

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

Note: If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2023

Project reference	30-012
Project title	A Community Approach to Waterbird Resource Management, Chia Lagoon
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Malawi
Lead partner	Birdlife International
Partner(s)	Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM) Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST)
Project leader	Alex Ngari
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	The project will not have its own website. However, it will be represented on BirdLife and Partners' websites and social media pages. www.birdlife.org/africa

Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

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

So far, we have no reason to change our indicators and the M & E system remains relevant but we will continue to evaluate it and will adjust as appropriate. The risk management Framework is now completed and the assumptions are still relevant. We have started mapping the indicators against the standard indicators and will have to amend some wording.

Coordination and Implementation Team meetings: A series of online meetings were held to review the award, address feedback from the evaluators, monitoring and evaluation, donor requirements, and safeguarding. A Steering Committee was established and has met once.

Activity 1.1.1: *Awareness raising and engagement activities to identify community members interested in participating in the waterbird management.* The project held 3 community meetings with traditional authorities, namely, Kalimanjira, Mwadzama and Nkhanga where all related community structures were invited and the project was presented, they welcomed the project. The structures that were engaged includes Area Development Committees (ADCs), Beach Village Committees (BVCs) representatives, Youth groups, Women groups, Village Natural Resources Management Committees (VNRMCs), Wildlife clubs and Bird hunters. A total of 18 women and 42 men who represented ADC at the meeting held on 18th August.

Activity 1.1.2 *Engagement of District and local government, existing village structures (Beach Associations), hunters and women in the set up of local Sustainable Bird Hunting Clubs, following Lake Chilwa model.* Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM) started awareness

raising: firstly, the District Environmental Subsector Committee (DESC) where all relevant government offices and NGOs working on the environment in the area provided their advice to the project. Attendees included: Ripple Africa, African Parks, Fisheries, Forestry, Environmental Departments. The meeting took place on 19^h July with a total of 36 (15 women and 25 men) participants. Thereafter, the project was presented to District Executive Committee (DEC) which has the overall authority to approve projects in the district. After presentation, the project was well received by DEC, approving it to go ahead with implementation. A total of 58 (15 women and 43 men) people participated in the district meetings. The formal Project launch is slated for mid-November 2023 soon after baseline studies have been completed.

Activity 1.2.1 *Exchange visits with Lake Chilwa Hunting Clubs are provided for inspiration and capacity development. Training and support for the establishment of the Chia Lagoon Sustainable Hunting Clubs is provided.* The project started community consultations about which members should take part in the exchange visit to Lake Chilwa. It was agreed that the visiting team should comprise BVCs, VNRC, local leaders and youth representatives.

Activity 1.3.1 *Hunters, fishers and a selection of other household members and community leaders will be surveyed to assess the extent, nature and purpose of bird hunting at Chia Lagoon (how many birds, how many hunters, which species, what is a sustainable level of hunting)* The project through community meetings with Area Development Committees started identifying the bird hunters, fishers around Chia Lagoon. During the meetings it was revealed that some hunters come from within the communities while there is a group which comes from areas far from the lagoon. Over 8 bird hunters and 23 fishers attended the meeting.

Activity 2.3.1 *Awareness raising publications/broadcasts, social media and events will be held focused on the community.* Information about the project and the awareness raising activities were published on different WESM media platforms. During the district meetings, an article was published in Nation Newspaper. The project was presented at a national biodiversity stakeholders meeting held on 12th October where positive input was received.

Activity 3.1.1 *Baseline socioeconomic surveys will be designed by external consultant and implemented by the consultant or/if deemed preferable, by the WESM team, with support of the consultant.* The project has concluded the process of recruiting a consultant to carry out socio economic study in communities around Chia Lagoon.

Activity 3.2.1 *Establish micro lending initiative to support these and other enterprises. Recruit members, mainly women.* During the reporting period, WESM engaged Micro Loan Foundation (MLF) in order to strategize on preparations that included assessment of the target communities in terms of their capacities and the kind of loans which could be promoted in the project area. WESM and MLF held planning meetings ahead of field visits to be conducted at the project area.

Activity 4.1.1 *Meetings are held with stakeholders involved in Fish for Tomorrow and Chia Lagoon fisheries management and with Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve. And, where applicable, with wider Lake Malawi Integrated Water Management programmes.* WESM organised a stakeholder meeting where the project objectives and activities were presented for stakeholders. The stakeholders also shared their briefs on activities they are implementing close to Chia Lagoon such as Ripple Africa who are promoting wetlands restoration activities through tree planting and conducting BVC trainings. 20 representatives (5 women and 15 men) from different NGOs and government departments attended the meeting and shared aspects for potential collaborations with the project around Chia. The notable areas included riverbank restoration, invasive species control as well livelihood activities.

Activity 4.2.1 *Dissemination of project information and emerging results at national level through articles/broadcasts, briefings and meetings.* WESM promoted the project activities through engagement of media houses during most of project meetings. The project activities were broadcasted on radio such as Zodiak Radio, Nkhotakota Community Radio. The print media also published an article in the Nation Newspaper.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

During the reporting period, Malawi faced a national shortage of fuel. We have not had to reschedule any activity based on fuel shortages.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: Yes/ A Change Request was submitted and approved to recruit a field facilitator, monitoring, evaluation & learning officer for the WESM team. Also BirdLife's IBA Officer replacement was communicated.

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes/

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/

Change request reference if known: Not known

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

Actual spend: £ [REDACTED]

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2024)?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

4c. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

None in this reporting period.

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document. See attached as Annex I

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so. See attached as Annex II

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**