

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	DARNV027
Project title	Addressing wildlife entanglement in discarded fishing nets through community-based approaches
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	India
Lead Organisation	Zoological Society of London
Partner(s)	Wildlife Institute of India
Project leader	Rebecca Austin
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	1 st April to 30 th September 2024
Project website/blog/social media	https://x.com/zslmarine

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).

In the project, "Addressing Wildlife Entanglement in Discarded Fishing Nets Through Community-Based Approaches," the initial six months focused on foundational activities and desktop works. The team conducted an in-depth review on "ghost nets in global perspective", emphasizing the causes of ghost nets, their impact on wildlife, and included case studies from several regions. It also included international frameworks for ghost net management and highlighted successful mitigation strategies. 14 Gram Panchayats (tentative) containing 24 potential villages for field implementation were preliminarily selected after detailed discussions with the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) team and previous researchers familiar with the area. These panchayats were selected based on proximity to the river, active fishing communities, and potential for women's involvement.

Additionally, desktop research identified existing Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the target villages, which will play a vital role in implementing community savings schemes and including women in the project. The team also got opportunity to engage with fisherwomen and forest and fisheries officials through the workshops conducted by the NMCG team at Wildlife Institute of India. A preliminary cost analysis was completed, including estimates for labor, transportation, and storage based on desktop research and previous knowledge.

The field activities, such as establishing savings schemes, field assessments of recyclers, and in-person meetings with the forest and fisheries officials, will be conducted during Q3.

Riverbank clean-up events are already ongoing in Bhagalpur under the NMCG project and will be strengthened on the project site by the team in the coming months.

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.

WII Staff that had been expected to be part of the in-country team were not available to be involved which meant a larger recruitment process than expected was needed. The recruitment of the project staff has been severely delayed during the initial months due to a lack of suitable candidates, resulting in limited implementation of the project activities. However, the NCMG – WII project team is working in the project area, and so some activities have been initiated.

There have also been issues relating to communications of activities and associated issues which are presently being addressed.

The above issues have meant that we have a significant underspend and that we are behind on a number of the elements of the workplan. We are working to develop a change request to fully characterise the impact on the project and what changes to the workplan, budget and logframe are needed.

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?

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.

- it would be useful to know more about the end market of the value-chain for end-of-life nets, including how well established these are and what risks this involves;

This is fundamental part of the project and will be fully characterised during the project. We are aware of some end markets but aim to determine how sustainable they are.

- it is unclear who between Zoological Society of London and Wildlife Institute of India will be responsible for the supply-chain focussed activities. A private sector partner/collaborator or enabling institution is encouraged;

WII are delivering the project on the ground, but we are working to identify re-cycling supply chain actors as proposed.

- the total project budget for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is 5% which seems low. You should consider if this is enough

While the % is low we will have a full time staff member in-country who will be focussed on M+E.

- the poverty benefits described could be better captured by logframe indicators - e.g. you could include an indicator to directly capture livelihood improvement from the 'sustainable business model established';

Due to project delays we are aiming to fully re-assess the logframe and budget and will submit via a change request this year.

- in the logframe, the narratives of Outcome and Output 2 are very similar, though indicators differ, so you should consider refocusing the wording of Output 2.

See above.

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.	Y
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	Y
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.	Y
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	Y
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 ?	Y
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	