

## 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: 31<sup>st</sup> 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](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line.**

<b>Project reference</b>	DARCC055
<b>Project title</b>	Wetland Learning Hub: empowering wetland conservationists in three key regions
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Indo-Burma, West Africa and Madagascar
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	WWT
<b>Partner(s)</b>	PRCM
<b>Project leader</b>	Chris Rostron
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 HYR1</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<i><a href="https://wetlandlearninghub.org/">https://wetlandlearninghub.org/</a></i>

**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.

In the first six months, we established a virtual learning environment to support wetland conservation in Indo-Burma. A Project Officer was recruited in August 2024.

We selected 172 wetland professionals from Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Myanmar, started the course in Oct 2024 with a live introductory session. We are further engaging with participants through the creation of smaller study groups. The upcoming in-person course will select 15 regional champions, aligning with our goals of fostering conservation leadership.

For West Africa, we are collaborating with PRCM to adapt content and language, with similar discussions underway for Madagascar.

Our M&E systems have been established and remain appropriate for tracking participant engagement and course completion. This will be directly measured through pre and post course surveys in addition to monitoring social media presence and completion statistics on the learning management system.

**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.**

Overall, progress has been smooth, but we encountered a few challenges:

**Staff Transition:** The project lead left WWT and a new lead has recently been recruited. The Primary Project Officer for this project took on additional work and responsibilities during the transition period.

**Project Officer Delay:** Due to logistical issues, our second Project Officer started in August 2024 instead of April.

**Change Request:** We requested and received approval to move WWT Cambodia staff costs to this year to support smoother implementation.

These developments are manageable and have not caused significant disruptions to the project timetable or budget. We are confident that with these adjustments, the project will continue as planned.

**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: CR24-004

**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?**

We have had a change in Project Leader since the inception of the project. A change request form has been submitted separately.

**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.

**A detailed timeline tracks project tasks and milestones.**

**Interaction of the three hubs:** The learning management system aims to facilitate engagement across hubs through themed workspaces, allowing participants to discuss cross-regional topics and share best practices. These features are built into the platform, with only minimal additional funds needed for hosting participant spaces in the future.

**SMARTer indicators:** We revised the indicators to include clear timelines:

- **Output 0. Indicator 0.2:** Three regional community support networks established by March 2026, each seeing at least 10 active contributions from those in and beyond those participating in courses within this project, demonstrating collaboration and resource sharing.
- **Output 2. Indicator 2.3:** By March 2026, 10 conservation orgs / gov depts in each region are reporting increased capability to deliver improved wetland conservation outcomes for poverty alleviation and biodiversity. At least 33% of these conservation orgs/gov departments will report this increased capability by March 2025, 100% by March 2026.
- **Output 3. Indicator 3.3:** 3.3. Three local organisations have increased capability and capacity to organise, deliver and fund regionally-relevant training by the project end in March 2026.

**Early career professionals and GESI:** Edited indicators tracks the impact on early-career professionals and GESI groups:

- **Output 1 Indicator 1.1:** 150 course participants from key local and national organisations engaged in wetland conservation have completed the online WLH course in Wetland Health and Vitality. Participant selection will aim for gender balance where possible. At least 50% of early-career participants will report improved skills, knowledge, and confidence as a result of the course.
- **Output 2 Indicator 2.1:** By March 2026, 45 conservationists have completed in-person practical regional wetland conservation workshops. At least 40% of selected participants will be women.

## Checklist for submission

<b>For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024)</b>	
Have you <b>responded to any additional feedback</b> (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 <b>risk register</b> ?	Y
<b>For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024)</b>	
Have you responded to <b>feedback from your latest Annual Report Review</b> ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	Y
<b>For All Projects</b>	
Include your <b>project reference</b> in the subject line of submission email.	Y
Submit to <a href="mailto:BCFs-Report@niras.com">BCFs-Report@niras.com</a> .	
Have you <b>clearly highlighted any confidential information</b> within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	N/A
Have you reported against the most <b>up to date information for your project</b> ?	Y
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	