

Darwin Initiative Main: Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the "Project Reporting Information Note":
(<https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources/information-notes/>)

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 20 pages** in length, excluding annexes)

Submission Deadline: 30th April 2024

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Darwin Initiative Project Information

Project reference	30-005
Project title	Protection to Community Engagement: Managing Nepal's youngest transborder National Park
Country/ies	Nepal
Lead Partner	Zoological Society of London
Project partner(s)	Environment and Rural Development Centre (ENRUDEC), National Trust for Nature Conservation Nepal (NTNC), Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC, Government of Nepal) and Banke National Park
Darwin Initiative grant value	£ 547,180.00
Start/end dates of project	01 July 2023 - 30 June 2026
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2023 – Mar 2024) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	July 2023- March 2024
Project Leader name	Dr Bhagawan Raj Dahal
Project website/blog/social media	
Report author(s) and date	Maheshwor Basnet (ZSL), Dinesh Neupane (ZSL) Pradip Sedhain (ZSL), Ajit Tumbahangphe (NTNC), Ram Krishna Chinal (ENRUDEC)

1. Project summary

Banke National Park (BaNP) was established in 2010, providing formal protection to local flora and fauna for the first time. The park was created to aid tiger recovery, and tiger numbers have increased from 0 to 25 (*Annex 4.1.1*). Similarly, prey species density has increased from 10.27 animals/km² in 2013, to 32.6 in 2022 (*Annex 4.1.2*). There are clear similarities between Parsa NP and Banke NP. Parsa's tigers increased nearly six-fold from 2013 to 2022 and prey densities reached 75.1 animals/km² in 2022 from 25.32 in 2013 (*Annex 4.1.3*). However, a 2019 ecological carrying capacity study in Chitwan and Parsa national parks shows that estimated tiger densities are still much lower than potential densities (*Annex 4.1.4*), showing the park can hold more tigers if prey density is increased. The tiger carrying capacity depends primarily on prey availability, and regular habitat management is required to increase prey numbers. This project is supporting BaNP in grassland, wetland and fire management activities to increase the quality of habitat, ensure viable populations of wildlife and to keep the ecosystem intact.

The growth in human population in the buffer zones around Banke NP has increased pressures on park and buffer zone resources. There are daily records of fuelwood and fodder collection in the park as well. Banke's wildlife recovery has also put pressure on human lives: human-wildlife conflict (HWC) increases each year in the nine buffer zone communities - including crop raiding, livestock depredation, and human and wildlife injuries and deaths. As per the record in BaNP database, a total of 305 HWC incidents were recorded in fiscal year 2017/18, 420 in 2018/19, 626 in 2019/20, 771 in 2020/21, and 817 in 2021/22) (Annex 4.1.5). Likewise, more than 300 HWC incidents have been reported from two project site Buffer Zone User Committees (BZUC) last year. Without remediation, HWC will continue to rise as human and wildlife populations grow. This project will work to reduce dependency on forest products, reduce the incidence of, and build community resilience to HWC, assisting park authorities to reduce illegal activities in two most affected BZUCs.

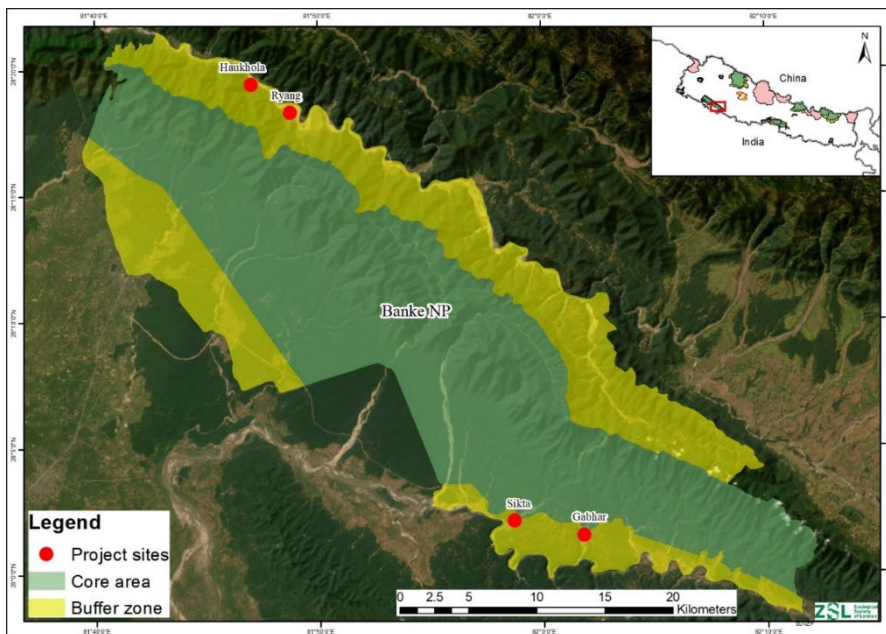


Figure 1: Map showing project sites in Banke National Park and Buffer Zone area.

2. Project stakeholders/ partners

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) is the main government partner for ZSL's Nepal office. DNPWC and ZSL Nepal have a project coordination committee (PCC) to facilitate the design, supervision, and implementation of all projects (Annex 4.2.1). The PCC is chaired by the Deputy Director General, with section heads from DNPWC and representation from senior ZSL Nepal staff. Through past joint projects, ZSL Nepal has fostered a strong partnership with DNPWC. With DNPWC as a guiding partner, ZSL Nepal has partnered with Banke National Park (BaNP), Environment and Rural Development Centre (ENRUDEC), National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) for this project. Partners were selected based on the organisations' government-authorized roles in different aspects of conservation, DNPWC for overall protected area (PA) management and BaNP for management of BaNP and its buffer zone area), and on field presence and experience ENRUDEC and NTNC. To facilitate project implementation and monitoring of the project activities inside the buffer zone of the protected area, a project management unit (PMU) has been formed, including representatives from ENRUDEC, NTNC and ZSL and chaired by the Senior Conservation Officer of BaNP (Annex 4.2.3).

The project concept was shared among all partners and the project was designed with their input (information, data, and feedback). Once project funding was secured, the project inception was carried out at a central level at PCC and site-level involving the relevant stakeholder of the project site (Annex 4.2.2) on 13 September 2023 and in park-level at PMU on 3 December 2023 (Annex 4.2.3) and approval was received to formally start the project implementation. This effort has been crucial to acquaint stakeholders on the project goal and associated activities. During the implementation, frequent meetings were carried out with the implementing partners (14 February, 17 February, 14 March 2024) (Annex 4.2.4) so to enhance the better coordination, and the better understanding of the activities and project goal. Additionally, the project concept (mainly logical framework, targets, deliverables, and evidence documentation requirements) was shared with implementing partners (Annex 4.2.4). Among the project's downstream implementing partners, ENRUDEC's focus lies primarily on community engagement within their implementation area, while NTNC's efforts are tailored to leverage their expertise in wildlife management activities both within and outside protected areas.

Likewise, the support from the local level government was mainstreamed into the project implementation with ward office agreeing to bear the cost of electricity bill associated with the electric light installed in the

Rapti BZUC (*Annex 4.35.4*). This has instilled a sense of ownership and collaboration for the common objective of the project. Further, the project extended its collaboration with the British Embassy Kathmandu's (BEK) Project coherence Unit (PCU). The project disseminated project information, funded by the Foreign Commonwealth Development Organization (FCDO), regarding an initiative launched by British Embassy Kathmandu-Project Coherence Unit (BEK-PCU) known as the activity mapping tool (5W). This tool aims to enhance BEK's capacity to synchronize the efforts of implementing partners at the delivery level. Consequently, it ensures interventions to operate with maximum effectiveness within the new federal model and fosters greater coherence in BEK's operations (*Annex 4.2.5*).

3. Project progress

Progress in carrying out project activities

Output 1 Livelihoods of 155 households in the project sites are improved (directly) through providing access to income strengthening opportunities, underpinned by support for mainstreaming nature-based tourism and strengthening of operation plans for buffer zone forests.

Output 1 revolves around the support to strengthen the income streams of the households, through developing knowledge related to livelihoods, supporting households to scale up their income streams imparting knowledge on generating business ideas, as well as tourism promotion through, hospitality training and workshops to discuss issues and challenges pertaining to the tourism prospects in BaNP. This year, two community banks were established in the project community. As planned, one community bank was supported with a seed fund. Additionally, the members of the community bank were trained on business plan development.

1.1 Set up two community banks within the project sites

With this objective, on 8 January 2024, community bank named as Fulbari Jibikoparjan Upasamiti (In English: Fulbari Livelihoods Subcommittee) at Hattidamar BZUC, Ryang was established (*Annex 4.3.1*) with 40 members of which all of them are women and 92% belong to indigenous and disadvantage and on 5 February 2024, Milijuli Baikalpik Aayearjan Samuha (In English-Milijuli Alternative Income generating group) in Rapti BZUC, Gabar-Sikta was established (*Annex 4.3.1*) with 32 member, out of which 81% are women, and 53% belong to disadvantage and marginalized group. The interest rate for both the community bank is fixed at 6%.

1.1.1 Provide community banks operation trainings to all the CB members.

After the establishment of community bank in each project site, on 16 February 2024 and 20 February 2024, the members of the CB received training on the operation of community bank (*Annex 4.4.1, 4.4.2*) including concept of community banking and its process and procedure that ensure the effective and efficient day to day functioning (*Annex 4.4.3*) in Ryang and Gabhar community respectively. A total of 76 members participated in the event in which 83% of the participants were female and 75% belonged to the indigenous and disadvantage group (*Annex 4.4.5*). These trainings helped to increase the average knowledge score of participants in Ryang community by 20% (the average pre-test knowledge score was 60% and post-test score was 80%) and in Gabhar community by 30% (the average pre-test knowledge score was 50% and post-test score was 80%) (*Annex 4.4.4*). We understand that the post test score is low as it is the new arena for the community member to work in and the project team vigilant and will strengthen these groups with frequent follow up and on-site coaching in the days ahead.

1.1.2 Provide account and bookkeeping training to all the CB members.

A one-day training on bookkeeping, accounting, financial resource management and its mobilisation was organized in each project site (*Annex 4.5.1, 4.5.2*) on 17 and 21 February 2024 in Ryang and Gabar community respectively. Altogether 76 participants attended the training in which 76% were women and 73% belong to the indigenous and disadvantaged group. These trainings helped to increase the average knowledge score of participants in Ryang community by 20% (the average pre-test knowledge score was 60% and post-test score was 80%) and in Gabhar community by 20% (the average pre-test knowledge score was 50% and post-test score was 70%) (*Annex 4.5.4*).

1.1.3 Conduct periodic meetings (quarterly meetings) with CB members for discussion on project updates, loan disbursement, usage of the loans, monitoring of the loan usage by the members, feedback and any other issues deemed necessary.

With the formation of two community banks at project sites, a total of four meetings were conducted by the community bank executive team. As per the collective decision made by the group to conduct monthly meetings on every 10th day of Nepali month, a total of three meetings (24 January 2024, 22 February 2024 and 23 March 2024) have been conducted by Fulbari Jibikoparjan Upasamiti. A total of 101 participants were involved in 3 meetings and all of them were female, where 85 % belong to disadvantaged and marginalized groups. Similarly, Milijuli Baikalpik Aayearjan Samuha conducted one periodic meeting (16 March 2024) and group members decided to conduct monthly meetings on every 3rd day of Nepali month (*Annex 4.6*). A total of 32 members (M:7, F:25; 53 % belong to the indigenous and disadvantaged group) participated in first meeting. Monthly meetings were envisioned to assess functioning of the group, collect monthly savings, returns, sharing progress and disperse of loan. Such periodic meetings promote

collective decision-making and ensure the transparency and accountability among the group members. Besides these, such meetings also provided the platform for monitoring and utilization of loans by members, gathering feedback and addressing appropriate issues that arise throughout the month.

1.1.4 Provide seed funds of GBP 4134 to each of the CBs to facilitate livelihood improvement activities by the community members.

In Y1 of the project, Milijuli Baikalpak Aayearjan Samuha at Rapti BZUC received the seed fund totalling £5696.50 (NPR. 911,440) on 26 March 2024 (*Annex 4.7.1, 4.7.2*). The other community bank will receive the seed fund in the following year. In addition to the seed fund from the project, the community bank themselves have also initiated raising funds locally with their monthly savings. By the end of March 2024, Fulbari livelihood subcommittee have raised a total of NPR 12,000 (£75) whereas Milijuli Baikalpak Aayearjan Samuha have raised NPR 3,200 (£20) (*Annex 4.7.3*). This sort of locally raised funds will eventually grow bigger with savings and interest collected from the loan recipient.

1.2 Conduct skill development trainings for community members from the project sites, to support alternative livelihood improvement projects and reduce the natural resource dependence of the community members.

Two activities were conducted in Y1 including the workshop for the formulation of business plan and market linkage strategy and implementation plan.

1.2.1 Conduct a 7-day Business Plan formulation workshop (1 in each side) for development of business plan (2 business plans, one in each site) for identified livelihood interventions in each site.

A business plan outlines any enterprise goals, strategies for achieving them and a roadmap through market analysis, financial projections along with organizational structure to secure the investment. A 7-day long training program was conducted from 16 March to 22 March 2024 (*Annex 4.8.1, 4.8.2*) in Rapti Sonari Rural Municipality-1 where 33 members (M:8, F:25; 61% indigenous and disadvantaged group) participated. The training was successful in equipping the participants with knowledge and skills (*Annex 4.8.3*) in developing business plans, identifying business risks and barriers and record-keeping... After the training, the average knowledge score of the participants increased by 32% (average pre-test score was 43% and post-test score was 75%) (*Annex 4.8.4*).

1.2.7 Facilitate 2 meetings (1 in each site, with 20 participants in each meeting) between relevant stakeholders including government authorities, BZUC and beneficiaries for Market Linkage Strategy and Implementation Plan.

With the primary objective to establish effective market linkages between skilled beneficiaries and high-demand places for their products or services, two 3-day workshops were conducted in both the project sites: 20-22 March 2024 in Ryang and 23-25 March 2024 in Gabhar respectively (*Annex 4.9.1, 4.9.2*). These two-workshops engaged 72 participants from the community, out of which 67 participants belonged to the community people (of which 85% are women and 66% are indigenous and disadvantaged group). The workshop reviewed the existing market in the target area, mapped the potential market for each of the identified livelihood alternatives, assessed the technical skills and knowledge among the beneficiaries, and conducted a needs assessment. The major outcome of the workshops was the signing of MoU between Raithane¹, and both the livelihood groups for collaboration and promotion of traditional agriculture products, skills and knowledge in both the project site (*Annex 4.9.3*). This initiative opens up an avenue for the community members to access the market opportunity beyond the current capacity of the members.

1.5 Provide ecotourism support and facilitate tourism stakeholders to promote Banke NP as a tourist destination.

With the aim to promote Banke NP as a tourist destination such that local community can benefit from ecotourism, people in the project site were engaged in hospitality training and tourism stakeholder meetings in Y1 of the project period.

1.5.1 Provide a 3-day long hospitality training, to relevant tourism stakeholders from the two sites, with 15 participants.

Three days hospitality training was organised from 10-12 January 2024, at Khadkawar Homestay, Banke comprising 20 participants (50% female; 50% indigenous and disadvantage groups) mostly who run the homestays in project communities (*Annex 4.10.1, 4.10.2*). The primary objective of the training was to develop the skills and knowledge required to excel in various aspects of the hospitality industry, including customer service, food preparation, housekeeping, and management (*Annex 4.10.3*). In addition, this

¹ Raithane Agri-products: It is an initiative of private sector towards conservation and promotion of agro biodiversity, indigenous knowledge and skill and food security in Nepal. Raithane has collaborated with 80 groups and cooperatives and is directly working with farmers to ensure farmers get the right value and price of their produce and labor. The farmers' produce is organic and has high nutrition value crops. Raithane has collected more than 150 variety of crop in 46 districts where 9,000 farmers are directly involved.

training helped to increase the average knowledge score of the participants by 37% (the pretest average score was 8 and post test score average was 11) (*Annex 4.10.4*).

1.5.3 Facilitate tourism stakeholder meetings with the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders and authorities including tourism board, HAAN, TAAN, home stays, entrepreneurs, and nature guides.

On 29 and 30 March 2024, the project organized one day interaction workshop (*Annex 4.11.1, 4.11.2, 4.11.3*) at Obhary and Nepalgunj, Banke respectively to bring all the relevant stakeholders such as representatives from tourism industry, including representatives from government bodies, local businesses, hospitality sector, journalists, travel agencies, nature guides, community managed homestay and community leaders, to discuss on the issues and challenges pertinent to the tourism promotion in BaNP. A total of 163 (M:133, F:30) participants attended the event including 27% participants from indigenous and disadvantage groups. The interaction program highlighted the need for adequate infrastructure and tourism activities in the buffer zone community forest as the tourism product to attract people.

1.6 Strengthen operation plans of Buffer Zone Community Forest and Buffer Zone User Committees to encourage good governance and commitment to conservation.

The operation plan of the BZUC or BZCFOP is the vital document that allows the users/community member to use their forest resource in a sustainable manner while working for conservation and management of the forest as well. Buffer Zone Community Forest User Group (BZCFUG) can manage and use their BZCF's resources only after the formation/ revision (if expired, generally valid for five years) and endorsement of BZCFOP by respective protected areas. This year the project supported the revision of the four BZUC's operation plans.

1.6.1 Collaborate with BZCFs (2 BZCFs) to strengthen its OP, through assessment, review and identification of gaps and recommendations, to be endorsed by NP.

This year, the database indicated that there were no backlogged operation plans for the BZCF. Consequently, efforts were focused on revising the operation plan of BZUC. Moving forward, the project will assist in revising the operation plan of BZCF in the upcoming year, addressing thematic gaps such as tiger conservation and human-wildlife conflict mitigation.

1.6.2 Collaborate with BZUCs (Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC and Rapti BZUC), to strengthen its OP, through assessment, review and identification of gaps and recommendations, to be endorsed by NP.

To enhance the effectiveness of BZUC (Buffer Zone User Committees), comprehensive operation plans have been thoroughly drafted for Hattidamar, Rapti, Madhyabindu, and Dhakeri BZUCs, led by the officials of Banke National Park. These plans have undergone thorough drafting and are now ready for final approval by the senior conservation officer of the park (*Annex 4.13.1, 4.13.2*). These operation plans have been strategically designed to address and rectify previous shortcomings and challenges within the buffer zone. By adding lessons learned from past experiences, the plans aim to encourage the capacity and resilience of BZUCs in fulfilling their conservation and community engagement mandates. In detailing these plans, specific measures have been outlined to optimize the management of resources, enhance biodiversity protection, and encourage sustainable livelihoods for local communities. Furthermore, strong strategies for stakeholder collaboration, monitoring, and evaluation have been integrated to ensure the ongoing adaptability and effectiveness of BZUC operations.

Output 2 Improved management of grasslands and wetlands, and control of forest fires in priority areas within the core of the park, underpinned by strengthened understanding of the habitat requirements of key species (sambar deer, spotted deer) results in an increase in tiger prey species density.

Activities under this output relate to tiger and prey hotspot monitoring along with associated habitat management. The focus of this output for Y1 particularly involves hotspot monitoring in priority areas, research on key hotspots for habitat requirement for key species, and associated forest fire risks.

2.1 Conduct tiger and prey hotspot monitoring in priority areas within Banke NP.

Under this activity in year one, the project aimed to equip BaNP in monitoring of tiger and prey hotspot in the strategic areas (as required) by providing equipment and capacity to frontline staff and producing knowledge product on habitat requirement and forest fire risk mapping.

2.1.1 Provide 20 Camera traps (Cameras) for the monitoring of tiger and prey hotspot.

To support BaNP in monitoring tiger and prey hotspot, the project purchased 20 camera traps i.e., Cuddeback model (*Annex 4.14.1*). These cameras are designed to detect movement through the PIR sensor and activate the camera to capture images or videos.

2.1.2 Support Banke National Park to deploy cameras in the strategic priority areas within the Banke NP.

25 camera traps were deployed along the highway passing through the BaNP. After training frontline staff (Act 2.16), technical ideas to reach 169 stations (169 grids) of Banke National Park has been delivered to

the field technician. A total of 36 individuals from Park (16), Nepal Army (8), Nature Guide (4), Cook (4) and NTNC Technician (4) are involved in the field work for camera trapping from 14 February 2024. Teams were divided into four groups including 7 members in each group where 8 members from the national park were in the board for the second camp replacement. Camera trapping, line transect, and patch occupancy is being conducted as per the plan shown in map (*Annex 4.18.2*).

2.1.3 Provide relevant equipment including batteries and GPS for facilitating camera traps and monitoring.

Three Garmin Etrex GPS units, two range finders (*Annex 4.16.1*), and Camera Batteries were required in the camera trapping survey in Banke National Park for the tiger and prey base monitoring survey. Therefore, the required equipment used supported the Banke National Park during the survey.

2.1.5 Conduct research on key hotspots, habitat requirement of key species, and key areas having forest fire risks.

Research focusing on habitat mapping through supervised classification with field validation, and identification of fire prone areas within BaNP and its buffer zone forests was conducted (*Annex 4.17.1*). A study identified that there is a high risk of grasslands either being converted to a forest or becoming unproductive land for native wildlife because of the invasive species. Additionally, man-made fires that have engulfed the dry biomass and made the land suitable for invasion by alien species or colonization of exotic species leading to the degraded habitat quality. It is recommended that open forest particularly grasslands at Giddenichaur, Gotheri/ Sikta Gotheri, Panimuhan, Thuria, Khairi khola and Sukhar khola are the areas that need immediate attention for the management to minimize the impacts of both fire and invasive species on native biodiversity.

2.1.6 Provide training to frontline staff (20) in regard to the research to be conducted.

A two-day orientation training on 12-13 February 2024, was organized (*Annex 4.18.1*) in the office premise of Banke National Park. Orientation training was led by NTNC-BCP in the presence of Senior Ecologist, DNPWC. Techniques of camera trapping, the setting of camera mode, Occupancy Survey, Line Transect, Elephant Survey, and GPS handling techniques were instructed in the orientation program. A total of 28 participants representing all group members of field monitoring technicians participated in the training program.

2.2 Conduct site specific wetland and grassland mapping and profiling.

This activity in Y1 has aimed to produce a knowledge document on wetland and grassland mapping and the findings were disseminated with stakeholders via a workshop.

2.2.1 Conduct site survey and research for wetland and grassland mapping.

The habitat mapping and profiling of BaNP was accomplished through satellite imagery analysis, digital elevation model utilization, and supervised image classification on Geographic Information System (GIS) platforms (*Annex 4.19.1*). This was further verified by field visits aimed at ground verification to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the habitat classification derived from remote sensing data. The Mixed Sal Forest emerged as the predominant habitat type, spanning an impressive area of almost 500 square kilometres, followed by grasslands which constitute a significant expanse of over 160 square kilometres, spread across both the core and buffer zones of the national park.

Rapti and Babai rivers with their several tributaries are the main river systems of the national park and its buffer zone. There are more than 50 waterholes and ponds mostly on the southern regions of the national park. Main streams that discharge into Rapti river include Kathauti, Jethi, Syalmare, Jhijhari, Bagsal, Ranighat, Muguwa, Puruwa, Khairi, Sukhar, Sauri, Lumba/Rolpali, Bairiya, Ojh khola and Tilkanya whereas Malai khola leads to Babai River. Most of the streams and creeks dry up inside the park during dry season but discharge is very high during monsoon. Research recommended the regular maintenance of waterholes particularly in Khairi Phanta area and strengthening the relationship with buffer zone community in enhancing habitat quality.

2.2.2 Conduct workshop with authorities and communities for dissemination of initial survey findings as well as validation, with 10 participants each year linked with activity 2.1.

Due to the delay in analysing the data of the camera trap deployment (Act 2.1.2) in relation to other year one activities, this activity was not carried out. The analysis of data collected from the camera trap is underway (*now the activity has been completed while this annual report is prepared*). Therefore, the project plans to share its findings after interpreting the data by the first quarter of the second year. This process will continue regularly throughout the project duration to keep the community and stakeholders informed about the status of tiger and prey species.

2.3 Support the management of two waterholes within the core of Banke NP.

This activity has begun to manage the two important wetlands that are identified through mapping and stakeholder consultative workshop.

2.3.1 Conduct workshop/trainings with relevant stakeholders (15 participants) for identification followed by management strategies of two waterholes within the core of the Banke NP.

A total of 22 (20 Park front line staff and 2 Research Student working in habitat research) participated in the training workshop (*Annex 4.21.1*). The workshop, held on 19th March 2024 aimed to identify the possible waterhole and Grassland areas, and address challenges related to waterholes, particularly focusing on water drainage issues, and problems associated with dry streams and waterholes.

Major discussion points in the workshop covered dry area assessment, waterhole challenges, dry stream, and waterhole issues, and has recommended developing the waterhole rehabilitation management strategies for the effectiveness of habitat management intervention for wildlife conservation. The workshop identified waterholes in Khairi phanta area along with Thina Kholi area, Agaiya area (way to Pani Muhan track for the waterhole), waterhole in Gandeli phanta, and waterhole in Jalseni Area as the prime waterholes that need management.

2.3.2 Conduct management of two identified wetland - identified through mapping in 2.2.

As per consultative workshop, Khairi phanta area was selected for the management of the waterhole area. Two wetlands (one in the northern side of Khairi phanta and another in the southern side of Khairi Phanta with the dimension of 14m x 8m (28°05'44.69"N,81°54'59.8"E and 28°06'02.48"N, 81°55'29.08"E) and these waterholes are in progress (*Annex 4.22.1*) where underground filling with soil has been done to concentrate water. The completion work of the water hole will be accomplished by the first quarter of the next year.

2.4 Support the management of 15 ha grassland within the core of Banke NP.

This activity aims to provide support for the year-round management of 15 ha grassland in the core area of BaNP for year 1 identified from the study conducted in Act 2.2.

2.4.1 Provide yearlong support for management of 15 ha grassland in the core area of Banke NP, identified through mapping exercise conducted in 2.2.

As per the grassland identified in activity 2.3.1 and mapping exercise in activity 2.2, 5ha grassland in the Karauti Phanta area was managed through grass and bush cutting, controlled burning, and uprooting activities (*Annex 4.23.1*).

2.5 Provide equipment for grassland, wetland and fire line maintenance to Banke NP.

In the first year, the focus of this activity is to provide support for the maintenance and regular operation of a tractor, along with supplying necessary tools and gears to the park authority. These resources will be used specifically for habitat maintenance and the creation of fire lines within Banke National Park. This support aims to enhance the park's capacity for managing its habitat effectively, reducing the risk of wildfires, and ensuring the safety of wildlife and forest.

2.5.1 Provide tractor to Banke NP for continuous habitat management support.

The acquisition of the Mahindra Arjun Novo 605 DI MS, equipped with a 50 HP engine and an accompanying trolley, was finalized on 22 March 2024 and will be handed over to BaNP on 21 April 2024 after adding the branding information of DEFRA as an acknowledgement of their contributions. It is expected that the tractor will contribute to habitat management activities including managing grasslands, maintaining fire lines, construction of waterholes and restoration of wetlands (*Annex 4.24.1*). All legal formalities, including the transfer of ownership rights to the park, have been completed.

2.5.2 Support regular tractor operation through fieldwork operating cost.

Since the tractor has not yet been handed over to the BaNP, this activity has not been carried out yet. Once the tractor is handed over, the project will be supporting the tractor operation throughout the project period for habitat management activities.

2.5.3 Support tools and field gears for grassland, wetland and fire line maintenance.

To better equip front-line park staff for the regular maintenance of grassland, wetland, and fire lines, 15 sets of tools and field gears including helmet, gloves, jump suit, swatter, along with 3 pieces of fire extinguisher and one 12 step telescope ladder were supported to the Banke National Park authority (*Annex 4.25.1*).

2.6 Provide support to improve understanding of the dynamics of forest fire and manage it within the park.

This activity in Y1 aimed to conduct research to map fire risk and dissemination of its findings, maintenance of fire lines in strategic fire prone areas, and capacitate frontline staff in firefighting.

2.6.1 Conduct Fire Risk Mapping in Banke NP (field-based surveys and desk-based literature review)

Topographic, anthropogenic and environmental variables are associated for the fire risk. Thus, this activity was conducted to identify spatial distribution of forest fire along with fire risk associated with topographic, physiographic, and local variable within Banke National Park (*Annex 4.26.1*). As a result, three major forest fire hotspots were identified (*Annex 4.26.2*), which could help to prepare forest fire management plan for prevention and control in the region.

2.6.2 Conduct workshop regarding the finding of the Fire Risk Mapping and efficient fire risk reduction in Banke NP (15 participants each year).

The findings of fire risk mapping were disseminated to park authorities and appropriate strategies to be adopted to reduce fire risk were discussed in the workshop held on 12 March 2024. Forest fire control and the reduction of its occurrence has been a growing concern in the park and its buffer zone. The workshop brought the stakeholders together including park officials, conservationists, researchers, and community representatives to share knowledge, experiences, and strategies for mitigating forest fire risks. A total of 23 participants (M:21, F:2) (*Annex 4.27.1, 4.27.3*) participated in the workshop.

2.6.3 Support Fireline management of 7km Fireline in Banke NP, identified through the fire risk mapping and stakeholder consultation.

As identified by stakeholders' consultation workshop and initial field survey, a main fire line along with the highway was selected for the fire line maintenance. The primary objective of this intervention was to strengthen the patrolling capacity of National Park as well as protect forest area from possible forest fires. A 3.5km fire line at the sub section of the main fire line connecting to the highway near Khairi Phanta was maintained properly (*Annex 4.28.1*). Bush cutting, drainage construction and soil filling in the fire line were accomplished under this activity.

2.6.4 Conduct firefighting training with frontline staff in Banke NP (15 participants).

To enhance the capacity of the frontline park staff of Banke National Park a 7-day long firefighting and grassland management training was organized from 12-17 March 2024 (*Annex 4.29.1, 4.29.2*). Both theoretical session and field practical sessions related to firefighting and grassland management were carried out where front line park staff including rangers and game scout (17) participated (*Annex 4.29.3*). This training helped to enhance the knowledge of the frontline staff on firefighting techniques.

Output 3: Reduced impact of human-wildlife conflict (HWC) in the project sites (total 1112 HHs/5170 people) through investments in livestock and crop safeguarding, underpinned by improved measures for the safety of people.

Activities under output 3 relate to human wildlife conflict (HWC) management. The focus of during this year was to implement HWC mitigation measures such as construction of PPC, mesh wire fencing, installation of community solar lights, establishing quick relief fund while also supporting the income generation streams by distribution of non-palatable crops.

3.1 Support Predator Proof Corrals to buffer zone communities

Livestock rearing stands as a significant asset for the community, and when they experience livestock loss, it directly has impact on their household income. Therefore, to address this challenge and protect household finances, predator proof corals (PPCs) were provided support this year to assist vulnerable households.

3.1.1 Support 120 Predator Proof Corrals to buffer zone communities

With an objective to minimize human wildlife conflict and reduce livestock depredations, a total of 30 PPCs (*16 in Hatitidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC and 14 in Rapti BZUC*) were supported this year (*Annex 4.29.2, 4.29.3, 4.30.1, 4.30.2*). These PCCs hold 240 small livestock (goats) as well as secure total household asset equivalent to NPR 24,64,000/£15,400. Of the total beneficiary household supported, 85% belonged to the indigenous and disadvantaged group. The dimension of PPC maintained for the project is 4mx2.5m and 1.5m of mesh wire inserted and height of 1m from the ground level as per the standard (*Annex 4.29.1, 4.30.1*). The total cost for one PPC is approximately NPR 66,100/£413 in which project supported (*Annex 4.30.3*) 41% of the total cost in terms of equipment and technical support while the household made 59% of the contribution in kinds and raw materials available at their house.

3.2 Support 2 km mesh wire fencing

Under this activity in Y1, a 650m long mesh wire was constructed at Battule of Kalimati Rural Municipality under Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC of Banke National Park. The fence was constructed with 10-gauge heavy coated wire with the hole of 4x4 inches. A total of 271 iron poles were installed to safeguard approximately 9ha of land benefiting 23 households. With landscaping creating physical barriers (*Annex4.31.1*), the project believes to have reduced different forms of human wildlife conflict in the project site over the project period.

3.3 Support 4000 non-palatable crops to community to deter HWC incidents.

As the project site adjoins wildlife habitat, HWC is regularly reported in the form of crop raiding. Therefore, the project aimed to promote non-palatable crops as a tool to deter wildlife from crop field. In Year 1, a total of 25 vulnerable households from Gangatekhola, Deurali and Hariyali buffer zone community forest of the Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC have been selected for cultivating non-palatable crops (ginger and turmeric) so as to contribute their households' income. The project has supported 670kg of ginger and 2000kg of turmeric to cultivate approximately 1.83ha of land (*Annex 4.32.1, 4.32.2*).

3.4 Support stall feeding through grass distribution of 3000 grass and training.

Supporting stall feeding through grass distribution presents a pragmatic approach for sustainable livestock management and reduces forest dependency, thereby alleviating pressures on fragile ecosystems and wildlife habitats. Hence, a total of 10,700 seedlings (5750 seedlings in each project community) were distributed. The major species of grass and fodder species distributed were Nimaro, Kimu, Bhatmase, Dumri, Badhar, Bhimala, Bakaino, Arjun, Raj Khannu, Epillpi, Napiars, Koiralo, Tanki (*Annex 4.33.1*).

3.5 Provide training on stall feeding to beneficiaries who received the grass (40 beneficiaries, 20 in each site).

Two training events were conducted at Ryang of Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC on 7 March 2024 and Gavar of Rapti BZUC on 10 March 2024 (*Annex 4.34.1, 4.32.2, 4.34.3*). The participants from the community bank formed by the project. A total of 47 members of community banks (75% are female and 68% are indigenous and disadvantaged group) participated the trainings. The trainings were successful in orienting the participants on livestock farming, the need for different types of nutritious grass, a balanced diet for livestock, and grass cultivation techniques.

3.6 Support 10 solar outdoor lamps, alongside construction and provision of solar panels, poles and bulbs for the outdoor lamps

To prevent potential encounters with wildlife during the night, the project initially planned five solar lights (3 in Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC and 2 in Rapti BZUC) in year one. Three solar lights (*Annex 4.35.1, 4.35.3*) were installed directly benefitting 35 households (165 community people) of Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC. However, in Rapti BZUC, instead of the two solar lights, 25 electric lights were installed as preferred by the Rapti Sonari Rural Municipality-1, ward office (*Annex 4.35.2*) offering tangible benefit to around 100 household (4470 community people). A notable advantage of the willingness of Rapti Sonari Rural Municipality-1 to cover electricity expenses of the installed electric lights through their own resource (which is expressed in a tripartite agreement between ENRUDEC (project partner), Rapti BZUC and Rapti Sonari Rural Municipality-1, (*Annex 4.35.4*) provides the ownership and sustainability of the project.

3.7 Establish two Quick Relief Fund, one in each side for access by local communities in case of losses associated with HWC, to facilitate in bridging the gap between the longer processing time required to claim relief fund for HWC.

A Quick Relief Fund (QRF) serves as a crucial mechanism to address the immediate aftermath of human-wildlife conflicts. By providing financial assistance on time to affected communities, a QRF can help to reduce the negative attitude towards animals. In Y1 of the project, one in each project community, a total of two QRF (one in each project community) has been set up (*Annex 4.36.1*) with the endorsement from the Banke National Park. Following the endorsed guidelines, the project provided the initial fund of NPR 581,000/£3631 to each of the BZUC (*Annex 4.36.2, 4.36.3*). The quick relief fund promptly offers compensation to victims, with replenishments occurring once the victim has received compensation from the Nepal government.

Output 4 Relationships between the park management and local people is improved through meaningful outreach programmes, underpinned by increased participation of two focal communities in conservation dialogues, and evidenced by community participation in intelligence gathering and community-based anti-poaching patrols.

A meaningful outreach programme is a key to strengthened relationships between park management and local communities, as it complements the need of both the actors in conservation. Therefore, this year, activities focused on raising awareness about HWC and promoting behaviour change in both the community and schools, along with installing hoarding boards and mobilizing Community-Based Anti-Poaching Units (CBAPU).

4.1 Produce and broadcast a short documentary on the biodiversity, cultural uniqueness and problems of Banke National Park and adjoining buffer zones.

A short documentary was produced and broadcasted, shedding light on the biodiversity, cultural richness, and challenges confronting Banke National Park and its surrounding buffer zones.

4.1.1 Produce one short documentary film on the biodiversity, cultural uniqueness, and conservation challenges of Banke NP and adjoining buffer zones.

This year, the project supported the production of a compelling documentary film showcasing the rich biodiversity, and cultural uniqueness to foster the tourism activities in Banke National Park (NP) and its adjoining buffer zones (*Annex 4.37.1*). The film serves as a powerful tool for tourism promotion and conservation, offering viewers a glimpse into the diverse ecosystems, rare species, and vibrant culture and tradition and indigenous communities residing in the buffer zones of BaNP, underscoring their integral role in the ecosystem. In year 2 of the project implementation, this documentary will be broadcasted on the relevant platforms, including in local TV, YouTube, DNPWC and Banke NP website.

4.2 Produce and install 6 information boards, develop and distribute 20 mounted posters to enable awareness campaign to reach additional buffer zone communities in Banke NP.

The information boards installed within the community serve as enduring reminders of the messages displayed, persisting in the community's consciousness for an extended period. Consequently, a total of

six mounted posters and two boards were strategically positioned within the community to raise awareness of the significance of wildlife.

4.2.1 Install 6 information boards in buffer zones.

In year one, the project aimed to install two information boards (12ftx8ft), one in strategic locations of each project community, containing messages about tiger and prey species ensuring maximum visibility and impact (*Annex 4.38.1*). The message conveyed by the information board can inspire community members to take proactive measures in safeguarding themselves and their properties from wildlife.

4.2.2 Install 20 mounted posters.

In the first year of the project, we handed over six mounted posters focusing on conservation of tigers and other wildlife, in an event of tourism stakeholder meeting to the representative of the organization such as BZUC, homestay, nature guides, and hotels (*Annex 4.39.1*). This initiative aligns with our mission to raise awareness and advocate for the protection of endangered species. The poster serves as a visual reminder of the critical need to safeguard tiger populations, other wildlife and their habitats.

4.3 Conduct 12 school programmes, aimed at facilitating behavioural change for kids (3 each in Hattidamar Ghuiyabari BZUC, Rapti BZUC, Rajkot BZUC and other BZUCs).

Through interactive workshops, captivating presentations, and hands-on activities, with the primary aim to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to enact positive transformations within their communities, a total of 15 school awareness events (*Annex 4.40.1, 4.40.2, 4.40.3*) were carried from 10 March 2024 to 20 March 2024 at various schools at Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC (3), Rapti BZUC (3), Madhyabindu BZUC (3), Kohalpur BZUC (3) and Deurali-Hariyali BZUC (3). Altogether, 813 students were sensitized out of which 50.5% of the participants were girls.

4.4 Conduct 12 community programmes, aimed at facilitating behavioural change for adults. (3 each in Hattidamar Ghuiyabari BZUC, Rapti BZUC, Rajkot BZUC and other BZUCs).

Recognizing the fact that the human wildlife conflict mitigation requires a multifaceted approach, apart from other interventions, changing the behaviour of the people who interact with forest resources is also equally important. In Y1, nine local trainers, designated as change agents, were trained to lead an extensive conservation awareness campaign targeting the fringe area surrounding the Banke National Park. These change agents carried out a total of 91 events in Rapti BZUC (10), Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC (10), Deurali-Hariyali BZUC (12), Rajkot BZUC (10), Dhakeri BZUC (12), Furkesalli Malai BZUC (15), Madhya Bindu BZUC (10), Purandhara BZUC (8) and Kohalpur BZUC (4) to facilitate the behavioural change of the communities (*Annex 4.41.1, 4.41.2, 4.41.3*), engaging 2780 local community members.

4.5 Engage communities and promote dialogues between them and the park in conservation during national and international conservation days (Each year on Global Tiger Day, CBAPU day, Environment Day, Wildlife Week and Wetland Day).

The project supported a 3-day provincial youth conference 2024 on World Wildlife Day 2024 that commenced from 3-5 March 2024 in Gabhar Valley Homestay in Rapti BZUC on the theme "Entrepreneurial Youth for a Prosperous Nation: Towards Sustainable Development Goals" (*Annex 4.42.1, 4.42.2*). The event included discussions and presentations covering various topics including sustainable development goals, climate change, youth entrepreneurship, governance, and tourism to name a few. The Chief Minister of the Lumbini province, encouraged the youth to actively engage in creating positive changes in society, emphasizing that political transformation alone is not enough, and active participation in various development initiatives is crucial.

4.7 Strengthen Community Based Anti-Poaching Units and support mobilisation.

Enhancing the effectiveness of Community-Based Anti-Poaching Units (CBAPUs) and providing support for their mobilization holds paramount importance in combating the illegal activities. These units serve as vital guardians of wildlife, fostering local engagement and ownership in conservation efforts while mitigating poaching threats to biodiversity. Hence, efforts were taken to mobilize CBAPU during this year.

4.7.1 Provide 2 trainings to CBAPU (10 participants each) in relation to anti-poaching activities.

Trainings to CBAPU members in relation to anti-poaching activities was organized for 23rd and 26th December 2023 and involved the active participation of 7 CBAPU members (M:4, F:3) in Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC and 17 CBAPU members in Rapti BZUC (M:4, F:13) respectively (*Annex 4.43.1, 4.43.2*). These trainings capacitated participants on governance and conservation issues (*Annex 4.43.4*). The training in Rapti BZUC increased the CBAPU's knowledge on combating poaching by the average of 43% (average pretest score: 31%, average post test score: 74%) in Rapti BZUC, and by 11% (average pretest score: 34%, average post test score: 45%) in Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC (*Annex 4.43.3*).

4.7.2 Provide field gears to CBAPU (1 in each site) to support their activities and promote safety during activities.

With inadequate facilities and field gears, CBAPU have been facing numerous challenges in wildlife patrolling. Thus, CBAPU of the Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC, Rapti BZUC, Furkesalli-Malai and Purandanda BZUC on 24 January 2024, 30 January and 17 March 2024 respectively (*Annex 4.44.1*,

4.44.2), in the presence of Local Government, Park representatives, ZSL and the ENRUDEC team, received the field gears that included camera, ii) first aid kit, GPS, jacket, t-shirt, shoes, torchlight, bag and water bottle (*Annex 4.44.2*).

4.8 Support CBAPUs to monitor illegal activities within buffer zone forests.

In order to address illegal activities in the forest and surrounding community, maintaining the active engagement of CBAPUs is crucial. This year, the project provided support to CBAPUs for conducting patrols within the buffer zone and facilitated meetings with stakeholders to share information, enabling adaptive management strategies to combat illegal activities.

4.8.1 Support CBAPUs in monitoring of illegal activities within buffer zone, through community patrolling.

In year one, the project supported CBAPU in carrying out a total of six patrols-, three patrols in Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC and three patrols in Rapti BZUC from 29 February to 29 March 2024 (*Annex 4.45.1, 4.45.2, 4.45.3*). The CBAPU records the number of members in patrolling, GPS coordinates if they see animals (directly or indirectly) or any illegal activity. This recording can help the management to take precautionary action. No such illegal activities were reported during this reporting period. In addition to this regular monitoring, CBAPU of Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC conducted five community level awareness programs focusing on HWC mitigation and illegal wildlife trade reaching 153 participants (62% of the participants belonged to indigenous and disadvantaged group (*Annex 4.45.4, 4.54.5*)).

4.8.2 Support CBAPUs in conducting regular meetings (quarterly) in each site for information flow.

The project supported CBAPU to carry out their regular meetings that facilitate the frequent interaction between CBAPU and BZUC for planning and flow of information from CBAPU to the stakeholders. A total of six meetings were conducted (three in Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC and three in Rapti BZUC) in between 24 January - 21 March 2024. A total of 71 members attended the meeting, of which 60% were female (*Annex 4.46.1, 4.46.2*).

3.1 Progress towards project Outputs

Output 1 Livelihoods of 155 households in the project sites are improved (directly) through providing access to income strengthening opportunities, underpinned by support for mainstreaming nature-based tourism and strengthening of operation plans for buffer zone forests.

As output 1 focused on livelihood improvement, various interventions have begun in year one targeted to strengthen the income stream opportunities for the vulnerable household of the project community. Through targeted interventions, we have directly bolstered their access to income-strengthening opportunities, thereby establishing two community banks, one in each project site Ryang, Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC and Gabar in Rapti BZUC engaging 72 households (*92% women, 75% indigenous and disadvantage group*) (Ind 1.1.1) for fostering sustainable economic growth within these communities. Both the community banks have decided to save NPR 100 as a monthly saving in the respective community bank and raised a total of NPR 15,200 (£95). Since these two-community bank are recently established no loans have been disbursed to the members to initiate their livelihood (Ind 1.1.3). Importantly, two trainings (Act 1.1.1, 1.1.2) and periodic meetings (Act 1.1.3) strengthened the community's capacity in CB operationalization. A business plan formulation workshop (Act 1.2.1) and market linkage and implementation plan (Act 1.2.7) assisted the members of different livelihood groups to enhance their economic condition and opportunity to further expand their petty businesses in a more advanced and professional manner. Tourism promotion activities were also carried out, bringing 183 (M:143, F:40) stakeholders (via hospitality training (Act 1.5.1) and tourism stakeholder meetings (Act 1.5.3) to a common agenda to find the solution and strengthen the capabilities from all sectors for the promotion of tourism in BaNP (Ind 1.4). Similarly, four BZUC OP were revised to sustainably use and manage BZCF resources (Act 1.6). In doing so, the project has not only safeguarded biodiversity but also created a framework for sustainable resource management that benefits both local communities and the environment at large.

Output 2 Improved management of grasslands and wetlands, and control of forest fires in priority areas within the core of the park, underpinned by strengthened understanding of the habitat requirements of key species (sambar deer, spotted deer) results in an increase in tiger prey species density.

Output 2 focused on the habitat management required for tiger and prey species therefore the activities during the year one were directed towards achieving these outcomes (Ind 0.2). For this, knowledge products were documented including key habitat and fire risk mapping (Act 2.1.5, Act 2.6.1), as well as habitat profiling of BaNP (Act 2.2.1). These key findings and stakeholders' meetings (Act 2.2.2, Act 2.3.1, Act 2.6.2) along with hotspot monitoring via 20 camera traps (Act 2.1) could lead to the indicator 2.1.1 that trace the suitability for the wild animals, thereby laying the groundwork for the targeted conservation efforts.

Following the reports, two wetlands (Act 2.3.2, Ind 2.1.2), five hectares of grassland (Act 2.4.1, Ind 2.1.3), and 3.5 km of fire line maintenance (Act 2.6.3) have been accomplished through the supply of tools and field gears (Act 2.5.3, Act 2.1.3), capacitating 17 frontline staff for firefighting (Act 2.6.4), 20 staff for field monitoring through camera traps (Act 2.1.6.), and providing a tractor for the regular operation in habitat

management (Act 2.5.1, Act 2.5.2) all together enhancing the quality of tiger and prey base habitat in BaNP.

Output 3: Reduced impact of human-wildlife conflict (HWC) in the project sites (total 1112 HHs/5170 people) through investments in livestock and crop safeguarding, underpinned by improved measures for the safety of people.

Output 3 oversees the reduction of human-wildlife conflict by preventing direct damage to human settlements from wildlife, creating more resilient communities, facilitating the quick relief fund to process for on-time response to victim families. In Y1, the project deeply concentrated its effort in preventing direct damage by supporting 30 predator proof corrals (Act 3.1.1), 650 m of mesh wire fencing (Act 3.2), and 28 streetlights (3 solar and 25 electric lights) in the project site benefiting 135 households (Act 3.6). The project aimed to create resilient communities by supporting 25 vulnerable households with 670kg of ginger and 2000kg of turmeric as non-palatable crops (Act 3.3), providing training to 47 people on stall feeding (Act 3.5) supplemented by the distribution of 10,700 seedlings of fodder species. In addition, a quick relief fund (Act 3.7) has been established and BZUC's responsibility includes provisioning immediate relief fund to victims of human casualties, in strict adherence to the procedures outlined in the Nepal Government's Compensation Guideline - 2080. These measures are expected to secure lives of human and wildlife, protect against the loss of livestock, rural community household assets, and enhance food security by preventing crop loss (Annex 4.29, 4.30, 4.31, 4.32, 4.33, 4.34, 4.35, 4.36).

The reduction in livestock kill and crop raiding in project communities will be measured in Y3 (Ind 0.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3) onwards, as the project has just started supporting BZUCs and communities to implement HWC mitigation interventions. These measures have been directly benefitting 1001 community people of 213 households (PPC: 30HH, streetlights: 135HH, wildlife deterrent crop: 25HH, and Mesh wire fencing: 23HH). In addition, a total of 10.83ha of land has been secured with the installation of mesh wire (9. ha.) and cultivation of wildlife deterrent cash crop (1.83 ha) (Ind 3.2.1). The output level indicators were measured with the help of reports provided by the consultation and analysis of workshop data and verification of different measures implemented. Furthermore, the area of crop land protected was measured with help of GIS analysis.

Output 4 Relationships between the park management and local people is improved through meaningful outreach programmes, underpinned by increased participation of two focal communities in conservation dialogues, and evidenced by community participation in intelligence gathering and community-based anti-poaching patrols.

Output 4 aims to enhance the relationships between park and local communities by supporting outreach programmes, conservation dialogues, and promoting community-based anti-poaching units, which ultimately contribute to behaviour change of community. This year, our team embarked on a transformative journey to showcase the rich biodiversity, cultural uniqueness, and conservation challenges of BaNP and its buffer zones through a compelling documentary (*available on request*) film (Act 4.1.1), which will be broadcast in Y2 in the relevant platform aiming to outreach greater number of visitors (Ind 1.4). Further, numerous behaviours change campaigns were carried out in the community and schools. A total of 813 students (M: 401, F: 412) (Act 4.3), and 2780 community people (Act 4.4) of the project site and adjoining communities, who frequently visit the forest for resource collection activities were oriented for behavioural change to live in harmony with wildlife (Ind 4.3). Two information boards (Act 4.2.1) and six mounted posters (Act 4.2.2) informed visitors and local community about conservation. CBAPU comprised of local communities, were engaged in patrolling, surveillance and data collection to protect wildlife from poaching after the trainings on their mobilization in anti-poaching (Act 4.7.1). In addition, field gears to facilitate their regular monitoring (Act 4.7.2) was also supported. During this year, CBAPU has also started patrolling (6 patrols, 3 in each site) forest areas. A mechanism will be established for its continuity after the project time frame. The project envisions that these forms of frequent and continuous information sharing platform will foster the relationship between community, BZUCs and BaNP (Ind 4.2). The increase in the information received by park via BZUC (Ind 4.2) will be collected from the BaNP and BZUCs until year three as the CBAPU continue to patrol their boundaries. Further, progress made through outreach programmes benefitting individuals (Ind 4.1), community representation in conservation meeting (Ind 4.1.3), and increases in positive attitude of the community towards biodiversity (Ind 4.3) will be measured by the end of year three.

3.2 Progress towards the project Outcome

Outcome: Improved status of tiger and prey species, reduced HWC, reduced poverty, and an improved relationship between park and people ensures a viable future for wildlife and people in Banke NP

With the successful completion of activities that contribute to the respective output, the project has paved a pathway towards achieving the desired outcome with the swift progress in addressing the output. The baseline for the Ind 0.2 has been retrieved from the National Tiger Survey 2022, i.e., 25 tigers and prey density is 32.6 animals/km² (Line transect). For the other outcome indicator, baseline survey on well-being

index (0.1) and HWC cost and perception (Ind 0.3, 0.4) in household level has been accomplished and the analysis is underway and expect to be available by the first quarter of the second year.

All changes against outcome-level indicators will be seen from year two and measured in year three through endline surveys. The year one progress shows the project is likely to achieve the intended outcome by the end of the funding and that the outcome can be measured by the indicators set during project development.

3.3 Monitoring of assumptions

Outcome: Improved status of tiger and prey species, reduced HWC, reduced poverty, and an improved relationship between park and people ensures a viable future for wildlife and people in Banke NP

Assumption 1: Banke National Park remains a priority area in the Western Terai Landscape for biodiversity conservation for the Government of Nepal.

Comments: Still holds true. Terai Arc Landscape Strategic and Action Plan (2015-2025) is still active.

Assumption 2: The park is willing to shift from protection-centric approach to management-centric approach to address various nuances arising in the park and its buffer zones.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 3: Communities living in the project sites are willing to participate in project activities.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 4: Meaningful engagement of communities remains an important tool to promote positive relationship between park and people.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 5: Mitigation of human-wildlife conflict continues to be the primary concern for buffer zone communities.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 6: The park is willing to provide its staff to participate in project activities.

Comments: Still holds true.

Output 1 Livelihoods of 155 households in the project sites are improved (directly) through providing access to income strengthening opportunities, underpinned by support for mainstreaming nature-based tourism and strengthening of operation plans for buffer zone forests.

Assumption 7: Project site residents are willing and able to engage in livelihood strengthening activities.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 8: Community banks can be managed in a way that minimizes risks and meets all regulatory requirements.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 9: Authorities are receptive to revision of forest plans.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 10: Improving livelihoods results in reduced forest dependency.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 11: Tourists find Banke NP an attractive destination and 'spread the word'.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 12: Significant proportion of revenue from tourism goes to local communities: the set-up, e.g. homestays, community-run rafting trips, is designed to ensure that.

Comments: Still holds true.

Output 2 Improved management of grasslands and wetlands, and control of forest fires in priority areas within the core of the park, underpinned by strengthened understanding of the habitat requirements of key species (sambar deer, spotted deer) results in an increase in tiger prey species density.

Assumption 13: Habitat requirements are a limiting factor for the growth of wildlife species in Banke NP.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 14: Management and/or creation of key habitats within the park is a priority for improved tiger prey numbers.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 15: Forest fires are a critical challenge within the park and its buffer zones.

Comments: Still holds true.

Output 3: Reduced impact of human-wildlife conflict (HWC) in the project sites (total 1112 HHs/5170 people) through investments in livestock and crop safeguarding, underpinned by improved measures for the safety of people.

Assumption 16: Human-Wildlife Conflict will continue to be a major problem in the buffer zones of Banke NP if mitigation methods are not implemented.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 17: Community members are willing to offer in kind support (labour, materials) to construct PPCs.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 18: Costs of livestock and crop depredations can be calculated from HWC rates and typical market values.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 19: Funds from local government towards the construction of mesh wire fencing can be leveraged.

Comments: Still holds true. No travel bans or lock downs imposed by government this year.

Output 4 Relationships between the park management and local people is improved through meaningful outreach programmes, underpinned by increased participation of two focal communities in conservation dialogues, and evidenced by community participation in intelligence gathering and community-based anti-poaching patrols.

Assumption 20: Laying the foundations for biodiversity-friendly production forests now will ensure the community-forest corridor is supported to provide connectivity into the future as timber harvests are made. Information boards and mounted posters help reinforce and extend the message promoted during the school and community programmes.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 21: Education and outreach programmes motivate youths in BZUC to participate in monitoring activities.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 22: Outreach work and community participation in dialogues and community-based anti-poaching units results in improved attitudes to the park and its wildlife.

Comments: Still holds true.

Assumption 23: The reduction in HWC (Output 3) will also contribute to improved attitudes to the park and its wildlife.

Comments: Still holds true.

3.4 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and poverty reduction

Impact: The future of globally significant species (tiger, tiger prey species, leopard) in Banke National Park is secured, multi-dimensional poverty reduced, and human-wildlife coexistence improved for buffer zones communities.

This is the first year of the project and is early to report evidence of the contribution that the project is making towards the impact. However, the project has laid the foundations by documenting required knowledgebases to implement project activities in each of the outputs. For example, studies have been conducted to strengthen the understanding of the habitat requirements of key species (sambar deer, spotted deer) hence supporting tiger numbers in BaNP, as well as fire risk mapping and habitat management (waterhole and grassland). Various measures to strengthen human wildlife coexistence have been initiated such as behaviour change campaigns, income strengthening opportunities for enhancing wellbeing, installation of PPC and mesh wire fencing. The progress towards this achievement will become tangible from year two as these interventions mature.

Based on this initiation, the project will continue to work to secure Banke National Park as the home of tiger and prey species with the help of the communities, as well while helping to alleviate their challenges such as HWC, natural resource dependency and lower incomes.

4. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP):

The project is contributing to Nepal's NBSAP through various activities which align with NBSAP strategies. For example, management of degraded habitats (two waterhole and 5ha of grassland, 3.5km fire line) (Ind 2.1.2, 2.1.3, Sec 3.1-Act 2.3.2, 2.4.1 & 2.6.3) is contributing to "improvement in protected areas habitats and connectivity (PA-C)". Revisions to the four BZUCOPs (Ind 1.2, Sec 3.1- Act 1.6) is contributing to the "improvement in conservation of biodiversity in community managed forest (FB-C)" strategy. Engaging CBAPU in project activities (Ind 4.2, Sec 3.1- Act 4.8) such as patrolling, has secured 60% of women participation which is contributing to "preparing community-based organisations for conservation-friendly management of their forests, with a particular focus on women and disadvantaged or indigenous groups (CE-A). Engagement of 61% women and 47% indigenous and disadvantaged groups across the overall project activities is contributing to "empowering women and other disadvantaged groups through financial and technical capacity building for conservation, sustainable use and access to equitable sharing of benefits (GSI-B3)" strategy. Similarly, the significant gaps that NBSAP has identified in the participation of women and indigenous groups in conservation which this project will help to address by working directly with these groups further contributing to Nepal's achievement of Aichi Targets 1, 5, 7, 11 and 15.

Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) Strategic and Action Plan: 2015-2025:

The project majorly contributes to the TAL strategy which has the goal "to conserve the ecosystems of the Terai and Churia hills in order to ensure integrity of ecological, economic, and sociocultural systems and communities". This year has particularly contributed to certain strategies including management of degraded habitats (two waterholes, 5ha of grassland) (Ind 2.1.2, 2.1.3, Sec 3.1-Act 2.3.2, 2.4.1 & 2.6.3)

which is contributing to “protect, restore and manage critical habitats (Strategy 1)”; revision of four BZUCOPs (Ind 1.2, Sec 3.1- Act 1.6) is contributing to “strengthen and promote sustainable forest management (Strategy 10)”. Further, establishment of two women-led community banks for livelihood activities (Ind 1.1, Sec 3.1-Act 1.1) is contributing to “provide local communities with innovative, sustainable economic incentives linked to forest and river conservation (Strategy 16)”.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG):

The project is contributing to four SDG goals. Establishment of two women women-led community banks for livelihood activities (Ind 1.1, Sec 3.1-Act 1.1) and engagement of 61% women and 47% indigenous and disadvantaged groups in overall project activities is contributing to 1: No Poverty (through fostering sustainable livelihoods for marginalised communities); 5: Gender Equality (through supporting women’s greater participation in decision-making on natural resource management); 10: Reduced Inequalities (through improving wellbeing and financial resilience of indigenous and marginalised people). Management of habitats (two waterhole, 5ha of grassland, 3.5km of fire line) (Ind 2.1.2, 2.1.3, Sec 3.1-Act 2.3.2, 2.4.1 & 2.6.3) is contributing to 15: Life on Land (through improving habitats for threatened wildlife and plants).

The project has had no interaction with any host country convention focal point, via host country or UK partners in the last 12 months.

Other National Policies and Plan:

Revisions to four BZUCOPs (Ind 1.2, Sec 3.1- Act 1.6) is contributing to the National Forest Policy 2019. Management of habitats (two waterhole, 5ha of grassland, 3.5km of fire line) (Ind 2.1.2, 2.1.3, Sec 3.1-Act 2.3.2, 2.4.1 & 2.6.3) is contributing to the targets around the “Restoration of Habitats and Strengthening Ecological Connectivity for Wildlife” of Nepal’s National Adaptation Plan (NAP). All project activities are in line with the Banke National Park and its Buffer Zone Management Plan (2023).

5. Project support for multidimensional poverty reduction

The project is working with two communities i.e., Ryang of Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC and Gabar of Rapti BZUC. The project identified beneficiaries for the project through participatory wellbeing ranking² of the community. The criteria for the selection were ethnicity, gender, diversity of income source, annual income, natural resource dependency, vulnerability to human wildlife conflict. Hence, the 381 households belonging to the wellbeing category C, D i.e., Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC (149 HHs) and Rapti BZUC (151 HHs). The project is aiming to reach at least 155 households with access to income strengthening, hence the targeted project beneficiary is from these selected households, with priority given to those the bottom of categories D and C.

This year, the project established two women led community banks, with 72 members (Ind 1.1.1) and supported with the seed fund totalling the amount of £5696.5 (NPR. 911,440) as planned for one community bank. The other community bank will receive fund in first quarter of year two (Sec 3.1, Act 1.1, 1.1.4). Of the total members, 72% belong to indigenous and disadvantage group and 91% are women. Members have had their capacity built in operation of community banks/cooperative management including concept of community banking and its process and procedure that ensure the effective and efficient day to day functioning and use the funds for the income-generating activities (Sec 3.1, Act 1.1.2).

In addition to direct livelihood support, the project also reached 213 households i.e. 1001 community people (PPC;30 (Ind 3.1, 3.1.1, Sec 3.1, Act 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7), community streetlights;135 (Act 3.6). Support to HWC is helping communities safeguard their livelihoods (224-250 small livestock/goats), avoiding the loss of NPR 24,64,000/£15,408, and crops across the 10.83ha of cropland (Ind 3.2.1, Sec 3.1, Act 3.2, 3.3). Cultivation of wildlife deterrent crops such as ginger and turmeric which is not only raided by wildlife but also have high market values, allows the community to diversify their income streams.

6. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Please quantify the proportion of women on the Project Board ³ .	Overall, there are 17 team members (ZSL, ENRUDEC and NTNC) for this project, of which, 30% i.e., 5 are female. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four programme staff (3 Male and 1 female) in ZSL is dedicated to project implementation in Nepal.
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² Participatory wellbeing ranking: Participatory Well-Being Ranking is a process by which a group of households are asked to rank themselves according to economic and social status. The process is conducted by Forest Users Groups with the assistance of local resource persons acting as facilitators. Households are generally described as either well-off, middle income, or poor, although some households may be described as extremely poor.

³ A Project Board has overall authority for the project, is accountable for its success or failure, and supports the senior project manager to successfully deliver the project.

	<p>The female staff is dedicated to the monitoring and evaluation function of the project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three programme staff each in ENRUDEC, and NTNC (4 Male and 2 female), is fully dedicated to the project implementation in project sites. • Remaining seven staff (5 male and 2 female) in ZSL, provide guidance and support on various aspects of programme, safeguard, and finance operation.
Please quantify the proportion of project partners that are led by women, or which have a senior leadership team consisting of at least 50% women ⁴ .	All project partners (DNPWC, BaNP and ENRUDEC and NTNC) are led by men.

GESI Scale	Description	Put X where you think your project is on the scale
Not yet sensitive	The GESI context may have been considered but the project isn't quite meeting the requirements of a 'sensitive' approach	
Sensitive	The GESI context has been considered and project activities take this into account in their design and implementation. The project addresses basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups, and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	
Empowering	The project has all the characteristics of a 'sensitive' approach whilst also increasing equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups	X
Transformative	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	

The project is actively working to mainstream gender equity and social inclusion principles, with a major focus on engagement of women and indigenous and marginalized groups. As part of the overall project activities, 64% of people engaged are women, and 48% belong to Indigenous and/or underrepresented groups. The proportion of women and those from historically underrepresented groups varies across specific activities. This inclusion of these groups was ensured from the very beginning of the project, for example, through the wellbeing survey carried in the project community to select the beneficiary. The criteria for the wellbeing ranking included: i) Gender of the Household, ii) Disability iii) low annual income iv) ethnicity v) vulnerable to HWC, access to natural resources, to name among few. The project continued to keep women, indigenous and disadvantage group at the centre of capacity building event as well e.g. the training on stall feeding practices (*75% of the participants were female and 68% belonged to indigenous and disadvantaged group*) (Sec 3.1, 3.5) and business plan development (75 % were women and 61% belonged to indigenous and disadvantaged group) (Sec 3.1, Act 1.2.1).

A major achievement for gender equity during this year one has been the formation of the women led community bank with 72 members (*92% women, 75% indigenous and disadvantage group*), initially for this year, creating economic opportunities for women in the project sites (Ind 1.1). These members were oriented on the basics of accounting and bookkeeping, financial resource management and its mobilization and the procedures for the mobilization of revolving funds (Ind 1.1, Sec 3.1, Act 1.1.2).

Likewise, 60% of beneficiary belonging to the indigenous and disadvantaged group were supported with a seed fund of £ 5696.5 (NPR. 911,440) (Sec 3.1, Act 1.1.4).

7. Monitoring and evaluation

The PCC and PMUs are the key monitoring units established by the project for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Similarly, the BaNP in coordination with project partners, buffer zone representatives and local communities, are conducting regular monitoring of project progress at the site. Regular visits have been

⁴ Partners that have formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.

conducted by the Project Lead to monitor and evaluate implementation. Altogether four monitoring visits have been made by the Project Lead during this year to assist implementing partners to provide clear guidance about the objective of the activity. Tied to the log frame, the ZSL project team uses a performance appraisal framework (PAF), to conduct M&E. The PAF is a web-based system designed by ZSL to track progress and promote interaction between project partners. Monthly reports are generated from the PAF system with input from all the relevant project components. These feed into the regular project reports for both the Darwin Initiative and ZSL's internal M&E procedures.

As this is the first year of the project, it is too early to demonstrate through evidence the contribution that activities and outputs are making towards the outcomes.

8. Lessons learnt

Initiatives, such as activity 1.1, which involves supporting startup funds for livelihood groups, utilised a stringent monitoring mechanism involving local government entities. This mechanism serves the dual purpose of safeguarding against mismanagement of funds while fostering transparency, governance, and the overall sustainability of project interventions. This has necessitated the continued collaboration with local government authorities, BZUC, and the National Park authority, coupled with joint monitoring efforts, which will be pivotal in ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of project interventions.

To address the challenge of human-wildlife conflict (HWC), in addition to the quality habitat management and investments in cutting-edge wildlife monitoring tools and research, prioritizing an insurance mechanism emerges as a sustainable solution, guaranteeing adequate compensation for HWC victims, encompassing crop damage, livestock predation, and human casualties. Additionally, future endeavours should spotlight innovative technological solutions to mitigate HWC, empowering local communities to embrace such advancements.

While ecotourism holds promise as a financing mechanism for conservation, its benefits haven't sufficiently reached communities around Banke National Park. Investing in infrastructure, such as visitor information centres, can enhance the park's appeal as a tourism destination, ensuring that local communities directly benefit from conservation efforts, thereby fostering positive attitudes towards conservation. Behavioural change campaigns have emerged as effective tools in fostering wildlife coexistence, educating and empowering communities on wildlife ecology and appropriate responses during wildlife encounters. Continuation of such awareness campaigns, with active involvement from the local community, promises heightened efficacy and impact, as evidenced by recent experiences.

Recognizing the tendency of local communities to prioritize short-term gains, robust monitoring mechanisms, in collaboration with local government bodies, park authority and BZUC, are imperative to ensure project effectiveness.

9. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

The project received some feedback during the project award period to strengthen the implementation of the project hence allowing for achieving outcomes. This feedback is responded as below:

i) It appears from references (2) and (3) that tiger numbers are still increasing in Banke National Park (BaNP). However, there appears to be potential for additional increases if prey densities can be increased. When reporting on project progress in achieving a higher tiger population density, analyses should incorporate past tiger/prey population trajectories and how these may have changed in response to habitat management:

Response: We have taken this feedback into consideration and will follow the methodology as suggested. This year camera traps have just been deployed at strategic location and findings from the first camera trap is yet to be analysed.

ii) The habitat improvement interventions appear very small:

Response: The project acknowledges that the habitat improvement interventions target is quite small. BaNP authority itself manages the habitat from their own resources and as well as other conservation organizations including Nepal Government's WWF-GEF supported Integrated Landscape Management project has also budgeted for habitat management in BaNP. Our support, though in small scale, helps to fulfil the habitat improvements that is being undertaken in larger scale. Besides, the project has supported tractor and budgeted for its operation throughout the project period which will be used in habitat management activities. Hence, eventually broader coverage area will be covered for the habitat management over the time. Through these combined efforts, the project has made significant strides in enhancing habitat quality and biodiversity conservation in BaNP.

iii) How will you stop illegal forest exploitation/poaching continuing alongside new alternatives?

Response: The project recognizes that addressing issues like illegal forest exploitation and poaching requires collaborative efforts. Therefore, it collaborates with local government, BZUCs, communities, and BaNP to tackle them collectively. Importantly, the project has envisioned strengthening the community

based anti-poaching unit (CBAPU) in regular patrolling and monitoring activities so that illegal forest exploitation and poaching events will be reduced.

In doing so, the project activities are aligned to empowering the community to become stewards of their natural resources. We believe that frequent and continuous behaviour change campaigns carried out in the project sites will eventually avert human behaviour on the exploitation of forest resources. Besides, the project has also planned and been working to update the operation plan of the respective BZUCs and BZCFs which allows the community people to utilize the forest resource in a planned way. In addition, the project will deploy spy camera (supported by ZSL's other projects), which will activate the BaNP's protection unit to take real time response for any detected illegal activities. Through these concerted efforts, the project aims to foster sustainable resource management and combat illegal practices effectively.

iv) There appears to be no provision for active prevention/enforcement ("anti-poaching patrols" appear only to do monitoring):

Response: We admit that no other provision for active prevention/enforcement besides monitoring by CBAPU is in place. The project believes that there is no "one-size-fits-all" strategy for tackling illegal wildlife crime because the scales and drivers of trade are diverse, from basic subsistence in local communities to high-profit trans-border organized crime. To combat this challenge, the project enhances the capabilities of the CBAPU through a multifaceted strategy that includes patrolling, surveillance, information gathering, wildlife rescue, and awareness campaigns. A significant driver of poaching, especially within rural communities, is the lure of quick financial rewards from criminal networks, exacerbated by underlying issues of unemployment and poverty. In response, the project actively engages local youth, who might otherwise be tempted by poaching, thereby diminishing the risk of illegal activities.

To address this issue, ZSL Nepal is collaborating with the DNPWC and BaNP on a mission to support species recovery by strengthening law enforcement in lowland PAs of Nepal. To help the Rangers' anti-poaching efforts, ZSL Nepal supports anti-poaching operations by providing funding for advance camps, field gear, patrol fuel and rations for short, medium and long-range patrolling. Additionally, ZSL Nepal provides training on SMART patrolling for army personnel and park authorities to enhance anti-poaching operations. Spy cameras strategically placed in high-risk areas, supported by ZSL Nepal, serve as silent guardians. These cameras detect movement, capture images of intruders, and transmit them to a Joint Operation Cell. This empowers rangers to assess threats and dispatch rapid response teams promptly. Beyond surveillance, these images become a potent tool for informant networks and intelligence gathering, thereby strengthening the fight against poaching syndicates.

v) It is not clear what basis there is for expecting to find market linkages or tourism prospects for the alternative livelihoods:

Response: Agricultural products serve as the primary source of income for communities. Establishing market linkages enables farmers to access larger markets beyond their immediate vicinity. By connecting with wholesalers, retailers, and even export channels, rural producers can unlock new avenues for selling their goods, thereby increasing their confidence to produce and invest which ultimately strengthen their income potential. Community banking mechanism supports the people to start their business, however, business plan formulation and market linkage and implementation plan help these CB members to understand their strength and way to channelize the business ideas including ecotourism, agri-business, and other.

vi) The project is proposing a high number of interconnected activities which could be difficult to manage. For example: it is unclear how "At least 15% increase in tourists" will be achieved and what this increase will mean regarding the project objectives. The set-up of two community banks and the establishment of enterprises by the end of the project needs further explanation to understand better the approach and the sustainability of these actions. It is also unclear how a "12% reduction in forest resource dependency" will be achieved and what exactly this means:

Response: BaNP, despite its rich cultural, religious, ecological, and biodiversity assets, has struggled to attract significant tourist attention due to limited promotion. However, with the project's support in producing a documentary showcasing BaNP's cultural and biological treasures, tourist/visitors interest could be stimulated. The increase in tourist/visitors number not only provides local households with income opportunities but also boosts BaNP's revenue, as mandated by Nepal's Buffer Zone Management Regulations (1996), which stipulate sharing 30-50% of revenue with the community. This revenue is subsequently reinvested in livelihood improvement, community development, and biodiversity conservation efforts. Therefore, increasing BaNP's revenue is crucial for the economic prosperity of the local population as well as for achieving the project's outcome indicator 0.1.

Similarly, a community bank is characterized as a locally established and operated financial institution, catering to the financial needs of the local community to facilitate the initiation of income-generating ventures with the aim to alleviate poverty and reduce dependency on natural resources through income-generating activities of the vulnerable and marginalized groups of the community, who are highly dependent on natural resources. All decision-making and operational activities are carried out by local

community members, thereby mitigating the potential for elite capture. The funds accrued by the community bank commonly have local origins, obtained from its own members or through support from organizations. These funds are subsequently lent within the local community, with no need for collateral. The interest rates, capped at a maximum of 6 percent, are established by the members themselves. This rate significantly undercuts the rates presented by corporate banks (up to 18%), and effectively motivate the members to initiate their own enterprises. Such additional income from such small enterprises supported from CB could motivate them minimize their engagement in natural resources extraction for their subsistence.

The institutional sustainability of these community banks is ensured by their affiliation with government-accredited institutions such BZUC, aligns with the priority area of National Park, Local government, BZUC in alleviating poverty, funds are regulated and generated locally by the members themselves in the form of saving and collection of interest, annual audit and general assemble is carried out to ensure transparency while monthly meetings addresses any concerns of the member and oversee operational matters.

The project's provision of promoting stall feeding, planting fodder species and non-palatable crops also align with project objective to reduce the forest dependency. These activities along with promoting CB member in local enterprises would definitely help to reduce the community's dependency on natural resources.

vii) The log frame needs to clarify what kind of baseline data are already available and which data still needs to be set. The log frame is proposing a high number of different Indicators that will make the M&E quite work intensive and this needs to be very carefully managed.

Response: The baseline and target have been carefully mentioned in the Annex 2. As mentioned in log frame, baseline data on tiger and prey species density along with associated damage and tourist number are already available in government records, whereas data on natural resource dependency, data on HWC damage and people attitude, wellbeing index particular of our project site have been collected in the baseline survey conducted in Y1 however, the analysis is in progress and expected to be completed by the first quarter of the project second year. Once the pre-project survey data is analysed, the M&E will be efficiently managed as log frame will be updated with the number in indicators.

10. Risk Management

No risk has arisen in the past 12 months.

11. Sustainability and legacy

The project was developed in line with the Government of Nepal's priority area, the Terai Arc Landscape Strategic and Action Plan 2015-2025, DNPWC's strategic plan and Banke National Park and its Buffer Zone Management Plan (2021). From the development phase, the project has consulted with stakeholders such as BZUC, Ward office, DNPWC and BaNP and therefore they have taken ownership of the project and have supported its development and implementation (Annex 4.2.6). Fire risk mapping (Sec 3.1, Act 2.6.1), and wetland and grassland mapping (Sec 3.1, Act 2.2.1), have given recommendations not only for the project but also for the BaNP and will continue to guide BaNP for future actions. Similarly, the four revised BZUCOPs (Sec 3.1, Act 1.6.1 & 1.6.2) will be of great support to BZCF users in managing and using forest resources from their BZCF for the next five years. The women-led cooperatives formed (Ind 1.1) in the first year of the project, with sustainable financial flow mechanisms, are a step towards establishing economically sustainable livelihoods in project communities. These women-led cooperatives have started to expand their original seed fund (Sec 3.1, Act 1.1.4), which shows their investment in and ownership of project activities. The project is enhancing community awareness and knowledge and as the communities remain in the project site, the knowledge gained will do also.

12. Darwin Initiative identity

The Darwin Initiative has been mentioned in each agreement signed with partners. The guidelines on use of the Darwin Initiative logo were briefed to project partners during the inception meeting before the start of implementation. The Darwin Initiative logo, along with the partners logo, has also been placed on banners, information boards and communication products, and also in the vehicle supported to BaNP (Annex 4.47.1). The project will continue placing the Darwin Initiative logo on hoarding boards and any other communication materials. This project supported by the Darwin Initiative aligns with the Terai Arc Landscape programme (a government-led landscape approach programme), which has a larger vision of developing contiguous habitat across the Terai Arc of Nepal and India through Terai and Shivalik hill forest of Nepal.

In general, the wildlife conservation community in Nepal is familiar with the Darwin Initiative through previously supported projects. However, this project has particularly publicised the Darwin Initiative in BaNP through engagement with local communities, local government, line agencies and BaNP, through project inceptions and stakeholder meetings and consultations.

13. Safeguarding

Has your Safeguarding Policy been updated in the past 12 months?	No
Have any concerns been reported in the past 12 months	No
Does your project have a Safeguarding focal point?	Yes [If yes, please provide their name and email] Asmita Pandey [REDACTED]
Has the focal point attended any formal training in the last 12 months?	No, as the focal person has recently joined following the resignation of the previous focal point. [If yes, please provide date and details of training]
What proportion (and number) of project staff have received formal training on Safeguarding? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During this project period, there has been no formal training on Safeguarding for project staff. However, prior to the inception of this project, all project staff were briefed on ZSL's Global Code of Conduct and Global Safeguarding. 	Past: % [and number] Planned: % [and number]
Has there been any lessons learnt or challenges on Safeguarding in the past 12 months? Please ensure no sensitive data is included within responses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There have not been any particular lessons learnt or challenges but as Safeguarding is a relatively newer term for our partner organisations, project partners have requested a detailed orientation on project specific Safeguarding which is due to take place during the next six months. 	
Does the project have any developments or activities planned around Safeguarding in the coming 12 months? If so please specify. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are not any activities planned as such, in the project workplan. However, ZSL is planning to provide refresher orientation on safeguarding to the partner's project implementing team in the project sites. 	
Please describe any community sensitisation that has taken place over the past 12 months; include topics covered and number of participants. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	
Have there been any concerns around Health, Safety and Security of your project over the past year? If yes, please outline how this was resolved. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	

14. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2023/24 Grant (£)	2023/24 Total Darwin Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Consultancy costs	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Overhead Costs	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Travel and subsistence	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	There was delay in start of the project, resulting in less frequency of travel than anticipated.
Operating Costs	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Capital items (see below)	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Others (see below)	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
TOTAL				

Table 2: Project mobilised or matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)

	Secured to date	Expected by end of project	Sources
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project (£)	██████	██████	
Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project (£)			

15. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

This is not applicable to this report.

16. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements or progress of your project so far (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes.

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds to edit and use the following for various promotional purposes.

The project “*Protection to Community Engagement: Managing Nepal’s youngest transborder National Park*” has started very smoothly despite a delay in SWC agreement processes, building strong foundations for the remaining project period. This first year, the project made significant footsteps towards uplifting vulnerable households, focusing on enhancing income opportunities and sustainable resource management. The operation of two community banks has allowed 72 households of poor and indigenous and disadvantaged groups, particularly women. Efforts towards sustainable resource management included revising BZCFOPs, (the only way which allows users/community people to use natural resource), and supporting households, ensuring biodiversity conservation and community development.

Habitat management is crucial for the conservation of tiger and prey species. Knowledge documents to strengthen the understanding of the habitat requirements of key species (sambar deer, spotted deer), fire risk mapping, guide the project to act for two waterholes construction, 5ha of grassland management, 3.5km of fire line maintenance. The project procured 20 camera traps, provided trainings to field monitoring technicians for their deployment and operation. The gathered data will aid stakeholders in informed decision-making for habitat conservation and management.

Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) mitigation and community safeguarding through various measures such as training on stall feeding practices, streetlights, mesh wire installation and distribution of non-palatable crops, predator-proof corral installation, and quick relief funds for victims have been initiated with the aim of promote HWC coexistence. A total of 10.83ha of land of 213 households which directly benefits to 1001 community people was initiated with these interventions. Further, behaviour change campaigns, orientation sessions in schools and communities, and the establishment of Community-Based Anti-Poaching Units helps to foster a stronger relationship between communities and the park.

Through strategic interventions in economic empowerment, habitat management, and human-wildlife conflict mitigation, the project has laid a solid foundation for achieving outcome and contributing to the impact in coming years. As a lead partner, ZSL has invested its time and effort in coordination with the DNPWC, BaNP, local government for the smooth execution of the project.

File Type (Image / Video / Graphic)	File Name or File Location	Caption including description, country and credit	Social media accounts and websites to be tagged (leave blank if none)	Consent of subjects received (delete as necessary)
Image	Drone Shot_after fire line after maintenance	Fire line maintained at main fire line joining the East-West Highway PC: NTNC-BCP		
Image	Business Plan Training	Group work during business plan training PC: Pradip Sedhain/ZSL		
Image	Community Solar Light	Community Solar lights installed at Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC PC: ENRUDEC		
Image	CBAPU Monitoring	Monitoring by CBAPU in Rapti BZUC PC: ENRUDEC		

Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against log frame for Financial Year 2023-2024

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2023 - March 2024	Actions required/planned for next period
<p>Impact: The future of globally significant species (tiger, tiger prey species, leopard) in Banke National Park is secured, multi-dimensional poverty reduced, and human-wildlife coexistence improved for buffer zones communities</p>	<p>The project has laid the foundations by documenting the required knowledge bases to implement project activities under each of the outputs. Based on this knowledge, the project will work towards tourism promotion and safeguard communities while addressing their stress points like HWC, natural resource dependency and the lower income situation.</p> <p>This year the project has directly reached 940 HHs in the project sites, approximately 4474 community members through various livelihood, and HWC interventions. Of these, 64% were women and 48% belonged to indigenous and disadvantaged groups.</p>	
<p>Outcome: Improved status of tiger and prey species, reduced HWC, reduced poverty, and an improved relationship between park and people ensures a viable future for wildlife and people in Banke NP</p>		
<p>Outcome indicator 0.1, Improvement in the well-being index of the participating households 155 households (HHs) by 25% by the end of the project (baseline for the participating HH established by the end of Year 1)</p>	<p>Baseline for wellbeing is yet to establish as the data analysis is underway. However, 72 HHs have been engaged in community bank (Sec 3.1, Act.1.1, Annex 4.3).</p>	<p>Baseline will be established and targeted activities such as skill-based training on electrician, plumbing, mobile repairing, livestock and commercial farming with necessary toolkits.</p>
<p>Outcome indicator 0.2, 10% increase in tiger number and density of prey species (sambar deer, spotted deer) by the end of the project (baseline from 2022 tiger survey data).</p>	<p>The baseline has been retrieved from the National Tiger Survey 2022, i.e., 25 tigers and prey density is 32.6 animals/km² (Line transect). To achieve the target of 10% increase in tiger number and density of prey species, various targeted activities such as two water hole management, 5ha of grassland, 650meter mesh wire fencing (Annex 4.31), 3.5km fire line maintenance (Sec 3.1, Act 2.6.3, Annex 4.28). Also to monitor the tiger and prey species, camera trap has been deployed at strategic location.</p>	<p>Activities such as water hole management, 5ha of grassland, 3.5km fire line maintenance, camera trap will be deployed at strategic location.</p>
<p>Outcome indicator 0.3 Economic costs from Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC) decrease by 30% in the participating households (120 HH from Predator Proof Corrals and 1112 HH from other HWC reduction measures) (baseline to be set in Y1) by the end of the project.</p>	<p>The baseline is yet to be determined. However, the progress towards the activities aligned to achieving the indicator has been in progress. 30 predator proof coral has been constructed, supported 670kilogram of ginger and 2000 kilogram of turmeric which when cultivated covers approximately 1.83 hector of land to 25 HHs as a wild life deterrent crop, a total of 10,700 seedlings (5750 seedlings in each project community) were distributed, 3 solar lights</p>	<p>The activities carried out in Year will be continued in Year 2 such as construction of PPC, Mesh wire fencing, fire line maintenance, cultivation of wildlife deterrent cash crop,</p>

	benefitting 35 HHs and 25 electric bulbs benefitting 100 HHs where the Rapti Sonari rural municipality ward no.1 has agreed to pay the electric bill of those installed electric lights and established two quick relief fund (Sec 3.1, Act 3.11.a & 3.1.1.b, Annex 4.30, 4.32, 4.33, 4.35, 4.36).	distribution of non-palatable crop, training on stall feeding.
Outcome indicator 0.4 60% increase in positive attitude of buffer zone communities in the project sites towards conservation by the end of the project.	The baseline is yet to be determined. However, the progress towards the activities aligned to achieving the indicator has been in progress. Video documentary was produced that is intended to serve as a powerful tool for tourism promotion, offering viewers a glimpse into the diverse ecosystems, rare species, and vibrant culture and tradition and indigenous communities residing in the buffer zones, underscoring their integral role in the ecosystem (Ind 1.4, 4.3, Sec 3.1, Act 4.1.1). Total of 15 school awareness were carried out involving 813 students of the project community. Similarly, change agents carried out a total of 91 events in Rapti BZUC (10), Hattidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC (10), Deurali-Hariyali BZUC (12), Rajkot BZUC (10), Dhakeri BZUC (12), Furkesalli Malai BZUC (15), Madhya Bindu BZUC (10), Purandhara BZUC (8) and Kohalpur BZUC (4), engaged 2780 people (Ind4.1, Sec 3.1, Act 4.3, 4.4). Furthermore, CBAPU carried out six patrols and six meeting were carried between CBAPU, BZUC and BaNP for increasing the accountability, solution to a problem, better coordination, combined effort in stopping the illegal activities within their buffer zone (Ind 4.2, Sec 4.1, Act 4.8.1 & 4.8.2).	Video documentary will be broadcasted via local tv channels, You Tube, BaNP website for wider reach in promoting tourism in BaNP. Behaviour change campaign both at community and school will be carried out frequently. Exposure visits will be conducted for the community members. Further, CBAPU will continue to patrol and carry out meetings with stakeholders for sharing information.
Output 1: Livelihoods of 155 households in the project sites are improved (directly) through providing access to income strengthening opportunities, underpinned by support for mainstreaming nature-based tourism and strengthening of operation plans for buffer zone forests.		
Output indicator 1.1, 155 HHs (disaggregated by gender and ethnicity) benefit from livelihood interventions by the end of Y3, with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.1 two community banks (CB) established with 100 HHs by the end of Y1, growing to 115 HHs by the end of Y3. 1.1.2 Additional 40 HHs (youths) trained in skill development and hospitality training by the end of Y2. 1.1.3 At least 35% of the participating HHs operate enterprises through soft loans by the end of Y3. 	1.1 72 members out of which <i>92% are women and 75% indigenous and disadvantage group</i> (Sec 3.1, Act 1.1) are engaged in community bank who will carry out livelihood activities once they start to disburse fund. <p>1.1.1 Two community bank established i.e., Fulbari Jibikoparjan Upasamiti at Hattidamar BZUC, Ryang and Milijuli Baikalpik Aayearjan Samuha in Rapti BZUC, Gabar-Sikta, with 72 members out of which <i>92% are women and 75% indigenous and disadvantage group</i> (Sec 3.1, Act 1.1)</p> <p>1.1.2 To be trained by Y2.</p> <p>1.1.3 Since the community banks have just been established and members are trained on its operation and daily function</p>	1.1 Members will access soft to initiate their livelihood interventions. <p>1.1.1 Beneficiaries will be added in the community bank as a member.</p> <p>1.1.2 40 youths from the project community will be identified and trained on CTEVT course in electrician, plumbing and mobile repairing.</p>

	and with the seed fund released recently, none of the household have accessed loan.	1.1.3 Community bank members will access soft loan form the community bank.
Output indicator 1.2, Six BZUC/BZCF operation plans within the two project sites updated to improve conservation and governance by the end of Y2.	1.2 Four BZUC OP i.e., Hattidamar, Rapti, Madhyabindu, and Dhakeri BZUCs, led by the officials of Banke National Park. These plans have undergone thorough drafting and are now ready for final approval by the senior conservation officer of the park (Sec 3.1, Act 1.6.1 & 1.6.2, Annex 4.13.1, 4.13.2).	1.2 Prepared BZUC OP will be endorsed from the respective BZUC along with new two BZCF OP will be prepared and endorsed from the respective BZCF.
Output indicator 1.3, 12% reduction in forest resource dependency (baseline to be established in Y1) of the project beneficiaries by the end of Y3.	1.3 The baseline is yet to be determined. However, the progress towards the activities aligned to achieving the indicator has been in progress, such as; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on stall feeding practice, in which 75% of the participants were female and 68% belonged to indigenous and disadvantaged group was conducted (Sec 3.1, Act 3.5), • 10700 saplings of fodder grass were distributed (Sec 3.1, Act 3.4) • Behaviour change champaign 91 events by change agents has been conducted engaging 2780 people (Sec 3.1, Act 4.4). 	1.3 Stall feeding training, fodder grass distribution, behaviour change champaign, OP revision and endorsement are planned.
Output indicator 1.4, At least 15% increase in tourists (domestic and international) visiting the park and its buffer zone (baseline to be established in Y1) by the end of Y3.	1.4 The baseline was established via the record of DNPWC for the FY 021/022 i.e., 271 visitors in the park. Activities such as; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video documentary for tourism promotion was produced, offering viewers a glimpse into the diverse ecosystems, rare species, and vibrant culture and tradition and indigenous communities residing in the buffer zones (Ind 1.4, 4.3, Sec 3.1, Act 4.1.1). • Hospitality training was conducted for three days from 10-12 January 2024 involving 20 participants out of which 50% belonged to women and indigenous and disadvantaged group (Sec 3.1, Act 1.5.1). • Workshop was organized with relevant stakeholders of Bank district to discuss on potentiality of tourism in BaNP, issues and challenges (Sec 3.1, Act 1.5.3). 	1.4 Documentary will be broadcasted in local tv channels. You Tube and BaNP website for publicity. Likewise, nature guide training will be provided to 12 participants. Meeting with stakeholder will be carried out to discuss on progress and existing barriers to tourism in BaNP.
Output 2. Improved management of grasslands and wetlands, and control of forest fires in priority areas within the core of the park, underpinned by strengthened understanding of the habitat requirements of key species (sambar deer, spotted deer) results in an increase in tiger prey species density.		

<p>Output indicator 2.1, Key habitat for ungulate species within Banke NP improved by end of Y3, with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1.1 Site-specific grassland and wetland conditions assessed with guidelines produced based on expert consultations about plant and animal species dynamics by the end of Y2. 2.1.2 Monitoring underway for water source use and predator/prey dynamics related to management at two water sources within core of the park by end of Y2. 2.1.3 15 ha of grassland managed within core of the park by end of Y2. 	<p>2.1.1 With the objective to develop a habitat distribution map of Banke National Park and recommend strategic locations for maintenance/ construction of fire lines for effective management of the habitats within the National Park, a study was conducted. The study identified a total of seven land use types, forest fire prone area, water bodies in BaNP (Sec 3.1, Act 2.1.5, Annex 4.17.2). The study report has been archived by BaNP for their future reference and action.</p> <p>2.1.2 As identified by the study report, the construction of two water hole is in progress in Khairiphanta area where soil filling work has been completed to retain the water (Sec 3.1, Act 2.3.2, Annex 4.22.1). Hence, the monitoring of water source use by predator and prey will be assessed in Year 2 via camera trap placed in the water hole area.</p> <p>A total of 5 ha of grassland has been maintained at Karautiphanta area as identified by the study report (Sec 3.1, Act 2.4.1, Annex 4.23.1).</p>	<p>2.1.1 Guideline to assess the grassland and wetland condition will be developed.</p> <p>2.1.2 Monitoring of water use by predator and prey species.</p> <p>2.1.3. Grassland management activities will take place.</p>
<p>Output indicator 2.2, At least 460 ha of forest directly secured from forest fire in fire prone areas, selected through consultation with park authorities, by the end of Y3, with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.2.1 7 km of fire line managed by the end of Y2. 2.2.2 Fire-fighting unit of the park trained and equipped by the end of Y2. 2.2.3 10% increase in density of key prey species (sambar deer, spotted deer) within the park by the end of Y3 (baseline to be set during 2022 tiger survey). 	<p>2.2 Approximately 400 ha of forest was secured from forest fire (Sec 3.1, Act 2.6.3, Annex 4.28.1 & 4.28.2)</p> <p>2.2.1 Total of 3.5 Km fire line at the sub section of main fire line connecting to highway near to Khairi Phanta was maintained directly securing around 400 ha of forest area from forest fire (Sec 3.1, Act 2.6.3, Annex 4.28.1 & 4.28.2).</p> <p>2.2.2 17 front line staff such as ranger and game scout of BaNP were trained on fire-fighting techniques and were equipped with as Helmet, Gloves, Jump Suit, Swatter, Fire extinguisher, 12 step telescope ladder (Sec 3.1, Act 2.6.4, Annex 4.29.1, Act 2.5.3, Annex 4.25.1).</p> <p>2.2.3 % increase in prey density will be measured by Y3.</p>	
<p>Output 3. Reduced impact of human-wildlife conflict (HWC) in the project sites (total 1112 HHs/5170 people) through investments in livestock and crop safeguarding, underpinned by improved measures for the safety of people.</p>		
<p>Output indicator 3.1, 20% decrease in livestock depredation by tiger/leopard in the project sites (baseline to be established in Y1) by the end of Y3, with</p> <p>3.1.1 120 Predator Proof Corrals distributed by the end of Y2.</p>	<p>3.1 The baseline is yet to be determined. However, the progress towards the activities aligned to achieving the indicator has been in progress, such as:</p> <p>3.1.1 30 PPC installed in two project community i.e., 16 PPC in Hatitidamar-Ghuiyabari BZUC and 14 PP in Rapti BZUC, avoiding the loss of 224 small livestock such as goats and securing NPR 24,64,000/£15,408 of the beneficiary.</p>	<p>3.1.1 90 PPC will be constructed.</p>

<p>Output indicator 3.2, 25% decrease in crop raiding by wild boar/nilgai in the project sites (baseline to be established in Y1) by the end of Y3,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.2.1 35 ha of crop land secured with 2000 m mesh wire fencing by the end of Y2. 	<p>3.2 The baseline is yet to be determined. However, the progress towards the activities aligned to achieving the indicator has been in progress, such as</p> <p>3.2.1 10.83 ha of crop land secured with the installation of mesh wire 650meter (9 ha).</p>	<p>3.2.1 Installation of mesh wire will be continued in Y2.</p>
<p>Output indicator 3.3, 25% decrease in deaths/injuries from tiger/leopard and other wildlife species in the project site (baseline to be set in Y1) by the end of Y3.</p>	<p>3.3 The baseline is yet to be determined. % decrease in deaths/injuries from tiger/leopard and other wildlife species in the project site will be measured by Y3. However, the progress towards the activities aligned to achieving the indicator has been in progress, such as</p>	
<p>Output 4. Relationships between the park management and local people is improved through meaningful outreach programmes, underpinned by increased participation of two focal communities in conservation dialogues, and evidenced by community participation in intelligence gathering and community-based anti-poaching patrols.</p>		
<p>Output indicator 4.1, At least 250,000 people exposed to outreach programmes in buffer zone by the end of Y3, with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1.1 12 school and 12 community education programmes conducted by the end of Y3 (4 in each year), sharing cases from other Nepal park buffer zones. 4.1.2 6 information boards installed in the project landscape visible at major sites (park entry points, roadside, major market) by the end of Y2. 4.1.3 At least 75% of focal community HHs are represented in local conservation dialogue meetings/fora. 	<p>4.1 Video documentary has been produced.</p> <p>4.1.1 15 school awareness session conducted, engaging 813 students with 50.5% female students' representation (Sec 3.1, Act 4.3, Annex 4.40.1, 4.40.2, 4.40.3).</p> <p>4.1.2 Two information board were installed at strategic location, one in each community (Sec 3.1, Act 4.2.1, Annex 4.38.1).</p> <p>4.1.3 % increase will be measured by Y3.</p>	<p>4.1 Video documentary will be broadcasted via local tv channels, You Tube, BaNP website for visibility outreach to wider people intended for tourism promotion as well as message of biodiversity conservation.</p>
<p>Output indicator 4.2, 25% increase in intelligence re illegal activities received by the park (baseline to be set in Y1) from the two project BZUCs by the end of Y3, with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.2.1 Two 10-membered Community Based Anti-Poaching Units operational (trained and equipped) in the two project sites by Y1, 4.2.2 Each CBAPU conducting a total of 30 monitoring missions in their respective buffer zones by the end of Y3. 	<p>4.2 % increase in intelligence regarding illegal activities received by park will be measured by Y3.</p> <p>4.2.1 Two community based anti-poaching units are established and are in operation. 24 CBAPU members have been trained and equipped with essential field gears for their safety and patrolling purpose (Sec 3.1, Act 4.7.1, Annex 4.43.1 & 4.43.2).</p> <p>4.2.2 Six patrols have been carried out during this year (Sec 3.1, Act 4.8.1, Annex 4.45.1 & 4.45.2)</p>	<p>4.2.1 No trainings and equipment support are planned in Y2.</p> <p>4.2.2 Patrolling will be continued through the Y2 with information sharing to the relevant stakeholders.</p>
<p>Output indicator 4.3, 60% of direct participants of the awareness programmes reporting improved positive attitude towards biodiversity conservation by the end of Y3</p>	<p>4.3 The baseline is yet to be determined. % improved in attitude towards biodiversity will be measured by Y3.</p>	<p>4.3 Activities such as awareness session on biodiversity conservation and importance will be carried out both in community and at schools.</p>

2: Project's full current logframe as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
<p>Impact: The future of globally significant species (tiger, tiger prey species, leopard) in Banke National Park is secured, multi-dimensional poverty reduced, and human-wildlife coexistence improved for buffer zones communities</p>			
<p>Outcome: Improved status of tiger and prey species, reduced HWC, reduced poverty, and an improved relationship between park and people ensures a viable future for wildlife and people in Banke NP.</p>	<p>0.1 Improvement in the well-being index of the participating households 155 households (HHs) by 25% by the end of the project (baseline for the participating HH established by the end of Year 1).</p> <p>0.2 10% increase in tiger number and density of prey species (sambar deer, spotted deer) by the end of the project (baseline from 2022 tiger survey data).</p> <p><i>Baseline: 25 tigers and prey density is 32.6 animals/km² (source. National Tiger Survey report, Nepal, 2022).</i></p> <p><i>Target: 10% increase tiger number and density of prey species i.e., 28 tigers and 35.86 animals/km² prey density.</i></p> <p>0.3 Economic costs from Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC) decrease by 30% in the participating households (120 HH from Predator Proof Corrals and 1112 HH from other HWC reduction measures) (baseline to be set in Y1) by the end of the project.</p> <p><i>Baseline: 0</i></p> <p><i>Target: 36 HHs from Predator proof coral, 334 HHs from HWC reduction measures.</i></p> <p>0.4 60% increase in positive attitude of buffer zone communities in the project sites towards conservation by the end of the project.</p> <p><i>Baseline: Available during first quarter of second year.</i></p>	<p>0.1 Pre and post project well-being surveys</p> <p>0.2 Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) records, annual reports from the park, pre and post project biodiversity surveys, national tiger survey data</p> <p>0.3 Annual reports from the park, buffer zone user committee (BZUC) records, project reports, pre and post social surveys, market value analyses for crop and livestock losses</p> <p>0.4 Pre and post project attitude surveys</p>	<p>Banke National Park remains a priority area in the Western Terai Landscape for biodiversity conservation for the Government of Nepal.</p> <p>The park is willing to shift from protection-centric approach to management-centric approach to address various nuances arising in the park and its buffer zones.</p> <p>Communities living in the project sites are willing to participate in project activities.</p> <p>Meaningful engagement of communities remains an important tool to promote positive relationship between park and people.</p> <p>Mitigation of human-wildlife conflict continues to be the primary concern for buffer zone communities.</p> <p>The park is willing to provide its staff to participate in project activities.</p>

	<i>Target: TBD</i>		
<p>Output 1</p> <p>Livelihoods of 155 households in the project sites are improved (directly) through providing access to income strengthening opportunities, underpinned by support for mainstreaming nature-based tourism and strengthening of operation plans for buffer zone forests.</p>	<p>1.1 155 HHs (disaggregated by gender and ethnicity) benefit from livelihood interventions by the end of Y3, with</p> <p>1.1.1 two community banks (CB) established with 100 HHs by the end of Y1, growing to 115 HHs by the end of Y3.</p> <p><i>Baseline: 0</i></p> <p><i>Target: 155 HHs by Year 3</i></p> <p>1.1.2 Additional 40 HHs (youths) trained in skill development and hospitality training by the end of Y2.</p> <p><i>Baseline: 0</i></p> <p><i>Target: 40 youths trained on skill development.</i></p> <p>1.1.3 At least 35% of the participating HHs operate enterprises through soft loans by the end of Y3.</p> <p><i>Baseline: 0</i></p> <p><i>Target: 35% (55 individuals) of the participating 155 HHs operate enterprises through soft loans by the end of Y3.</i></p> <p>1.2 Six BZUC/BZCF operation plans within the two project sites updated to improve conservation and governance by the end of Y2.</p> <p><i>Baseline: 0</i></p> <p><i>Target: Six BZUC/CF operation plan updated</i></p> <p>1.3 12% reduction in forest resource dependency (baseline to be established in Y1) of the project beneficiaries by the end of Y3.</p>	<p>1.1 BZUC records, bylaws and constitution of CBs, pre and post project social survey reports, photographs, project reports, skill development training minutes and photographs.</p> <p>1.2 BZUC records, park records, BZUC/BZCF operation plans, meeting minutes and photographs.</p> <p>1.3 BZUC records, park records, pre and post project social surveys.</p> <p>1.4 Park records, district tourism board records, project reports, workshop minutes, photographs.</p>	<p>Project site residents are willing and able to engage in livelihood strengthening activities.</p> <p>Community banks can be managed in a way that minimizes risks and meets all regulatory requirements.</p> <p>Authorities are receptive to revision of forest plans.</p> <p>Improving livelihoods results in reduced forest dependency.</p> <p>Tourists find Banke NP an attractive destination and 'spread the word'.</p> <p>Significant proportion of revenue from tourism goes to local communities: the set-up, e.g. homestays, community-run rafting trips, is designed to ensure that</p>

	<p><i>Baseline: Available during first quarter of second year.</i></p> <p><i>Target: 12% reduction in natural resource dependency.</i></p> <p>1.4 At least 15% increase in tourists (domestic and international) visiting the park and its buffer zone (baseline to be established in Y1) by the end of Y3.</p> <p><i>Baseline: 317 Tourists (Source: DNPWC AR 2079/80).</i></p> <p><i>Target: 365 Tourists</i></p>		
<p>Output 2</p> <p>Improved management of grasslands and wetlands, and control of forest fires in priority areas within the core of the park, underpinned by strengthened understanding of the habitat requirements of key species (sambar deer, spotted deer) results in an increase in tiger prey species density.</p>	<p>2.1 Key habitat for ungulate species within Banke NP improved by end of Y3, with</p> <p>2.1.1 Site-specific grassland and wetland conditions assessed with guidelines produced based on expert consultations about plant and animal species dynamics by the end of Y2.</p> <p>2.1.2 Monitoring underway for water source use and predator/prey dynamics related to management at two water sources within core of the park by end of Y2.</p> <p>2.1.3 15 ha of grassland managed within core of the park by end of Y2.</p> <p><i>Baseline: 0</i></p> <p><i>Target: 15 ha of grassland</i></p> <p>2.2 At least 460 ha of forest directly secured from forest fire in fire prone areas, selected through consultation with park authorities, by the end of Y3, with</p> <p>2.2.1 7 km of fire line managed by the end of Y2.</p> <p><i>Baseline: 0</i></p>	<p>2.1 Park records, park annual reports, project reports, training reports, pre and post project biological survey reports, pre and post project photographs, guidelines</p> <p>2.2 Park records, park annual reports, project reports, training reports, pre and post project photographs, water source camera trap data, inventory list and receipt from park for fire-fighting equipment</p> <p>2.3 Park records, park annual reports, pre and post project biological</p>	<p>Habitat requirements are a limiting factor for the growth of wildlife species in Banke NP.</p> <p>Management and/or creation of key habitats within the park is a priority for improved tiger prey numbers.</p> <p>Forest fires are a critical challenge within the park and its buffer zones.</p>

	<p><i>Target: 7km fire line managed</i></p> <p>2.2.2 Fire-fighting unit of the park trained and equipped by the end of Y2.</p> <p>2.2.3 10% increase in density of key prey species (sambar deer, spotted deer) within the park by the end of Y3 (baseline to be set during 2022 tiger survey).</p> <p><i>Baseline: 32.6 animals/km²an density of prey (Source: National Tiger Survey, Nepal, 2022).</i></p> <p><i>Target: 35.86 animals/km² prey density.</i></p>		
<p>Output 3</p> <p>Reduced impact of human-wildlife conflict (HWC) in the project sites (total 1112 HHs/5170 people) through investments in livestock and crop safeguarding, underpinned by improved measures for the safety of people.</p>	<p>3.1 20% decrease in livestock depredation by tiger/leopard in the project sites (baseline to be established in Y1) by the end of Y3, with</p> <p><i>Baseline: Available during first quarter of second year.</i></p> <p><i>Target: TBD</i></p> <p>3.1.1 120 Predator Proof Corrals distributed by the end of Y2.</p> <p>3.2 25% decrease in crop raiding by wild boar/nilgai in the project sites (baseline to be established in Y1) by the end of Y3,</p> <p><i>Baseline: Available during first quarter of second year.</i></p> <p><i>Target: TBD</i></p> <p>3.2.1 35 ha of crop land secured with 2000 m mesh wire fencing by the end of Y2.</p> <p>3.3 25% decrease in deaths/injuries from tiger/leopard and other wildlife species in the project site (baseline to be set in Y1) by the end of Y3.</p> <p><i>Baseline: Available during first quarter of second year.</i></p>	<p>3.1 BZUC records, pre and post project social survey reports, photographs, project reports.</p> <p>3.2 BZUC records, pre and post project social survey reports, photographs, project reports.</p> <p>3.3 Park records, incident reporting, BZUC record, pre and post project survey reports.</p>	<p>Human-Wildlife Conflict will continue to be a major problem in the buffer zones of Banke NP if mitigation methods are not implemented.</p> <p>Community members are willing to offer in kind support (labour, materials) to construct PPCs.</p> <p>Costs of livestock and crop depredations can be calculated from HWC rates and typical market values.</p> <p>Funds from local government towards the construction of mesh wire fencing can be leveraged.</p>

	<i>Target: TBD</i>		
<p>Output 4</p> <p>Relationships between the park management and local people is improved through meaningful outreach programmes, underpinned by increased participation of two focal communities in conservation dialogues, and evidenced by community participation in intelligence gathering and community-based anti-poaching patrols.</p>	<p>4.1 At least 250,000 people exposed to outreach programmes in buffer zone by the end of Y3, with</p> <p>4.1.1 12 school and 12 community education programmes conducted by the end of Y3 (4 in each year), sharing cases from other Nepal park buffer zones.</p> <p>4.1.2 6 information boards installed in the project landscape visible at major sites (park entry points, roadside, major market) by the end of Y2.</p> <p>4.1.3 At least 75% of focal community HHs are represented in local conservation dialogue meetings/for a</p> <p><i>Baseline: Available during first quarter of second year.</i></p> <p><i>Target: TBD</i></p> <p>4.2 25% increase in intelligence re illegal activities received by the park (baseline to be set in Y1) from the two project BZUCs by the end of Y3, with</p> <p>4.2.1 Two 10-membered Community Based Anti-Poaching Units operational (trained and equipped) in the two project sites by Y1.</p> <p>4.2.2 Each CBAPU conducting a total of 30 monitoring missions in their respective buffer zones by the end of Y3.</p> <p><i>Baseline: 0.</i></p> <p><i>Target: 60 monitoring mission by Y3.</i></p> <p>4.3 60% of direct participants of the awareness programmes reporting improved positive attitude towards</p>	<p>4.1 Pre and post programme survey reports, project reports, photographs.</p> <p>4.2 Park records, CBAPU reports, training minutes, photographs, monitoring mission reports.</p> <p>4.3 Pre and post project attitude survey, project report.</p>	<p>Information boards and mounted posters help reinforce and extend the message promoted during the school and community programmes.</p> <p>Education and outreach programmes motivate youths in BZUC to participate in monitoring activities.</p>

	biodiversity conservation by the end of Y3. <i>Baseline: Available during first quarter of second year.</i> <i>Target: TBD</i>		
<p>Activities (each activity is numbered according to the output that it will contribute towards, for example 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are contributing to Output 1)</p> <p>Output 1</p> <p>1.1 Set up two community banks within the project sites. 1.2 Conduct skill development trainings for community members from the project sites. 1.3 Provide tools for beneficiaries of Act 1.2 to facilitate uptake of the livelihood skills. 1.4 Establish education fund within two higher secondary schools to support wildlife victim and/or other vulnerable families for education. 1.5 Provide ecotourism support and facilitate tourism stakeholders to promote Banke NP as a tourist destination. 1.6 Strengthen operation plans of Buffer Zone Community Forest and Buffer Zone User Committees to encourage good governance and commitment to conservation. 1.7 Promote agro forestry within the project sites.</p> <p>Output 2</p> <p>2.1 Conduct tiger and prey hotspot monitoring in priority areas within Banke NP. 2.2 Conduct site specific wetland and grassland mapping and profiling. 2.3 Conduct workshop for result sharing and expert consultations to produce guidelines for habitat management. 2.1 Support the management of two waterholes within the core of Banke NP. 2.5 Support the management of 15 ha grassland within the core of Banke NP. 2.6 Provide equipment for grassland, wetland and fire line maintenance to Banke NP. 2.7 Provide support to improve understanding of the dynamics of forest fire and manage it within the park. 2.8 Conduct exposure visit to Manas NP (India) for park staff to learn best practices in habitat management.</p> <p>Output 3</p> <p>3.1 Support Predator Proof Corrals to buffer zone communities. 3.2 Support mesh wire fencing. 3.3 Support non-palatable crops. 3.4 Support stall feeding (grass distribution). 3.5 Support solar outdoor lamps. 3.6 Quick relief fund.</p> <p>Output 4</p> <p>4.1 Produce and broadcast a short documentary on the biodiversity, cultural uniqueness and problems of Banke National Park and adjoining buffer zones.</p>			

- 4.2 Produce and install six information boards, develop and distribute 20 mounted posters to enable awareness campaign to reach additional buffer zone communities in Banke NP.
- 4.3 Conduct 12 school programmes, aimed at facilitating behavioural change for children.
- 4.4 Conduct 12 community programmes, aimed at facilitating behavioural change for adults.
- 4.5 Engage communities and promote dialogues between them and the park in conservation during national and international conservation days.
- 4.6 Conduct exposure visits for community members to promote the uptake of best practices in HWC mitigation, livelihood improvement and forest management.
- 4.7 Strengthen Community Based Anti-Poaching Units and support mobilisation.
- 4.8 Support CBAPUs to monitor illegal activities within buffer zone forests.
- 4.9 Conduct buffer zone forest management trainings in the project sites.

Annex 3: Standard Indicators

Table 1 Project Standard Indicators

DI Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
DI-A04	Number of people reporting that they are applying new capabilities (skills and knowledge) 6 (or more) months after training.	People	Men	0			0	40
DI-A06	Number of people with improved access to services or infrastructure for improved well-being.	People	Female	72			72	115
DI-B01	Number of new/improved habitat management plans available and endorsed.	Number	Language-Nepalese	4			4	6
DI-B10	Number of individuals / households reporting an adoption of livelihood improvement practices as a result of project activities.	Household	Female	0			0	155
DI-D01	Hectares of habitat under sustainable management practices.	Hectare	Protected area	5			5	15
DI-D01	Hectares of habitat under sustainable management practices.	Hectare	Protected area	400			400	460
DI-D15	Net change in incidences of human wildlife conflict.	Number	Crop raiding	0			0	25% decrease in crop raiding by wild boar/nilgai in the project sites from baseline.
DI-D15	Net change in incidences of human wildlife conflict.	Number	Death/injuries	0			0	25% decrease in deaths/injuries from tiger/leopard and other wildlife species in the project site from the baseline.
DI-D15	Net change in incidences of human wildlife conflict.	Number	Livestock depredation	0			0	20% decrease in livestock depredation by tiger/leopard in the project sites from the baseline

Table 2 Publications

Title	Type (e.g. journals, best practice manual, blog post, online videos, podcasts, CDs)	Detail (authors, year)	Gender of Lead Author	Nationality of Lead Author	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online)

Annex 4: Onwards – supplementary material (optional but encouraged as evidence of project achievement)

Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the correct template (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and deleted the blue guidance text before submission?	√
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to BCF-Reports@niras.com putting the project number in the Subject line.	√
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with BCF-Reports@niras.com about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	√
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	√
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see Section 16)?	√
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	√
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	√
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	