

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

Project Ref. No.	162/13/027
Project Title	Developing reserves for biodiversity conservation and sustainable fisheries in Rodrigues
Country(ies)	Mauritius
UK Organisation	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
Collaborator(s)	Shoals Rodrigues (primary collaborator); Fisheries Research and Training Unit (FRTU), Fisheries Protection Service (FPS), National Coastguard, Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA)
Project Leader	Dr Alasdair Edwards
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Project website	http://www.ncl.ac.uk/tcmweb/tmr/aje_darwin_rodrigues.html

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project.

Marine reserves declared in Rodrigues

On 9 April 2007, four marine reserves were finally gazetted in Rodrigues. This good news came shortly before the major regional workshop on 9-14 May, a key milestone of the Darwin project. The workshop, entitled “*A Regional Perspective on MPAs in the Western Indian Ocean*”, was opened by Rodrigues’ Chief Commissioner, Mr Johnson Roussety, and brought together 75 delegates from 12 countries at the Escale Vacances Hotel in Port Mathurin on to discuss the issues of unsustainable marine resource use and how MPAs can be used as effective management tools.

Originally planned as a modest meeting with 25 delegates, the scope of the meeting was widened in discussion WWF, the Indian Ocean Commission, and the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) to include a two-day session to initiate the Western Indian Ocean Marine Ecoregion (WIOMER) MPA Managers’ Forum, in addition to the three-day formal meeting. The Darwin funding provided a catalyst which attracted twice as much again from Fonds Français pour l’Environnement Mondial, WWF, the European Union’s Regional Programme for Coastal Zone Management of the West Indian Ocean Countries (ReCoMaP), WIOMSA, and the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to support the much larger meeting. Darwin funds supported the participation of: Dr A. Edwards, Dr F. Gell, Mr A. Harris, Dr S. Mangi, Dr L. Rodwell and Ms S. Walmsley (UK), Ms J. Lichuge (Mozambique), Ms J. Church (Kenya), M. B. Cauvin (Réunion), Dr V. Hoon (India), and Ms J. Sauzier, Ms J. Ah-King and Ms P. Bapoo-Dundoo (Mauritius), as well as 16 Rodriguais.

The workshop was a great opportunity for Rodrigues delegates to learn lessons from MPA managers throughout the region and further afield (e.g. Sénégal, India, St Lucia), and for regional delegates to share information, experience and ideas. Highlights of the workshop included a visit to the Rivière Banane marine reserve, which will be the first to be demarcated, and a stakeholder meeting by Creole speaking delegates (Seychelles, Mauritius, Madagascar, Comores) with local Rodriguais fishermen affected by the new reserves.

The WIOMER MPA Managers' Forum, part of a project managed by the Indian Ocean Commission and WWF to bring regional coherence to MPA development, was successfully established and now networks MPA managers from Mauritius, Rodrigues, Seychelles, Comoros, Madagascar and La Réunion.

MPA Information Tables for the region and summaries of the presentations in both French and English have been posted on the project website and sent to all workshop participants.

Shoals Rodrigues education campaign

Fisher Training has progressed well and there have now been 20 sessions at 2 fishing villages (St François and Pointe Coton), discussing topics such as coral reefs, octopus and fish biology and fisheries management.

Club Mer (a weekly club for young Rodriguans) has also progressed well and Saturday sessions have included presentations on various topics, including a talk of Palau coral reefs by Dr Edwards. There have also been beach activities, snorkelling and swimming sessions are given to *Club Mer* members and the general public every Saturday. During Environment Week (4-9 June), *Shoals Rodrigues* participated in the Environment Fair organised by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, and students from *Club Mer* joined 12 youth groups around the island to participate in the environmental carnival and a Try Dive session, which was attended by over 40 *Club Mer* students and members of the public. Youth groups from Rodrigues and Mauritius have also visited the *Shoals Rodrigues* Centre, including 53 students from Lorette College, Curepipe in Mauritius and 15 sixth form students from Rodrigues College who undertook a 3-week field course.

Educational poster

The third poster, entitled 'Le Récif de Demain', has been designed and 300 copies are being produced and distributed to all primary and secondary schools, FRTU, FPS as well as the fishing communities. To maximize impact the poster is in French.

***Shoals Rodrigues* Fisheries monitoring programme – lagoon seine net fishery**

Assessments of the seine net catches have been carried out on 27 fishing days to date between 1 March and 30 September, working with 4 fishing teams (Port Sud Est, Pointe Corail, Pointe l'Aigle and Baie du Nord). The lengths of 12,997 fish were measured and fish were also brought back to the laboratory for length-weight measurements and assessment of gonads. The data are currently being analysed using the database system developed by Dr Edwards. The results of the seine net fishery study have been presented by Dr Edwards at the Regional MPA workshop in May and by Research Coordinator, Dr Hardman at the 5th WIOMSA Scientific Symposium in South Africa in October.

Assessments of the line and basket trap fishery were continued working in collaboration with FRTU enumerators. Surveys are carried out at one fish landing station per week and have been undertaken at 11 stations on 17 fishing days. Fishers are asked questions about time spent fishing, where they were fishing, and techniques used and the catch is measured.

***Shoals Rodrigues* Habitat monitoring programme**

Monitoring of the lagoon habitats took place at 8 sites during June (following recommendation to discontinue surveys of fine sediment areas). The results of our coral reef monitoring surveys over the past 5 years were presented by Research Coordinator Emily Hardman, at the National Ocean Science Forum held in the University of Mauritius in July.

Dive Training

Four FPS officers and one FRTU officer completed their PADI Open Water course on 15th September under instruction from J. Raffin of *Shoals Rodrigues*.

Public awareness

Publicity for the Darwin Initiative work has included 2 newspapers articles, a radio interview and a TV appearance (on the MBC production 'Carnets de Rodrigues') following the MPA workshop in May. An article about our work with the fisher community was also published by Reuters in May. *Shoals Rodrigues* also collaborated with the NGO, Mauritian Wildlife Foundation on their project to provide environmental training for tour operators.

Other information

Shoals Rodrigues has won the contract to undertake the Community Participation Campaign for the UNDP MPA project in the south of Rodrigues. The project will be carried out over a 2 year period and will involve a sensitisation campaign working with 10 coastal villages in the south of Rodrigues and 3 primary schools. The project aims to ensure that all community stakeholders are empowered so as to enable them to make informed decisions about management issues related to the MPA.

Shoals Rodrigues has secured funding through the Indian Ocean Commission's project "Réseau des aires marines protégées des pays de la COI" to demarcate the marine reserve at Rivière Banane. Funding is currently being sought to develop alternative livelihood projects for the fishers affected by the marine reserves.

Training visits

Dr Alasdair Edwards made a training visit from 4-14 September as well as assisting with the organisation of the workshop from 1-16 May in Rodrigues. The main purpose of the training was to work with *Shoals* personnel on a detailed manual for the fisheries database so that work could continue without outside help.

Papers for peer reviewed journals

These two milestones are behind because (1) we decided to produce two linked papers for the same journal, (2) FRTU took 5 months to respond to an official request for the latest fishery statistics, (3) further (lengthy) analysis was found to be needed for the length-frequency paper to estimate growth coefficient (K) values, and (4) the regional workshop occupied more of our time than expected. The two papers remain in manuscript but we intend to submit to *Fisheries Management and Ecology* before the end of the project. Titles are: *The large seine-net fishery of Rodrigues Island. I. Characterisation of the fishery and trends in catch and effort* and *The large seine-net fishery of Rodrigues Island. II. Using length-frequency data to assess stock status and management options*. Sufficient data for a third paper on the octopus fishery are available.

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 affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: no/yes, in..... (month/yr)

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

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

We have still not received any official communication of the mid-term review carried out at the end of last year or an official go-ahead to implement its suggestions. In the interim we have adopted the revised logframe (from a draft version of the review) as a basis for the remainder of the project which ends in 3 months time.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form email** to Eilidh Young, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme at Darwin-Projects@ectf-ed.org.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 14-075 Darwin Half Year Report**