

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus

Half Year Report

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2024

Project reference	DARCC041
Project title	Ranger Empowerment: Strengthening Skills in Kenya's Conservation Areas
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Kenya
Lead Organisation	Zoological Society of London
Partner(s)	Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Kenya Forest Service (KFS) Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA), Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI), Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA), Game Rangers Association of Africa (GRAA), World Wildlife Fund(WWF), 51 Degrees
Project leader	Curveena Ghataure
Report date and number	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.zsl.org/what-we-do/projects/kenya-conservation-work Twitter: @ZSLAfrica

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).

Output 1 *Activity 1.3. Hold discussions with KWS, KWS LEA, WRTI and KWCA leadership.*

We began with Activity 1.3, as it emerged as the most logical starting point in the project sequence. As implementation progressed, it became clear that the project's scope would expand. Originally considered a peripheral partner, the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) is now positioned as a key partner on par with KWS/LEA, KWCA, and WRTI. KFS plays a crucial role as a natural resource management agency responsible for Kenya's biodiverse forests. The reason for positioning them as a key partner is that they have a ranger workforce of 4,800 (larger than KWS) and are currently increasing this by about 50% as part of the government's plan to plant 15 billion trees by 2032.

In May, ZSL conducted introductory meetings with KWCA and WRTI, and consulted with KWS and WWF (see Annex 1a & b). A formal meeting with KFS took place on August 13 at their Karura HQ, introducing project goals to senior leadership, including the Chief Conservator of Forests and Commandant. KFS expressed strong interest in collaboration and agreed to share training materials. On August 27, a project inception meeting with the KFS committee covered ranger roles, training structures, and the Training Centre. Both parties agreed that an MoU would formalise the partnership beyond this project (see Annex 1c & d; & 2a).

On August 14, ZSL met with KWS senior leadership at their Nairobi headquarters (see Annex 1e) - led by the Deputy Director of Wildlife Protection. KWS shared insights on their ranger training materials, noting their own internal curriculum review is near completion. KWS expressed interest in participation but had concerns about the feasibility of a new review. KWS requested a formal project implementation letter for their Director General, (see Annex 3a); a response is pending. On August 21, ZSL introduced the project to the new Commandant and Chief Instructor at the KWS Law Enforcement Agency, who expressed commitment to collaboration. Additionally, ZSL met with the Senior Assistant Director for Tsavo to discuss the project's regional activities (see Annex 2b).

On September 25, ZSL met with KWCA's senior team to introduce the project, discuss objectives, and outline KWCA's roles and responsibilities. This meeting provided insight into KWCA's operational model, their management of conservancy rangers and scouts, and their training framework. A formal project implementation letter was sent to the KWCA CEO, who responded positively (see Annex 3b). Prior to this, ZSL met with the Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association (TTWCA), a KWCA member, to explore their participation as a regional association, proposing TTWCA's training hub as a site for in situ training (see Annex 2c).

Late September we met with WRTI's Director of Training to introduce the project and discuss WRTI's strategic role across key outputs. As a government agency focused on research and training in the wildlife sector, WRTI's involvement is crucial. They recently completed a sector-wide training needs assessment (TNA) and published a National Wildlife Training Agenda, which will support the curriculum review process and module design. An official letter to the WRTI Director outlined project objectives and WRTI's role as a key partner (see Annex 3c). In summary, constructive discussions and buy-in have been successfully established with key leadership across KFS, KWS, KWS LEA, KWCA, and WRTI. All necessary protocols have been followed to secure project support.

Activity 1.1. Select experts who will work on review of the national ranger training curriculum, including representatives from KWS, WRTI, KWCA and drawn from project partners' networks.

KFS, KWS, KWCA, and WRTI have each committed to the expert review panel. Follow-up meetings included visits to WRTI and KWCA offices and workshops at the KFS Law Enforcement Academy in Gilgil and KWS LEA in Manyani. At WRTI, this coincided with the launch of their strategic plan, aligning ZSL with WRTI's objectives. These sessions reviewed project progress, involved senior training staff, set next steps and timelines, nominated panel members, and discussed each agency's specific training needs, with requests for in-house training materials made (see Annex 2d-g).

Discussions have been held with NGO and private sector partners to secure project buy-in and representation on the review panel. On August 14, a meeting with WWF covered project alignment and their supporting role (see Annex 1f). Similar discussions occurred with the URSA committee and their project liaison, Grant Miller (of ZSL), as well as their former Programme Manager who contributed to the proposal. The URSA committee has agreed to participate on the panel, with Grant Miller as the primary contact. A meeting was held with the CEO of the Game Rangers Association of Africa (GRAA) to understand their role as a continental ranger body, followed by a formal communication regarding their engagement and membership on the expert review panel. Additionally, 51 Degrees, a Kenya-based company specialising in ranger training, has been identified as a partner. Meetings with their directors were conducted to secure their involvement and invite them to join the panel.

A total of 14 slots have been allocated for the review panel, with the following breakdown: Government – KWS 2, KFS 3, WRTI 3; NGOs – KWCA 2, URSA 1, GRAA 1, WWF 1; Private sector – 51 Degrees 1.

Indicator 1.1: *By end of Q1, Y1, expert review panel convened comprising 10-15 representatives of government, conservancy, private sector, and NGO partners (target = at least one representative each from KWS, KWS LEA, WRTI, KWCA, and KFS).* This has effectively been achieved, with the panel assembled and disaggregated by gender, age group, and stakeholder representation.

Activity 1.2. Evaluate the KWS national ranger training curriculum delivered by KWS LEA.

Sharing training materials from ranger agencies is crucial for evaluating curricula. Before the project implementation phase, no firm commitments were made to share materials. While Activity 1.2 focused on KWS training materials, it has become necessary to include KFS and relevant KWCA materials as key partners. Progress with each agency is as follows:

KWS: Sharing of the ranger competency curriculum and the Code of Conduct (CoC) is limited due to KWS's nearing completion of their internal curriculum review, and the CoC is legally bound to the Wildlife Act. The LEA will share their training programs document to update the main curriculum. KWS have proposed creating a best-practice guidelines document instead of revising the CoC.

KFS: KFS has shared the CoC and the Human Rights-Based Approach syllabus (see Annex 4a & b). They are also preparing four cadre-specific and two external curricula documents for digital sharing. A consultative workshop has advanced the identification of training gaps, with a draft Identified Training Gaps document ready to expedite KFS's curriculum evaluation (see Annex 4c).

KWCA: KWCA rangers complete training at KWS LEA and receive conservancy-specific training as capacity allows, so they do not have a separate curriculum. However, they have provided Standard Operating Procedures for Wildlife Scouts, Gender Inclusion Guidelines, and a Code of Conduct (see Annex 4d).

WRTI: As a government research and training institution formerly part of KWS, WRTI has shared best-practice guidelines that cover the ranger workforce. They provided the National Wildlife Training Agenda and the Wildlife Sector TNA, both of which will contribute to the curriculum evaluation (see Annex 4e).

Activity 1.4. Survey KWS and KWCA rangers, to ascertain their specific training needs.

This activity is in the preparation stage, with discussions ongoing between ZSL and ranger agencies. We plan to develop a questionnaire based on the IUCN Competency Register and the URSA Global Ranger Competencies. Proposed survey groups include KWS rangers in Tsavo, TTWCA scouts in Taita, and KFS rangers. We are seeking internal expertise in training needs assessment for Q3.

Activity 1.5. Community focus group discussions to gather information on points of tension between communities and rangers to understand how to tailor trainings.

The ZSL team is seeking to leverage its FAIRER programme for this task. We plan to organise focus groups of 10-15 participants from four communities, utilising ZSL's existing work and relationships. Proposed sites include Mtito Andei, Taita through TTWCA (an existing ZSL partner), and a northern community in collaboration with Ewaso Lions (another existing ZSL partner). Additionally, KFS will select a community from one of their Community Forest Associations (CFA) to participate.

Activities 1.6 & 1.7 Not within reporting period; Output 2 & 3 Activities not within this reporting period.

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 & timetable of project activities.

Ambitious objectives. Feedback from partners and specialists in curriculum review and training design has raised concerns about the limited time and resources allocated to the project's objectives. A thorough review of national-level curriculum documents is estimated to take at least 4-6 months. Developing high-quality, context-specific training modules may require 6 months or more, while effectively training ToTs in content and delivery best practices will take 6 months to ensure proper understanding and teaching capacity. Mentorship activity resources may have been underestimated.

Scope creep. The project's nationwide scope and inclusion of multiple key agencies, especially KFS, have expanded the depth of materials and expertise required for review, training design, and delivery.

Reluctance to share materials. KWS is hesitant to share its ranger curricula due to their sensitive nature and concerns about duplicating efforts from their own internal review. They did not communicate the status of this review during the proposal phase, which is key to project objectives. Furthermore, KWS's protocol-driven process for engagement and material sharing risks delaying the project timeline.

Project partner – URSA. URSA's Programme Manager played a key role during the proposal stage and was to support implementation. However, she left just before the implementation phase began and has not been replaced, resulting in a significant gap in institutional knowledge and project support.

Budget adjustments. Original budget for reviewer consultancy, report drafting, module design, and mentorship has been underestimated due to the expanded scope, now including KFS as a key partner.

Change request. We will submit a Financial Change Request by December 31 to reallocate funds within budget lines and transfer some from Year 1 to Year 2, pending a budget re-forecasting exercise. This is due to delays in accessing KWS training materials and underestimated consultancy costs, along with necessary staffing adjustments. A revised work plan has been drafted to reflect updated activity timelines and expected completion dates (see Annex 5a).

3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with NIRAS:	Yes/ No
Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes/ No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes/ No

<p>4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024). Actual spend:</p>
<p>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)?</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>4c. If you expect and underspend, then you should consider your project budget needs carefully.</p>
<p>5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures</p> <p>Please note that the project commenced on 15th April 2024. As such, this report covers 5.5 months of progress, focusing on the specific activities completed within this timeframe. Additionally, the project manager was recruited in June and assumed the role on 1st August 2024.</p>
<p>6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report.</p>

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)?	
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	Annex 5b
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.	
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	
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 ?	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	