

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	DARCC040
Project title	Forest law enforcement capacity building for biodiversity protection in Cameroon
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Cameroon
Lead Organisation	Zoological Society of London
Partner(s)	Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), Cameroon
Project leader	Armstrong Mba Acha
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR1 October 2024</i>
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.zsl.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.

Since the project's start in April 2024, we have successfully processed all required administrative sign-offs from the Government of Cameroon and presented the project to all key stakeholders, including the government, private sector, and civil society. The Forestry Assessor position became effective on August 1, 2024, accelerating our implementation efforts and resulting in the following accomplishments

Output 1 Gaps have been identified in company reporting against SIFE requirements

- 1.1 Kick-off meeting and scoping exercise between ZSL and MINFOF
- 1.2 Completed a literature review on SIFE requirements and their alignment with the SPOTT tool's ESG indicators; the report is now available. (Currently in French)
- 1.3 Conducted expert interviews with stakeholders to assess SIFE implementation, compliance, and potential areas for improvement.

1.4 A partner working session was conducted to refine the methodology and timelines. A new work plan is now available, with additional activities incorporated.

1.5 Completed a desk-based review of 23 Annual Operational Plans and corresponding AFIRs for compliance with the SIFE. This included 23 companies in Year 1 (rather than the 25 initially planned), with the same 23 companies reviewed again in Year 2, totalling 46 reviews instead of the initially planned 50.

1.6 Review M&E mechanisms used by MINFOF to identify compliance with the SIFE. The report is pending, as the review was only completed a week ago.
 (Ind 1.1) Gaps identified in Annual Operational Plans and their corresponding AFIRs against compliance with the SIFE for 25 forestry companies by end of Y1Q1 based on CY2023 data and re-assessed by end of Y2Q4 based on CY2024 data leading to an increase in 60,000 hectares of area under improved sustainable management practices. [DI-D01] **This has been partially met with 23 AOPs and AFIRs assessed against compliance to the SIFE as required in Y1. Concessions involved cover a total area of over 63,798(only for the portions assessed)**

(Ind 1.2) Gaps identified in Annual Operational Plans and their corresponding AFIRs against compliance with the SIFE for 25 forestry companies by end of Y1Q1 based on CY2023 data and re-assessed by end of Y2Q4 based on CY2024 data leading to an increase in 5 IPLC groups with strengthened tenure and/or rights [DI-B06]- **This has been partially met with 23 AOPs and AFIRs assessed against compliance to the SIFE as required in Y1. Consultation of all stakeholders ongoing with incorporation of their views including IPLCs through their advocates.**

(Ind 1.3) At least 10 stakeholders from government, civil society and private sector are consulted and provide suggestions for improvement of AOP Gap Analysis by end of Y1Q2. [ZSL], **This has been done and stakeholders have provided suggestions to improvement of AOPs and AFIR gap analyses and contained in a report_(-currently in the French version)**

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.

- Law No. 2024/008, enacted on July 24, 2024, introduced new forestry and wildlife regulations, affecting the project and guidance development, which must now align with the updated legal requirements. Consequently, two additional activities have been incorporated to align project outcomes with the new law, resulting in increased costs. Securing 25 AOPs and corresponding AFIRs has been challenging; only 23 AOPs were obtained. It was revealed that some companies were issued annual felling permits without having submitted an AOP or completed an AFIR. Delays in administrative procedures at the Ministry of Forestry may extend project implementation by an estimated quarter. Additionally, documents will have to be translated given most of the engagements and reports are in French We shall be submitting a change request subsequently to this effect.

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)?

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?

N/A

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.

N/A

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

[n/a](#)

HYP (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 ?	<u>n/a</u>
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.	<u>n/a</u>
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	<u>yes</u>
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	