

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	30-026
Project title	Conserving biodiversity through community engagement in Gaurishankar Conservation Area, Nepal
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal
Lead Organisation	-
Partner(s)	-
Project leader	Dr. Madhu Chetri
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 October 2024, HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	

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.

Progress is outlined below based on the key milestone during this period (April to September) as in the project implemented timetable. Bold denotes activities that we aimed to undertake during this period.

Output 1: Enhance the national and local capacity in mountain biodiversity conservation in through trainings, and awareness programme

1.3 Support to bachelor's and master's students in research and trainings (New)

The project has announced Student Research Grant Support on the 11th of September, 2024. With the aim of encouraging young and upcoming researchers this grant will offer financial assistance to the enthusiastic bachelor and master degree students in the field of biodiversity conservation. This support will mainly focus on the research of various fields related to the status of wetlands, herpetofauna and avifaunal diversity along with the impact of linear infrastructure

development and eco-tourism in GCA. The well documented findings of these researches will lay a foundation in the field of biodiversity in GCA.

1.4 Provide training to project staff on gender and social inclusion, human rights-based advocacy & programming, good governance

A comprehensive staff training (n=18; male=13, female=5) was conducted over three days at the headquarter Singati, focusing on critical themes of gender and social inclusion, human rights-based advocacy, and good governance. This expert-led training saw full participation from all staff members. Over the first two days, it mainly focused on key topics, including gender equality, the significance of social inclusion and principles of good governance. It was also successful in shedding lights upon the best managerial practices. This training aimed to enhance the team's understanding of how these concepts influence effective organizational functioning and community engagement. On the third day, the training shifted to nature-related topics, offering hands-on sessions in herpetofauna handling techniques and basic photography training. This multifaceted approach not only equipped staff with practical skills but also fostered a deeper commitment to ethical practices and inclusivity within their work.

1.6 Forest fire control trainings

The project has successfully completed the entire procurement process for forest fire tools and equipment, ensuring that all necessary resources are in place for effective wildfire management. The training on forest fire control techniques using these tools are planned for next quarter. Once the training is conducted, the forest fire control equipment will be distributed across the CAMCs of the GCA, empowering local stakeholders to actively engage in fire prevention and control efforts.

Output 3: Enhanced co-existence between human and wildlife through awareness, revived traditional methods and implementation of mitigation strategies

3.2 Conduct awareness programmes on human wildlife conflicts at community level, especially targeting issues related to retaliatory killing

The awareness program on Human-Wildlife Conflict (Retaliatory Killing) was conducted on 20th September, 2024. This event is a crucial step towards fostering coexistence between local communities and wildlife. By equipping participants with the knowledge and tools necessary to protect their livestock and change their attitudes toward predators. The program has laid a foundation for sustainable conflict mitigation. Out of total 34 participants (31M, 3F), 1 belonged to Adhibasi, 18 to Janajatis and 15 to Brahimin/Chhetri ethnic group.

3.3 Provide support to local communities to construct animal barriers like mounds, trenches and biological fences around their farm

The project has successfully signed an agreement with the CAMC, Bulung to support local communities in constructing biological fence which will serve as barriers to keep the wildlife out of the reach of human settlements. To facilitate this, the project conducted meetings to engage with community members and carefully select appropriate sites and plant species, for the installation of the biological fences. Based on local people's suggestions, demand, and geographical considerations, the program will involve planting variety of species such as Timur, Nil kaanda, Ketuki, Hattibar, Chutro, and Nigalo to create effective barriers that protect crops. The plantation will start from the beginning of third quarter.

3.4 Training to encourage and support locals to continue traditional scaring methods (shouting, beating, drums and metal pots, installing scarecrows, boom rang, fireball etc.) against crop depredation

The program aims to train local people of Dolkha on controlling human-wildlife conflict using traditional scaring techniques. With that, the project has signed agreement with CAMC, Bulung and soon it will provide training and empower communities with the skills to use and revive the traditional scaring methods.

3.5 Support on construction of predator proof corrals/cattles shed

The construction of a predator-proof coral/cattle shed is a vital step in mitigating human-wildlife conflict and protecting livestock from predators. The project finished signing of the agreement of all 100 targeted corral construction in Orang, Suri, Chankhu, Alampu, Lamabagar, Bigu,

Khare and Gaurishankar, identifying high depredation sites. The construction of the predator-proof coral will begin with the beginning of the next quarter.

3.6 Support locals to build raised platforms (machans) to guard crop filed

The Project has successfully signed an agreement of 20 Machans in Suri, Gaurishankar, Lamabagar, Chankhu, Orang, Khare and Bulung. The design with all construction norms are provided by the project to the CAMC and soon the work will start. The objective of machan construction is to effectively guard crop fields, ensuring the safety and security of the crops from crop raiding from wildlife. This initiative has not only empowered the community but also enhanced the protection of the agricultural produce, leading to increased yields and improved livelihoods for the farmers.

Output 4: Alternative livelihood options through green economy and enterprises

4.4 Promote cultivation of high valued medicinal plants (e.g. Argeli, Timur piper) in two pilot sites

To help local communities generate income through cultivation, the project has selected two sites: Chankhu and Suri. In Chankhu, 2,000 Timur seedlings were provided for planting, benefiting 60 households. In addition, the program in Suri involved planting Argeli plants, with approximately 7,000 seedlings and cuttings distributed across four different locations. This initiative will directly benefit 50 farmers in Suri through the Argeli plantation.

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.

Given the challenging geographical terrain and the community's reliance on agriculture for their livelihoods, organizing meetings, workshops, and training sessions has always been a challenge. To overcome this issues, we are committed to implementing a comprehensive and well-structured planning. Additionally, we have recognized the importance of being flexible with our budgets for these programs to accommodate any unforeseen challenges. This approach will help us better support our community's needs and ensure successful outcomes. These challenges will not have any effect on our planned budget and timetable whatsoever.

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:

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 Estimated underspend:

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