

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	29-011
Project title	Terai Arc: Community stewardship to secure wildlife corridors and livelihoods
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal
Lead partner	Zoological Society of London
Partner(s)	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Parsa National Park (PNP) and Mithila Wildlife Trust (MWT)
Project leader	<i>Ms. Monica Wrobel/Mr. Bishnu Prasad Thapaliya</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>October 2022, HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media	

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).

This project works in the northern buffer zone of Parsa National Park (PNP) and is aiming to secure connectivity between protected areas and northern Shivalik hills using a corridor of community-managed forests; mitigate human-wildlife conflict; and reduce communities' dependence on resources through diversified livelihoods and enhanced agroforestry. As the project started from 1st June 2022, this report includes progress of four months (June-September). In the first four months, the project focused on creating an enabling environment for the smooth and effective project implementation by understanding the Biodiversity Challenge Fund project's requirement, sharing information about the project to partners and stakeholders, making formal agreements with implementing partners, developing the project team, orienting the project team on programmatic and financial compliance and starting the baseline and other initial studies required to proceed with project implementation. The detail of which are as below:

Introductory webinar and workshop: The project started with participating in the webinar (15 June 2022) and workshop (17 June 2022) organized by NIRAS LTS International for all new projects. The project lead and programme management specialist from ZSL Nepal attended this workshop and got an in-depth view on needs and requirements of reporting (technical and financial), communications/branding and M&E plan. This webinar and workshop helped to provide us with a clear picture of all requirements at the start of the project. The resources shared were further used by ZSL Nepal to orient partners and the project team.

Agreement with implementing partner: ZSL Nepal has completed the agreement with MWT, the implementing partner for this project, incorporating the technical and financial reporting needs and requirements.

Project inception meetings: ZSL Nepal conducted six project inception meetings with 48 different staff, partners, and stakeholders to ensure a successful start to the project. Firstly, inception meetings were held among ZSL Nepal staff (15 July 2022) so that all the team understand the project and know what their individual contribution to the project will be. A second inception meeting (21 July 2022) was held among ZSL Nepal's Project Coordination Committee (PCC) at Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) to share information about the project and to get their formal approval to start project implementation. Similarly, an inception meeting (5 Sep 2022) was also held at PNP by the project management unit (PMU) to share information about the project and formally start implementation at the buffer zone area of PNP. Likewise, an inception/ orientation meeting (4 Aug 2022) was organized for Mithila Wildlife Trust (MWT) at Dhanusa to inform them about project and to orient them on the project's logical framework, targets, deliverables, and evidence documentation requirements. Furthermore, two inception meetings were held with local governments in project sites (Jitpur Simara Sub-Metropolitan City and Manahari Rural Municipality offices) to share with them information about the project, get approval to start implementation and request support that may be required during the project implementation.

Site observation: Representatives from ZSL Nepal office and MWT visited the project sites with the respective chairperson of Amlashwor BZUC, Lokhit BZUC and Manahari BZUC to observe the community members and community managed forests.

Project team formation: A project implementation team has been formed by MWT. As per the agreement with ZSL, MWT has hired one project officer and three project associates. All of them are based in project sites.

Orientation on safeguarding and financial compliance: ZSL organized a virtual orientation event (22 Sep 2022) on safeguarding and financial compliance for partners implementing BCF funded project. ZSL is currently implementing two BCF projects (One DI main and one IWTCF main). Therefore, the orientation event was combined for all partners involved (Mithila Wildlife Trust and Himalayan Nature). The South Asian Wildlife Enforcement Network, (SAWEN), a regional inter-governmental body who are helping us execute some activities were also invited. The partners had requested this orientation during the DI inception meeting and IWTCF technical report's comment sharing meeting.

Baseline studies: The activities of output 1 will be guided by the identification of priority areas for forest improvement and habitat management in the community forest corridor. Therefore, an assessment to identify priority areas (Activity 1.1 and 1.5.1) is ongoing in the project sites. The final report will be received by end of October 2022; other activities will take place following the findings and the recommendations of the assessment.

Similarly, a socio-economic baseline survey (Activity 5.1), field visits and community interaction meetings are ongoing for the household/beneficiary selection for output 2 (human wildlife conflict), output 3 (sustainable livelihood) and output 4 (agroforestry). Therefore, all related activities will take place in the second half of the year after the final baseline report is received and household selection is completed.

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.

There have not been any notable problems.

ZSL has received good feedback from our implementing partners in regard to conducting inception meetings and orientations at the start of the project as they felt that it will act as excellent guidance for them throughout project implementation. ZSL Nepal is thus planning to conduct more of these events to capacitate partners throughout the project.

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 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?

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?

There has not been any issue so far.

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**