Standard Indicator Method Note

Biodiversity Challenge Funds

Number of people with enhanced livelihoods

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

Date: 11 February 2026

Contents

1. Summary Information

Indicator	Number of people with enhanced livelihoods Number of people with sustainable livelihoods created or protected
Units	Number of people
Type	Output or Outcome
Headline data reported	Annual number of stakeholders (people) who have had their livelihoods protected or alternative livelihood opportunities created as a result of Biodiversity Challenge Funds (BCFs) funding
Disaggregation	Compulsory: • Sex • Country (or UK Overseas Territory (UKOT) for Darwin Plus) • Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC) status[1], other[2] Recommended • Age • Disability • Geography • Sector See *Annex 2: Disaggregation guidance* for further guidance on disaggregation

Links	Other indicators or frameworks this indicator links to:
	• Core Official Development Assistance (ODA) objective
	• Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Target 9.2 Percentage of the population in traditional occupations
	• Sustainable Development Goals
	   o Goal 1 | End poverty in all its forms everywhere
	   o Goal 2 | End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
	   o Goal 10 | Reduce inequality within and among countries

Related Defra International (DI) key performance indicators (KPIs)	DI KPI 7: People benefitting from strengthened or new livelihoods
BCF Standard Indicators:	DI-D03, DPLUS-D03, IWT-A01 (wording of indicator different: Number of people with reduced multi-dimensional poverty)
Revision History	N/A – this method was first published 02/2026

The aim of this methodological note is to guide project teams towards tailoring their approach to monitoring and measuring enhanced livelihoods using informed decisions about the context of their project.

---

[1] See https://www.ipbes.net/glossary-tag/indigenous-peoples-and-local-communities
[2] Not compulsory for SI DPLUS-A06 Number of people participating in community events and activities

2.   Definition

For this indicator, the definition of a sustainable livelihood is one that is widely accepted in development practice[3]. This is the Chambers and Conway (1992:7-8) definition:

> A **livelihood** comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims, and access), and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is **sustainable** when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its **capabilities and assets**, and provide sustainable livelihood **opportunities** for the next generation; and which contributes **net benefits** to other livelihoods at the **local and global levels** and in the **long and short term**.

This indicator considers an individual's income or employment status. It also examines other factors, such as transforming structures and processes (livelihood interventions) that enhance or sustain existing livelihoods, contributing to long-term outcomes and ultimately to reducing poverty. The simplified Sustainable Livelihoods Framework is provided to organise the factors that enhance livelihood opportunities, to enable a broader range of support to be captured (*Figure 1*). This approach better represents the multidimensional aspects of livelihood improvements and reflects the variety of development activities being implemented by projects funded by Defra's Official Development Assistance (ODA).
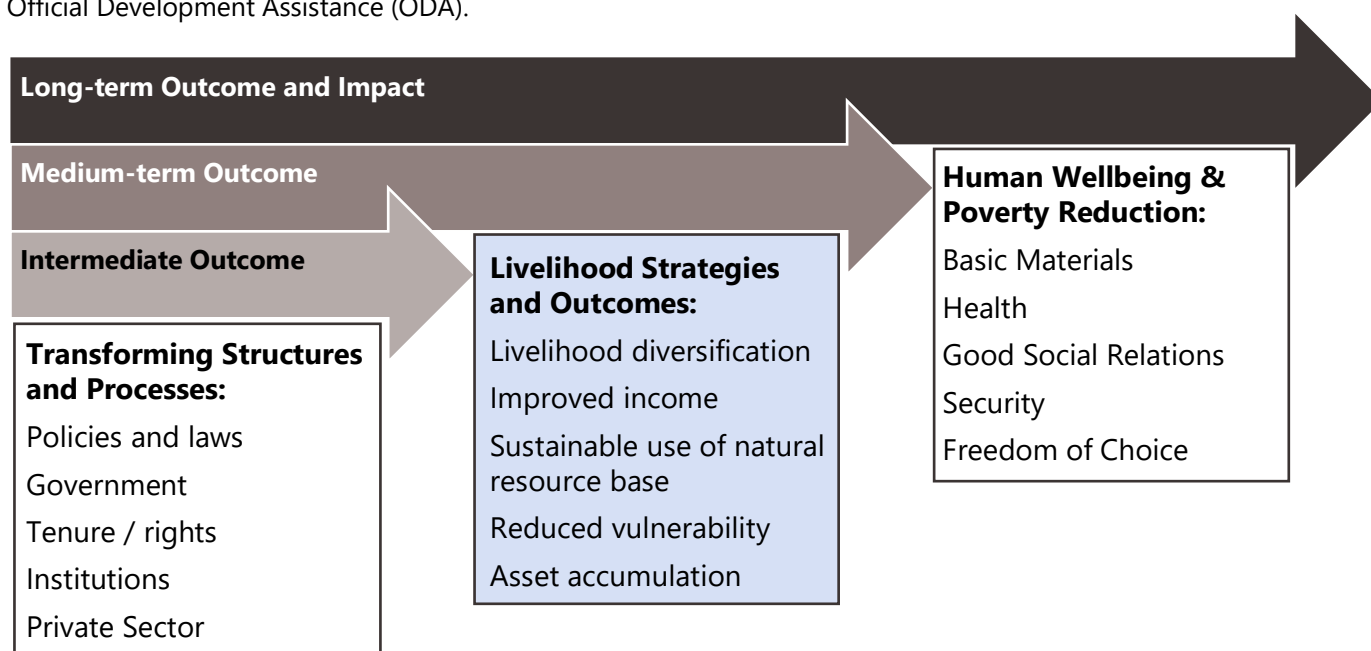
Long-term Outcome and Impact

Medium-term Outcome

Intermediate Outcome

Transforming Structures and Processes:
Policies and laws
Government
Tenure / rights
Institutions
Private Sector

Livelihood Strategies and Outcomes:
Livelihood diversification
Improved income
Sustainable use of natural resource base
Reduced vulnerability
Asset accumulation

Human Wellbeing & Poverty Reduction:
Basic Materials
Health
Good Social Relations
Security
Freedom of Choice

Figure 1. Simplified Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Adapted from DFID, 2002).

The figure above provides a simplified overview of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), outlining the expected results in the intermediate, medium, and long-term. For this guidance note, the main focus is on 'Livelihood Strategies and Outcomes', which are medium-term outcomes. These are the changes that should become evident during and after the project ends.

In the intermediate (near-term), a typical BCFs project aims to help people find new ways to earn a living or improve their current livelihoods locally. This is achieved by carrying out activities that change how things are organised or managed. Such activities might include:

---

[3] Chambers, R. and Conway, G., 1992. Sustainable rural livelihoods: practical concepts for the 21st century. IDS Discussion Paper 296. Brighton: IDS.

- Strengthening or setting up local institutions
- Developing or applying policies and laws to support sustainable livelihoods and the use of natural resources
- Working with government at different levels to build support and expand successful initiatives
- Supporting traditional rights to land and resources
- Encouraging private sector investment to tackle conservation challenges

These efforts create the right conditions for **medium-term outcomes** in this case, **Livelihood Strategies and Outcomes**, such as more reliable incomes, greater security, more assets, and the sustainable use of natural resources, so that rural livelihoods are protected and improved. BCFs projects often use approaches like climate-smart agriculture or community-based forest management to achieve these goals.

Reducing poverty is usually a **long-term outcome** and a key impact of BCFs projects. The steps taken to change structures and processes (intermediate outcomes) help achieve better livelihood strategies and outcomes (medium-term results), which in turn should lead to improved wellbeing and less poverty. For more information on how projects support people to improve their wellbeing as part of poverty reduction, please refer to the separate guidance note available on the Information Notes page under Resources on all three BCFs websites (Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus).

3.   Approach

Below is a summary of the key steps that should be reviewed before deciding if this indicator should be used for reporting in a project.

Step 1: Decide **who** could be counted → Step 2: Decide whether we are **protecting** current livelihoods **or creating** new ones → Step 3: Specify how we are strengthening or protecting livelihoods

Step 4: Gather data through project monitoring → Step 5: Report disaggregated results

The BCFs commit to being a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Sensitive programme. A GESI Analysis builds on previous guidance from the BCFs on how applicants and projects should consider GESI in the design and implementation of their projects. Conducting a GESI Analysis is important in providing an insight and clearer understanding of the context a project is working within.

The findings from a GESI Analysis will support the review of these key steps and should be used to inform some of the decisions outlined in the Stepwise guidance below.

For further information on how to conduct a GESI Analysis, see the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion page under Resources on all three fund websites (Darwin Initiative, IWT Challenge Fund, Darwin Plus).

See *Annex 1: Worked example* for a worked example of using this approach for reporting this indicator in a project.

4. Stepwise guidance

4.1 Step 1. Decide who could be counted

Consider these four steps:

1. Does the project address one or more of the Livelihoods Strategies and Outcomes defined in Figure 1?
2. Is the support provided with the core objective of creating or protecting livelihoods?
3. What is the appropriate unit of analysis for this support?
4. Is the support to stakeholders "targeted" or "direct"?

These questions are explored in further detail below.

1. Does the project address one or more of the Livelihoods Strategies and Outcomes defined in Figure 1?

For this indicator, a project may count people who have been supported across a range of dimensions in the Livelihood Strategies and Outcomes area of the simplified sustainable livelihood framework in Figure 1. Ensure that the support can be categorised by at least one of the dimensions listed in the framework for alignment to this indicator.

2. Is the support provided with the core objective of creating or protecting livelihoods?

To accurately attribute results to interventions, a project must be sure that the activities undertaken have a direct focus on sustainable livelihoods outcomes for individuals. Use professional judgement to determine whether the activity is creating or protecting livelihoods outcomes.

Example: If a project is addressing the sustainable use of natural resources, this can only be counted under "livelihood outcomes" if it is being done for the purpose of creating or protecting livelihoods in a targeted way, for example to reduce vulnerability. If activities are addressing sustainable use of natural resources with no connection to livelihood outcomes, do not report on this.

3. What is the appropriate unit of analysis for this support?

Does the project expect to measure livelihoods outcomes at the regional, community, household, or individual level? It is the responsibility of project teams to determine the most appropriate scales and corresponding units of analysis. The scenarios presented below provide a guide for deciding on the unit of analysis:

- In instances where a household survey is used as the primary mode of data collection, project teams should consider exactly which members of the household are benefitting from the livelihood activities conducted by the project.

- Project interventions can be measured at the community level, for example, by looking at the availability of certain services or infrastructure. It's important to check if everyone in the community can access these services, or if some people are excluded due to power dynamics. If not, everyone has equal access, it's better to measure impact at the household level to see who truly benefits.

Insights from the project's GESI Analysis should inform decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis, especially where unequal access, social norms, or exclusionary dynamics may affect who benefits from services or infrastructure.

Table 1: Definitions for Community and Community Group.

Beneficiary Group	Definition
Community	Based on where people live (geographic area), official boundaries (administrative area), or shared cultural traits.
Community Group	Defined by characteristics like age, sex, disability, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC) status, livelihood type, land tenure, income level, resource use, or religious affiliation.

4. Is the support to stakeholders "targeted" or "direct"?

For this indicator, only count stakeholders that are **directly supported**, or those who have received medium to high intensity of support (**indirect support**). If support is of low intensity and not targeted, do not report. For help in classifying support level, see below descriptors and *Table 3*.

Targeted support implies a high degree of attribution to the project. Targeted beneficiaries can be identified as receiving direct support from the project and as being aware of this support, and can be counted individually. The definitions of Targeted stakeholders versus Not Targeted stakeholders are provided in *Table 2*.

A GESI Analysis can assist to identify which groups are most likely to be targeted, under-served, or indirectly reached, ensuring classification reflects the social realities and inclusion barriers in the landscape.

Table 2: Categorisation of Targeted and Not Targeted beneficiaries

Targeted stakeholders	Not targeted stakeholders
Receiving direct support from the project (i.e. receiving training or funding directly) Aware that they are receiving support (i.e. can identify the project or activity which they are supported by) Can be counted individually or at a household level (i.e. not an organisation, must be a named individual / household)	Benefitting indirectly from project activities (i.e. inter-community knowledge sharing, user of shared resources, etc.) Cannot be individually named or counted (i.e. an organisation instead of its individual members) Not aware that they are being supported (i.e. users of a shared resource such as restored mangrove forests who are not aware of the project activities)

Table 3: Descriptors for classifying level of support.

Intensity of Support	Targeted	Not Targeted
High intensity	Direct stakeholder	Indirect stakeholder
Medium intensity	Indirect stakeholder	Indirect stakeholder
Low intensity	Indirect stakeholder	Not reported

Intensity of support describes the level of effort provided per stakeholder, on a continuum. Use professional judgement to determine if intensity is low, medium, or high with reference to the below descriptors:

- **Low Intensity:** awareness campaigns e.g. focusing on local communities' roles in protecting ecosystems, distributing seeds, or using low-cost tools for improving agricultural productivity.

- **Medium Intensity:** training programs that provide basic skills or knowledge to a large group of people, such as community-based natural resource management, e.g. of fisheries or forests, supporting local enterprises to integrate biodiversity-friendly practices into their business models.

- **High Intensity:** direct financial assistance such as cash transfers, or comprehensive training programs for individuals that provide advanced skills or knowledge, e.g. in climate resilient livelihoods, or infrastructure improvements that directly impact individuals' livelihoods.

Direct stakeholders are defined as both targeted and high intensity.

Indirect stakeholders are defined as either: Targeted, and medium or low intensity OR Not targeted, and high or medium intensity.

4.2   Step 2. Decide whether we are protecting current livelihoods or creating new ones

Determine if the activity is either creating or protecting livelihoods, or a combination of both.

- **Creating:** when the project activity is supporting new or alternative sustainable livelihood opportunities for stakeholders, for example introducing alternative livelihoods via value chain development.

- **Protecting**: when the project activity is acting on existing livelihoods to support or strengthen them in areas where they are vulnerable, or in a way that increases the sustainability of an existing livelihood for the future, for example reinforcing or formalising land tenure / rights.

The project will need to determine how many stakeholders had their livelihood either protected or created. While both can be reported, care should be taken to ensure the **same people are not reported twice** as both protected and created. The project must attribute, to each person, if their livelihood was created or protected.

4.3   Step 3. Specify how we are strengthening or protecting livelihoods

In the livelihoods framework (*Figure 1*), identify what support was provided to the people being counting. There may be different areas of support provided for particular groups in larger projects. In cases where there is more than one area, the project is supporting people at any one time, the primary area (or the area that best describes the project focus as a whole) should be reported. Information on other aspects, through which people are being supported, can be flagged in the narrative when reporting. This is to assist with understanding what types of livelihood support is being delivered with ODA funding for improved livelihoods.

4.4   Step 4. Gather data through project monitoring

Data on stakeholders will come from a project's data collection tools. Methods used to obtain stakeholder data may vary; please do make a note of how data is gathered for quality assurance. Wherever possible, collect data to allow for disaggregation by sex, country, and IPLC status.

Approaches to collecting stakeholder data — particularly sensitive categories such as sex, age, disability, and IPLC status — should be guided by the project's GESI Analysis. The analysis helps determine what is contextually appropriate, how to ask questions safely, and how to avoid reinforcing social risks or excluding marginalised groups.

Direct stakeholders: it is recommended that projects should prioritise obtaining secondary data from direct stakeholders wherever possible. If no secondary data is available, projects should collect their direct stakeholder data through the use of surveys, preferably with modules that enable the assembly of information at the individual level. Ensure information can be collected in a sensitive manner on the stakeholder's sex and IPLC status (at a minimum) as well as potentially age and disability (if appropriate), and other aspects of their livelihoods needed to understand the broader associations within the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework.

Targeted stakeholders through sampling: in larger areas, projects may choose to select a representative sample of a landscape's stakeholders to reduce capacity needed to survey over time. This representative cohort should be assessed throughout the project to show progressive changes in their land tenure and access rights. It is important that if sampling a population, the project ensures the cohort is:

- Representative of the stakeholder population within the impact area/landscape
- Large enough to be able to detect changes in this indicator over time, and conscious of the potential for sample attrition over time
- Designed to minimise sampling error, and to minimise the potential for sample contamination (e.g. if other projects are operating in the same area)
- Suitably structured to be tracked and re-contacted for subsequent evaluation points

Indirect stakeholders through population data: data on indirect stakeholders will often come from population surveys. Where projects do not directly interact with a population, it will not be feasible to collect detailed stakeholder data.

- By using this method a project is making assumptions about its reach in a given area. When using this method please take a **conservative approach** and consider if discounts are needed on these figures for accuracy. Look critically at the assumptions being made and who is counted as having received targeted or direct support as a result of the interventions.

Convert household data to number of stakeholders for reporting: where interventions are implemented at the household-level, ask partners to collect **individual-level data** on household members to allow for disaggregation by sex, age, disability, and information on the sector the person is working in. If you have household-level rather than individual-level data, then the number of households needs to be converted into the number of people. If there are reliable data on average household size for the target location or sub-population, use that. Otherwise, multiply by the national average household size. Although working out the total number of stakeholders by using an average household size is satisfactory, it is worth noting that this approach limits the ability to disaggregate data representatively.

Other methods: where projects do not directly interact with a population it will not be feasible to collect detailed stakeholder data. It also may not be feasible to collect stakeholder data in contexts of violent conflict or population displacement. In these cases, use the best available data source to estimate stakeholder numbers and ensure the methodology is recorded for quality assurance when data is reported.

4.5   Step 5. Report disaggregated results

Results under the number of people with livelihoods protected or created should be broken down by direct and indirect stakeholders, with a separate line in the Standard Indicator table reporting for each. For both direct and indirect stakeholders, it is compulsory when reporting to disaggregate by the following when appropriate:

- Sex (male, female)
- IPLC status (IPLC, other)

Please refer to *Annex 2: Disaggregation guidance* for further support on unpacking data against the categories above.

Attribution: In the case of multi-donor funded projects - where Defra ODA is not the sole funder of a project – the Defra ODA attribution reported should be calculated on the basis of Defra's share in the total project cost or budget. In case Defra happens to be the only funder of a project implemented by a multilateral institution, the full result can be reported, but this should be explicitly mentioned in the report to ensure this is understood when the return is quality assured at the central level to confirm there is not a risk of double counting.

Annex 1: Worked example

The following example elaborates on the steps taken by a project to determine and report on the number of people with livelihoods protected or created, using a hypothetical example of a rural community project in Kenya. The explanations illustrate the process and reasoning behind each step.

In this example, the project helped 50 farmers. Some started new ways to earn money, while others made their current jobs more secure. Each person is counted only once, based on whether their main benefit was a new or improved livelihood. The results are clearly separated and show details about sex and community group, so it is easy to see who benefited from the project.

Key elements the project considered:
To report on this indicator, identify who directly benefited, decide if their livelihood was created or protected, collect and break down the data, and then report the numbers clearly. Avoid double counting anyone. This approach ensures the reporting is accurate, fair, and easy to understand for everyone involved.

Project scenario:
A project supports a rural community by introducing new climate-smart agriculture techniques in Kenya. The main goal is to help local farmers earn a more stable income and reduce their vulnerability to drought. The project is about to report on the progress after its second year of implementation.

Step 1: Inclusion criteria:
The project team began by clearly defining who would be considered a beneficiary of the project's interventions. This involved reviewing the project's objectives — namely, supporting rural farmers to improve their livelihoods through climate-smart agriculture. The team identified two categories of stakeholders:

- **Direct beneficiaries**: farmers who directly participated in training sessions and received resources or support from the project. These individuals were actively engaged in project activities and were the primary focus of the intervention.

- **Indirect beneficiaries**: farmers who did not attend the training directly but benefited from resources or knowledge shared by direct beneficiaries. The team monitored uptake by tracking which farmers adopted new approaches or accessed shared resources. Where there was evidence of meaningful use — such as regular application of new techniques or tools — the project classified these individuals as indirect beneficiaries with medium-intensity support.

To ensure accuracy and transparency, the team documented the process for classifying beneficiaries, including the criteria for what constituted direct and indirect support. They also consulted with local partners and community representatives to validate their approach and ensure it reflected the realities on the ground.

Step 2: Defining created or protected livelihoods
The team then determined what constituted a "created" or "protected" livelihood in the context of the project. They assessed the types of activities farmers undertook as a result of the support provided. For example, if a farmer began beekeeping due to project training and resources, this was counted as a created livelihood. Similarly, if farmers used new methods to safeguard existing agricultural activities against drought, these were considered protected livelihoods. The team used clear and consistent definitions to ensure that results could be reliably reported and compared.

Step 3: Livelihood Framework dimension

Next, the project mapped its interventions against the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework to clarify which dimensions were being addressed. In this case, the main focus was on livelihood diversification (encouraging farmers to take up new activities like beekeeping) and improved income (helping farmers earn a more stable living). This step helped the team communicate which aspects of livelihoods were being strengthened and provided a foundation for reporting outcomes in line with established frameworks.

Step 4: Data collection

For accurate reporting, the project team designed a data collection process that captured relevant details about the beneficiaries. They conducted surveys with all 50 direct beneficiaries and an additional 70 indirect beneficiaries. With guidance from a GESI specialist and information from their GESI Analysis, the team collected information on each person's sex and their membership in IPLCs, ensuring that data collection was sensitive and appropriate for the context. Due to contextual sensitivities, the team decided not to collect age-disaggregated data for this group.

By working through each of these steps methodically, the project ensured that the reported figures for people with livelihoods protected or created were robust, transparent, and aligned with donor reporting requirements.

Step 5: Calculating and reporting

To date, the project has directly supported a total of 50 people with enhanced livelihoods. Among these direct stakeholders, 6 are male IPLC, 4 are female IPLC, 18 are male non-IPLC, and 22 are female non-IPLC. For indirect stakeholders, the project has reached a total of 70 people so far, including 10 male IPLC, 6 female IPLC, 34 male non-IPLC, and 20 female non-IPLC. As the 70 farmers who were indirectly supported had gained significant access to resources and were known to be using them, it was deemed that they were receiving medium intensity support and so would also be reported on.

This information was reported in the following manner in the Annual Report:

DI Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
DI-D03	**Number of people with enhanced livelihoods – Created – Direct stakeholders**	Number of People	Male & IPLC	4	2		6	8
			Female & IPLC	2	2		4	5
			Male & non-IPLC	12	6		18	22
			Female & non-IPLC	12	10		22	25
DI-D03	**Number of people with enhanced livelihoods - Created – Indirect stakeholders**	Number of People	Male & IPLC	6	4		10	12
			Female & IPLC	4	2		6	8
			Male & non-IPLC	24	10		34	40
			Female & non-IPLC	16	4		20	30

The table above presents a detailed breakdown of the number of people with enhanced livelihoods supported by the project, using the Standard Indicator DI-D03. It separates results for direct and indirect beneficiaries and provides further disaggregation by sex (male, female) and by IPLC status. As all the stakeholders were based in Kenya, the project did not have to disaggregate by country.

For each stakeholder group, the table shows the number of people reached in each year of the project (Years 1, 2, and 3), the cumulative total to date, and the total planned to be reached by the end of the project. For example, the project plans to reach 8 male IPLC and 5 female IPLC as direct beneficiaries, and 12 male IPLC and 8 female IPLC as indirect beneficiaries by project completion. This approach ensures that reporting is transparent and allows for clear tracking of progress over time, while also highlighting the inclusivity of the project by showing how different groups have benefited.

The disaggregation helps to demonstrate the project's reach among key groups, supporting both accountability and learning for future interventions. Each person is counted only once in the relevant category, and the totals reflect the sum of all years reported.

Annex 2: Disaggregation guidance

Sensitive collection of disaggregated data

When collecting disaggregated data, it is crucial to approach the process with sensitivity and respect for the individuals involved. Care must be taken to ensure that questions are phrased appropriately and that participants understand the purpose of the data collection. This helps to foster an environment of trust and reduces the risk of causing discomfort or inadvertently excluding individuals from underrepresented or marginalised groups. Projects should consult their GESI Analysis to understand context-specific sensitivities around collecting sex, age, disability, IPLC status, and other data, and to identify any risks associated with asking these questions.

Individual-level disaggregation

Whenever possible, projects should assess the impact of their interventions through surveys which disaggregate population data as per the below.

Compulsory for all people-focused indicators:

- **Sex**: disaggregate direct stakeholder counts by sex using two categories: male and female. Due to safeguarding with regard to gender minorities, further disaggregation according to sex or gender is not advised. Where a stakeholder's transgender, intersex, or non-binary status is known, classify according to their gender identity where a 'male' or 'female' designation fits with this. Otherwise leave blank.
- **Country** (or UKOT for Darwin Plus)
- **IPLC Status** – IPLC, other[4] [5]

Recommended for all people-focused indicators:

- **Age**: disaggregate direct stakeholder counts by age using four categories: children (age 0- 14); youth (age 15-24); adults (age 25-64); and elders (age 65+)

- **Disability**: projects should incorporate the Washington Group 'short set' of six disability questions to their stakeholder monitoring surveys[6]. Anyone who answers 'a lot of difficulty' or 'cannot do at all' to one or more of the six questions counts as disabled

- **Geography**: disaggregate direct and indirect stakeholder counts by geography wherever possible, using two categories: urban and rural. In the absence of internationally agreed definitions of urban and rural, use the definition set by the national statistical office in the country where the project is operating

Recommended for **Number of people with Sustainable Livelihoods created or protected**:

- **Sector:** Energy supply; Industrial processes; Business; Public; Residential; Transport; Agriculture; Fisheries and Aquaculture; Waste Management; Forestry; Land/sea Use or change; Water; Other

For further information, see the Standard Indicator Reference guide on the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning page under Resources on all three fund websites (Darwin Initiative, IWT Challenge Fund, Darwin Plus).

---

[4] See https://www.ipbes.net/glossary-tag/indigenous-peoples-and-local-communities
[5] Not compulsory for SI DPLUS-A06 Number of people participating in community events and activities
[6] https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/question-sets/wg-short-set-on-functioning-wg-ss/