

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

Half Year Report

Project reference	27-002
Project title	Healthy wetlands for the cranes and people of Rukiga, Uganda
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Uganda
Lead partner	Margaret Pyke Trust (“MPT”)
Partner(s)	International Crane Foundation (“ICF”); Rugarama Hospital (“RH”); and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (“LSHTM”).
Project leader	David Johnson
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2 24 October 2022
Project website/blog/social media	Website: https://margaretpyke.org/environment/projects Twitter: @MargaretPyke @savingcranes @TheEWT @LSHTM Facebook: @MargaretPykeTrust @InternationalCraneFoundation @EndangeredWildlifeTrust @RugaramaHospital

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

Output 1

Activity 1.3 and 1.4: An audit of the eight Community Conservation Groups' compliance with their Community Conservation Agreements has been undertaken. The audit analysis showed that harvests achieved from phase two of livelihoods support (provided to the groups in March 2022) far exceeded those achieved in phase one (provided in September 2021), despite the total kilograms of seeds provided to each group being less than in phase one. For example, in phase one 12,400kg of potato tubers were provided in total to the eight groups from which 19,643kg of potatoes were harvested, however in phase two 9,920kg of tubers were provided in total and 29,676kg of potatoes were harvest. Reasons for this significant improvement are due to increased involvement of peer farmers, continued mentoring and education provision by project partners, and an increase of awareness campaigns around improved farming techniques and effective methods to reduce soil erosion and increase soil fertility.

Activity 1.6: The crane breeding season commenced in October and will continue until March next year. Project partners and ‘Crane Custodians’ (trained volunteer community members) have commenced monitoring of breeding pairs and nests, the results of which will be shared in the annual report. Fixed route surveys along four routes continue to be collected every two months, to count crane sightings and incidents. The last fixed route survey report, conducted in August 2022, recorded 96 crane sightings. In addition to this, a ‘Crane Census’ was conducted in September 2022 to systematically count all cranes in the Rukiga District (not just those in our project area), which found there to be 520 cranes in total. This is the first count of its kind in this region.

Output 2

Activity 2.1: 16 peer farmers have continued to demonstrate soil and water conservation methods,

sustainable agricultural practices and environmentally sound waste disposal methods to neighbours in their community on their 'model farms'.

Activity 2.2:

- Approximately 900 people attended our two festivals, which brought community members from our project sites together to celebrate their wetlands and Grey Crowned Cranes and to learn how they can conserve them. At the festivals, people were invited to enjoy performances on project themes by local school children and Community Conservation Groups, a marching band-led parade called people to join the festival, free healthcare services were provided, and project messages about the links between environmental and human health, and livelihoods were provided. The event was attended by national and local government representatives, and received national media coverage.
- 1,950 households from eight parishes in two sub-counties of Rukiga District were provided with Napier grass stems and trained on their use, in May 2022. The stems were cut from Napier grass nurseries planted in year two of the project and, once planted in community members' farmland, will help to combat soil erosion from the hillslopes into the wetland below.
- 50 people (community members, local council leaders, parish and sub-county chiefs, and sub-county chairpersons) attended a meeting aimed to help project partners to better promote sustainable farming techniques, such as the digging of trenches and planting of Napier grass on hillslopes across the District. At the meeting, local leaders agreed to coordinate "community digs", where local leaders encourage all neighbours on a set date at a certain location (i.e. on a hillslope) to undertake key activities such as the digging of trenches, planting of Napier grass and other activities that will help to combat soil erosion from the hillslopes, improve soil quality, and reduce water turbidity in the wetland.

Activity 2.4: Project partners have continued with the implementation of the communications plan, including presenting messages on project themes to men's and women's community groups and church congregations (reaching 830 people), and on two local radio stations that broadcasts across the Rukiga District and neighbouring regions to approximately 11 million people.

Activity 2.6: Water clarity testing has continued each month, using a "water turbidity test". The average score for the last quarter was 43.2cm. The results have recently been negatively impacted due to the early arrival of the rainy season, which brought heavier rains a month earlier than expected.

Output 3

Activity 3.2: An additional 15 community members were trained as 'Crane Custodians' to undertake wetland conservation and monitoring and received equipment to help them to undertake their duties, such as boots and smart phones to enable 'Survey 123' (GPS crane and wetland monitoring) reports to be submitted.

Activity 3.3: 24 people were trained as Village Health Team members (voluntary community peer educators) on the health and poverty alleviation benefits of improved reproductive health.

Activity 3.4: 2,675 people were mobilised by Village Health Teams and radio broadcasts to attend outreach clinics for health services.

Activity 3.7: The London Measure of Unplanned Pregnancy surveys continue to be collected and analysed every six months.

Output 4

Activity 4.3: We continue to brief Ugandan journalists on our project, resulting in our project featuring in multiple national news broadcasts and national newspaper articles in Uganda.

Activity 4.4: Preparations are underway for the regional capacity-building workshop focussed on conservation and reproductive health organisations, which is planned to take place in February 2023 in Kampala.

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.

An unexpected positive development: Due to our close links with local government in the project area, project partners were invited to join a community engagement meeting attended by approximately 80 subsistence farmers from across the wider Rukiga District to share project messages relating to wetland and crane conservation. The meeting was hosted by the Rukiga District's Natural Resources Department to promote the "Green Climate Fund" (A UNDP funded, Uganda Ministry of Water and Environment led programme to enhance Ugandan subsistence farmers' ability to deal with climate impacts). The impact that this could have on the project is that more people from outside of the project area have been able to hear messages on wetland and crane conservation, meaning that more people could engage in positive actions benefitting wetland and crane health. This will not affect the budget or timetable of project activities as it is a complimentary action.

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

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS: No

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance N/A

Change request reference if known: N/A

4a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

4b. If yes, then you need to 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 if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

In September 2022, the Uganda Government announced an Ebola outbreak in the Central Region of the country and travel to and from the affected area was restricted on 15 October 2022. Our project is not directly affected by this issue, as our project sites are located approximately 350km away in the South-West Region of the country. At present this is not affecting our ability to undertake project activities, however we are closely monitoring both Uganda and UK government advice on the matter.

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS-LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**