

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	30-012
Project title	A Community Approach to Waterbird Resource Management, Chia Lagoon
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Malawi
Lead Organisation	Birdlife International
Partner(s)	Wildlife and Environmental society of Malawi
Project leader	Alex Ngari
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	The project <i>does not</i> have its own website. However, it is represented at Partners' websites and social media pages/channels: https://wesm.mw/2023/11/13/chia-project ; https://twitter.com/BirdLifeAfrica/status/1783607382922121435 https://www.facebook.com/birdlifeafrica ; https://www.linkedin.com/posts/paul-k-ndang-ang-a-25906320-malawi-fish-bird-activity-7179049952155758593-w59y/

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).

Activity 1.1.2 *Engagement of District and local government, existing village structures (Beach Associations), hunters and women in the setup of local Sustainable Bird Hunting Clubs, following Lake Chilwa model /*

One meeting was held on 19th July with key Nkhotakota district stakeholders to share project updates including on: micro lending trainings, hunters' association formation, wet season biodiversity assessment by MUST; 25 (10 women and 15 men) participants attended. The project was applauded for conducting the assessments whose findings informs the district future planning and the district socio economic profile which is under review.

Activity 1.4.1 *Participatory process to agree what sustainable hunting means, define a code of conduct, hunting protocols and enforcement mechanisms of individual Sustainable Bird Hunting Clubs and an overarching Sustainable Bird Hunting Association.*

WESM facilitated the development of code of conduct and protocols for 18 hunting clubs. The newly established hunter's association consolidated the protocol and code of conduct from clubs and shared with WESM for further processing.

Activity 1.5.1 *Chia Lagoon Bird Hunting Associations in operation, including monitoring of adherence to agreed bylaws*

A bird hunters' association was established on 11 June 2024; an executive committee from member clubs are in place; The local leaders appreciated coordinated effort to better manage Chia waterbird resources.

Activity 2.1.1 *Participatory process for identifying and mapping bird sanctuaries (MUST) (for breeding birds, threatened species), agreeing protection measures, providing signage and any minor structures, as needed and implementing a communications plan (WESM).*

Through hunting clubs, protection measures for the birds sanctuaries have been agreed upon by association. A communications plan is in place and being implemented.

Activity 2.2.1 *Participatory process to plan restoration. Work with community to undertaken restoration actions (set up tree nurseries, seedling purchase, planting and care, sustainable harvesting, invasives removal, monitoring)*

Four tree nurseries with 13600 seedlings have been set up; trees will be distributed to all hunting clubs and village natural resources committees. One sensitization meeting was conducted on common invasive species in and around Chia lagoon, a plan to start removing them was developed.

Activity 2.3.1 *Awareness raising publications/broadcasts, social media and events will be held focused on the community.*

Awareness meetings held through football and netball matches where at least 1000 people attended; this opportunity was used to disseminate messages concerning protection of birds and biodiversity in and around Chia lagoon as well as dangers of encroaching Chia. The event was publicised through radios, television & Facebook.

Activity 2.4.2 *Ongoing Waterbird monitoring protocol will be designed and implemented. Training provided for community participation.*

Six hunters were trained on waterbird identification and monitoring by MUST; protocols are in place. The training aimed at improving the knowledge and skills of local hunter on birds monitoring.

Activity 2.4.3 *User friendly Bird ID guides will be designed and distributed e.g. to WESM branches, Chia Lagoon Hunting Clubs/Beach Associations/Natural Resource Committees, Schools, Wildlife Clubs and tourism lodges*

The bird ID guides have been designed in consultations with local communities and birds' experts especially on local names of birds found at Chia.

Activity 3.2.2 *Micro lending mechanism is in operation, coupled with training for beneficiaries.*

With Micro-Loan Foundation (MLF), three women groups were established and 78 participants trained on financial management and enterprise selection prior to receiving loans. A total of \$4000 has been disbursed after the trainings. Consultations with key stakeholders on establishing a men-friendly community revolving fund are underway; men are not fully benefiting from the existing loaning initiatives.

Activity 3.3.1 *Avitourism is promoted through marketing and outreach to tourism businesses, bird guide training and installation of physical facilities*

Promotion meetings were held with managers of lodges and tourist centers in Nkhotakota to publicize Chia bird-watching activity; they welcomed the additional interesting activity for their guests' package; the participants suggested to be availed with promotional leaflets/posters for access by their guests. Bird guide have been developed and printed; quotations for 20 life jackets are being reviewed while consultations on the designs and appropriate siting of a birdwatching tower are almost completed.

Activity 3.3.3 *Provide practical support or small investments in avitourism/wildlife tourism infrastructure (e.g. boat repairs, safety equipment, signage)*

Operators were engaged to identify five boats for be repair; quotations are being sourced. Signage has been designed but awaiting completion of delineation of bird sanctuaries by MUST.

Activity 4.2.1 *Dissemination of project information and emerging results at national level through articles/broadcasts, briefings and meetings*

WESM promoted project activities through media houses including: Zodiak & Nkhotakota community radios, display of publications, posters at national event on Wetlands and Wildlife Days held on 2nd August 2024. Participants including Minister of Tourism and Wildlife acknowledged WESM interventions in Chia lagoon. The event was attended by at least 4000 people.

Activity 4.3.2 Dissemination of project information and wider experience/lessons learned of CBNRM, especially for wetlands at international level through articles and participation in international event
WESM and MUST participated at all- Africa BirdLife Partners meeting of held in Senegal from 31st August to 6th September 2024. The project milestones were shared during the conference particularly at the Partner's fair.

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.

A section of planted trees at the rehabilitation site was affected by an extended dry weather spell. The replacement of the affected trees will benefit from the community tree nurseries established.

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

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?

A training and discussion on Safeguarding was held on September 19th, attended by 10 WESM and 1 MUST employees and 4 BirdLife staff.

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

We provided feedback on questions raised by Darwin Initiative reviewers on the approved project. We provided further feedback to the questions at the Year 1 annual reporting via an annex.
On reviewing Year 1 report, the reviewers listed five comments and queries for Project Leader, and for which will be responded to during the submission of the Year 2 annual report.
We do not have any query for which our response is pending.