

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	DPLUS 112
Project title	Capacity building in fisheries evidence, networks and management (Virgin Islands)
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	The Virgin Islands (BVI)
Lead partner	Centre for Environment Fisheries & Aquaculture Science (Cefas)
Partner(s)	Government of the Virgin Islands, Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)
Project leader	Leila Fonseca
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	25.10.23 HYR 4
Project website/blog/social media	X: @CefasGovUK @CANARICaribbean

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

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

Output 1: Creation of a formalised network of fisherfolk

No actions during the last six months.

Output 2: Fisherfolk capacity building in fisheries management

From July 19-21, four fisherfolk representatives and one representative from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DOAF) from the Virgin Islands participated in a three-day fisherfolk peer learning exchange to Barbados. The exchange, which was hosted by the Barbados National Union of Fisherfolk Organisation (BARNUFO) with the kind support of the Barbados Fisheries Division, allowed the participants to engage with a functioning umbrella fisherfolk organisation in Barbados and learn how they are involved in fisheries management and decision making. Participants were also exposed to learning opportunities on topics such as stewardship, gender in fisheries, fisherfolk leadership, sustainable fisheries and application of innovative fishing technology. CANARI's press release can be found [here](#).

CANARI, with Cefas support, are in the process of implementing two 'pilot projects'. CANARI's press release regarding the pilot project launch can be found [here](#).

Pilot project #1 - Piloting an electronic trap recovery system to reduce ghost fishing in the Virgin Islands pot fishery.

The project will target licensed pot/trap fishers in the four main Virgin Islands – Anegada, Jost Van Dyke, Virgin Gorda and Tortola. This will pilot the use of an electronic fishing trap recovery system to reduce ghost fishing in the Virgin Islands’ pot/trap fishery.

Objective 1: To train and equip 20 licensed pot fishers from Anegada, Jost Van Dyke, Virgin Gorda and Tortola with 40 RESQUNIT electronic fishing trap recovery systems.

Objective 2: To conduct and report on pilot trials of the RESQUNIT electronic fishing trap recovery system to test its desirability and feasibility for pot/trap fishing in the Virgin Islands context.

Pilot Project #2 - Anegada Island Seaweed Mitigation Project. To pilot the use of a community-constructed sargassum boom to reduce the impacts on biodiversity, livelihoods and health caused by sargassum influxes at Setting Point, Anegada.

Objective 1: To engage at least 15 fisherfolk and other community stakeholders in Anegada in the construction and deployment of a low-cost, homemade Sargassum boom.

Objective 2: To monitor and evaluate the impact of the sargassum boom and document and share lessons learned.

Output 3: Fisheries evidence report

The ‘Fisheries in the Virgin Islands: evidence, data gaps, and recommendations towards improved management’ report was finalised in July 2023 and was presented to the DOAF in an electronic and printable version along with an ‘Executive Summary’ and shared. The project end meeting/review and official handover of the published reports will be undertaken at the final project handover meeting with the DOAF, scheduled for 5^h – 9th February 2024.

Output 4: Central GIS fisheries database

In January 2023 Cefas GIS staff conducted an in-country visit aimed at deploying and implementing the database that had been developed prior to the October in-country visit and altered following VI feedback. During this visit, VI DOAF staff used and tested the databases and workflow developed by Cefas. The last day of the visit concluded with review of implementation workshop and access database and the ESRI geodatabase was handed over to VI DOAF. Following this Cefas sent extensive user guides to DOAF and are currently working on improvements to the database, incorporating further user feedback with a view to hold a 2 hour interactive, online workshop to answer any questions before officially handing this over at the February project close-out visit.

Output 5: Government staff capacity building in GIS and data management

As per change request number 4 in March 2022, £ was transferred to DOAF to purchase desktop computers and ArcGIS licences. A 3rd visit by Cefas GIS scientists took place in January 2023 to finalise implementation of the GS database.

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.

Under Output 2, Activity 2.3 the original project application and scope suggested ‘at least’ three pilot projects ‘to demonstrate best practices and innovations in sustainable fisheries and marine management implemented by the end of project year three’ would be undertaken. As the

project is due to come to a close at the end of FY 23/24 two pilot projects have been scoped and are currently being implemented.

Cefas is compiling a 'change request' to reduce the number of pilot projects to remain within project scope.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: No

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

Change request reference if known:

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

Actual spend: £ [REDACTED]

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

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

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

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

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

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

N/A

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

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

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

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