

## 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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023**

<b>Project reference</b>	<b>27-007</b>
<b>Project title</b>	Increasing the resilience of biodiversity and livelihoods in Colombo's wetlands
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Sri Lanka
<b>Lead partner</b>	International Water Management Institute
<b>Partner(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wetland Management Division, Sri Lanka Land Development Corporation (SLLDC), Ministry of Urban Development, Coast Conservation, Waste Disposal, and Community Cleanliness, Sri Lanka</li> <li>• Department of Wildlife Conservation, Ministry of Wildlife and Forest Conservation</li> <li>• Biodiversity Secretariat, Ministry of Environment</li> <li>• Central Environment Authority (CEA), Ministry of Environment</li> <li>• Urban Development Authority (UDA), Ministry of Urban Development, Coast Conservation, Waste Disposal, and Community Cleanliness, Sri Lanka</li> <li>• Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka (FOGSL), University of Colombo, Sri Lanka</li> <li>• Cobra Collective (CC)</li> </ul>
<b>Project leader</b>	Dr. Matthew Simpson
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2023 HYR4
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://cobracollective.org/portfolio/increasing-the-resilience-of-biodiversity-and-livelihoods-in-colombos-wetlands/">https://cobracollective.org/portfolio/increasing-the-resilience-of-biodiversity-and-livelihoods-in-colombos-wetlands/</a> <a href="https://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/what-we-do/projects/show-projects/?C=1125">https://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/what-we-do/projects/show-projects/?C=1125</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/project_cobra/status/1316718438505680896">https://twitter.com/project_cobra/status/1316718438505680896</a>

**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 2023 the focus has been primarily on finalizing the best-practice activities and disseminating the project findings. To this end activities have 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 5 - Dissemination of project findings

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

Participatory videos (PVs) – two PVs have been finalised by each of the 5 communities (Beddagana, Heen Ela, Kottawa, Kolonnawa, Madiwela). The general theme for the first set of videos is the best practices of the community and the second set of videos consisted of the challenges faced by the community and possible solutions. Some minor corrections and edits are still to be made on the second set of videos for the Beddagana and Heen Ela communities. The PVs for the 5 new communities (Attidiya, Madinnagoda, Crow Island, Mulleriyawa, Kimbulawala) are near completion; 2 out of the 5 are completed and ready for sharing, 3 are in the editing/subtitling stages. The PV approach for the 5 new communities was different due to time constraints. In this case footage (interviews and scenes) were captured by the project implementing teams (IWMI/CC) and video editing was undertaken by a videographer. However the communities were engaged in the process and provided feedback on draft videos through informal video viewings (in-person, Attidiya on the 11<sup>th</sup> August and Madinnagoda on the 15<sup>th</sup> Aug) and via WhatsApp

Wetland community monitoring app development

(<https://thushara.lankawebdirectory.lk/codegen/>) - the wetland monitoring app was finalized and field tested, including by children involved in the school program (see below). Various bugs and small issues were identified and have been resolved. Training in the application of the app was undertaken with students from Kelaniya University. A proposal for continued future maintenance and development has been developed and funding is being sought.

**Output 5 - Dissemination of project findings**

PV screenings were conducted on 07<sup>th</sup> August (Maharagama Agrarian Services Centre) and on 14<sup>th</sup> August (Maliban Aramaya (Temple) Beddagana).

- 27 people were present at the first screening. Of these relatively few were farmers because most of the farmers were in the field. As a result the majority of participants were agricultural officers. The participants provided their comments both written and verbal. Padmini (Kottawa community rep) introduced Kottawa videos 1 and 2, and Kasun (Kolonnawa site coordinator) introduced Kolonnawa video 1. Ranugi (and IWMI intern) and a volunteer from WNPS, were able to introduce the wetland monitoring app (see below) and provide a short tutorial for the interested officers.
- The second screening was organised by the Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte Divisional Secretariat. A total of 72 people, residents from the area, participated. Videos from Beddagana and Kolonnawa were shown and introductions to the videos provided by Mohotti (Beddagana community rep) and Kasun (Kolonnawa site coordinator). Written feedback was provided by the participants. Discussions on the video message were conducted. The IWMI/CC teams introduced the overall project, process, and the wetland monitoring app.

Schools program – following the success of the Wetlands Awareness Week in September 2022 the project (led by FOGSL) has initiated a 6-month schools program. This is an additional program of work, to those delivered within the project dissemination plan, but has been developed as lessons learnt during dissemination have identified this mechanism as the most effective way to spread project messages within communities. Commencing on 18<sup>th</sup> August this

program covers 5 schools (WP/JAYA/Siri Parakumba Vidyalaya, WP/JAYA/Gothatuwa Maha Vidyalaya, WP/JAYA/Madiwela Sri Rahula M. V. Madiwela, Kotte, Kottawa Uthura Darmapala Vidyalaya, and Rajagiriya President College) and 130 secondary school pupils. The program has been approved by the Ministry of Education. There are weekly events delivered, including educational workshops at each school (with pupils from all schools participating) and fieldwork in Colombo wetlands. The sessions comprise: classroom, field activities (use of the monitoring app, maps, identification of species), water quality testing, and guest speakers. The program will raise awareness of key wetland issues amongst the children and their communities and provides the opportunity to interact and share learning experiences between the different schools.

World Mangrove Day (26<sup>th</sup> July) - The project, key findings and the wetland app were presented to the Wildlife and Nature Protection Society of Sri Lanka. On the same day a presentation on the project was made to a mixed group of community members and government staff.

The 6th stakeholder workshop was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 2023 at the International Water Management Institute with a total of 42 participants. The new Director of the Biodiversity Secretariat (Ms Sujeewa Fernando) provided an introduction and welcome, the IWMI/CC teams provided project progress and updates. A video mediated dialogue was conducted in which community members introduced the second set of videos (from each of the initial 5 communities). Feedback and discussions were held on the message and lessons learned from the videos. This provided a first opportunity to discuss the development of the wetland management principles which will be developed and finalised in the next (final) 6-months of the project.

**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.**

No notable problems in this reporting period.

**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: N/A

**4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)**

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 2024)?**

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: £

**4c. 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.**

**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 – the project remains on track for completion in January 2024.

**If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, 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.**

**All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.**

**Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with NIRAS 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](mailto: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**