

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

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

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2023

Project reference	DARNV013
Project title	Trialling Wild Harvest Improvement Projects for sustainable wild plant trade
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Morocco, Uzbekistan
Lead partner	TRAFFIC
Partner(s)	FairWild Foundation, Global Diversity Foundation, Moroccan Biodiversity and Livelihoods Association, Uzbekistan Association of organisations for the production and processing of liquorice and other medicinal plants
Project leader	Cara Flowers
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	Not live yet

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

The project has commenced with contracting of key partner organisations and onboarding to the reporting and management processes. Regular team meetings (virtual) have been established. Change request regarding the project start date has been submitted and approved by DEFRA (see below), with revised start date of the project 1 July 2023. The timetable of implementation has been adjusted appropriately.

Overall, project activities planned for delivery between June-September 2023 are on track. Details provided below:

Terms of reference for the multidisciplinary expert group (MEG) have been drawn up, feedback sought and now finalised. A list of potential members has been created (**Activity 1.1.**)

Terms of reference for the research into Fisheries Improvement Projects (FIPs) and their relationship to wild plant harvesting have also been created. Feedback has been sought and work on the literature review has commenced (**Activity 1.2.**) Plans were made for the project manager attendance of a sustainable supply chain coalition event ([Rethinking Value Chains | Putting People & The Environment First](#)) in October with a focus on local engagement to build external relationships for this work. This will inform some of the research through engaging with other sectoral colleagues regarding supply chain interventions and lessons from certification that have aimed to maximise benefit for communities and the environment.

Following Activity 1.2, the analysis and synthesis of FairWild, MSC, and FIP frameworks to produce draft WHIP framework will commence in the next reporting period (**Activity 1.3.**)

Activities 2.1 and 2.2 in Morocco and are due to commence in January 2024. Nevertheless, steps to prepare for these activities have been initiated, together with the project partners.

Activities in Morocco have been delayed by the severe earthquake in September 2023. The epicentre of the earthquake was in the High Atlas Mountains, where project partners GDF and MBLA carry out the majority of their work with rural communities. The project implementation in Morocco has thus been significantly impacted – see below for further details. Activities to start preparation for the pilot in Morocco are anticipated to restart in November 2023.

In Uzbekistan, the project is aligning with activities underway by GIZ and the FairWild Foundation to support sustainable wild harvesting of liquorice in Republic of Karakalpakstan and Khorezm Oblast, under GIZ's project "Ecologically Oriented Regional Development in the Aral Sea Region" (ECO ARAL). FairWild Foundation has recently authored a guidebook on sustainable liquorice harvesting for this project, which will be a useful tool for the WHIPs pilot project in Uzbekistan. As part of the ECO ARAL project, a sustainable liquorice info day has been organised in Nukus on October 25th. The WHIPs project will be able to draw from the stakeholder identification and engagement for this event. Initial discussions have been held with the consultant identified to implement activities in Uzbekistan (a senior member of the Association of Organizations for the Production and Processing of Liquorice and Other Medicinal Plants, who is also consulting for the ECO ARAL project), and a ToR for his assignment has been drawn up.

Additionally, interviews with relevant industry stakeholders have begun (**Activity 2.5**).

Work has started on building a shared influence project plan (**Activity 3.1**). This will be a working document that evolves and develops further as additional information is added. The influence plan will need to include specific stakeholder analysis for each landscape and to build upon this in a participatory manner.

Work has also started on developing a webpage for the WHIPs project within traffic.org.

Standard indicators: Regarding the standard indicators that this project will be using, baseline data will need to be collected for reporting on our indicator framework next year. This will be particularly important for indicators *DI-B04 - Number of new/improved sustainable livelihoods/poverty reduction management plans available and endorsed* and *DI-D01 - Hectares of habitat under sustainable management practices*.

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

The project has started later than anticipated due to changes in staff at TRAFFIC International with two staff members who were originally proposed for the project now no longer working for the organisation. As a result the project manager has changed and a new individual is in post with their role currently straddling two roles originally identified for the project (i.e. project manager and research/pilot coordinator). TRAFFIC International submitted a successful request to delay the project start date and combine roles.

On September 9th there was a severe earthquake of 6.8 across the project area in Morocco. As a result both Moroccan Biodiversity and Livelihoods Association and Global Diversity Foundation are focussed on humanitarian relief efforts at present. TRAFFIC International understands that GDF have had a call with DEFRA and FCDO colleagues in order to increase humanitarian capacity and eventually move towards resuming other project activities. TRAFFIC International supports this approach and will maintain a watching brief on the situation updating the challenge fund in the next reporting period if significant delays or changes to the current programme of work are required. It is possible that there are additional earthquakes in the project area or that humanitarian work becomes more intensive than planned. TRAFFIC International hopes that the FCDO will support GDF, MBLA and other local partners to deliver

the much needed immediate aid and support with long-term resilience and capacity building. The WHIPs project remains a helpful element for long-term resilience building in communities affected by the Earthquake assuming that damage to natural resources and income generating activities is not more extensive than current assessments illustrate.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: Yes

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

Change request reference if known: CR23-045

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

Actual spend: £ [REDACTED]

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

No Estimated underspend: £0

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

Not applicable

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

No