

Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity 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	DARCC024
Project title	Strengthening Local Partner Capacity For Effective Biodiversity and Poverty Interventions
Country/ies	Zambia
Lead Partner	Action Against Hunger
Project partner(s)	Kaluli Development Foundation (KDF), Environment Africa Zambia (EAZ) and Conservation Farming Unit (CFU)
Darwin Initiative grant value	£195,000
Start/end dates of project	1/04/2023 to 30/06/2024
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2023 – Mar 2024) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	April 2023-Mar 2024 – Annual Report 1
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1. Project summary

This project addresses the capacity challenges faced by local organizations. The local organizations are supported to improve systems, develop tools, and adapt new approaches for project management, data collection, storage, analysis and reporting. Ultimately at the end of the project, the organizations will be able to effectively design and implement high-impact projects that contribute to slowing down the loss of biodiversity through programmes that provide alternative sustainable agricultural livelihoods.

By building these organisations capability, they will be able to implement interventions that generate evidence and can pursue high impact funded projects with significant funding instead of operating in the peripheries where they have no noticeable impact to the Kavango Zambezi Trans-frontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA). Impactful initiatives that local organization

cannot pursue solely or in consortia include Biodiverse Landscapes Fund (BLF) among others. Opportunities such as this would support their work in biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction.

The Local Organisations are already formulating proposals to mobilise resources to scale up nature-based interventions.

1.1 The biodiversity challenges and human development and wellbeing challenges

Lack of awareness on importance of biodiversity conservation and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

Lack of Community preparedness to withstand the adverse effects of climate change such as droughts and floods.

Over-exploitation of natural resources as a means of economic empowerment by Communities engaging into unsustainable practices such as deforestation, contributing to depletion of valuable natural resources in the Zambezi watershed.

1.2 Problems Identification

Several methods were used to identify the problems. In terms of coming up with solutions that are responsive to address the gaps that the Local NGOs were facing, Action Against Hunger assessed and identified the gaps that Environment Africa (EA) was facing, which informed the project design. It was established that the EA needed capacity building in M&E, Project Management and design and overall system strengthening such as procurement, HR, Financial Management. For the additional two Local Organisations that were not assessed prior to the program design, a rigorous process of assessment was used.

Firstly, a letter was written to the Government of Zambia to provide a list of local NGOs that are operating in the project targeted area, the Zambezi Watershed. Thereafter, an invitation for Expression of interest was sent out to all the listed organisations. For the organisations that responded, a due diligence questionnaire and partner capacity self-questionnaire was administered. This is what guided the focus of the capacity strengthening among local partners.

In addition, at the project inception, a baseline survey was conducted to strengthen the focus of the interventions and to assess the prevailing challenges within the Zambezi watershed. The baseline process included data collection from communities (adult and children representatives) around the watershed and incorporated Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), Water Resource Management Authority (WARMA), Forestry Departments (FD), Cooperatives, Traditional leadership, and other relevant stakeholders at national, provincial and district levels. This study also made use of secondary data sources to complement the findings from the primary data sources. This was in the form of document reviews from past similar studies.

As for the community awareness campaigns: The project design used secondary data, formal and informal consultations to direct the project design. Further the targeted communities underwent a knowledge assessment prior to the awareness campaigns in biodiversity conservation, Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), and Risk Reduction Strategies. The idea was to leverage on the indigenous knowledge of the community and develop solutions that are not alien to the lifestyles of the communities.

1.3 Project Location.

The project is being implemented along the Zambezi Kafue Watershed in Western and Southern Province covering 8 districts namely Mwandia, Sesheke, Kazungula, Sioma, Zimba, Shangombo, Sioma and Livingstone. The project areas are well presented as shown in the maps Annex 5.

2. Project stakeholders/ partners

The partnerships were based on the demand from the host Country. The project design made consultations with Government, LNGOs, and conducted desk reviews to direct the project

formulation. The implementation has continued engaging various partners such as UN Agencies, donor communities, INGO, Government line Ministries and local leaderships.

The project inception workshop brought together various stakeholders, who thereafter have been key to the project implementation, leveraging on the different synergies that have forged joint resources mobilisation with FAO, UNDP, CRS, IFAW, WWF and Government to support further gaps on biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction. Proposals have been submitted to ADB, SADC, USAID, CISCO, CCAC to support the cause, borrowing the evidence from what is already being achieved under Darwin 29 and other partners.

The Government of Zambia has played a critical role in this intervention. For instance, when identifying the local partners, the selection of local partners began with making requests to the Government to guide in making recommendations of the LNGOs that could be relevant to the program.

Throughout the implementation period, the Government has continued supporting the project despite not having a direct budget allocation under this project. This was demonstrated through its commitment in addressing biodiversity and poverty challenges in Zambia. The Government through the Ministry of Agriculture has been working with Action Against Hunger, Local partners and beneficiary households to identify and implement participatory climate-resilient food systems, livelihoods, services, and markets in the Kafue-Zambezi watershed communities.

Government continues to provide endorsements for resource mobilisation to scale up the interventions, citing some of the benefits, lessons learnt and best practices that the project has brought forth.

2.1 The project partner's Involvement

The partners/beneficiaries have been at the core of the program, which has contributed to successful project implementation. The baseline survey that was conducted gave insights on biodiversity changes that informed the decision making and future program design. The feedback was incorporated to formulate awareness campaign materials and guided the design of some strategies for the program, for instance the setting up of demonstration plots to enhance practical learning was because of the beneficiaries' inputs.

The project has been implemented throughout with mutual respect for the beneficiaries, their lived experiences have always been appreciated and they form part of the solutions that the project seeks to bring about.

2.2 Achievements, lessons, strengths, or challenges with the partnerships

The project successfully managed to bring the local partners on board, and the necessary capacity building has been conducted. Action Against Hunger continues to work closely with the Local partners and has gone further to work closely with other LNGO within the project areas for cross learning, and harmonization of the activities. For example, during information dissemination on the findings of the survey, other local partners, Government, Private Sector in the project areas were brought together, so that they could benefit from the information and provide feedback on the findings for incorporation (See Annex 5 Report for more information). This also improves the quality of the final reports and enhances the ownership and appreciation of the data and increases chances for utilisation.

Action Against Hunger also continues to engage with the British High Commission in Zambia as a key partner for poverty reduction. We invited them to the Project Launch of Darwin and have few email exchanges and recently in February 2024, the Chief Executive Officer of Action Against Hunger, Dr. Charles Owubah met with the Deputy High Commissioner, Mr. Sam Waldok – UK/FCDO to continue strengthening ties and pursue policy matters aimed at addressing poverty in Zambia.

During project activity implementation government stakeholders are at the centre working either directly with Action Against Hunger or local partners in activity planning, community mobilization, awareness creation and linking Action Against Hunger to other key stakeholders at Community, district, Provincial and National levels. Additionally, following the current drought emergency in

Zambia, Action Against Hunger has constantly been engaged in Disaster Management Committees and disaster responses at District and National level.

Traditional leadership plays a key role in the success of community projects in the project area, the government has played a key role in facilitating introductions, support, and ensuring commitment and buy-in from traditional leaders and beneficiaries. Overall, the government and other stakeholders have amplified and improved our impact and visibility in the project areas and beyond.

2.3 Challenges

- The project did not consider a budget for Government system strengthening, but meanwhile, during implementation, their role has been cardinal to provide technical backstopping and institutionalisation.
- The competing needs from local partners sometimes come into play because the staff that the local partners have are also responsible for other day to day tasks of the Organisations, though not common but sometimes their human resources are stretched across the different demands.
- This also means some project team members from local partners may not be able to consistently be available within the project implementation area, reducing efficiency and effectiveness in delivery.
- Overall limited resources to implement larger scale impact projects, effectively support project field operation activities and collaboration with other stakeholders.
- In some cases, conflicts and disputes between influential government personnel and the community may affect the successful implementation of certain project activities in affected communities especially if the interventions are to be implemented through a local partner (limited situation control).
- There is not really a designated officer at the British High Commission with a clear mandate for effective feedback on the Darwin Project. The reporting system is mostly directly with UK, making local collaboration a bit weak with the Donor.
- The outbreak of Cholera and the severe droughts of 2023/2024 farming season have affected the program implementation, as certain protocols for gatherings must be minimised as per Health Regulations. The drought has severely affected communities who are now prioritising the search for food and water as opposed to being easily available for continued learning. Furthermore, the local partners and ACF also had to support Government to conduct various emergency rapid assessments and come up with National Drought Response Plan 2024.

2.4 Local Partner Selection

To facilitate the selection process for the local partner, the process started with mapping of local NGOs in general. A letter to request for a list was written to the Government, the Ministry of Community Development that is responsible for registration of NGOs on the 4th of May 2023.

After the list was obtained, some parameters were set up to guide the shortlist for the Darwin Project. The focus at this stage was to select all the NGOs that were focused on biodiversity and climate change with presence along our project targeted areas, the Zambezi Watershed. A total of 16 NGOs were pulled out of the list based on these area perimeters.

Thereafter, an invitation for Expressions of Interest (EOI) was sent out to the 16 NGO's on 24th May, 2023, with 31st May as the deadline for submission of EOI.

Out of the 16 invitations sent out, 10 LNGOs responded as shown in the table attached as Annex 6. Based now on the company profile that the 10 LNGOs submitted, the analysis was done in line with relevance of the activities that the project envisaged that the Local Partners would perform.

With the analysis, the list came down to 4 NGOs (refer to table and comments) that were subjected to due diligence. The due diligence was conducted by administering the due diligence questionnaire with attached responses for the 4 companies shortlisted namely Bulimi, Green Earth (BGE), Kaluli Development Foundation (KDF) and Conservation Farming Unit (CFU).

The main assessment was based on provision of Administrative Documentation Checklist and secondly on adequately providing answers to the questionnaires. Even though capacity was to be built, the local partners had to show some level of systems being in place that could be strengthened. For instance, they needed to have a Board in place for good Governance.

Based on that, the ranking was as follows from highest to the lowest.

1. Kaluli Development Foundation (KDF)
2. Conservation Farming Unit (CFU)
3. Bulimi
4. Green Earth.

The target for the project was to build the capacity of three Local Partners, and one local partner was pre-selected at project design stage, to understand the capacity that potentially Local NGOs face and incorporate them in the initial project design. From the shortlist, only two local partners were to be selected, and the final selection was passed over to the Regional Office and Headquarters to finalise to enhance transparency. The Regional Office working with Headquarters made final recommendations for the KDF and CFU. Thereafter, the collaboration agreements were prepared and signed outlining the different activities and responsibilities of all partners.

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities.

OUTPUT 1

Activity 1. Local Partner Selection

Three Local Organisations have been selected namely Conservation Farming Unit (CFU), Kaluli Development Foundation (KDF), and Environment Africa (EA), guided by the thematic area of focus of the project and the location for the project, which is focusing along the Zambezi, Kafue Watershed. The Collaboration Agreement has been signed with all the three organisations, detailing the roles and responsibilities of each par (refer to Annex 7 Collaboration Agreements signed).

Activity 1.2 Training Local organization to review past project reports on successes and recommendations.

During the workshop, the Local Organisations together with Action Against Hunger reviewed past project reports, and recommendations were made and continue to be revised and discussed. Recommendations included insights on project management strategies and tools, understanding, flexibility and problem solving for donor requirements on reporting, and paying particular attention to changes that may arise even from traditional donors. The local partners have exhibited good reporting through this project where they are always reporting on their activities. The capacity building based on the recommendations will also continue through additional meetings because of the value of continuous learning with the local partners.

Activity 1.3 Local Organization conducts baseline survey at community level to understand the ecosystem and the human element of the communities living in the watersheds.

The local partner and Action Against Hunger collaborated to carry out an ecosystem assessment in the watershed area. This initiative aimed to collect vital information regarding the ecosystem's

health and the socio-economic aspects of the communities living within it. To achieve this, three staff members from each NGO underwent training in using Kobo Collect, a data collection tool.

To prepare the staff for effective data collection using Kobo Collect, a comprehensive training was conducted. The training included the following key components:

Introduction to Kobo Collect: The staff members were introduced to the Kobo Collect platform, its features, and its capabilities in collecting and managing data.

Questionnaire Design: Participants were trained in designing structured questionnaires tailored to capture specific information related to the ecosystem and human aspects of the communities.

Data Collection Protocols: The training emphasized the importance of adhering to standardized data collection protocols, ensuring data consistency and accuracy.

Offline Data Collection: Given that some survey locations had limited connectivity, the training also covered the process of collecting data offline and later synchronizing it with the Kobo Collect server.

Questionnaire Design

Following the training, the staff members from the three NGOs collaborated to design a set of comprehensive questionnaires. These questionnaires were carefully crafted to capture essential baseline information related to both the ecosystem and the human element within the watershed communities. Key components of the questionnaires included:

Baseline Survey

Armed with their questionnaires and the skills acquired during the training, the staff members proceeded to conduct the baseline survey in the target communities within the watershed area. The survey methods included:

- Household Surveys (targeting 225 households across 7 districts): Structured interviews were conducted with representative households to collect data on socio-economic factors, land use, and other relevant information.
- Key Informant Interviews (targeting 35 participants) drawn from government line ministries, traditional leadership, and other influential members of the community: Local experts and community leaders were interviewed to gain insights into historical and cultural aspects of the communities' relationship with the ecosystem.
- Focus Group Discussions (targeting 12 in total including 1 for children): Interactive discussions were held with community members to explore their perspectives, experiences, and aspirations regarding the ecosystem.

Data Analysis and Reporting

The data collected during the baseline survey was analysed by the three partner NGOs. The findings were compiled into a comprehensive baseline report (Annex 8) that will serve as the foundation for future conservation and development initiatives within the watershed area. The report was shared with relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, donors, and the local communities.

Activity 1.4 Local organisations are taken through a workshop to do Self-assessment, objective setting, and project planning.

The local organisations were taken through self-assessment, objective setting, and project planning. To achieve this a questionnaire was formulated for self-examinations cutting across various departments of Finance and Administration, Human Resource, M&E and Programs of their internal processes. Further, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was conducted with all three NGOs and then presented to the group for questions and further discussion. The process brought out a lot of information which was valuable. Each organization identified their own internal processes that need strengthening, and strategies for improvement. The capacity needs identified were mostly cutting across all the three local partners. Under the project management cycle, the key issues were; lack of capacity for resource mobilisation, lack of information on funding opportunities, limited capacity to develop winning proposals and report writing, and these limitations guided the formulation of the training materials and follow up action being undertaken.

In line with human resource, staff turnover was highlighted as another issue, limited tools for effectively conducting work were highlighted. The lack of clarity on some policies was identified strongly since most policies are covered under a general policy. The gender policy was lacking

clarity in all the three local partners, therefore a training in Gender was conducted in November 2023.

To leverage on future project designs, we also learnt about successful conservation farming techniques that Conservation Farming Unit (CFU) is promoting that contribute to biodiversity conservation through minimised soil disturbance. Kaluli Development Foundation (KDF) has successfully run livelihood diversification projects, through livestock pass on to improve resilience to climatic shocks. Environment Africa (EA) shared their experience working with the youth in the communities for sustainable interventions and long-term change. The training also focused on understanding the mission statements of the organisations, and the objective setting for clarity in program implementation and keep staff engaged. The training also looked at different steps of project planning and its importance for successful project implementation.

Activity 1.5 Finance system training

The training with Finance staff from Environment Africa, Kaluli Development Foundation and Conservation Farming Unit focused on assessments of their existing finance systems, Finance manuals, reporting template development and orientation, Risk Registers, Audits, workflows, successes, and challenges of project implementation to mention a few.

Considering the huge cost attached to Finance systems such as the initial set up costs, Training and Data migration, it was recommended to supplement and upgrade existing Finance systems for sustainability beyond the project life span and provide onsite support to the three (3) organisations.

Activity 1.6 Train the local organizations to develop and update Procurement and Logistics policy and guidelines.

The local partners did not have stand-alone procurement policies, as they were embedded in the finance policies. So, Members of staff from each of the three organisations were Trained to develop procurement and logistics policy and guidelines. The training focused on the procurement processes, Asset Management, and control to fill the gaps of the capacity analysis that was conducted. The follow up will continue to be made throughout the project period to ensure that the systems are fully embedded in the organisations.

Activity 1.7 Train the local organizations to develop and update Human Resources policy and guidelines.

The three local organisations were trained to develop and update Human Resources policy and guidelines. The training also focused specifically on discipline grievance procedures to guide management and general staff.

Activity 1.8 Train the local organizations to develop project Life-cycle training and tools development.

The training on the project Lifecycle and tools development was conducted between 19th to 22nd September 2023 for the three organisations. Trained staff have trained others in their organisations. Another follow up training was conducted in March 2024 by the Regional Experts, and both training materials have been shared with the local partners, for them to continue referring to them and to use the materials to conduct their in-house trainings. The local partners were trained on project development, from theory of change to log-frameworks and evaluations and the tools used in different organization for them to adopt.

The biggest gap identified for the local partners has been intel on available funding opportunities. Action Against Hunger has been supporting Local Partners with sharing opportunities for funding because Action Against Hunger has an established Department that is focused on monitoring funding opportunities.

Henceforth, what Action Against Hunger has done is to partner with the three local NGOs to develop concept notes to secure funding for implementation of climate resilient food systems, nature-based solutions, water resource management and Disaster Risk Reduction. After the

training, one proposal has been developed and submitted to ACGO Agriculture Foundation worth EUR450,000, "Building Resilient Adaptation to Climate Change through Agricultural Education (BRACAE)." To continue enhancing the capacity, Action Against Hunger is sharing relevant funding calls to the local partners and is continuing with consortiums in responding to funding opportunities. Other co-creations are responses to Climate Clean Air Coalition focusing on Household Energy, Smart Agriculture and Waste Management. Action Against Hunger has been enhancing capacity building through co-creation of proposals and concept notes, in some cases supporting the local partners to prime the funding opportunities as large as \$1 million. The results are yet to be received for the applications so far made.

Activity 1.9 Training and trial runs on data collection, subsequent data collection, analysis, mapping and curating the data for reporting as well as archiving.

In the preceding year, significant efforts were dedicated to enhancing the capacity of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) officers in the domain of data collection tool design. Through comprehensive training programs and workshops, these officers underwent rigorous skill-building exercises focused on the intricacies of crafting effective data collection instruments. The objective was to empower them with the expertise necessary to design robust tools tailored to the specific needs and objectives of their initiatives.

During the subsequent reporting period 3 (1 male, 2 female) M&E officers from the partner local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) utilized innovative digital data collection platforms such as Kobo Collect, the platform provided a seamless interface for data collection, enabling officers to capture, manage, and analyse data in real-time. Harnessing the knowledge and skills acquired in data collection tool design, they successfully conceptualized and developed three distinct levels of questionnaires: Key Informant (KI), Household (HH), and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) questionnaires which were used for the pre impact assessment exercise for the irrigation intervention on the project.

OUTPUT 2

Activity 2.1 Conduct workshop where Local Organization develop comprehensive projects that are effectively planned, easily implementable with verifiable results on food security, value addition and marketing through collective invention by the communities.

A workshop was conducted to allow local partners with support from the Ministry of Agriculture technical staff and other stakeholders to effectively plan implementable projects that can yield verifiable results. Climate smart demo plots on the Simple Family Drip irrigation system (FDS) were proposed to promote efficient and effective use of water - a limited resource in our region of operation, these plots will increase climate resilience and food security in our communities as well as bring about value addition and marketing opportunities to the host communities. Each local partner is to have a minimum of three garden plots, managed by women's group, an Individual Household, and a community-youth group as direct beneficiaries respectively, and over 300 indirect beneficiaries per plot i.e. approximately 2700 beneficiaries in total by the end of the project. This activity slowed down due to the Cholera outbreak and drought situation, that changed the operational dynamics.

Additionally, Community Water Conservation Groups are being setup from each demo plot whose role involves spearheading awareness on water conservation, Water and Sanitation and Hygiene as well as maintenance of facilities (Gardens, fences, and drip irrigation). These sites will also be used to incorporate nutrition activities and awareness for the host communities with support from our government stakeholders to further strengthen resilience among households.

The local partners are further mobilising resources to scale up these projects from demonstration plots to actual household implementation, to enhance food security.

Activity 2.2 Support the organization in developing visual reports to share with communities and stakeholders.

The organization played a crucial role in developing visual reports to effectively communicate project activities and findings to communities and stakeholders. These reports, crafted in collaboration with partners and government ministries, provided clear and accessible insights

into project progress and outcomes. Through engaging visual storytelling techniques, the reports simplified complex data, enhancing understanding and engagement among diverse stakeholders. Additionally, the organization organized a data disseminating workshop, bringing together stakeholders to share baseline findings and discuss project insights. During the workshop, participants had the opportunity to interact with the visual reports, fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration. By soliciting feedback and input from stakeholders, the organization ensured that project interventions remained responsive to community needs and priorities, contributing to the project's success and sustainability.

Activity 2.3 Train and mentor the local organization update their internal policies especially on safeguarding as well as operational manuals to support elaborate project design and implementation.

The participants were trained and mentored to update their internal policies on safeguarding as well as operational manuals to support elaborate project design and implementation. The safeguarding training was repeated for the second time on 17th April 2024, with feedback from local partners as they appreciate the training more, that the training should extend to our Government Counterparts who by default are part of the project. Further capacity building was provided by Regional Technical Experts from Action Against Hunger Nairobi on project design, synergising Nutrition and WASH in FSL and biodiversity programs to strengthen further resilience of the households. Post training support mechanisms such as mentoring will continue beyond the project life cycle because a rapport has been created for continuous knowledge exchange, hence even monitoring will continue to strengthen the policies.

OUTPUT 3

Activity 3.1: Conduct a budgeting workshop for the local organizations and have the teams develop comprehensive budget templates as well as sample project budgets.

The Local partners have been trained in project formulation that include budgeting, and they have been able to develop proposals and Concept Notes adapting to different donor requirements. Action Against Hunger is supporting CFU to expand donor recipient base, by supporting it to register with USAID to obtain Unique Entity ID (UEI) to be eligible to apply directly for USAID Funding. On the other hand, the partner has been exposed to USAID budget application as a sub, that was a bit complex, but with support from Finance Technical Expert, Teshome Muleta and other team members from Action Against Hunger, the partner was able to prepare the budget. This is in addition to other donors such as Climate Clean Air Coalition where each of the three Local Partners has been given an opportunity to lead/prime the Application managing the whole process, including budgeting.

Activity 3.2: Conduct peer learning sessions to review individual organization HR manual Salary scale and participation in peer salary and benefit surveys.

Prior to the training, all the three local partners had some existing policies and manuals in place that formed a basis for the training and improvement. The local organizations were trained and supported to update their manual for Human Resources borrowing from the materials from Action Against Hunger. They are also being supported to join a network of non-profit organizations where current changes and policy are discussed and to participate in regular salary surveys. EA is a member of the Zambia National Child Rights Network, that is also involved in HR surveys.

In terms of the remuneration, the three organisations are compliant with the labour laws in Zambia. The process of strengthening the HR policies and active engagement in the NGO networks continues to be strengthened through participation in meetings.

Activity 3.3 Generate update maps with date of the watersheds that the local organization cover and reports from the baseline and mid-term reviews they conducted.

To enhance the environmental conservation and management efforts in the local community, in the previous year three staff members from the local partners received training on how to generate updated maps of the watersheds within their operational area using Quantum

Geographic Information System (QGIS). This initiative aims to improve the accuracy and accessibility of watershed information. During this reporting period, the project achieved a significant milestone by successfully developing and printing watershed maps for the 8 target districts. The maps depicted a span of 10 years, from 2013 to 2023. These served as dynamic visual representations, illustrating the evolving landscape of watershed activities over the designated time frame.

Each local partner that attended the baseline report dissemination workshop received printed copies of these meticulously crafted maps. The distribution of these maps empowered partners to showcase the changes and developments in watershed activities within their respective areas of operation. This dissemination strategy not only enhanced awareness but also fostered community engagement and participation in watershed conservation efforts.

Activity 3.4 Conduct routine Monitoring, Evaluation and learning once every quarter.

The organization established a robust routine of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) activities, conducting quarterly assessments to monitor project activities and drive continuous improvement. Visits to local NGO sites were a cornerstone of this process, where dedicated teams assessed progress, provided support, and fostered engagement with stakeholders on the ground. Through close collaboration with local partners, challenges were identified and addressed promptly, ensuring project objectives were met efficiently. Additionally, the Country Director's personal visits to project sites further strengthened partnerships, offering support and resources to enhance local capacity and drive positive change within communities. These proactive MEL efforts and high-level engagements exemplified the organization's commitment to effective project management and partnership development, ultimately advancing progress towards project goals.

Activity 3.5 Exit and close out reporting.

The project has been having monthly meeting where progress of the project is shared, which is critical to the build-up to the preparation of close out report at the end of the project. The local partners have also been shared with in advance the reporting requirements and templates to ensure that they are collecting and reporting on relevant activities to easy and meet the donor requirement on the overall

3.2 Progress towards project Outputs

Overall, the project has made substantial progress towards its outputs. Tangible progress includes the development of project proposals and M&E practices. These achievements indicate a positive trajectory towards achieving the project's objectives. To ensure continued progress, ongoing monitoring and evaluation will be essential, along with targeted actions to address any identified challenges or gaps.

Output 1: The training provided to local organizations has resulted in tangible outcomes. Local partners have developed comprehensive project proposals focusing on biodiversity and food security outcomes, exemplified by the successful submission of proposals refer Activity 1.8.

Baseline survey has been conducted, providing essential insights into the ecosystem and community dynamics in watershed areas. Workshops on self-assessment, objective setting, and project planning have been completed, enhancing organizational capacity across various departments.

Output 2: Local organizations have been empowered with functional tools for operations. Workshops have been conducted to develop comprehensive projects focused on food security, value addition, and marketing, showcasing community involvement in project planning. Support has been provided for the development of visual reports to share project progress with stakeholders. Additionally, training, and mentoring sessions have successfully updated internal policies, including safeguarding and operational manuals, supporting project implementation.

Output 3: Organizational capacity in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices has been strengthened. Local organizations have been trained in M&E integration with data collection tools, enhancing their capabilities in this area.

3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

The project outcome, enabling local partners to design and deliver biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction programs in watershed communities of Zambia, has seen significant progress. Local partners now possess knowledge and capacity in conservation and restoration approaches suitable for watershed areas. Staff training and capacity-building initiatives have equipped local organizations with the necessary skills to implement large-scale programs effectively. The successful development and submission of project proposals demonstrate tangible steps towards achieving the outcome.

Outcome Indicators:

1. Local partners have knowledge on conservation and restoration approaches ideal for the watersheds.

Baseline Condition: Limited knowledge of conservation and restoration approaches among local partners.

Progress to Date: Through training workshops and capacity building initiatives, local partners have gained substantial knowledge in conservation and restoration approaches suitable for watershed areas. Evidence includes participation in workshops, successful completion of training programs, and the development of watershed maps, project proposals integrating conservation and restoration principles.

2. Local partners have sufficient internal capacity in Finance, HR, M&E, and programs to implement large programs of over £100,000.

Baseline Condition: Limited internal capacity within local partners to implement large scale programs.

Progress to Date: Capacity building efforts focusing on monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and program management have yielded significant improvements in internal capacity. Evidence includes the successful completion of training programs by staff members design of data collection tools, conducting internal surveys and the submission of project proposals for funding exceeding £100,000.

The indicators are adequate for measuring the intended outcome as they provide clear benchmarks against which progress can be assessed. The evidence gathered demonstrates tangible advancements in knowledge and capacity among local NGOs, indicating positive momentum towards achieving the outcome.

Based on the progress observed, the project is likely to achieve the outcome by the end of the funding period. However, continuous monitoring and evaluation will be essential to ensure that progress remains on track and to identify any emerging challenges that may require mitigation strategies. If any obstacles arise that threaten the achievement of the outcome, proactive measures will be taken to address them promptly. This may include targeted capacity building interventions, additional training programs, or adjustments to project strategies to overcome barriers and sustain progress towards the desired outcome.

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Assumption 1: Close working relationship with local provincial and district administration in respective watersheds.

This assumption remains largely valid, as evidenced by ongoing collaboration and engagement between the selected local organizations and provincial and district administrations. Regular meetings and consultations have been held to ensure alignment of project activities with local government priorities and policies. However, occasional challenges have arisen due to

bureaucratic processes and differing priorities, requiring proactive communication and negotiation to maintain effective partnerships.

Assumption 2: Acceptance from communities where organizations will be operating.

The project has largely met this assumption, with evidence of acceptance and support from communities where the organizations are operating. Community consultations, participatory decision-making processes, and awareness-raising activities have fostered a sense of ownership and engagement among community members. However, occasional pockets of resistance or scepticism have been encountered, necessitating targeted community engagement and dialogue to address concerns and build trust.

Assumption 3: Participation of key government actors like forest and wildlife department and energy regulatory board with local organizations.

This assumption holds true, with active participation and engagement from key government actors such as the forest and wildlife department and energy regulatory board. Collaboration agreements have been established to formalize partnerships and delineate roles and responsibilities. Regular meetings and joint planning sessions have facilitated coordination and alignment of efforts towards shared goals.

Assumption 4: Participation of and endorsement of traditional leaderships like the Barotseland Royal Establishment.

The project has successfully engaged traditional leadership, including the local chiefs, in project activities. Endorsement and support from traditional leaders have been instrumental in gaining community trust and facilitating access to resources and networks. Regular consultations and respectful engagement with traditional authorities have ensured their continued involvement and endorsement of project initiatives.

Achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and poverty reduction

Overall, the country has benefited from the internal capacity of local organizations that jointly work with communities living around Zambia's major water towers / watersheds to seamlessly implement poverty eradication and food systems that are climate resilient, less wasteful, less environmentally destructive and less carbon intensive. In terms of biodiversity, over 4,738 community members with support from the local organizations, have a better and actionable understanding of climate change impacts on ecosystems, wildlife as well as the challenges that emerge on human livelihoods along with the responses and interventions that the local organizations can initiate with communities to pursue alternative livelihood that does not instigate human-wildlife confrontation.

The communities along the watersheds have been trained in conservation farming practices, to increase their yields and minimise environmental damages through use of appropriate tools like rippers as opposed to ploughs to minimise soil disturbance. The communities have also learnt safe use of pesticides to minimise damage to the environment, and use of crop rotation for nitrogen fixation. The trainings also covered the interaction and connectivity of the ecosystem, and the repercussions that lack of conservation brings to the entire system, impacting the entire ecosystem along the Zambezi watershed in Zambia. With this knowledge and appreciation, the watershed ecosystems will thrive as natural and managed ecosystems benefiting also from the organizations' strong capabilities technically, supported by strong systems of project management, data collection, and analysis and reporting, strong automated financial management, procurement and operational systems.

Local organizations have grown to be sources of transparent data for research and monitoring of projects based on the wholesome implementation of Kobo toolbox, QGIS and Open HDS systems for data collection and Presentation. For sustained ecosystem management, the local partners have been supported with tools and capabilities that enable them to collaborate with other funders and organizations by confidently articulating their community engagement, transformational approaches, and impact in proposals, with comprehensive work-plans and project implementation plans. They have so far been able to make presentations at public forums

to other stakeholders on the changes that have taken place along the watershed for the last 10 years and solicit for consented efforts from other partners and donors to stop the destruction and seek efforts to restore and manage the existing resources.

3.5 Achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and poverty reduction

The project seeks to achieve key four high impact indicators namely;

1. Successful audit reports for 2 years indicating growth in funds.
2. Full use of financial and operation systems in planning, budgeting, accounting, and human resource management with a strong internal capacity
3. Collaboration with Provincial and National administration in sharing climate data, mitigation, biodiversity tracking leading to joint planning.
4. Participation in biodiversity project consortia as an expert lead on the Zambezi and Kafue watershed conservation interventions

The first indicator will only be reported following the audit at the end of the project.

The indicator two on full use of financial and operation systems in planning, budgeting, accounting, and human resource management are under way, with strong demonstration of capacity in planning and budgeting being highly exhibited through timely reporting and budget preparation to respond to various donor calls and indicated earlier in the report to the benefit of the three local partners, and Government through completing Government efforts.

The long-term capacity of the three local partners has been built through efforts on resource mobilization, program design and implementation of current Darwin 29 projects and others. The increased capacity to mobilise, design and implement programs that are nature based and all-round climate resilient, livelihood and ecosystem system restoration have so far empowered 4,738 Households along the Zambezi Kafue watershed.

Despite the droughts, our beneficiaries can adapt simple agriculture practices and technologies to produce food through backyard-home and community gardens. The Darwin Initiative project is supporting the establishment of 9 irrigation smart agriculture demonstration plots. The use of smart agriculture techniques mitigates the impact of the droughts on the beneficiaries, as the results have shown that those for instance who used conservation farming techniques like crop cover, minimum soil farming.

Additionally, the project through stakeholder engagement workshops has extended the capacity building of Action Against Hunger and Local partner staff to Food Security and Livelihood (FSL), WASH and Nutrition programs within the region as well as linking the project to responsible government ministries such as Ministries of Health and Agriculture to train the beneficiaries in nutrition and WASH. Please refer to Annex 5 report on workshop

Another high-level impact achieved is the enhanced Collaboration with Provincial and National administration in sharing climate data, mitigation, biodiversity tracking leading to joint planning. The local partners working with ACF were able to hold a dissemination workshop of the baseline survey findings, and were able to jointly design the livelihood interventions for the local communities benefiting over 4,738 HH that are also being linked to markets for agricultural technologies thereby contributing to poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation through use of appropriate technologies.

The project also achieved sustainability through close collaboration with government and local organizations taking pole position as a thought leader in Kavango Zambezi Trans-frontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA). The local partners have been recognized as key players and invited to attend international conferences on Accelerating Nature based Solution that took place from 11th to 15th March, 2024 in Livingstone, Zambia with high level participation and conveners like United Nations Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, Africa Union Development Agency, Global Ever Green Alliance to mention but a few, to the amazement of the local partner EA who said and I quote, ' because of the Darwin project, we have now gained

recognition, acceptance and increased interactions with high level organisations including Government”

4. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements

This capacity is contributing immensely to restoring Zambia’s Zambezi watershed and Kafue watershed making up part of the Kavango Zambezi Trans-frontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA). This project is strongly contributed to the Nationally Determined Contribution of Zambia to the Paris Agreement on climate change. This project is building the capacity and capability of local organizations that jointly work with communities living around the Zambia’s Kafue and Zambezi watersheds to implement seamlessly poverty eradication measures and food systems that are climate resilient, less wasteful, less environmentally destructive and less carbon-intensive through training and demonstration. The impact is that the organization is contributing to the communities’ pursuit of sustainable conservation and restoration approaches that are adding to the watershed ecosystems thriving as natural and managed ecosystems benefiting from the local organizations’ strong capabilities technically, supported by strong systems of project management, data collection, analysis and reporting, strong automated financial management, procurement, and operational systems. Environment Africa, Conservation Farming Unit and Kaluli Development Foundation have had their capacity boasted to actually implement climate resilient food systems, livelihoods and markets thereby contributing significantly and directly to seven Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs) specifically Goals (1) no poverty, (2) zero hunger, (3) good health and well-being, (7) affordable and clean energy, (8) decent work and economic growth, (10) reduced inequality, (13) climate action.

The capability and work of the local organization is also contributing to the Zambia National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) developed in 1997 after Zambia ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1993. The NBSAP identifies Zambia priorities, potential and constraints and identifies opportunities for donor support in the conservation and management of the country's biodiversity. The plan recognised over 600,000 households depended directly on Zambia’s biodiversity for their livelihoods. The number has grown since. The dependence of Biodiversity along the Kavango Zambezi Trans-frontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA) section of Zambia is evident on the highways given the huge number of trucks ferrying wood for timber and biomass inform of charcoal.

Empowering local organization to work in supporting the Zambia National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs) and the Nationally Determined Contribution of Zambia to the Paris Agreement on climate change through pursuit of agro-biodiversity with a variation of sustainable crop and livestock production, farming systems, agro-ecological and socio-economic conditions.

In support of the Conventions, Treaties and Agreements, the project has continued engaged with Government and ensuring alignment with Government priorities. Action Against Hunger is working closely with Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, and recently collaborated in resource mobilisation and applied for funding to Africa Development Bank (Climate Adaptation Window) to support activities on climate change, addressing root causes such as biodiversity mismanagement.

5. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Please quantify the proportion of women on the Project Board ¹ .	Board is led by a woman and is 60% women composition (3 female and 2 male).
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¹ 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.

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 ² .	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CFU Board is led by a woman and is 50% female, but senior leadership is male dominated (33/67%). 2. KDF Board is male dominated 86% and 14% female, but staffing is 50% women in key position. 3. EA: The board is female dominated with 71% and 29% male, and senior staffing of 58 female and 42% male.
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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 targeted the staff of the local organization to create a deep awareness of gender equity and that all persons have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities within their organizations and the same principles of gender equality as was designed in the project, the project ensured that the project implementation did not create inequality or perpetuate long-held norms of patriarchy that exclude women and girls from self-determination and asset ownership. The women, the youths were included in the trainings, formulation of water groups and decision making. Out of the beneficiaries, the segregation was as follows:

Darwin Initiative Beneficiaries - 2023					
L.Org	Male	Female	Boys	Girls	TOTAL
CFU	1525	1496			3021
EAZ	171	210	30	30	441
KDF	751	525			1276
TOTAL	2447	2231	30	30	4738

Action Against Hunger's approach actively promoted inclusion of women in the capacity training sessions for organizations. Action Against Hunger also conducted the first round of gender training with all the local partners, and a 2nd session is scheduled for the month of May 2024. The follow up session was because of more knowledge gaps that were identified during the training. It was established that Gender training needs more time to effectively impart the

² 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.

knowledge. Once the second session of the training is conducted, the project will be confident that the Ambassadors that the local partners are appointing will adequately act as peer support to each other. EA appointed Inonge Lubasi as Gender Ambassador and others are awaiting to appoint after 2nd gender training.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

Throughout the reporting period, the project implemented a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to assess the effectiveness of its activities and their contribution to desired outcomes. This involved close collaboration with local partner organizations, such as CFU, KDF, and EA, ensuring alignment with project goals and contextual relevance. Key activities included baseline surveys, capacity-building workshops, and the development of visual reports to communicate progress to stakeholders. The M&E approach proved suitable for demonstrating how outputs and activities directly influenced project outcomes, with qualitative and quantitative indicators providing valuable insights into ecosystem health and community well-being. Despite its effectiveness, areas for improvement were identified, including the need for better coordination among partners and streamlining of M&E processes to enhance efficiency and reliability.

Partners played a central role in the M&E process, actively contributing to data collection, analysis, and reporting activities. Information sharing among partners and stakeholders was facilitated through regular workshops and knowledge exchange forums, fostering collective learning and collaboration. The M&E plan underwent iterative adjustments to better align with evolving project needs, with revisions focusing on enhancing data collection tools, refining indicator frameworks, and strengthening capacity-building initiatives. Moving forward, efforts will continue to address identified areas for improvement and maximize the contribution of monitoring and evaluation to project success and sustainability.

7. Lessons learnt.

Highly motivated and committed community members especially in southern province districts, coupled with excellent support from entire project area's leadership from both traditional and government is really working well for the project.

The streamlining of the project into already existing projects for campaign awareness made it possible to effectively reach high numbers of beneficiaries with a limited budget, thereby increasing the project impact.

Bringing together three different local partners that had never collaborated before, and seeing them develop such good interactions, work together successfully on activities such as baseline survey, has enhanced local partner collaboration and cross learning. This brings about improved coordination for in Country collaboration.

The project has supported the local partners networking beyond project partnership, to the exposure to other INGO and donors, as the partners are always represented by Action Against Hunger in Country and other international forums, and in resources mobilisation. The local partners have enhanced their collaboration with local Government among many others. ***EA reiterated that "Action Against Hunger has enhanced our interactions with non-project partners like WWF, and also recognition and acceptance by Government".***

Challenges

In some cases, the local partners had thinly spread on human resource, where in some districts the partners do not have physical establishment, they are managed by nearby districts. This is also because the project had spread along all districts along the Zambezi Kafue Watershed, covering 8 districts with a limited budget. Working with local partners with limited budget to cover other districts without a physical presence on a lean budget, is challenging, the commitment could be seen, but aligning activities for effective delivery was sometimes a challenge.

Additionally, a limitation in resources and reliance on local partners to use some of its resources like transport, limits effective monitoring of project activities and progress.

Recommendations

For a budget of [REDACTED] even if the need is there along the Zambezi Kafue Watershed, I would not target all the districts along the Watershed, I would select only 3 districts, one for each Local Partner. This could be the reason that Kaluli Development Foundation has performed really well, because they only had one district for implementation.

Include certain budgetary support for transport/logistics so that the beneficiaries can easily be reached by the project. This can sort out partially the issues of reach for the 8 districts that we are saying the project had over-spread.

If not, within the same budget, assign each local partner only one district to operate in. This evidently worked for KDF who decided to concentrate in only one district. This approach ensures that local partners will have their resources both human and material, available within the designated project area to ensure consistency, effectiveness, and efficient delivery.

Furthermore, having one staff 100% paid for by the project under the local partner assigned to work under the project will have fewer competing demands to allow maximum flexibility and concentration on the project and other staff could have only % allocation of their time to the project.

The Project is of value yet limited in funds and time, an extension of operations in terms of funding, coverage, and number of years beyond one year would amplify community transformation and accommodate community project impact measurement at optimum.

I would also put a second component of the project from knowledge to action, where after people have acquired the knowledge under this Darwin 29, the project would go further to provide support to the beneficiaries with tools and resources to apply their acquired knowledge. In this case these beneficiaries now need access to the right smart agriculture tools and equipment such as irrigation, rippers, drought tolerant seeds, access to finance to consolidate the knowledge gained. *Action Against Hunger working with local partners are however working hard to mobilise resources to build on all the tremendous milestones and important gains that Darwin 29 has made, hopefully the opportunity under Darwin 31 could also meet this gap.*

Action Against Hunger would encourage partners doing similar projects to work with local partners, because Action Against Hunger has found that local partners have a wealth of knowledge especially about the communities, which makes the community mobilisation, campaign awareness more effective.

The joint-implementation of the project among 4 partners has been a great learning experience, each partner brought with them great experiences that boosted the project. The project has achieved so much for its budget, it has been a marvel. While Action Against Hunger has built the capacity of the local partners, the local partners also built the capacity of Action Against Hunger through an opportunity to manage the three dynamic local partners. Action Against Hunger design of future programs will not be the same, because of these great lessons through this project.

We would also recommend a careful selection process of the local partners like Action Against Hunger did. With the right selection, you increase your success rate for the project. The Action Against Hunger selection process can be adopted as a model for selecting local partners.

Action Against Hunger would also recommend that the project design takes into consideration, a phase of providing access to the right tools to actualise the knowledge gained. For instance, if you have empowered the farmers to know that ploughing impacts the micro-organisms in the soil, and the farmers have learnt, do they have access to the right tools that replace the bad practices. The access to tools, alternative livelihoods etc can help consolidate the gains of the knowledge imparted in the beneficiaries.

Action Against Hunger would also recommend a longer time frame for the project to give time, to conduct follow up assessment to monitor knowledge retention as 15 months is not adequately to teach, let partners practise and again assess them.

Also being flexible to make necessary changes within the local structures of operation to maximise impact and benefits of the project to the beneficiaries with support from the local partners' leadership and the donors.

Provide institutional support to local Government to effectively backstop the projects because they have budget constraints. Government involvement in the project is key for project institutionalisation in the existing Government structures and easy exit for the project.

Building the learning into the project and future

Action Against Hunger working with local partners are designing projects that will focus on actions/practical implementation of solutions to consolidate the knowledge imparted on the Darwin beneficiaries. The second phase will focus on giving access to the technologies that enhance adaptation to climate change and support the reforestation along the watersheds to promote biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction.

Action Against Hunger with local partners would like to support capacity building of Government, especially at the local level to support field implementation seeing the commitment that Government exhibited under limited resources.

The local partners also appreciated the safeguarding trainings and are keen for the future projects to include safeguarding training for Government institutions that we are working with, as this could not be done under Darwin 29 due to budgetary constraints.

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

There was no feedback that required attention.

9. Risk Management

Yes, there are some risks that have arisen. The Country has experienced the worst drought in the last 40 years, with over 6 million people affected and in need of immediate assistance. The beneficiaries of the Darwin Initiative have not been spared, because of this, as a coping strategy, people may start over-exploiting natural resources as a coping mechanism.

Also, the communities have started shunning away the awareness campaign.

The country also faced a Cholera outbreak that resulted in certain measures by the Government to curb the spread of the disease. Staff in all institutions had to take measures also to stay safe.

The project is trying to link the beneficiaries under this project to other project that are supporting immediate life savings interventions and other medium- and long-term support. Action Against Hunger is also working hard to fundraise resources to support the beneficiaries so that the gains made under this project are not lost.

The project incorporated a WASH component to minimise the risks of the spread of cholera and build long term capacity of the local organisations in WASH, because it has potential to affect the implementation of biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction programs.

- Up-dated version of risk register attached herewith.

10. Sustainability and legacy

Action Against Hunger is part of the national and district working groups where all donors, Government and NGOs and the private sector converge to share progress on projects. Action Against Hunger has adequately used this forum to continue sharing about the Darwin project, and such have generated interest for consortia with other partners like UNDP, FAO, CRS, WWF that they have identified themselves closely to the focus of the Darwin Initiative.

The project has carried out some radio programs to increase visibility. Further publications on print media as well as social media have been made. Several materials such as t-shirts, pop ups and maps have been printed and distributed. The engagement meetings have taken place with the Government, the British High Commission in Zambia, UN Agencies, local and international organisations, and donors where the activities and impact of Darwin are constantly shared. The

resource mobilisation on climate change, ecosystem management and poverty reduction opportunities continue to draw on the evidence from Darwin initiative, making the program known beyond the in-country contacts.

The project has enhanced recognition and acceptance of local partners by Government, leaving a legacy that will enhance quality of future programming.

The interest has been shown through Government commitment to raise more funds to scale up the program, through various endorsement letters provided to the ADB and SADC TFCA. This is because the Government has seen the results of the projects and would like to promote further biodiversity conservation and reduce poverty along the communities in the Zambezi, Kafue watershed.

The local partners have been able to develop and submit several proposals jointly and singularly, demonstrating the confidence that they have gained from the learning. They are showing more aggression towards resource mobilisation.

The local partners are confident to deliver public presentations, e.g they handled the dissemination of the findings of the baseline, addressing all the clarifications that were coming from the participants, this is a demonstration of capacity in data collection, analysis, reporting and presentation.

The local partners that have been trained have also been supported with the training materials, they have capacity to train others to ensure continuity. The fact that the local partners are part of the communities along the Zambezi, Kafue watershed, they will continue carrying forward the practices that they have learnt together with the communities beyond the project life cycle.

Additionally, Government structures have been involved in the project implementation and have been dedicating their technical support to the program, to ensure that the gains made are sustained.

11. Darwin Initiative identity

The project has made several efforts to publicise the Darwin Initiative. For instance, there are pop up materials that have been made are displayed at various functions, at the inception workshop in June 2023, at the training workshop with partners in Choma in September,2023, at the baseline findings dissemination workshop held in Livingstone in March 2024. The project has also printed and distributed branded t-shirts to the Government, local partners, and other stakeholders as a way of enhancing project visibility. The project aired on radio, climate change messages to broaden the project reach, and has been publishing on social media and print media.

The UK's contribution has always been recognised through the placement of logos on the materials, acknowledgement whenever engaging with Government, other donors, and Implementing partners.

The project has been identified as a distinct project in that it has its own dedicated staff who are 100% dedicated to the Darwin Project under Action Against Hunger it has its own resources dedicated and used specifically to Darwin Initiative. The project also holds separate monthly review meetings that focus solely on Darwin Initiative Project.

There is a good understanding of the Darwin Initiative by Government at National and local level, UN Agencies such as UNDP, FAO, UNHCR, local NGOs and INGO. The evidence from the Darwin initiative has been used greatly in consortiums applying for funding where Action Against Hunger has made joint application with UNDP, FAO, UNHCR, CRS, Plan International, KDF, CFU, EA, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Green Economy, and Environment. The project is being used to strengthen requests for resource mobilisations within the Country and outside consortiums with Tanzania and Zimbabwe. All the named organisations are familiar with the project, and Government is the one that launched the project and also has been endorsing fund application to other donors like ADB, EU, SADC TFCA to scale up the project.

12. 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, <i>Musyani Mutambo</i> [REDACTED]
Has the focal point attended any formal training in the last 12 months?	Yes Orientation on safeguarding done in May, 2023
What proportion (and number) of project staff have received formal training on Safeguarding?	Past: 100% [23 Planned: 100% [23]
<p>Has there been any lessons learnt or challenges on Safeguarding in the past 12 months? Please ensure no sensitive data is included within responses.</p> <p>There has not been any safeguarding issues in the past 12 months.</p>	
<p>Please describe any community sensitisation that has taken place over the past 12 months; include topics covered and number of participants.</p> <p>The following are the topics that were covered in the awareness sessions: Identifying early warning systems: The communities were taken through the process of identifying. It was amazing to see that the communities have their own indigenous way of forecasting the impending droughts or floods the information that was complemented with awareness training. Risk Reduction: The communities have been taken through trainings in risk reduction that included setting up climate smart demo plots on the Simple Family Drip irrigation system (FDS) to reduce rainfed agriculture dependence, while also promoting efficient and effective use of water. Integrated water management systems: Considering the social, economic, and environmental aspects of water use and management. The project mobilised the communities and Community Water Groups were set. Here the sensitisations involve spearheading awareness on water conservation, Water and Sanitation and Hygiene as well as maintenance of facilities. The other sensitization that took place focused on conservation farming to enhance biodiversity conservation, were the communities were taken through the smart agriculture, learning on the soil conservation, reducing soil disturbance, mulching and safe use of herbicides and the benefits that come with these practices. This was part of the Anticipatory Actions that also included use of climate appropriate seeds and diversifying livelihood. The communities were sensitized on the dangers of cutting down trees and how it contributes to some of the climate change that the communities themselves identified and experienced such as poor soils, extreme temperatures, droughts, and floods.</p>	
<p>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.</p> <p>There hasn't been any safety and security concerns on the project, however there was only health concerns due to the outbreak of cholera in Zambia that also affected some parts of the project areas. The project responded by reducing the number of gatherings and reducing time spent during the gathering as guided by Ministry of Health. Refer to section 2.3 on challenges and section 9 on risk management.</p>	

13. 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 Initiative Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)

Staff costs (see below)				
Consultancy costs				Funds to be utilized for endline activities Change Request to follow due to emergencies.
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				Funds to be utilized for end of project reviews and activities. Change Request to follow.
Operating Costs				
Capital items (see below)				Over expenditure caused by laptop and Camera replacement
Others (see below)				Due to emergencies in Zambia (drought and cholera), Some funds to be used in the next fiscal year pending Change Request approval.
TOTAL	£165,710.00	£160,806.84		

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 (£)			Internal funding from ACF-USA
Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project (£)	Submission have been made awaiting feedback		

14. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere.

Zambia has faced cholera pandemic recently. In December 2023 at the onset of the delayed rains, Zambia experienced a sudden surge in cholera cases spreading to over 72 districts in 7 provinces. The cases kept going up in January and February, with daily admissions of over 600 people and daily deaths of over 20. Within that period December to 14th March 2024, the Country has experienced mortality of over 700 people. To date, 16th April over 22, 800 people have suffered from cholera within four months, and are struggling to get total recovery, as the disease leaves aftereffects for a long time. The problem is still there with only reduction in daily hospital admission of 60, entailing that the disease has not yet been combated. Considering that some of our project areas have also been affected by the Cholera pandemic, the project has incorporated

the WASH and Nutrition components in the project by training all the three local partners, so that they have capacity to include a WASH message during the climate change awareness, so that we have a health community and smoothen the Darwin project implementation.

Conversely, even though the project did not emphasise the aspect of cross learning, it is one of the major achievements that the project has made. By bringing together the three different local partners, the partners have acknowledged that the project has promoted collaboration among its grantees, encouraging knowledge exchange and partnerships. In the words of CFU Program manager, Stanley Silwiimba “By connecting CFU with other organizations and individuals working in the same field, thereby contributing to more shared learning and exchange of best practices.”

The partners also acknowledge that “Darwin Initiative has provided financial resources to support expand our operations, implement new conservation techniques in water management, food resilient and ecosystems management. Today we are implementing irrigation facilities in Zimba and Livingstone because of Darwin Initiative”.

According to the local partners, being associated with the Darwin Initiative has to some extent increased the visibility and recognition of CFU, KDF and EA with possibilities of attracting additional funding, partnerships and support from other stakeholders interested in conservation and sustainable agriculture.

In terms of exit strategy, the project has been involving Government existing structures to support the beneficiaries, so that there is continuity at the end of the project cycle. Additionally, the use of local partners ensures that beyond the project lifecycle, just as they had to mainstream the awareness campaigns and other community activities, the targeted beneficiaries of the Darwin project are outside their areas of operations, hence the local partners will continue following up on them.

Lastly, the Project is working towards attainment of smooth exit through successful capacity building. So far, the local partners now have:

1. Action Against Hunger has built the capacity for local organizations including acquisition of systems and training of staff.
2. Full use of financial and operation systems in planning, budgeting, accounting, and human resource management with a strong internal capacity.
3. Collaboration with Provincial and National administration in sharing climate data, mitigation, biodiversity tracking leading to joint planning. The local partners were facilitated to hold an information dissemination workshop from 20th March 2024 with Provincial and National administration, and other stakeholders were in attendance, and it generated a lot of interest to guide planning for climate change, biodiversity, and poverty reduction. A total of 40 people were in attendance.
4. Participation in biodiversity project consortia as an expert lead on the Zambezi and Kafue watershed conservation interventions. The local partners are leading some consortiums to support fundraising for biodiversity and poverty reduction interventions along the Zambezi Kafue Watershed, refer to Activity 1.8.

15. 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 (please leave this line in to indicate your agreement to use any material you provide here).

The Darwin Initiative through three local partners successfully reached out to over 4,738 community members within the Zambezi watershed and conducted awareness campaigns in the following topics;

- a. Integrated water resources management
- b. Resource mobilization for both local partners and communities
- c. Risk reduction strategies.

16 project Team members from both Action Against Hunger and Local partners were oriented/trained in WASH & Nutrition for incorporation into the Darwin awareness message and training to respond to the cholera outbreak that affected the Darwin 29 project beneficiaries.

Promote and support beneficiaries through Climate Smart Technologies – 9 Irrigation plots within the project area are being established to promote community and household level adoption thereby promoting food security and climate resilience in the communities.

Zambezi Watershed mapping – Focus on water flow and land use change - activity trend analysis in the last 10 years between 2013 to 2023. (Maps attached)

Built local NGOs’ capacity in data collection, analysis, and mapping for reporting and Project Proposal development. Local partners now have the capacity to lead consortiums and calls for proposals through the health collaboration with Action Against Hunger.

Improved publicity and visibility via social media, website, Radio, Newspapers, and other platforms.

There has been more government, private sector stakeholders, Beneficiaries & local Partners engagement and collaboration throughout the project through workshops, conferences, Disaster response committees at National, provincial, district, and community levels thereby amplifying Action Against Hunger’s Visibility and impact within the project areas.

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	Earth Day		https://www.facebook.com/share/p/7vaPAkiAHRPoK6Nn/?mibextid=oFDknk	Yes
Image	Stakeholders Engagement & Information Dissemination		https://www.linkedin.com/posts/mike-mukuwa-64477912b_darwin-activity-7181766313910910976-kvwq?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop	Yes
Image	Country Director's Field visit		https://www.facebook.com/share/p/jiQXY1huHxGbUQpm/?mibextid=oFDknk	Yes
Image	Capacity Building Workshops		https://www.facebook.com/share/p/tGrpcx4YqR8a8sSz/?mibextid=oFDknk	Yes

Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against Indicators of Success for Financial Year 2023-2024

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2023 - March 2024	Actions required/planned for next period
Outcome: The local NGOs are enabled to operationally and technically design and deliver biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction programmes in watershed communities of Zambia		
Outcome indicator 0.1 Local NGOs have knowledge on conservation and restoration approaches ideal for the watersheds	3 local NGOs trained and rolled out conservation and restoration interventions in target areas see Annex 9	The learning on the demo plots with communities
Outcome indicator 0.2, Local NGOs have sufficient internal capacity in Finance, HR, M&E and programs to implement large programs of over £100,000	9 staff have been trained in Finance M&E and Business development programs	
Output 1 Training for local organizations on operational and technical knowledge that will empower them to implement projects that help communities in watershed areas		
Output indicator 1.1 Local NGOs develop at least one comprehensive project proposal with biodiversity and food security outcomes	A proposal has been developed and submitted to ACGO Agriculture Foundation worth EUR450,000, "Building Resilient Adaptation to Climate Change through Agricultural Education (BRACAE)." Also three other calls are being finalized for submission before 30 th April each for \$1 million to Climate Clean Air Coalition focusing on three different thematic areas, Household Energy, Transformative Agriculture, Transformative Waste Management. Refer to section on Activity 3.2 of the report for more information.	The partners will continue with project designing
Output indicator 1.2 Local NGOs update their internal policies including safeguarding and operational manuals to support project design and implementation	The participants were trained and mentored to update their internal policies on safeguarding as well as operational manuals to support elaborate project design and implementation. Refer to activity 2.3	Local Government to be trained in Safeguarding
Output 2. Local organisations empowered with functional tools for operations like accounting system, HR system and M&E data collection system		
Output indicator 2.1.	The finance system upgrade was done for all partners, and they are already submitting financial reports to ACF before	Continued monitoring and support

Local NGOs are able to prepare comprehensive budgets and record accounting transaction that can be audited	next tranche of payment is done as stipulated in the collaboration agreement.	
Output indicator 2.2. Local NGOs have a simple and easy to use HR systems including recording of staff time, leave tracking and payroll processing away from spreadsheets	The upgrade of the HR system was done.	Continued monitoring and support will be essential to address any remaining gaps and sustain progress towards output targets.
Output indicator 2.3 Local NGOs have comprehensive data collection tools that help in setting up baseline surveys and community registration and continuous data collection when project officers visit communities for follow-ups and trainings	The local NGOs have been empowered with data collection tools. Refer to activity report, baseline survey Annex	The endline survey is scheduled at the end of the project in June.
Output indicator 2.4 Local NGOs have Successfully prepared project budget and comprehensive annual budget	The partners have been able to prepare their project budgets based on the Collaboration Agreement set out.	Continued monitoring and support
Output indicator 2.5 Drafted HR manual Salary scale and participation in peer salary and benefit surveys	This is an ongoing process refer to section 3 above.	Continued monitoring and support
Output indicator 2.6 Organization is able to generate maps and reports	This has been achieved refer to Annexed maps generated in collaboration with local partners.	Final report is remaining to be done at the end of the project
Output 3. Strengthened organizational capacity of local organizations in financial management, human resources, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices.		
Output indicator 3.1 Increased financial capability among local organizations, as evidenced by the successful development and utilization of comprehensive budget templates and project budgets.	The partners have been able to work with different donor templates to prepare budgets in proposals. Refer to activity progress reporting on this.	They will continue exploring other donors that they have not yet encountered
Output indicator 3.2 Enhanced financial transparency and accountability within local organizations, demonstrated by proficient use of the finance system for recording auditable accounting transactions. Output indicator 3.3 Trained local organizations on HR systems and Implemented HR systems for staff time recording, leave tracking, and payroll processing	3.2 Finance Systems were upgraded has been, and very good reports have been come from the local partners but follow up is required. 3.3 The training was conducted and the HR systems are functional. Refer to the training report Annexed.	Follow up monitoring is required, the physical engagements were minimised because of Cholera outbreaks

<p>Output indicator 3.4 Improved data management and decision-making capabilities within local organizations, as indicated by the successful integration of M&E systems with comprehensive data collection tools, leading to better baseline surveys, community registration, and continuous data collection during follow-ups and trainings</p>	<p>3.4 This has been achieved, impressively when the local partners and ACF met to position for Darwin Extra for 2024 Call, the partners were referring to findings from the baseline in order to design the project, an indication of data utilisation. Also to demonstrate this capacity, refer to baseline survey report, the baseline information dissemination workshop report.</p>	<p>Endline survey is pending, and scheduled for June</p>

Annex 2: Project’s full current Indicators of Success as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification
<p>Outcome: The local NGOs are enabled to operationally and technically design and deliver biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction programmes in watershed communities of Zambia</p>	<p>Local NGOs have knowledge on conservation and restoration approaches ideal for the watersheds</p> <p>Local NGOs have sufficient internal capacity in Finance, HR, M&E and programs to implement large programs of over £100,000</p>	<p>Review of data collected using the M&E tools provided to the organization to generate reports on trends especially data on effectiveness of trainings, food security interventions adopted and yields, conservation efforts e.g. seeds and seedlings planted, etc</p> <p>Surveys conducted at the start of trainings for the organizations and by the organization at the beginning and end of the sessions evaluating knowledge of practice and policy and changes observed and needed at practice and community level Audit reports of organizations</p>
<p>Output 1 Training for local organizations on operational and technical knowledge that will empower them to implement projects that help communities in watershed areas</p>	<p>1.1 Local NGOs develop at least one comprehensive project proposal with biodiversity and food security outcomes</p> <p>1.2 Local NGOs update their internal policies including safeguarding and operational manuals to support project design and implementation</p>	<p>1.1 Pre and post training surveys for the Local NGO to test impact, understanding and knowledge of the participants</p> <p>1.2 Detailed project proposals with in-depth theory of change, log frames and monitoring strategies from local NGOs was done, and continue to do through responding to donor opportunities</p> <p>1.3 Local organisational policies, such as safeguarding policies are done.</p> <p>1.4 Successfully prepared project budget and comprehensive annual budget</p>
<p>Output 2 Local organisations empowered with functional tools for operations like accounting system, HR system and M&E data collection system.</p>	<p>2.1 Local NGOs can prepare comprehensive budgets and record accounting transaction that can be audited.</p> <p>2.2 Local NGOs have a simple and easy to use HR systems including recording of staff time, leave tracking and payroll processing away from spreadsheets.</p> <p>2.3 Local NGOs have comprehensive data collection tools that help in setting up baseline surveys and community registration and continuous data collection when project officers visit communities for follow-ups and trainings</p>	<p>2.1 Drafted HR manual Salary scale and participation in peer salary and benefit surveys</p> <p>2.2 Organization can generate maps and reports</p>

	<p>2.4 Local NGOs have Successfully prepared project budget and comprehensive annual budget.</p> <p>2.5 Drafted HR manual Salary scale and participation in peer salary and benefit surveys</p> <p>2.6 Organization can generate maps and reports</p>	
<p>Output 3 Strengthened organizational capacity of local organizations in financial management, human resources, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices.</p>	<p>3.1 Increased financial capability among local organizations, as evidenced by the successful development and utilization of comprehensive budget templates and project budgets.</p> <p>3.2 Enhanced financial transparency and accountability within local organizations, demonstrated by proficient use of the finance system for recording auditable accounting transactions.</p> <p>3.3 Number of Trained local organizations (staff) on HR systems and Implemented HR systems for staff time recording, leave tracking, and payroll processing</p> <p>3.4 Improved data management and decision-making capabilities within local organizations, as indicated by the successful integration of M&E systems with comprehensive data collection tools, leading to better baseline surveys, community registration, and continuous data collection during follow-ups and trainings</p>	
<p>Activities</p> <p>1.1 Training Local organization to review past project reports on successes and recommendations</p> <p>1.1 Local Organization conducts baseline survey at community level to understand the ecosystem and the human element of the communities living in the watersheds</p> <p>1.2. Local organizations are taken through a workshop to do Self-assessment, objective setting and project planning</p> <p>1.2. Finance system training</p> <p>1.2. Train the local organizations to develop and update Procurement and Logistics policy and guidelines</p> <p>1.2. Train the local organizations to develop and update Human Resources policy and guidelines</p> <p>1.2. Train the local organizations to develop project Life-cycle training and tools development</p> <p>1.2. Training and trial runs on data collection, subsequent data collection, analysis, mapping and curating the data for reporting as well as archiving</p> <p>1.3 Conduct mid-term analysis on the use of data collection tool and the reports being generated by the organization to gauge communities appreciation of the competency of the local organizations and embrace jointly developed interventions in livelihood, conservation and ecosystem restoration</p> <p>2.1 Conduct workshop where Local Organization develop comprehensive projects that are effectively planned, easily implementable with verifiable results on food security, value addition and marketing through collective invention by the communities.</p>		

- 2.2 Support the organization in developing visual reports to share with communities and stakeholders.
- 2.3 Train and mentor the local organization update their internal policies especially on safeguarding as well as operational manuals to support elaborate project design and implementation

- 3.1 Conduct a budgeting workshop for the local organizations and have the teams develop comprehensive budget templates as well as sample project budgets.
- 3.2. Train the account teams on using finance system acquired to record accounting transaction that can be audited.
- 3.3 Train the local organizations to have simple and easy to use HR systems including recording of staff time, leave tracking and payroll processing away from spreadsheets.
- 3.4 Acquire and support the local organization to integrate their M&E with comprehensive data collection tools that help in setting up baseline surveys and community registration and continuous data collection when project officers visit communities for follow-ups and trainings.

Important Assumptions

To achieve a team of local organisations that contribute to the national capacity and capability, the project assumes that:

- 1. The selected organisations have a close working relationship with local provincial and district administration in the respective watersheds
- 2. That there is acceptance from the communities where the organisations will be operating
- 3. There is participation of key government actors like forest and wildlife department and energy regulatory board with local organisations
- 4. There is participation of and endorsement of traditional leaderships like the Barotseland Royal Establishment

Annex 3: Standard Indicators

Table 1 Project Standard Indicators

DI Indicator number	Name of indicator using original wording	Name of Indicator after adjusting wording to align with DI Standard Indicators	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
DI-A01	People who attended training on CBD Reporting Standards	Number of officials from national Department of Environment who attended training on CBD Reporting Standards	People	Men	20			20	60
DI-C17	Articles published by members of the project team	Number of unique papers published in peer reviewed journals	Number	None	1			1	4
DI-A03	Local NGOs have sufficient internal capacity in Finance, HR, M&E and programs to implement large programs of over £100,000	Number of local/national organisations with improved capability and capacity because of project.	Number of organizations	Organisation Type.	3			3	3
DI-A04	Local NGOs have knowledge on conservation and restoration approaches ideal for the watersheds	Number of people reporting that they are applying new capabilities (skills and knowledge) 6 (or more) months after training.	People	Gender; Age Group; Stakeholder group: Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, Nationals, public sector, civil society, private sector;	20			20	20
DI-A05		Number of trainers trained reporting to have delivered further training by the end of the project.	People; Number trained	Gender; Age Group; Stakeholder group: Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, Nationals, public sector, civil	20			20	20

DI Indicator number	Name of indicator using original wording	Name of Indicator after adjusting wording to align with DI Standard Indicators	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
				society, private sector.					
DI-A07		Number of government institutions/departments with enhanced awareness and understanding of biodiversity and associated poverty issues	Government institutions	Govt. Organisation Type (local, national, treasury, planning, environmental, agricultural, forestry).	5			5	5

Table 2 Publications

Title	Type (e.g. journals, manual, 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)
Action Against Hunger (Action Against Hunger) strengthens NGOs' capacity in Zambia	The Mast Newspaper	Dr. Oliver Kandela Bulaya, 2024.	Male	Zambian	The Mast Newspaper, Lusaka	The Mast Newspaper. The Mast, Tuesday March 5, 2024, Page 4
Action Against Hunger partners with local NGOs to drive sustainable irrigation initiatives - a call to action in the midst of climate crisis	The Mast Newspaper	Dr. Oliver Kandela Bulaya, 2024.	Male	Zambian	The Mast Newspaper, Lusaka	The Mast Newspaper. The Mast, Tuesday March 12, 2024. Page 4
Action Against Hunger and how they are preparing communities	Local Radio Station	Gestin Hamuwele, 2024.	Male	Zambian	Sinazongwe Local Radio Station	Sinazongwe Local Radio Station Saturday and Monday

Title	Type (e.g. journals, manual, 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)
Against natural Disasters in Sinazongwe Districts						

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?	X
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to BCF-Reports@niras.com putting the project number in the Subject line.	X
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.	X
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 15)?	X
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	X
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	X
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	