

DARWIN INITIATIVE ANNUAL REPORT

1. Darwin Project Information

Project reference no. 162/12/009

Project Title: Darwin Field Station for Biodiversity Research, Education and Training

Country: The Gambia

UK Contractor: University of Warwick

Partner organization: Makasutu Wildlife Trust

Grant Value: £163,826 (£62884 October 2003-March 2004)

Start/finishing dates: October 1st 2003 – September 2006

Reporting period: October 1st 2003 – 31st March 2004 Report number1

Project website: http://fcisl.wie.warwick.ac.uk/~Darwin_Gambia/MakasutuWT

Authors: Dr Linda Barnett and Dr Susan Barker

2. Project Background

This project is located in The Gambia, West Africa in the protected area of Abuko Nature Reserve (see section 3). Despite the fact that The Gambia has been committed to the conservation of its environment for many years (it designated its first wildlife area in 1968 and developed an environmental action plan in 1997) The Gambia's biodiversity is fast disappearing. The Gambia National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2001) recognizes that much of the biodiversity loss in The Gambia is due to lack of awareness, lack of reliable data and the necessary human and economic resources to undertake effective resource planning and management. Research, training and institutional capacity building are highlighted as priority areas.

This project aims to raise the capacity among government, NGOs and civil society to manage, conserve and monitor biodiversity, through providing an established centre for training of trainers, running of activities for a broad range of audiences including researchers, university students, family groups, school children and tourists, and producing a variety of education material about The Gambia's biodiversity.

3. Project Purpose and Outputs

The main objective of the project is to build and equip the Darwin Field Station, which will serve as a focus for biodiversity research, training and education in The Gambia.

The field station will be managed by Makasutu Wildlife Trust (MWT), a Gambian NGO, who will also be involved in delivering the training courses. Staff from MWT and the government departments of Department of Parks and Wildlife Management, Forestry and Community Development will be trained as trainers during the project by the project leader and TA and ultimately participate in delivering relevant parts of the training courses. A variety of courses will be

provided at the centre ranging from an introductory one to introduce the concept of biodiversity through to more technical courses covering research techniques, monitoring and recording, biodiversity indicators and conservation management.

There is currently a lack of material in The Gambia about biodiversity and this hampers public awareness and education about the issues of its conservation and sustainable use. The Darwin project will provide information about The Gambia's biodiversity in a variety of forms including easy to use field guides, a web-based photographic database, newspaper articles, TV and radio programmes, and scientific publications.

The field station will also act as a focus for research. Data collection from permanent plots and transects in Abuko Nature Reserve during the project will provide the basis for a long-term database. Collaboration between local and international researchers will be encouraged and facilitated through the Darwin centre specifically for research in the Abuko reserve, and other protected areas in The Gambia.

Changes in the Operational Plan

This project was originally due to start on April 1st 2003. Upon approval of the project the project leader was asked by the Darwin Secretariat to cut the costs of the project in the first year, and decided the only practical way to achieve this was to delay the start of the project until the 1st October 2003, thus halving costs such as salaries, overheads etc. in the first year. The length of the project thus remains at two years but has started six months later than the first proposed starting date.

A more significant change in the operational plan has also occurred. In the original approved project proposal, the project was based near a small village called Kembajeh, and in kind construction costs of the building (labour and well digging) and running costs post project were to be met by an ecotourism business and partner of MWT, Makasutu Culture Forest (MCF). MCF were also willing to provide a vehicle and its running costs for the length of the project as in kind funding.

At the launch of the project, the Government of The Gambia (GOTG) expressed an interest at having more involvement than they had originally stated. They offered an existing two storey building within Abuko Nature Reserve to Makasutu Wildlife Trust for the Darwin Field Station, and land within walking distance from the reserve for accommodation for international researchers and students. The building is thirty years old and required major renovation work. The Government of the Gambia however also offered some support in the form of in kind labour from Abuko rangers during the renovation phase of the project. The location of the project was thus changed and now based in Abuko Nature Reserve. The Darwin Secretariat was consulted fully about the change, and approved the change at the end of November 2003. The start of the project was therefore effectively delayed until the beginning of December. This has resulted in some slippage of activities and outputs, with the associated lack of budget

expenditure. The Darwin Secretariat is aware of this and has approved the transfer of the outstanding monies to the next financial year.

4. Progress

The project officially started on the 1st October 2003. Prior to this Makasutu Wildlife Trust had constant contact with University of Warwick in the development of the project proposal, including the change in timing. Makasutu Wildlife Trust has acted as the in country partner facilitating liaison with the government departments of Parks and Wildlife Management, Forestry, Fisheries and Community Development, the National Environment Agency, National Agricultural Research Institute, University of The Gambia, Gunjur Environmental Protection and Development Group, the Association of Non Governmental Organisations, Concern Universal, Makasutu Culture Forest.

Makasutu Wildlife Trust has previously been involved with training local communities and private sector guides on a developmental and small scale, and running a national education campaign about snakes with the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management.

Key Milestones for Year 1 (1st October 2003 - 31st March 2004)

Project Implementation Timetable		
Key Milestones	Proposed Date	Actual/Rescheduled Date
Planning workshop	November 2004	December 2004
Training manuals 1&2	January	Ongoing
Centre built and equipped	March	Ongoing, estimated time of completion May 2004
Long term monitoring plots established	March	March 2004
Opening of centre	March	June 2004
Training of trainers	March	June 2004
Promotional material for centre and courses produced	March	April/May

The delay in the start of the project has meant that slippage has occurred in some of the timings for the key milestones, mainly associated with the Darwin Field Station building, and the training courses. Work on the building did not start until February, and the renovation work has turned out to be considerably more extensive than first anticipated (major preparation work was required to ensure a strong foundation to the building which took about four weeks), before the renovation work to the main body of the building could be started. However, work on the building is now proceeding well, with an estimated finishing date of early May 2004.

The planning workshop took place in December and the first two training manuals are currently being prepared. The permanent plots have been established in Abuko Nature Reserve, and analysis of the vegetation has begun.

Additional outputs during this period include the establishment of a permanent transect for butterfly and bird counts taking into account the different habitats in the reserve. Data collection has started on the transects. The first easy to use field guide on the common butterflies of The Gambia has been published and the project already has a project website currently hosted at the University of Warwick website for its development.

The major difficulty encountered during the year was the timing of the intervention of the Government of The Gambia, which resulted in a delay in the start of the project and at the time a loss of faith in the future of the project by staff at Makasutu Wildlife Trust. However the change in location of the Darwin field station has resulted in an improved project with closer liaison with the government Department of Parks and Wildlife Management. MWT have also initiated the formation of a joint conservation management committee consisting of DPWM and MWT staff for Abuko Nature Reserve. This committee meets regularly and is currently drawing up a management plan for the reserve.

The trainers themselves will be trained through an intensive two week course where they will undertake and experience many of the activities that participants on the training courses will also carry out. At the outset, midpoint and end of the course participants will be assessed for their knowledge and skills, and this forms the basis of our cognitive evaluation. The trainers will also be expected to complete a self- audit, which will highlight gaps and strengths in skills and knowledge. This will be prior to the course, at the midpoint and end of the course to provide a self-monitoring of their progress. The training courses will provide practical fieldwork as well as lectures, guest speakers and site visits. Additional activities include presentations, and development of role-plays. The trainers will keep a journal in the months following the training course. This will highlight any difficulties in the field, aid in sharing their experiences with others and form the basis of refresher courses for the trainers.

Timetable for Next Reporting Period (1st April – 30th September 2004)

Date	Key Milestones
April	Research commences. Training manuals 1 &2 produced.
May	Promotional material for centre and courses produced.
June	Darwin Field station opens. Training of trainers commences.
August	Production of easy to use field guide 2
September	Project assessment and development of advanced training courses workshop. 2 radio, 1 TV and 4 newspaper articles produced.

6. Partnerships

The University of Warwick and Makasutu Wildlife Trust have been in constant collaboration over the last year: before the start of the project Dr Susan Barker via email; from 1st October 2003 Dr Linda Barnett, postdoctoral assistant in The Gambia has worked alongside all the staff of MWT on all aspects of the project, including the renovation work on the building, the development of the training courses, setting up and recording in the permanent monitoring plots and transect, and production of the easy to use field guide. Dr Susan Barker visited the Gambia in October 2003 at the proposed start of the project, in order to participate in the planning of the project. Much of this time however was spent resolving the changes in the project brought about by the GOTG's offer of Abuko Nature Reserve as a base for the Darwin project.

MWT have made some initial contacts with the University of Cumbria who wish to make use of the Darwin field station for student projects.

7. Impact and sustainability

The profile of the project is gradually increasing in the country. There has been a lot of interest in the renovation work on the building in Abuko Nature Reserve. Local people and tourists visit the reserve and everyone who visits the reserve passes by the building. MWT staff also wear corporate T-shirts, which associate them with the project and its aim to conserve biodiversity in The Gambia. MWT has a local and overseas membership base and it produces a newsletter 3 times a year for its members and sells it locally. The Darwin project was featured in the winter issue and will feature in each newsletter throughout the lifetime of Darwin project Initiative project. There has also been a lot of local interest in the easy to use field guide on the common butterflies of the Gambia.

The Vice President of The Gambia will be invited to the opening of the Darwin Field Station, together with key personnel from government departments, NGOs and other organizations. The press will also be invited, and TV and radio coverage of the event is assured.

In the longer term MWT is committed to obtain its own funds for the field station through additional projects. The website will be a key feature in disseminating information about the field station and the biodiversity in the Gambia and will widen the network of international collaborators and visitors.

9. Outputs, Outcomes and Dissemination

Due to the delayed start of the project training manuals 1 and 2 are still only in draft form. Local participation from government and NGOs was sought in the content of the courses and how they were to be delivered through a workshop. The participants are currently providing feedback on the draft manuals. No specific training of trainers for the training course to be delivered by the Darwin field station has been carried out to date, although the TA has worked closely

with MWT staff on all aspects of the project including vegetation mapping which is included as part of training course 2.

Additional outputs achieved during this period are the publication of the first easy to use field guide and the establishment of the website for its development.

The website will be pivotal in disseminating information about the project, the Darwin field station and biodiversity in The Gambia.

Table 1: Project Outputs (according to standard output measures)

Code No.	Quantity	Description
5	3	Continuous training to 3 MWT Gambian staff throughout the project by TA
7	2	Training manuals to be used by host country: 1) Biodiversity, National Policy and the Law, 2) Research Techniques and Recording, Methods of Instruction
6B	2	MWT staff trained in vegetation mapping and animal census techniques
10	1	Easy to use field guide on the common butterflies of The Gambia
15A	1	Launch of project, resulting in one national newspaper article, and 2 mins national TV broadcasting time. 2 local UK newspaper articles.
20	1	To be filled when accounts have been completed
22	1	Establishment of 6 permanent monitoring quadrats
23	1	1,000 printing costs, 1,600 training equipment

Table 2: Publications

Type	Detail	Publishers	Available from	Cost
Field Guide	Common Butterflies of The Gambia L Barnett, C. Emms and M. Newport 2003	The Darwin Field Station, The Gambia	MWT, P.O. Box 2164, Serrekunda, The Gambia Will also be available at NHBS, Subuteo books once we have an	£4

			ISBN number.	
--	--	--	--------------	--

10. Project Expenditure

Item	Budget	Expenditure	Balance

*the delay in the start of the project (see section 3) has affected the expenditure in the first six months. A large proportion of the unspent budget is associated with the ongoing cost of providing and equipping the Darwin Field Station. The underspend in the travel and subsistence budget is due to the fact that the project leader was due to travel to The Gambia for the opening of the Darwin Field Station and training of the trainers. As this will not happen until later in the project, the budget is being carried over. The conference and seminar budget is associated with the preparation of the training manuals, which is an ongoing activity. The remainder of the printing costs is associated with the production of the training manuals and promotional material, which is also an on going activity. The underspend for Gambian salaries is due to the delay in taking on project staff, including those at MWT and staff from the government departments as trainers. We have kept DEFRA informed about our underspend and it has been agreed that we can carry over the underspend of budget to the next year of the project.

11. Monitoring, Evaluation and Lessons

At this stage we are monitoring the project through its outputs. The building and equipping of the Darwin Field Station is a key tool in the successful completion of the project, as are relevant training manuals and training of the trainers. Although none of these outputs have yet been produced due to the delay in the start of the project, they are progressing well. We have taken time to include local participation in the deciding on the content and delivery of the training courses in order to provide a package that will aid knowledge transfer on the local level. Despite the reduced number of outputs during this period, we have also been able to produce additional ones including the first easy to use field guide and a basic website. Six months time should see us back on target with our outputs.

The training of MWT staff is continuous, and the TA has based the training and field activities of the project around producing relevant outputs (e.g. designation and vegetation survey of the permanent monitoring plots).

We will evaluate the progress of the project through the number of training courses the Darwin Field Station provides and the number of people it trains. Each participant on the training courses will be assessed prior to the course for their knowledge, and again mid point and the end of the course. This will provide the basis for a grade for each participant at the end of the course. Each participant will also undertake a personal audit and journal to aid self - assessment.

Feedback will be obtained from the participants and will be used to refine subsequent training courses. Evaluation will be through questionnaire and interview.

Longer-term trainee outcomes will be monitored through MWT management and evaluation and periodic evaluation by the technical assistant. Evaluation of trainers will be carried out through annual participatory seminars and workshops where trainers are invited back to evaluate their own performance during the previous 12 months and give feedback on ways to improve it e.g. training/retraining in particular areas.

MWT will record researchers visiting Abuko Nature Reserve to undertake biodiversity research as a result of the Darwin project. This will provide a basis for comparison with the last 2 years.

APPENDICES

Annex 1 Report of progress and achievements against Logical Framework for Financial Year: 2003/2004

<i>Project summary</i>	<i>Measurable Indicators</i>	<i>Progress and Achievements April 2003-Mar 2004</i>	<i>Actions required/planned for next period</i>
<p>Goal: To draw on expertise relevant to biodiversity from within the United Kingdom to work with local partners in countries rich in biodiversity but poor in resources to achieve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conservation of biological diversity, • The sustainable use of its components, and • The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources 			
<p><i>Purpose</i> <i>To build the capacity of relevant personnel in The Gambia to assess and monitor its biodiversity, undertake research on species, habitats and ecosystems and disseminate information to a variety of audiences.</i></p>	<p>Increase in personnel capable of working effectively on biodiversity and biodiversity related issues. Increase in number of researchers working on biodiversity in The Gambia. Increase in baseline information on biodiversity in the Gambia Development of biodiversity indicators for the Gambia Media items e.g. television and radio programmes.</p>	<p>Training course workshop. Draft training manuals for two courses produced. Partner organisation staff trained in vegetation mapping and monkey census techniques. Research started in Abuko Nature Reserve Pilot website designed and on line. One easy to use field guide produced</p>	<p>Finalisation of training manuals 1 and 2. Completion and opening of Darwin field station, training of trainers and commencement of training courses. Production of promotional material. Start building researchers accommodation Collect baseline data in Abuko Nature Reserve, and start active management and restoration of habitats. Production of one field guide, and two more training manuals 2 radio and 1 TV broadcast. Collate flora and fauna images, add</p>

			to website and continue to collect images.
Outputs			
Partner organisation able to run training courses and provide facility to undertake, stimulate and facilitate research	Minimum of 8 staff from 5 partner organisations trained in ecology and biodiversity assessment techniques.	<p>Planning workshop for training courses completed with participation of 8 other organisations.</p> <p>Permanent monitoring plots and transects in place.</p> <p>MWT project staff recruited and trained in ecology, plant identification and vegetation mapping and monkey census techniques.</p> <p>Building work on Darwin field station on going.</p>	<p>Training of trainers for training courses 1 and 2.</p> <p>Open Darwin field station and start running courses.</p> <p>Promote the station to encourage researchers to undertake research there.</p>
<i>Digital photographic database produced and information on the biodiversity of The Gambia disseminated</i>	200 fauna and 300 flora images produced and stored on CD. Active website with hit-rate score. Regular meetings to disseminate information.	50 fauna and 30 flora images produced.	Continue to collect and collate images, and create the digital database as part of the website.
<i>Publication and presentations.</i>	4 radio, 2 TV broadcasts, 4 easy to use field guides, 6 training manuals, annual symposium, two scientific papers.	One easy to use field guide on common butterflies produced.	Second easy to use field guide completed. 2 radio and 1 TV broadcast.
<i>TV and radio programmes</i>			1 TV and 2 radio programmes