

## 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>	30-022
<b>Project title</b>	Ecosystem restoration of watering holes in Cambodia's Northern Plains
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Cambodia
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Wildlife Conservation Society
<b>Partner(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laos Buffalo Dairy, Luang Prabang, Lao PDR</li> <li>• Centre for Biodiversity Conservation (CBC) of the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), Cambodia</li> <li>• Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (PDAFF), Cambodia</li> <li>• Ministry of Environment (MOE)</li> </ul>
<b>Project leader</b>	Nev Broadis, Landscape Technical Advisor, WCS
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	October 2024, HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="http://www.wcs.org">www.wcs.org</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.

The project continues to progress well and is on target to achieve its goals within the next 6 months. Three out of four CPAs are regularly producing buffalo dairy products. Seasonal pond restoration is progressing well, with communities actively taking a lead role in the process. Specific output progress reports as follows:

**Output 1.2**

Over the last six months, various movements were made between the four herds to increase genetic diversity and improve milk yield depending on location. A total of 12 (10 female) buffalo were transferred between herds. In addition, 14 (13 female) buffalo were purchased to supplement herd numbers across 3 CPAs. Births over the last six months were slightly lower than expected with 4 (1 female) buffalo born across the four herds. Death from natural causes reduced the overall herd size by 2 females. Sales of meat to local traders, or the WCS Vulture Restaurant further reduced herd size by 5 (all males), creating an income of \$2,350 in meat sales alone. Average herd size at the close of the reporting period was 18 buffalo, below the threshold for pond restoration.

#### **Output 1.3**

In August 2024, three staff from our partners at the Laos Buffalo Dairy conducted a six-day workshop on Animal husbandry, milk production, pregnancy checking, deworming, vaccination, ear-tagging, and cassava silage demonstration. Additionally, community members were trained in inspect and purchasing of new buffalo and extra techniques in milk & yogurt production. A select group of entrepreneurial women community members received additional training in distribution and sales opportunities, including selling yogurt at Koh Ker temple complex. Results of the pregnancy checking were positive, with potentially 18 calves due to be born during the peak season – a record for the project.

#### **Output 1.4**

Dairy structures were checked and repaired in time for the monsoon season across all four CPAs. Due to the local design, repairs are carried out by community members with the required skillsets. New dairy equipment for milk production was purchased locally to maintain the high standards of milk production.

#### **Output 1.5**

Informal nutrition groups continue to frequent three of the CPA dairies, predominantly these are preschool and early years children in the village who are nutrient deficient and have habitually visited the dairy. On average, across three CPAs, the daily participant count is 18 (10 girls). As the dairies are now producing yoghurt, the children are diversifying how they intake the additional nutrition, from consuming warm milk in the early morning, to fresh cool yoghurt in the evening. Both remain on offer, based on remaining stock from sales of yoghurt.

#### **Output 2.2 & 2.4**

Community members in each of the four CPAs are now fully trained in seasonal pond monitoring, with 16 (6 women) community members conducting monthly surveys based on seasonal pond monitoring protocols. Collectively, 114 pond survey sessions were conducted over the last six months, with all data uploaded to KoboCollect by community members, including filing sketch maps and photographs.

#### **Output 2.5 – Camera Traps**

Between April and July 2024, a total of 8 cameras were deployed at 8 seasonal ponds (4 control and 4 experiment ponds) across 4 CPAs, data classification is currently on-going by local staff using a combination of the software - MegaDetector and Timelapse.

#### **Output 3.1. And 3.2 – SMART Patrols**

During the reporting period, communities patrolled both the seasonal pond network and adjacent community protected areas a total of 135 patrol days. The patrol teams were still very much dominated by men, with 15% women participation on forest patrols and 30% women participation on pond patrols.

#### **Output 3.3**

Community members across the protected area conducted bird nest monitoring or protection of 9 nests (6 Sarus Crane and 3 Giant Ibis) of which all fledged successfully during the monitoring period. The protocol for nest searching was adapted for Sarus Cranes and during the reporting period an innovative method of utilising Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to identify nesting sites was trialled with exciting preliminary results.

#### **Output 3.4**

A national MSc student, supported by the project and conducting his research on seasonal pond monitoring completed his draft thesis for presentation to the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Initial feedback was received, and the draft is being amended accordingly. We are confident that the student will successfully complete his course.

**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.**

One income stream for the community dairies had been planned at the Koh Ker World Heritage Site. Low tourist numbers led to inefficient sales during the low season for Cambodian tourism. Whilst this was a problem, it was not wholly unexpected. The communities were able to adapt to the situation and began supplying yoghurt as refreshment snacks for organisations working in and around the project area. Organisations conduct regular community meetings and often have budgets for refreshments at these meetings. The community were able to use their networks to sell yoghurt to these institutions. This will not affect the 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:	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?**

None

**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.

Our annual report feedback contained no items to be updated in this report.

## 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)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
If not already submitted, have you attached your <b>risk register</b> ?	
<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> ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
<b>For All Projects</b>	
Include your <b>project reference</b> in the subject line of submission email.	
Submit to <a href="mailto:BCFs-Report@niras.com">BCFs-Report@niras.com</a> .	
Have you <b>clearly highlighted any confidential information</b> within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	
Have you reported against the most <b>up to date information for your project</b> ?	
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	