

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 2023

Project reference	29-028	
Project title	Linking science to management: restoring community forests in Nepal	
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nepal	
Lead partner	ForestAction Nepal	
Partner(s)	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) UK, Kathmandu Forestry College (KAFCOL), Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal (FECOFUN)	
Project leader	<i>Naya Sharma Paudel, PhD</i>	
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR2</i>	
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.facebook.com/JalthaBiodiversity/ https://twitter.com/BiodiversityNep	

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).

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

We started this project in July 2022 and we are in the first half of year II (Y2) of the project. This report presents the project progress between March-September 2023. We are nearly in the half way of the project life. So far, our indicators are valid and we are working to achieve the planned outputs towards the outcome. Our monitoring and evaluation (M&E) assumptions are still valid. So far project progress is satisfactory.

Activities in different outputs are presented. The number in the parenthesis represents the activity number from the agreed implementation timetable followed by supporting reports. Supporting reports are available will be attached separately while submitting the report.

Output 1: Forest ecosystem restored and biodiversity conserved in Jalthal community forests

A plan for degraded forest patch restoration has been prepared with the collaboration of Community Forest User Group (CFUG) in Pathibhara Kalika Community Forest (CF). Twelve user members including executive members of CFUGs were trained in planning preparation for three days. (1.1, 1.2 Doc 01, 03). Several interactions and meetings have been organized with community forests and other stakeholders to plan, review and monitor the activity implementation of the restoration plan prepared earlier in the other two CFs (1.2, Doc 02, 04). Participatory assessment of the most degraded patch has been done and restoration plan has been implemented in three community forests (CFs) (1.2, Doc 01, 02, 03). Two awareness and training programs for CFUG leaders and forest patrol teams have been organized in Dasrathpur and Durgabhitta CFUG to rescue, protect and nurture the natural regeneration of trees (1.3, Doc 02, 04). A forest nursery has been established and managed in Pathibhara Kalika CFUG to grow the seedlings of rare species that have low regeneration and CF members have been trained to collect and transplant rare plant seedlings, over 1700 seedlings of 7 rare species that have impaired regeneration have been growing in the nursery and more than 250 seedlings, have already been transferred to suitable areas (1.3, 1.4 Doc 02). Two information boards showing the importance and conservation awareness of rare species *Dillenia indica* (Autangya) and *Ougenia oogenesis* (Sadan) have been placed in Bishal and Hariyali CF in collaboration with respective CFUGs (1.3, 1.4, 1.9 Doc 02). A school awareness program (Wildlife conservation awareness and bird watching) was organised at Pathariya, Himali and Pashupati secondary schools on September 1,2 and 3 in collaboration with respective eco club committees, more will be organised in the future (1.6, Doc 05,09). More than 1400 banana and bamboo culms have been planted in 4 CFs of Jalthal to improve habitat for elephants (1.7, Doc 02).

Output 2: Local governments and stakeholders take strong measures, both policy and operational, to control existing and newly reported invasive alien species

Over a half dozen meetings have been organized to discuss and plan for Mikania and other invasive species control and more than 55 ha of the area has been cleared that was invaded by the Mikania and other invasive species (2.1, Doc 01, 02). A user awareness program on Invasive species management was organized in Durgabhitta and Dasaratpur CFUG, informing and introducing the newly invaded *Mimosa diplotricha* as an invasive species of the region (2.3, 2.6 Doc 04). Invasive species including *Mimosa diplotricha* and Mikania were presented as the major environmental problems at the world environment day celebration in Bhadrapur municipality and other meetings and programs organized in collaboration with various stakeholders (2.3, 2.6, Doc 6).

Output 3: Income and employment of forest dependent poor increased and improved through better management of land and bio resources

A series of meetings and interactions have been organised with CFUGS to work on agroforestry and fodder plantation. Weeding and cleaning of seedlings and turmeric, assisted natural regeneration and plantation of seedlings has been done to ensure sapling protection and growth in agroforestry sites of various CFs (3.3, Doc 01,02). More than 6500 individual seedlings of fodder and tree were planted in three community forests employing a total of 105 individual workers,

more than 1000 fodder seedlings have been distributed to the users of three CFUGs (Durgabhitta, Pathibhara Kalika and Hariyali) and 36.5 Kg seeds of perennial grass was distributed among the 100 female beneficiaries of goat farming (Mother goat distributed in previous project and previous year) of 4 CFUGs (3.5, 3.6 Doc 01, 02). Twenty five Metric Tons of compost has been prepared by utilizing the biomass of invasive species in three CFUGs of Jalthal (3.4, 3.8 Doc 01,02).

Output 4: Long term restoration of forest mainstreamed through knowledge management, capacity building and enabling policies

A Newspaper article on the importance of natural regeneration and native tree plantation over exotics species plantation has been published in Ratopati online (4.4, Doc 09). Another article on the important regeneration status of iconic species of Jalthal *Artocarpus Chama* (Latahar) has been published in a leading English newspaper of Nepal. The article presents Latahar as an important native species of the remnant Forest (4.4, Doc 09). The population assessment of the globally threatened species *Cycas pectinata* has been completed and analysis of field data is in progress (4.1, Doc 02).

We will present standard indicators in our annual report, however, following are already secured in first half of the project year.

1. Number of people benefited in training: 10
2. Number of Management plan prepared: 1
3. Other publications: 2
4. Forest Area restored: 50 hectare
5. Rare and threatened species propagated: 2 species
6. Number of households reporting improved income: 30
7. Conference presentation: 1

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 project encountered two major problems during the implementation of the activities.

1. Danger of wild elephants inside the forest: During this year's activities, project staff have come into contact with wild elephants inside the forest more than five times. Users and staff are unable to access the forest in the allotted period due to fear and risk of wild elephants, which has affected the project's timeliness and efficiency.

2. Drought during monsoon season: Prolonged dry spells during the rainy season are uncommon which have hampered the growth of fodder seedlings and other native regeneration, particularly those that have been planted or assisted regeneration. Our experimentation with Sal (*Shorea robusta*) natural regeneration could not result in the desired outcomes due to longer drought after the ripening of Sal seeds. Sal seeds have short viability, around one week only.

3. Drought during Monsoon has also affected some of our transplanted seedlings of rare species. Seedling survival was lower than expected.

These problems will bring slight changes in our time table but will not affect our budget and activities and targets.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: No

Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance	No
Change request reference if known:	NA

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

Actual spend: £ [REDACTED]

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: £ NA

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?

For the time being, we do not have issues.

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. 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**