

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	DARCC048
Project title	Building legal capacity to improve forest management in Liberia
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Liberia
Lead Organisation	ClientEarth
Partner(s)	Heritage Partners & Associates, LLC (HPA) and National Union of Community Forest Management Bodies (NUCFMB)
Project leader	<i>Babette Tachibana-Brophy</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR1</i>
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.

Under Output 1, planning is underway for the first Legal Working Group (LWG) scheduled for October 2024. The LWG will be dedicated to enhancing local community understanding of carbon markets and the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). As part of our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) approach, a focus group discussion with LWG participants will be held to assess their understanding of key topics and allow us to gather qualitative feedback, to identify areas for improvement and tailor our approach. In the context of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) considerations, we seek to ensure that there is equal representation of men and women in attendance at the LWG. This is to increase female participation in decision-making and advocate for gender equity to be included in the design of new legal frameworks surrounding carbon markets and GBF. Attendance sheets will be collected at the LWG to monitor this.

Under Output 2, NUCFMB, with support from ClientEarth, recruited two national consultants in the areas of financial management and advocacy. The consultants completed comprehensive assessments on (1) gaps in financial management and (2) strategic plans, communications, and advocacy strategies, respectively. Key findings indicate that while NUCFMB has some effective policies and a strategic plan, there are significant gaps and weak internal financial, and advocacy protocols. Training sessions on advocacy and financial management with NUCFMB staff are planned for October 2024. NUCFMB has also enhanced its operational capabilities with the purchase of two laptops to facilitate efficient workflow, support staff members, and further advance its mission.

In September 2024, NUCFMB held a regional meeting in Nimba, bringing together representatives from surrounding communities to share knowledge and discuss biodiversity and conservation. The meeting location was selected to facilitate participation from more remote communities and participants were paid a stipend to support their attendance. It was attended by 28 participants (Male 15, Female 9), three NUCFMB coordinators and a local forest commissioner.

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.

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

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?

Delays in contracting partners and subsequent delays to their expenditure reporting means that we are reporting a lower spend than expected. We are also showing a slow expenditure rate because many key activities, travel and audit costs are scheduled between October 2024 and March 2025. Our Programme Manager is closely overseeing partner expenditures and working on financial and project planning with each partner to mitigate further delays and ensure timely implementation going forward. We can confirm that we are still on track to fully spend the grant within the project period, and confident that these steps will help us stay on track and deliver our outputs and outcome by the end of March 2025.

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.

Please see our responses to feedback in Annex 1.

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.	
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 ?	
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	