

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report Form

Project Title	People and Plants – Training Darwin mentors in India
Country	India
Organisation	Botanic Gardens Conservation International
Project Ref. No.	162/10/002
Report date	December 2002

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months against the agreed baseline timetable for the project.

Progress against the agreed baseline timetable for the project has far reached expectations. The Project officer has visited all the District education officers and most of the area education officers in the five districts of the western Ghats to request support with teacher training in environmental education and to encourage teachers to take their children on visits to the Kodaikanal Botanic Garden.

In the follow up to the environmental education workshops run in March 2002, more than 75 of the teachers organised training workshops for 396 of their fellow colleagues in their own and nearby schools. Each programme lasted 1-2 days and comprised lectures, activities and games. Further workshops are planned. Other teachers involved in the original training have also claimed to have run informal training sessions for more than 500 teachers, bringing the total to 896 teachers. If we consider that an average school class has 45 children, then over 40,000 school children have benefited from their teacher's training in environmental education (5,000 more than expected). Of note is one female teacher from Vasudevanallore in Tirunelveli district who provided training for 16 other teachers and six further teachers from Palni town in Dindigul district who offered training to 150 teachers.

In August four two-day evaluation workshops were run involving 99 teachers. The final four workshops are planned for February 2003.

The first draft of the teachers' handbook was made available in August for teachers to evaluate during the workshops. The teachers' comments have been recorded and will be incorporated into the final draft, which will be printed early in 2003.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments, that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will effect the budget and timetable of project activities. Have any of these issues been discussed with the Department and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Due to strikes during September and October (of both teachers and education officers) work on the project remained static. Environmental education activities could not be implemented in most of the schools and so the project officer continued to visit the District Education Officers and Area Education Officers in order to gain their support for the aims and objectives of the project. With the strikes, however, there is concern that the evaluation of the project will be delayed. This is something that needs to be discussed with the Department.

Another notable problem with the project has been the official hierarchy and bureaucracy. In order for teachers to carry out environmental education activities, an official order is needed. This takes time and energy and requires significant motivation and commitment on the part of head teachers and area education officers.

This year, there has been the introduction of new educational policy. Several teachers have complained that their workload has increased and that they do not find time for environmental education activities. It will therefore be important to ensure that the teachers handbook explains clearly how the activities can be incorporated into the school curriculum.

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures.

No

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