

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects

Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

Note: 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 2022

Project reference	27-007
Project title	Increasing the resilience of biodiversity and livelihoods in Colombo's wetlands
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Sri Lanka
Lead partner	International Water Management Institute
Partner(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetland Management Division, Sri Lanka Land Development Corporation (SLLDC), Ministry of Urban Development, Coast Conservation, Waste Disposal, and Community Cleanliness, Sri Lanka • Department of Wildlife Conservation, Ministry of Wildlife and Forest Conservation • Biodiversity Secretariat, Ministry of Environment • Central Environment Authority (CEA), Ministry of Environment • Urban Development Authority (UDA), Ministry of Urban Development, Coast Conservation, Waste Disposal, and Community Cleanliness, Sri Lanka • Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka (FOGSL), University of Colombo, Sri Lanka • Cobra Collective (CC)
Project leader	Dr. Matthew Simpson
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 st October 2022 HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	https://cobracollective.org/portfolio/increasing-the-resilience-of-biodiversity-and-livelihoods-in-colombos-wetlands/ https://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/what-we-do/projects/show-projects/?C=1125 https://twitter.com/project_cobra/status/1316718438505680896

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).

During the period April to September 2022 the activities carried out contributed to meeting the following outputs.

1. Output 2 - Identification of best practices for community wetland management and monitoring protocols. - Best practice community wetland monitoring and management examples.
2. Output 4 - Project evaluation – development of criteria and development of online questionnaires
3. Output 5 - Dissemination of project findings

1. Output 2 - Identification of best practices for community wetland management and monitoring protocols. - Best practice community wetland monitoring and management examples.

In January and February 2022, members of the Cobra Collective visited Sri Lanka and offered training on participatory video-making to stakeholders (government, non-government, and communities including youth) and others who were interested. A series of physical meetings were held at IWMI, Diyasaru park and at the wetland sites of Beddagana, Kolonnawa, Kottawa, Heen-Ela and Madiwela. (Figure 1)



Figure 1: Wetland sites

After the introductory meetings were conducted with representation of all stakeholders, meetings were held at the respective wetlands, to further introduce the concept and also to select interested community members who would advance with the filming. A total of twelve meetings were held (242 people attended, 103 women and 140 men). In addition, planning meetings with partners and key stakeholders were held throughout the period. Ownership of the individual wetlands varies from private farmers to different government institutions (Table 1).

Table 1: Ownership of the 5 wetlands

Wetland	Ownership
Beddagana	UDA
Heen-Ela	UDA
Kolonnawa	Farmers
Kottawa	SLLDC
Madiwela	UDA

Between March and April 2022, community representatives, and site coordinators from government partner organisations, were appointed for each of the wetlands (Table 2). The role of these appointed staff is to engage, coordinate and deliver community engagement activities with wetland communities in each of the wetlands, including the use of participatory video and the implementation of community monitoring activities.

By April, for each wetland, a site coordinator and 2 community representatives were appointed, with the exception of Heen-ela where despite the early links established, it has to date proved difficult to facilitate meaningful engagement. However, we continue to work with various people at Heen-ela and progress has been made in the last few weeks.

Table 2: Site Coordinators (3 F and 2 M) and Community Representatives (5 F and 3 M)

Wetland	Site coordinator	Community Representative	Community Representative
Beddagana	Narmadha Dangampola (Female) - UDA	H.M.B.K.B Herath (Male)	Sadeeshe Mohotti (Male)
Heen-Ela	Chethika Gunasiri (Female) - SLLDC	TBC	TBC
Kolonnawa	Kasun Bandara (Male) – SLLDC	A.A.T Nayomi (Female)	I.D.K Chathurangi (Female)
Kottawa	Manusha Welikala (Female) – Research and Development officer Department of Agrarian Services	M.D.D Jayathissa (Female),	Mallika Padmini Perera (Female)
Madiwela	Hiranth de Silva (Male) – SLLDC	Jagath Wasantha (Male)	N. Randika Perera (Female)

The field team and partners discussed the community best practices that were also supported by the partners. For four wetlands the storyboards were prepared, and the videos were developed. Four videos are now ready for review. Two of the videos will be presented at the Ramsar COP 14 meeting in Switzerland in November 2022 (see point 3 below).

Site coordinators had around 8 to 10 sessions in the field, to demonstrate the use of the equipment and capture the key moments of the video clip. At each site, 5-6 people were trained in storyboarding and the creation of video clips.

Despite the political and economic crises which commenced in April and was followed by a severe fuel crisis the local project activities continued. Because many community members couldn't afford to travel to physical meetings, we organized virtual WhatsApp meetings. Each group had community-level meetings and also WhatsApp meetings. Institute heads (UDA and SLLDC) were also part of the WhatsApp group to discuss the progress at each site. Institutional heads were also part of this group, where they were able to monitor activities and engage with developments. Community representatives met frequently to develop the videos. The rough footage was ready in late September 2022.

Wetland Community Monitoring App development – A mobile phone application has been developed by Emotional Intelligence and Life Skills, a Sri Lankan NGO with experience of communication strategies and techniques, and with the local wetland communities. The app has been designed for individuals and communities to regularly collect physical and biological information which is then presented on a web dashboard. The app has been translated into Sinhala and Tamil and is currently being tested by the communities.

The wetland online course – translations of the online course into Tamil and Sinhala have been completed, however, take up of the course has so far been limited. To rectify this we will be delivering a weekly online, live session to discuss a specific module and to support people in accessing the online content. This is designed to be completed in early January 2023 where we will support learning further with face-to-face sessions to recap topics.

In conjunction with FOGSL, a schools program was initiated in September 2022 to build awareness and stimulate interest in school children. Schools in the vicinity (i.e. within 5km) of the 5 wetlands were identified (Figure 2) and approached to determine their interest for pupils to engage in wetland activities. A wetlands and biodiversity awareness programme was developed and delivered at Diyasaru Wetland Park. One hundred and thirty seven children, across a range of ages, participated during the week (Table 3; Figure 3). Follow-up activities are now being organised with schools.

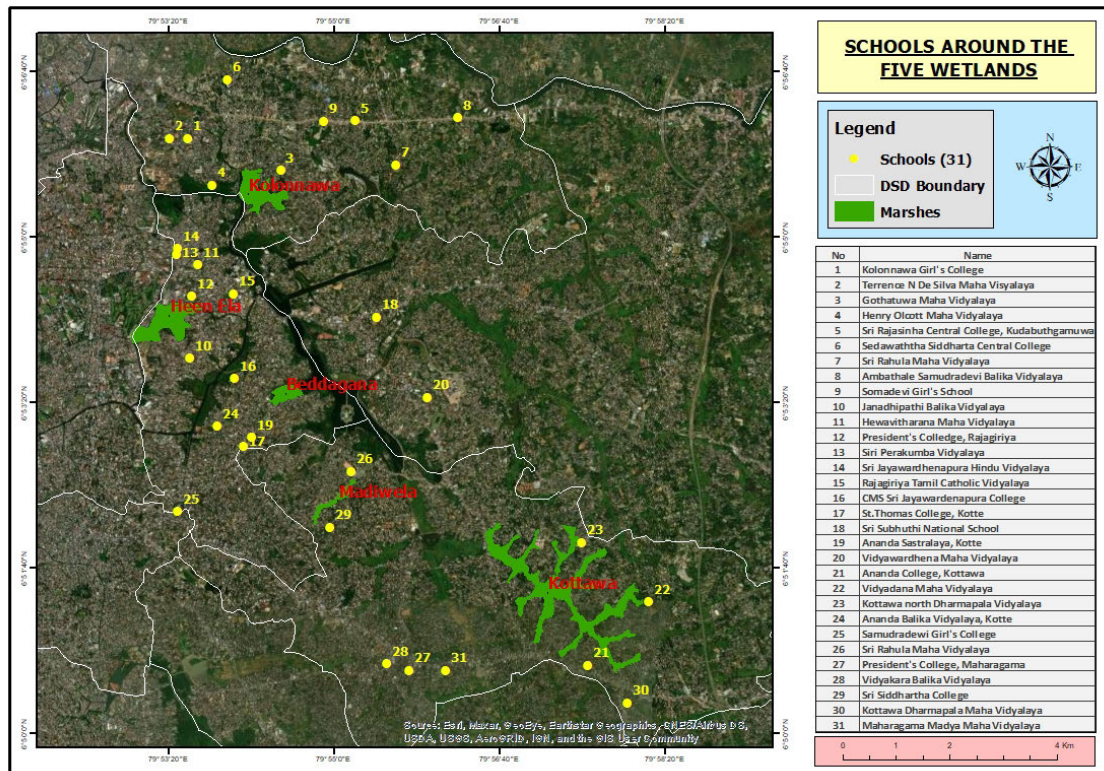


Figure 2: Schools located with 5km of the 5 wetlands.

Table 3: Number of school children that participated in the wetlands awareness week

Wetland	School	Total	F	M
Kolonnawa	GOTHTUWA MAHA VIDYALAYA	18	8	10
	HENRY OLCOTT MAHA VIDYLAYA	25	10	15
Heen ela	HEWAVITHARANA MAHA VIDYALAYA.	21	11	10
	PRESIDENTS COLLEGE	23		23
Madiwela	VIDYAWARDANA MAHA VIDYALAYA	29	17	12
Kottawa	KOTTAWA ANANDA M.V.	21	6	15



Figure 3: Andrew Price of the British High Commission visits Diyasaru Wetland park during the schools program

Additional activities to support the project:

In April 2022, Luisa Charles from Imperial College, UK (double master's degree at Imperial College London and the Royal College of Art, UK) visited Sri Lanka to develop a robotic device

to monitor water quality. She worked closely with the Moratuwa University, Sri Lanka staff (Professor, KTM Udayanga Hemapala) and held awareness-raising sessions at the university and also with the community and youth in the 5 wetlands. Four water quality parameters were included in the design and could be remotely controlled once the device was on the water.

Gavindya Gamage was an intern from Wayamba University, Sri Lanka and had on the job training. Her project focused on water quality assessment of the Heen Ella wetland to better understand spatial variation in water quality characteristics across the wetland. Later she served as an intern in the Darwin Project and assisted with the establishment of the schools program.

2. Output 4 - Project evaluation – development of criteria and development of online questionnaires

Criteria for project evaluation were developed in Year 1. Stakeholder and community questionnaires have been developed to collect data regarding project impact. These are available in English, Tamil and Sinhala in hard copy and online formats. All participants within the project are encouraged to complete the questionnaire which will be repeated annually to assess impact.

3. Output 5 - Dissemination of project findings

A side event has been organized at the Ramsar COP 14, entitled, Community wetland management for livelihood and biodiversity resilience. Led by IWMI and jointly hosted by IUCN, Wetlands International, CC and the Government of Sri Lanka. 7 November 2022, 6.30 pm.

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.

The country as a whole faced a number of political and economic crises. These delayed field-level activities in terms of meeting physically and UK based staff from the Cobra Collective were unable to travel to Sri Lanka after February. However, innovative ways were used to keep the dialogue going. WhatsApp groups proved to be particularly successful in terms of getting community members to interact.

We have already requested and been granted a no cost extension and despite the challenges this year we anticipate completing the project as planned in January 2024. In order to adapt the project to the current situation and to fund the no cost extension we are requesting to move funds between budget lines and into the next financial year. Reflecting the issues the project has experienced, from the political and economic crises, we have also requested the following changes to the logframe:

- minor changes to the delivery timetable;
- as a result of recommendations from the annual review we are requesting a shift in emphasis from assessing livelihoods via household incomes to assessing livelihood protection from environmental events such as flooding;
- the dissemination process with other communities in Colombo is altered as a response to what we have learnt in terms of communication and community engagement during COVID-19 and during the latest crises.

The request, encompassing both the financial changes and the changes to the logframe, was submitted on 28th October 2022.

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: Yes/No

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes/No on 28/10/22

Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes/No
Change request reference if known:	

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: £

The change request includes a request to shift £ [redacted] into the next financial year (i.e. 2023/24). If this is approved it is unlikely we will have an underspend this year.

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?

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**