased based on the baseline survey results, bolstered by comprehensive PRA exercises conducted in the villages.

3. **“The project report indicates that women are engaged but could clarify how they are engaged to ensure that they have voice, agency, and decision-making influence. Similarly, while undoubtedly the women on the Project Board have influence, the women on the leadership teams of the national partners may or may not have voice and influence.”**

Response: In all project activities extra efforts have been made to include women from all focal villages in the planning process. It has also ensured that women involved are also tied up to existing platforms which enables them to voice and action their concerns and ideas (Please see response to feedback point no. 1 above). The project at every step allows women beneficiary representatives to take the lead on initiatives and are always encouraged to do so. All our beneficiaries for improved cook stoves, mushroom cultivation and livestock para-vets are all women. Many of them are already extending their services to adjoining villages of their own accord, for instance, the key women trained to manufacture and maintain ICSs have already catered to several households in adjoining non-project villages and are turning it into a supplementary income generation livelihood. Within our partner organisations, a fair number of women exist in senior lead roles, such as members of the Board of Trustees and Departmental Heads, who then provide avenues for other women in the organisation to have voice and influence in their respective roles within the organisations.

4. **“The M&E framework would seem to be sufficient for the project. It would be useful if the report could mention or annex the timetable in order to assess the timeliness of the activities. The means of verification of achievement of indicators could also be described.”**

Response: We have already taken steps and developed a quarterly technical reporting format and shared with our partners while also regularly following up for updates on the activities undertaken. The partners also bolster all claims with submission of evidence (written, photographic and videographic) as well as bills and receipts for project expenses. In addition, the in-country project manager follows these up with regular visits to the field sites. All mentions of progress and delays are in relation to the existing

workplan/timetable submitted with the application and were expecting this to be communicated along with the reports to all reviewers.

5. “The cost of PPP makes this reviewer question if the activity can achieve critical mass without widespread subsidies.”

Response: The concern on sustainability and scalability of PPPs post project is understandable, however from past experience in Nepal (previous Living with tigers project), significant upscaling and spread post project period was observed, despite the costs. It is evident therefore that the benefits outweigh the costs (of losing livestock), and once people realise this, they make efforts to build their own PPPs to protect their livestock. Moreover, going forward the project aims to develop a scale-up phase to continue supporting a larger section of the village populations with this and other activities, while also alongside working with village councils and forest departments to accrue any possible financial support to beneficiaries to make it more sustainable.

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.	N/A
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	N/A
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.	Yes
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	Yes
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	N/A
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Yes