

## 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 2022**

<b>Project reference</b>	DIR28S2-1031
<b>Project title</b>	Biocultural landscapes for livelihoods and connectivity in Verapaces, Guatemala.
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Guatemala
<b>Lead partner</b>	University of Greenwich
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Federation of Cooperatives of the Verapaces, FEDECOVERA, Association Private Nature Reserves of Guatemala, ARNPG
<b>Project leader</b>	Jeremy Haggart
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	Oct 2022, HYR1
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	

### **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).**

The start date of the project was delayed to 1<sup>st</sup> September due to delays in response to clarifications requested by reviewers of the original proposal. Also, time was needed to conduct due diligence reviews and contracting of partners. Contracting has been completed with FEDECOVERA but completion of due diligence with the Association Private Nature Reserves of Guatemala (ARNPG) is pending. Partners have found the increased due diligence needed to meet contracting requirements beyond their past experience in receiving funds from international donors.

Nevertheless, in September an inaugural workshop was held in Coban, Guatemala for all project partners and stakeholders hosted by FEDECOVERA. The inaugural meeting was attended by Nick Whittingham, British Ambassador to Guatemala, who spent nearly two days meeting with project partners and visiting their facilities. The inaugural meeting was also attended by the Executive Secretary of the Council for Protected Areas (CONAP), who agreed to ensure his institutions support and engagement with the project. Planning meetings were held with project partners on responsibilities for execution of the project and administration of funds. A stakeholder workshop was held between project partners, CONAP, cooperatives, and private nature reserves to discuss the objectives of the project. Two specific advances were to identify the most viable route for a biological corridor along the Sierra Yalijux, and thus the geographic targeting of the projects activities, and second to begin to understand the interest of indigenous communities in registering their traditional knowledge and in particular around use of medicinal herbs. Regarding the development of biocultural protocols, progress was made on the identification of: (i) formal and traditional governance structures at landscape scale (mountain spirits), cooperative/community scale and family scale; (ii) existing mechanisms and

tools to protect Biocultural Systems, such as rights relating to systems of knowledge, customary laws and cooperative agreements; (iii) measures and mechanisms for the joint protection of traditional knowledge and biocultural systems in national and regional policy and legislation.

**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.**

As noted above the start of the project has been delayed to 1<sup>st</sup> September, but also the duration extended to a full three years, and budget amended accordingly. This has been approved and overall is beneficial in providing a slightly longer time frame to meet and evaluate outcomes.

Some unexpected issues were:

1. The fall in the value of the pound from 10.3 quetzals per pound as budgeted to 8.8 quetzals currently a drop of 15% in the effective budget to partners.
2. Three of the six staff originally proposed to work on the project by FEDECOVERA have since been allocated to another project won shortly before the Darwin project was awarded. FEDECOVERA is in the process of hiring new staff to replace them, but could not do so until the contract was signed. New staff should be confirmed in the course of October, and a change request will be submitted.
3. Some changes will need to be requested to the log-frame in part due to the fall in value of the pound.
  - i. The target area of reforestation is reduced from 240ha to 200 ha and area of agroforestry from 160 ha to 100 ha, the later generates a greater saving as it includes the costs of crop establishment. This should not affect overall the landscape impacts as the recently won project plans to plant trees on 5000 ha of land, although across a broader area it does include the project target areas. Additionally, FEDECOVERA has agreed to promote conservation of existing natural forest in the cooperatives and apply for Forest Protection incentives to support that for at least 100 ha. This is an important additional element to the conservation strategy missing in the original proposal.

ii.

We will submit a change request to the log-frame to reflect these changes, assuming this is allowed. Should the pound recover its value we would propose to dedicate recovered funds to activities based on indigenous knowledge and activities such as medicinal herbs that derive from it as an activity of considerable interest to the communities, and not being supported by any existing project or initiative. Also, it potentially provides employment for young people from small areas of land, thus reducing pressure for agricultural land for new generations which is the main driver of natural forest loss.

4. Due to delays in completion of due diligence for contracting of the Association of Private Nature Reserves of Guatemala ARNPG, we will be requesting a budget adjustment and delay of start of their activities to January 2023, approximately a 4-month delay. Given the approved extension there will be sufficient time to complete all planned activities.

**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: Change in staff and log-frame	Change in dates and budget Yes No
Formal Change Request submitted: Change in staff and log-frame	Change in dates and budget Yes No
Received confirmation of change acceptance Change in staff and log-frame	Change in dates and budget 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:

**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 response to feedback from the proposal we are attaching a revised Implementation Timetable to this document, and the Risk register to the accompanying e-mail.

**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](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**