

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report Form

Project Title	Building capacity for biodiversity monitoring and assessment in Nepal
Country	Nepal
Organisation	UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre
Project Ref. No.	162/11/020
Report date	31 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).

The training course conducted in the UK in March 2003 for six staff of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) resulted in these staff members organising and delivering training for ten other KMTNC field staff in May 2003. These 6 days of training were conducted at Gandruk in the Annapurna Conservation Area. Topics included the concepts of biodiversity assessment and monitoring and field techniques for surveying selected key species, including the use of GPS. Monitoring protocols and field data collection sheets for snow leopard, common leopard, blue sheep, barking deer, cheer pheasant and Himalyan Griffon vulture were reviewed. Participatory survey methods for the assessment of community forest resources were also practised. Field work was planned to test the counting methods and to identify suitable monitoring sites for these species.

Further training in biodiversity assessment and monitoring and field techniques was conducted for field staff in the Annapurna Conservation Area in October 2003. This 6-day workshop was led by Philip Bubb (UNEP-WCMC) and Graham Tucker (consultant in biodiversity monitoring techniques) with Nepalese experts in bird and mammal surveying. Preparation of guidelines on biodiversity assessment and monitoring were prepared for testing in the training by UNEP-WCMC staff and consultants during July to September 2003. These materials will be further developed during November and December 2003 for field testing in 2004. The results of the training are also being incorporated into other projects run by KMTNC.

Siddhartha Bacharya completed his training at the University of Edinburgh in assessment of the impact of community involvement on biodiversity conservation and continued the analysis of the results of PRA fieldwork work conducted in 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?

The fieldwork for the assessment of key biodiversity species in the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) has been limited by the resurgence of the conflict between the Maoist guerrilla movement and the Government of Nepal, with the ending of a ceasefire in September. In the southernmost sector of the ACA, where moist mountain forest habitats are found, the conflict has prevented fieldwork trials because of security limitations on travel by the staff of KMTNC. Only the planned field trials of survey methods for cheer pheasant and Himalayan Griffon vulture could be tested in the current reporting period. Fieldwork trails for the remaining species have been rescheduled to Spring 2004 and relocated to areas in central ACA which are free from security concerns.

The impact of the Maoist conflict on the Project was discussed with KMTNC staff during the training conducted in October 2003. Whilst KMTNC has restricted its activities in the southern sector of ACA they are able to operate normally in the majority of the Area. The objectives of capacity building, developing appropriate tools and guidelines for biodiversity assessment and monitoring, and strengthening community participation in the protected area are still achievable. The postponement of some of the fieldwork to early 2004 has resulted in some of the budget funds for the current reporting period actually being utilised later in the current financial year.

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

UNEP-WCMC has not submitted a grant claim form during the current reporting period. This was because expenditure on the project was lower than expected due to the postponement of fieldwork. A grant claim for April to September 2003 will be submitted in November and thereafter at Quarterly intervals, as preferred by the Darwin Initiative Secretariat.

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