

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report Form

Project Title	Habitat Audit and Change Detection in Sierra Leone
Country	Sierra Leone
Organisation	Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, UK and Department of Biological Sciences, Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone.
Project Ref. No.	162/11/006
Report date	31 st October 2003

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

During this six month period several of the trainees in Sierra Leone have been active in collecting field data for a variety of environmental projects. Some advice has been provided from the UK, but efficient communication remains a problem (see below).

Work from the first season was presented and well received at the British Ecological Society Annual Meeting. After the presentation I was interviewed by a journalist from Nature and a short article appeared in the on-line version (science updates) of the journal (unfortunately the article does not mention the name Darwin Initiative). A similar presentation has been made to the Cambridge Conservation Forum, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and Leicester University.

A paper on the effect of increased human pressure on the mammal fauna of the FBC Botanic Reserve has been submitted to the journal Biological Conservation

An interview on deforestation around Freetown was given on the BBC Focus on Africa programme.

An article was published in the NERC (Natural Environment Research Council) journal Planet Earth; this generated considerable interest including a contact with the policy division of Dfid. They are, apparently, thinking about re-starting to fund environmental projects in Sierra Leone.

Negotiations for the project to produce a series of multi-temporal thematic maps of Gola have been started with RSPB. (A quick look suggests the Liberians have built a ~50 meter wide road to within ~1km of the Gola North Reserve).

The second field season is due to start around the 1st December. This year it will be preceded with a week's worth of activity planning relating to the successful pre-project funding of the "native trees" DI project. It is hoped that the pre-project funding will mean that the project meets the needs of all the stakeholders from the beginning.

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?

Technical

It appears that the use of radar data for mapping land cover in Sierra Leone is still in a “research” rather than “application” phase. Since the annual report some analysis of the data has been performed at Monks Wood by “friends” of the project in an attempt to determine just what could be achieved. Some results could be obtained when tandem ERS-1 data is used; however, this was only possible by using very specialised (and rather expensive) software that is not readily available. Even the tandem data is of limited utility in the more mountainous areas, and, in the most forested areas the “C” band was saturated (need to use a longer wavelength with more penetrating power). Our conclusion is that mapping using radar has not yet reached the point where the technology that can be transferred wholesale to Sierra Leone.

Slow unreliable internet connection has limited the amount of “distance teaching” that was possible; although considerable activity has taken place in Sierra Leone they can’t afford to send the images to the UK expert!

There are technical problems with the Landsat 7 satellite, but this project has no plans to purchase more images.

These issues have no impact on the budget or time-table of events.

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

After consulting with the stakeholders during the first field season it was obvious that there was a need for a longer-term broader based capability in GIS and RS. Professor Andrew Millington of Leicester University agreed to provide the UK end of a British Council Higher Education Link programme. Unfortunately the British Council has seen fit to suspend this programme subject to Ministerial review. It is not obvious where else to try and get funding to establish FBC as a focal centre for the teaching of GIS and RS and research into their application into a wider range of environmental applications, however, we intend to see whether any funds can be obtained from the Leverhulme Trust.

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Project Manager, Email: stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk