

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	29-031
Project title	Improved Conservation and Community Benefits in Kenya's Critical Mountain Forests
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Kenya – Aberdare and SW Mau
Lead partner	The Rhino Ark Kenya Charitable Trust
Partner(s)	Kenya Forest Service (KFS) and Aberdare Joint Surveillance Unit (AJSU)
Project leader	<i>Christian Lambrechts</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>October 31, 2022 HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media	https://rhinoark.org/ <i>@rhino.ark (instagram)@RhinoArk (twitter)@rhinoark (facebook)</i> <i>https://www.linkedin.com/company/rhino-ark-charitable-trust/</i>

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).

Rhino Ark received notification of the project and fund approval was received on BLANK DAY, so with the approval from the granting committee at the BIODIVERSITY Challenge Funds, the team commenced implementation of the Darwin Grant in July 2022. The details provided include the progress of the program from **July 2022 to September 2022**.

South Western Mau

Forest Restoration:

For Q2(Jul-Sep 2022), the primary activity with Darwin funding was the initial preparation of the 30 hectare forest rehabilitation site located at Korabariet. Full mobilization of the local community was carried out in collaboration with the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) and the local Community Forest Association leadership.

The site preparation works involved the following:

Mapping of the replanting site using GPS. Coordinates the site perimeter were collected and a site map developed using GIS tools. The data was shared with the KFS to form the basis for the work. Following this the site bush clearing works were carried out to remove invasive species and clear the site in preparation for planting. A micro-fence for the entire site perimeter, comprising 2,700 metres was erected to protect the site.

The activities carried out in Q2 were in line with the project plan and within the budget.

Activities within the Q2 period implemented with matching funds were the rehabilitation of a 40 hectare site at Tirigoi. The work were implemented between May and July 2022. The site is fully secured with 44,000 seedlings planted and under full time monitoring by community scouts.

Aberdare

Forest Restoration:

Rhino Ark was able to procure a meeting with partners Kenya Forest Service (KFS) Forest Station Manager (FSM) to achieve an agreement on the forest restoration plan. The degraded site at Sophia was mapped out ~20ha.

The total length of the fence measured ~1.9km and Bill of Quantities developed. Procurement of the materials initiated.

1.4 Select, procure and plant indigenous tree seedlings: with technical advice of FSM-Geta, we have populated a list of site-specific trees to be planted at the Sophia restoration site.

Community tree nurseries with suitable seedlings have been identified and the officials have been engaged and express of interest to procure their seedlings has been communicated.

Awaiting rains before we finalise the procurement of the seedlings.

Community Livelihoods

CFA re-build Programme: Chairman Geta Community Forest Association engaged.

Ecotourism enterprise – A meeting with Geta CFA is scheduled for Nov 2022 to identify persons to be trained as Guides, Porters and Cooks. The process to identify Certified Mountain Guide Consultants initiated and to date two have been identified in addition to a Kenya Wildlife Service Mountain Rescue Officer (Mt. Kenya)

Community Tree Nurseries

Two nursery attendants (a male and a female) have been hired and training of the nursery attendant is scheduled for November 2022.

3.2 10KM of Conservation Electric Fence: Initial Meeting with KFS FSM Geta held; Fence alignment conducted and underlying issues identified. Preparation of Bill of Quantities (BQs) 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.

South Western Mau

There have been challenges experienced with the Korabariet site planting were some delays in set up of implementation due to the national general election held in August 2022 and the subsequent supreme court case contesting the verdict. The political unrest delayed any actions and progress with the project. The area also experienced unusually heavy rainfall for an extended period, rendering access roads within the area impassable.

To mitigate the above, the team has taken steps to fast track some activities to mitigate for the election related delays. It is envisaged that the rehabilitation of the Korabariet site will be implemented within the budget and timeline.

Aberdare

Little to no rainfalls around Sophia area has made us to delay the planting of trees in Q2. Seasonal variations have had impact on the planned timetable but no impact on the budget envisaged.

Financial Challenges for the Overall Project

Since the start of the Ukraine/Russian war, the financial markets have seen unprecedented fluctuations with exchanges rates between the British Pound/Euro/Kenyan Shilling. Combined with the increased cost of living and the additional cost to procure supplies a significant strain has been added to the execution of the project. We understand that the award amount can not be increased so we are working through the options that we have available so we can determine the best course of action and address these issues. We will keep your team apprised to what - if any- changes need to be made to 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: Yes – via email inquiry on Oct 19, 2022

Formal Change Request submitted: No - a future submission may be considered

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: £

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?

No, not at this time.

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**