



**BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



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

Half Year Report

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

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 2025

Please note all projects that were active before 1st October 2025 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line.

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| Project reference | 31-012 |
| Project title | Afroalpine conservation through sustainable livelihoods and institutions inspired by tradition |
| Country(ies)/territory(ies) | Ethiopia |
| Lead Organisation | University of Oxford (Wildlife Conservation Research Unit - WildCRU) |
| Partner(s) | Dinkenesh Ethiopia |
| Project Leader | Jorgelina Marino |
| Report date and number (e.g. HYR1) | April 2025 - Sep 2025 HYR2 |
| Project website/blog/social media | ethiopianwolf.org |

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

The project continued to make good progress during this period, despite security issues resulting in an unpredictable operating environment and intermittent field access. Communities remained highly engaged, and Year 2 planned activities moved forward, particularly those linked to livelihoods, peer-to-peer learning and community-led monitoring. Momentum has been driven largely by local ownership and the capacity of local committees, *budins* and model farmers to operate with reduced supervision.

- Output 1. Sustainable livelihood cooperatives and associations formed and livelihoods implemented. Work progressed in both guassa and honey livelihood streams. In South Wollo, 5.1ha of degraded *chichisa* land were rehabilitated through guassa planting by 118 households organised into two *budins*. This approach continues to show strong potential for scaling and for strengthening community autonomy. Progress in Asta Mar honey production also expanded. A total of 80 transitional and modern beehives were produced for distribution in South Wollo and beehives and accessories were transported and handed over to 40 beneficiaries. Five existing *budins* in Gazgibella Woreda were strengthened with new members, increasing participation from 20 to 40 producers. An additional 20 new honey producers were selected and organised into three *budins*.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output 2. Communities and authorities with improved capacity for conservation and co-management. a) Preparation toward community-led monitoring: recognising that full implementation depends on periods of safe access, a consultation meeting was held with 33 community representatives in Lalibela. We documented local values of biodiversity and priorities for traditional monitoring, a foundational work to design context-appropriate monitoring approaches. b) Participated in a validation workshop of the 10-year General Management Plan for the Abune Yosef CCA, which brought together 36 participants from woreda, zonal, and regional offices, scouts and community representatives; this helped re-establish dialogue around natural resource governance in a period when many formal structures are not functioning. c) Preparatory work for the revival of conservation councils: 35 council members selected across Abune Yosef, Enjafat, Wodebiye, and Telfetit in North Wollo, and 45 from across 11 kebeles in South Wollo; preparations for council meetings ongoing. • Output 3. Best practice dissemination and increased capacity for scaling. a) Strengthening model farmers: peer-to-peer training-of-trainers session for nine model farmers in Tenta, who then trained participating households. b) Three-day model farmer TOT, delivered by the Lalibela National Honey Museum for 12 producers, seven of whom have already supported beneficiaries during bee colony transfers in their <i>budins</i>. c) Improved organisation of our livelihood beneficiary datasets for guassa and honey producers now including ecological information relevant for impact monitoring. d) A draft manuscript on the integration of guassa cultivation into local livelihoods was prepared. • Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Socioeconomic and scenario interviews continued (86 new scenario interviews; baseline socioeconomic surveys reached 199 households), building the basis for evaluating poverty and livelihood outcomes at the end of the project. Most ecological monitoring activities remain delayed but the groundwork for an integrated monitoring plan is now in place. | |
| <p>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.</p> | |
| <p>Countryside unrest and insecurity dictated sporadic field access; windows for implementation determined by local security dynamics and the erratic functioning of local administrations. While core livelihood activities progressed well, other components were delayed: (a) ecological monitoring could not begin as safe field access was limited; (b) council revival meetings postponed due to temporary dissolution of these institutions; (c) guassa planting and colony transfers restricted to safe areas; to be expanded next season through a strategy that enables work in more sites with less supervision; and (d) occasional delays in transporting materials due to widespread road closures. Still, communities continued planting and installing hives with remote support, supporting the project's shift toward more devolved, community-led implementation. These delays are manageable and do not threaten project viability, but some Year 2 activities will move into Year 3. A timeline adjustment and re-budget request is begun prepared, reflecting revised steps activities, the underspend from reduced movement, and opportunities to strengthen peer learning and livelihood assistants.</p> <p>Lessons learned: The communities have shown strong readiness and autonomy, mobilising quickly when safe access opens. Diversified guassa planting models create more flexible entry points for participation, and peer-to-peer learning through model farmers has become essential when staff cannot travel. Local institutions also provide useful support with minimal supervision. The concept of Livelihood Assistants offers a practical, decentralised, implementation model. Staff have strengthened risk communication, using community updates to guide deployment and regularly revising the risk register. Overall, these lessons show that the project can continue to deliver meaningful progress under challenging conditions by relying more on local leadership and flexible, decentralised approaches.</p> | |
| <p>3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?</p> | |
| Discussed with NIRAS: | No |
| Formal Change Request submitted: | No in this period |

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| Received confirmation of change acceptance: | Yes (on previous period) |
| Change Request reference if known: | |
| 4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025) 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 2026)? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Estimated underspend: £ [REDACTED] | |
| 4c. If you expect an underspend, then you should consider your project budget needs carefully. We anticipate an underspend for the current financial year, primarily due to reduced field access and postponed implementation activities, with operational costs lower than expected. We are preparing a re-budget and timeline adjustment to submit before the 31 December deadline. | |
| 5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures? At this stage, we have no additional issues to raise. | |
| 6. Project risk management The project continues to operate in areas affected by intermittent instability and unpredictable access. Our risk register has been updated to reflect new and evolving risks, including: risks to staff and beneficiaries when travelling to project sites; risks to local partners when engaging in project activities during social unrest periods; potential loss of equipment stored in government offices. Mitigation measures include: reliance on community alerts to determine safe travel windows; increased use of committee members and model farmers to reduce staff movement; flexible planning and rapid deployment during safe periods; exploring alternative secure storage locations for project equipment. | |
| 6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| <div style="background-color: black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div> | |
| 7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent Annual Report. As a reminder, all projects that were scored as 'Not Yet Sensitive' in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment of their latest Annual Report should demonstrate how they are meeting the minimum GESI-Sensitive standard. During this period, the project made progress in addressing Year 1 feedback by improving internal systems for evidence tracking and documentation, preparing stronger quantitative summaries for future submissions. Work has begun to address gaps in ecological monitoring (Indicators 2.4 and 2.5), with a detailed monitoring plan to be implemented once field access allows. Baseline socioeconomic datasets expanded substantially during this period, laying a stronger foundation for end-of-project evaluation. Underspend and budget variances linked to access constraints are being addressed through the current re-budget process. The project also advanced its GESI commitments, with growing women's participation in guassa and honey activities, stronger peer learning through model farmers, and homestead guassa planting offering an accessible entry point for women and elder-headed households; scenario interviews further clarified gendered livelihood dynamics. | |

Checklist for submission

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| Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, and annexe other requested materials as appropriate. | Yes |
| Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ? | Yes |
| Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website? | N/A |
| Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email. | Yes |
| Submit to BCF-Reports@niras.com | |
| Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report. | |