

# Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

## Half Year Report Form

<b>Project Title</b>	Darwin Initiative for the Sustainable Use of Sea Cucumbers in Egypt
<b>Country</b>	UK and Egypt
<b>Organisation</b>	University of Hull
<b>Project Ref. No.</b>	162/10/027
<b>Report date</b>	19 November 2002

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

Most capital items have now been purchased and shipped to Egypt. An Area Survey for the stock assessment is underway. Over 50 sites from Taba in the north of the Gulf of Aquaba, to Safage, south of Hurgada on the Red Sea, have been assessed using CPUE. In addition, at many of the sites social surveys have been conducted with local fishermen using an open interview technique. Consequently, the marketable species and their value are known. A preliminary species list and reference collection are in the process of being developed. The reference collection is housed in the Department of Marine Sciences, Suez Canal University. A field guide to sea cucumber of the Egyptian Red Sea is also currently being developed. Preliminary extraction of bioactive substances is in progress in the Department of Pharmacy. In addition, bioassays have been developed in the UK and are ready for the initial test of extracts scheduled to begin in February. In addition, an aquaculture system has been set up with animals being maintained since September. The system is based at Haraz Hatchery on the Suez Canal. Whilst animals are not usually found here their survival in the hatchery is encouraging. The hatchery benefits from facilities for broodstock and algal culture. Consequently, given the initial delay in the start of the project, most aspects of the project are now progressing on schedule with milestones being met. The mariculture element of the project is ahead of schedule.

In addition, three presentations have been made at conferences. First, the background to the bioactive substance work and potential applications were presented as a poster at the 10th International Congress of Parasitology, Vancouver August 2002. Second, two posters, one reporting preliminary species information and distribution and the second, the background to the bioactive substances work were presented at the International Society for Reef Studies European Conference held in Cambridge, UK September 2002.

### **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?**

Since the beginning of the project a large illegal fishery has developed along the area under the jurisdiction of the Red Sea Governorate. Many sites have become completely fished out. Several prosecutions are in progress and at least 25 fishermen have died in diving accidents whilst fishing sea cucumber. Extreme political pressure is being applied to the Red Sea Governorate, and via them, to Dr Hanafy and the project to open the fishery before the stock assessment is completed. These problems have been given a great deal of press coverage in Egypt. It is to be seen how this problem resolves itself politically but it has had an impact on the area and extent of the Area Survey. It is also very difficult to find un-fished populations of sea cucumber for quarterly and monthly surveys. This will not affect

budget but might affect timescale or scope of the stock assessment.

Additional sets of dive kit were purchased from Above and Below Divers, a dive training business based in Hull. The discount on prices was such that this group has been recognised as a sponsor to the project. In addition, they are sponsoring a UK based PhD studentship (fees and living allowance) to assess the impact of sea cucumber removal on habitat quality and function. This will add significant value to the work undertaken as part of the original proposal and meets several of the additional requirements of the EEAA regarding impact assessment of the fishery. Significant added value is provided to the project via this sponsorship at no additional cost to the budget.

In addition, contact has been made with the Egyptian Oceanographic Institute, based in Hurgada regarding their possible involvement in the project. Whilst very basic, the institute does have facilities for mariculture with open ponds built out on the reef flat.

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

Given the initial delay in first, signing the contract, and second, the consequence of September 11 and changes in personnel among the Egyptian Partners, the project did not officially begin until October 2001 and did not really begin until after the first meeting of partners in April 2002. Given the reporting scheme required by the Darwin Initiative, this means that the project is reporting officially 6 months but closer to 1 year out of synchrony with the scheme.

I, therefore, wonder whether it is possible/ sensible to accept slippage in the project of 1 year in relation to the reporting process. Whilst I have submitted an annual report for the period up to April 2002, there had been little progress by this time. However, the project is now progressing satisfactorily and by April 2003 will have met year 1 milestones and deliverables but not year 2.

Completed forms to: Rose Clarkson, Darwin Initiative M&E Project Manager, John Muir Building, Kings Buildings, University of Edinburgh, Mayfield Rd., Edinburgh EH9 3JK, Scotland. Email: [R.Clarkson@ed.ac.uk](mailto:R.Clarkson@ed.ac.uk)