

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	DARCC034
Project title	Vicuña management for biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods in the Bolivian highlands
Country(is)/territory(ies)	Bolivia
Lead Organisation	Wildlife Conservation Society Bolivia
Partner(s)	ACOFIVB
Project leader	Oscar Loayza Cossío (oloayza@wcs.org)
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2 (1 April - 30 September 2024)
Project website/blog/social media	https://bolivia.wcs.org/

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.

Output 1. Legal consolidation of ACOFIVB and their regional associations.

1.1 Internal regulations of 11 regional associations developed and approved by Yr 1.

A diagnosis of the legal situation of each Regional Association of Vicuña Management Communities (ARCMV) was carried out. The need to update the legal documentation (notarized copy of the Legal entity, bylaws and internal regulations, Power of Attorney) of 8 ARCMVs was identified and was updated.

1.2 ACOFIVB and 11 regional associations are legally established by Yr 2.

The updated legal documentation of all Regional Associations of Vicuña Management Communities (ARCMV) has allowed the initiation of the process for the legal establishment of the National Association of Vicuña Managers of Bolivia (ANMVB).

ACOFIVB was created exclusively as an entity responsible for facilitating the marketing of vicuña fiber at the national level, but not as a representative body for the Vicuña Management Communities and the Regional Associations of Vicuña Management Communities (ARCMV). However, in practice, it has assumed that role. Therefore, there is a need to formally establish the National Association of Vicuña Managers of Bolivia (ANMVB) so that it can officially represent all CMVs and their ARCMVs in everything related to the use and conservation of the species, beyond the marketing of the fiber.

Output 2. Field schools implemented by ACOFIVB with regional associations on best practices for animal welfare, population census, capture, mechanical shearing, disease surveillance, fiber selection, fiber collection and sale.

2.1 Eleven regional associations participate in field schools on vicuña census.

Based on the experience from the field schools conducted in year 1 of the project, where training was provided for the census and monitoring of vicuña populations, 12 field schools were held during this semester. Eight took place in the Regional Associations of San Andrés de Machaca and Calicut (La Paz Department), Qari Qarwa, Quri Wari del Sur, and Carnages (Oruro Department), as well as Colcha K, Sud Lipez, and Villazon Municipal Protected Area (Potosí Department). Four field schools were conducted in Apolobamba, Sama, Sajama and El Cardon protected areas. The ARCMV reports are attached for reference.

2.2 Eleven regional associations participate in field schools on vicuña capture, visual disease surveillance and mechanical shearing.

The ARCMV and CMV have agreed on a schedule for the shearing of vicuñas, which will take place from September to December 2024. With this schedule, ACOFIVB, representing the CMV and ARCMV, has requested authorization from the General Directorate of Biodiversity and Protected Areas (DGBAP) to carry out the shearing as planned. In response, the DGBAP approved the request through note CITE: 124/2024, authorizing the 2024 shearing season.

Based on the schedule for harvesting vicuña fiber, a support and capacity-building program for vicuña management has been established with the ACOFIVB board. This program includes field schools aimed focusing on animal welfare and principles of ecosystem conservation and vicuña habitat. A Departmental Field School has been conducted for the ARCMV and CMV in the La Paz department to provide technical strengthening for vicuña management.

On another note, during the current fiber harvesting season (September to December), monitoring of the prevalence of mange and other diseases continues across all regions. Additionally, to enhance training in monitoring of vicuña health with a focus on mange, a protocol has been developed for managing vicuñas with mange and handling the carcasses of vicuñas that have died from the disease.

2.3 Eleven regional associations, 1,625 men and 875 (35%) women participate in field schools on fiber selection and fiber collection and storage.

Training on fiber selection, collection and storage was carried out in Yr. 1. This year we focused on supporting its sale.

On April 10th, 2024, the assembly of ARCMV and CMV was held to evaluate offers for the 15th sale of vicuña fiber. Eight purchase proposals for vicuña fiber were evaluated, with the Italian company Loro Piano emerging as the winner (qualification report attached).

As a result of the fiber sale, on September 13th, with the participation of the Vice Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity, Climate Change, and Forest Management and Development (VMABCCGDF), the ARCMVs of Apo Lobamba, San Andrés, Calacoto, Qari Qarwa, Whila

Khollo, Qari Wari del Sur, Carnages, Tomave, Colcha K, Sud Lipez, Villazón, and non-affiliated Vicuña Management Communities, as well as the governments of Oruro, La Paz, and Potosí, and technicians from WCS Bolivia, distributed the economic benefits to all ARCMV and CMV participants in the 15th shearing campaign. As a result of the 2023 shearing season, a total of 2,134 Kg. of vicuña fiber was sold, generating an income of 5,827,305 Bs. or close to 650,000 GBP.

For this second year, WCS, in coordination with ACOFIVB, has organized technical teams to provide support, technical assistance, and on-site training reinforcement to CMV and ARCMV during the handling, capturing, and shearing of vicuñas. The prioritized support topics include training on the "Technical Guidelines for Vicuña Management," training in fleece handling, and a review of the fiber selection technique for vicuña fiber. The final results of the shearing season will be included in the final report to be presented in April 2025.

Output 3. Field schools implemented by ACOFIVB and regional organizations on peatland and wildlife monitoring

3.1 Eleven regional associations participate in field schools on conservation and monitoring of highland peatlands and associated wildlife species.

In coordination with ACOFIVB and all the regional associations, monitoring sites for wetlands have been identified. Field schools and studies of vicuña habitat have been conducted, applying the methodology for monitoring wetlands and water sources during the wet season (March - May). The study includes the assessment of water quality through the identification and presence of macroinvertebrates, forage production, vegetation coverage, key species, and water availability in the peatlands.

3.2 Eleven regional organizations map priority peatlands and identify indicator species to be monitored.

Currently, monitoring is being conducted (studies on water quality, forage production, water availability in wetlands, and characterization of vegetation livelihoods) at the sites identified with ACOFIVB in the various ARCMV for the dry season (October and November). The final results of these studies will be presented in the final report.

3.3 Four monitoring reports on size and water level of priority peatlands.

To date, there are two reports: one on the methodology for monitoring peatlands at various identified sites, and another on the results of peatland monitoring and their water sources during the wet season. The final report will include information for the dry season and consolidate all the monitoring information.

3.4 At least 6 local schools monitor indicator species using naturalist.

This activity is pending and will be carried out after the shearing campaign is over. Training will be provided to the vicuña managers in January and to local schools at the beginning of the school year, February 2025.

Output 4. Vicuña regulations reviewed by ACOFIVB and revolving fund established

4.1 Participatory review of current regulations and inputs for a manual of functions and administrative procedures with regional associations.

In coordination with ACOFIVB and DGBAP, the technical guidelines for vicuña management have been updated and adjusted. The document is currently under review before moving to the design, layout, and printing phase.

Additionally, in coordination with ACOFIVB and DGBAP, the first workshop for updating the National Vicuña Management Plan 2024-2029 took place on August 16th and 17th, 2024, with the participation of ARCMV and CMV from across the country. During the event, working groups were formed based on prioritized strategic guidelines to conduct a SWOT analysis and propose actions to strengthen strengths, seize opportunities, overcome weaknesses, and counteract identified threats. This work was presented in a plenary session for review and approval as the basis for formulating the Management Plan. The following interventions were prioritized:

1. Conservation and protection of vicuñas and their habitat.
2. Sustainable management and use of vicuñas.
3. Value added and marketing of vicuña fiber.
4. Strengthening community capacities of CMV, ARCMV, and ANMV for sustainable conservation and use of vicuñas.
5. Institutional strengthening of government agencies (National, Departmental, and Municipal authorities, as well as the protected area service SERNAP) for implementing the National Management Plan.
6. Research, training, knowledge management, and communication.

4.2 Adjusted regulations and establishment of a revolving fund with agreement of regional associations.

Support is being provided to ACOFIVB in the development of regulations for the collection and commercialization process of vicuña fiber. The aim is to control the traceability and destination of the product to prevent the entry of fiber sourced from poaching into the market. This regulation will be presented in the final report and will be the basis for the development of a revolving fund.

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.

Some national entrepreneurs and artisans, after not winning in the competitive qualification for the sale of vicuña fiber, contested the commercialization of vicuña fiber before the government and reported their exclusion to the media. This conflict delayed the sale by four months; however, thanks to the strength of the ACOFIVB Board and the lack of valid arguments to prevent the commercialization of the fiber, meetings were organized to analyse the situation with the DGBAP. As a result, negotiations were conducted with these local companies and entrepreneurs who had contested the sale. This situation highlighted the urgent need for a regulatory framework for the commercialization of vicuña fiber that is consensus-based among all stakeholders, to prevent the opening of vicuña fiber sales to the local market from facilitating the trade of illegal fiber derived from poaching.

Among the key lessons learned, the ongoing coordination with the ACOFIVB Board, its ARCMV, and CMV stands out as one of the most significant aspects, encompassing the national, regional, and local levels of the organization. This coordination enabled the group to overcome these challenges.

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?

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.

Comment:

Since ACOFIVB has been established and operating since 2007 and is the official project partner to WCS, please clarify what the project means by “legally established”.

Reply:

ACOFIVB (Association for the Commercialization of Vicuña Fiber Bolivia) was primarily organized to support the commercialization of vicuña fiber, but it does not function as a legal representation of the CMV and ARCMV. However, due to necessity, it has taken on this role, which is not included in its bylaws. For this reason, the project is supporting the legal formation of the National Association of Vicuña Managers Bolivia (ANMVB), which will represent all the interests of the CMV and ARCMV before the State in all matters involving the conservation and sustainable use of vicuñas in Bolivia.

Comment:

Progress towards Output 3 is not clear. Please clarify when the field schools will take place.

Reply:

Field schools for the study and monitoring of peatlands were held during the wet season (March to May) and are now being conducted for the dry season (October and November).

Comment:

Progress towards this Output is unclear. The project reports that a review is underway and adjustments to existing regulations are being carried out. The project further reports that these review documents will be presented for validation in national workshops and approved by the

National Assembly. However, the timeframe for these processes is not identified and it is unclear if this will be achieved before EoP.

Reply:

The documents (technical regulations) currently being updated and adjusted are:

1. Technical guidelines for vicuña management
2. National Vicuña Management Plan 2025–2029
3. Regulations for the commercialization of vicuña fiber in Bolivia

All of them are expected to be completed before the conclusion of the Project.

Comment:

The project states that *“the spatial distribution of these peatlands and their representativeness will allow extrapolating the results to the entire area of vicuña management in Bolivia, which is around 12 million hectares”*. It is unclear how viable it would be to extrapolate results over such a vast area. Please provide justification for this statement.

Reply:

We are in the process of local validation of the delineation of wetland areas in the northern, central, and southern regions of the entire distribution area of the vicuña. This will involve mapping and extrapolating the results to all the wetlands within the vicuña distribution area in Bolivia. An initial map of all peatlands in Bolivia has been developed and the confidence limits of the GIS model is being established through a field validation. It is likely that the extension of the smallest peatlands found in ravines, particularly in the South of the country, may not be able to be estimated but their location appears possible.

Comment:

Under Indicator 0.2, the project aims to increase income for 5,500 herder HHs. The project reports that the project has been responsible for increasing the number of HHs engaged in management and utilisation of Vicuña fiber from 5,500 HHs to 7,160 HHs. However, increasing the number of HHs engaged in this activity does not indicate that income will increase by 30% for 5,500 HHs, as per the indicator

Reply:

As a result of the 2023 shearing season, a total of 2,134.38 Kg. of vicuña fibre was sold, generating an income of 5,625,097.23 Bs. or close to 627,000 GBP in total and 114 GBP per herder. In 2022, 1,249.9 Kg. of vicuña fibre was sold for 3,264,037.46 Bs. or close to 364,000 GBP in total and 50.8 GBP per herder. We will be able to report on the fibre obtained during 2024 in the final report but not on the final sale price.

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.	
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	
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