

Pioneering an Innovative Conservation Approach in Sierra Leone's Gola Forest

Final Report



Submitted by



The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

in partnership with

Conservation Society of Sierra Leone
National Commission for Environment and Forestry, Sierra Leone Government



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Cover Images.

- Top Left: RSPB and CSSL members meeting with President Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, Freetown 2005
- Top right: Gola Forest Reserve Signboards on reserve boundary. Alex Hipkiss/RSPB
- Bottom Left: White-necked picathartes, Guy Shorrocks/RSPB
- Bottom Right: Community member in hunting regulation meeting, Malema Chiefdom. Alex Hipkiss/RSPB

Darwin Initiative

Final Report - Pioneering an Innovative Conservation Approach in Sierra Leone's Gola Forest

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1. Darwin Project Information

Project Reference No.	162/13/031
Project title	Pioneering an Innovative Conservation Approach in Sierra Leone's Gola Forest
Country	Sierra Leone
UK Contractor	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Partner Organisation (s)	Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL); Forestry Division (FD)* of the National Commission for Environment and Forestry (NaCEF)
Darwin Grant Value	£133,900
Start/End date	15 October 2004/30 March 2007
Project website	N/a
Author(s), date	Alex Hipkiss

2. Project Background/Rationale

The project is located in the 75,000ha Gola Forest Reserves and 7 chiefdoms in the Kenema, Kailahun and Pujehun Districts of Sierra Leone. The reserves are designated as production reserves and have been commercially logged in the past. The RSPB in collaboration with CSSL and FD have worked to protect the Gola forest since 1990. The civil war in the 1990s ended both commercial and conservation activities in the area.

The government of Sierra Leone (GoSL), in the post conflict situation has show strong support to protect the Gola Forest and was particularly keen to investigate new and innovative approaches that would benefit communities in a more sustainable way. GOSL was also keen to make moves to improve upon its international image.

Although the overall integrity of the Gola Forest Reserves is not immediately threatened, illegal logging, hunting and encroachment for farming in the post conflict situation (the conflict officially ended in 2002) are on the increase. In addition, there were serious concerns that if the forest did not soon come under conservation control, it would only a matter of time before logging rights are allocated to a commercial logging enterprise.

This project aimed to address this threat over a two-year period by obtaining a long-term conservation concession for the Gola Forest Reserves – i.e. to lease the rights to its management and exploitation, but exercise those rights to protect the forest whilst paying the government for the management rights and compensation (royalties) to communities for the conservation of the forest. In 2004, the project was given the initial go-ahead from the Government of Sierra Leone to develop an overall management plan for the concession for cabinet consideration in 2007. Darwin support contributed significantly to this planning process.

In March 2002, representatives of the RSPB, CSSL and key Sierra Leone government ministries met to discuss the re-establishment of the Gola Forest Conservation Programme following the return of peace to Sierra Leone. The meeting was highly

successful, and resulted in the production of a signed document approving a proposed Gola Conservation Concession Framework and a Framework Vision for the conservation of the Gola Forest.

Following this meeting, in 2003 the RSPB applied for and received a grant from Conservation International's Global Conservation Fund (GCF) to assess the feasibility of a conservation concession programme in Gola. During the feasibility study, which was co-funded by the RSPB and implemented by RSPB, CSSL and FD, a project assessment and planning process involving as many stakeholders as possible was carried out. A socio-economic and forest condition survey and a cost-benefit analysis with the involvement of all seven Gola communities were conducted and concluded with a participatory planning workshop.

The planning workshop resulted in the production of a project outline and a Joint Statement by the participants demonstrating their support for the conservation concession concept. A meeting followed it between CSSL, the RSPB and the Sierra Leone Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, the production of a Statement of Intent by the RSPB and the provision of a letter of support by the Minister.

3. Project Summary

The purpose of the project is to establish an innovative, participatory management programme for the Gola Forest, Sierra Leone, using a conservation concession strategy. Establishment of a conservation concession involves the formulation of an agreement (with a management plan integral to the agreement) under which an area important for biodiversity is conserved in the long term but government and local people receive benefits of the same value or more as those they would receive if logging or other damaging activities were permitted.

The outputs are as follows.

- Knowledge of the biodiversity and natural resources of Gola and the ecosystem services it provides is improved.
- A detailed management plan is developed with the involvement of all stakeholders.
- The capacity of the Forestry Division (FD), the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) and local communities to play their roles in the new management arrangement is increased.
- Awareness of the importance of the Gola Forest is raised locally and nationally.

Neither the outputs nor the operational plan have been modified significantly since the project began.

The project has helped Sierra Leone implement several articles of the CBD, especially 6 (general measures – 5%), 7 (Identification and Monitoring – 5%), 8 (in situ conservation – 30%), 10 (sustainable use – 10%), 11 (incentive measures – 20%), 12 (research and training – 20%) and 13 (public education and awareness – 10%).

In addition the projects activities are relevant to the Forest Biodiversity thematic programme and the Economics, trade and incentives, Ecosystem approach, Protected areas, Public education and awareness, and Sustainable use of biodiversity cross-cutting issues.

There is clear and strong commitment from senior government that the entire 75,000ha Gola Reserve will become a National Park. In January 07 a draft notice was presented to cabinet that will declare the national park which is now being forwarded to the

Attorney Generals office before its is publicised as a government notice. The Conservation Concession idea is therefore becoming obsolete, as what we are now developing is a partnership between government and civil society to establish a protected area. The funding mechanisms of the Conservation concession proposed, however remain in that the dedicated trust fund proposed will be utilised to fund core part operation costs and the ongoing community development schemes. Community compensation and development protocols have been agreed and the agreement signed (appendix 5) in January 2007. The conservation concession payments have provided added impetus for the government to go much further and commit to a national park.

We believe that the project approach is still innovative as Sierra Leone, a least developed country needs to find ways of obtaining sustainable financing to protect its natural heritage and engage communities – which it cannot do from current government budgets. We hope that the Gola approach can be used as a model for Sierra Leone and used as an example for the need for sustainable financing for protected areas in cash-poor countries.

This next phase, which began in May 2007 will see the project funding park operation costs, including staff salaries for Government and NGOs. The Government is therefore benefiting significantly for this income and protecting a vital resource, and will continue to do so once the Endowment Fund is established.

On specific outputs:

Output 1. Knowledge of the biodiversity and natural resources of Gola and the ecosystem services it provides is improved.

See **4. Research** below for more details. Darwin fund have supported the first major Biodiversity Survey of the Gola Forest since the 1980s. These surveys have contributed to the reassessment of the Birds, mammals and trees of the forest as well as assessing the overall condition of the forest since the cessation of 30 years of commercial logging and the 10-year civil war. It can be concluded, generally that the conflict has been good for the Forest in that the removal of commercial interests from the forest for over 20 years has allowed significant forest re-growth and regeneration in areas previously logged. In terms of the biodiversity values, all of the known threatened bird species have been recorded in the forest in the past 2 years, however much more needs to be done to assess their distributions, populations and general ecology. Similar issues relate to the mammals, again all species known from the forest have been recorded yet little is known of their populations, distribution and ecology. The ecosystem service studies will take two further years before we can make any clear conclusions whilst we built the picture of the services provided.

The civil conflict reduced some threats due to the depopulation from the insecurity, but probably contributed to the boom in illegal logging by communities (with power-saws) as well as a general loss of government control over the forest resource. This resulted in a lot of small scale, damaging activities during and after the conflict.

Output 2. A detailed management plan is developed with the involvement of all stakeholders.

This has been a highly consultative process, the plan is in its final stages of drafting, but the critical point of consultation has been completed with the local communities. The management plan has now been adapted to a national park format and situation and the organisational structure adapted.

The management plan has been initially internally draft by the project team during September thru November 2006. The draft was discussed at a partners meeting in October 2006 and in a community meeting (with community forest management committees) in November 2006. Both meetings reached broad consensus on the plan,

the community meeting in particular gave strong approval to the plan. There have also been a series of meeting from chiefdom to chiefdom to present the latest iterations of the management plans. See Management plan table of contents in Appendix 6.

Biodiversity monitoring mechanisms will be developed during the next 2 years, there was not sufficient time, nor has it been appropriate to develop these as data which will inform the plan, is still being collected, compiled and analysed. Agreement on compensation with communities had been reached in January 2007 (appendix 5). We have also nearly completed the key documents for the concession agreement and management structures for the proposed National Park.

Output 3. The capacity of the Forestry Division, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) and local communities to play their roles in the new management arrangement is increased.

On the job training has been the most effective way of building capacity and the project has given almost 100 Sierra Leonean a real chance of developing capacities through this flagship programme.

Two long-term staff members of CSSL are getting their first experience of implementation of a large conservation project, as well as being directly involved in protected area management. Other staff have been recruited on a contract basis and are likely to continue playing an important role in Gola and other protected areas.

Despite the ongoing on the job training for Forestry Division and community staff only the biodiversity team and the forest guards have received structured and targeted training. The project will now need to develop a training programme for all staff under the national park organisation structure that will need to be closely monitored and supported.

Output 4. Awareness of the importance of the Gola Forest is raised locally and nationally.

Staff regularly meet to plan advocacy activities, based on target groups, key messages and most effective means. The communities are the most important target group, but all levels of society are addressed in order to consolidate political and popular support for the idea of protecting Gola as a unique national heritage. The key messages for most groups are: (1) the Gola Forest is unique and important; and (2) all Sierra Leoneans will benefit from the conservation of Gola.

Face to face and radio communication has been shown to be the most effective means of sharing information. A regular series of radio shows is also used to reach a wider audience in the Eastern Region. A variety of events at both local and national level have been used opportunistically to get information across. A project calendar and simple project leaflets have been produced and distributed. Newspaper articles are frequently published in the national press and intermittently in the international press.

The Project was launched by the President of Sierra Leone in 2005 at the district showground in Kenema and was widely publicised. The project has also been promoted at national workshops and fora and at two international conferences in Cameroon in 2005 (Birdlife International Conference of Africa partners) and at the Convention on Biological Diversity COP7 in Brazil, in 2006. The project has also been promoted in the RSPB Birds magazine, World Birdwatch and several others. See appendix 15 for some samples.

Just the existence and operation of the Gola Programme have had a big effect on awareness raising, the participation of the project in other forums reinforced this.

- **Research**

A twelve-member survey team was assembled and trained in 2005, led by an RSPB recruited research biologist and a local counterpart. The forest survey is based on a systematic sample. Straight 4 km transects were cut and marked at regular intervals across the forest. In total 180 km of transects were surveyed. Mammals and their signs were surveyed along the length of these transects using distance sampling techniques. Birds were surveyed at points at 200 m intervals along transects using timed species counts and distance techniques. Habitat and vegetation structure was assessed at these same points. Trees are identified, measured and marked in circular plots centred on these same points. Human activities were scored within these tree plots and as encountered on an ad hoc basis (all staff have data sheets for scoring human activities as they encounter them) along all transects and baselines connecting the transects. All transects are located using GPS and are tagged at 25 m intervals so it is possible to easily locate any observation to within a few metres.

The bulk of bird, mammal and tree surveys were completed by the end of March 2007. All data collection is now completed but analysis will take a further few months to complete. The interim reports attached here details this surveys (appendix 7).

Almost all of the 50 large mammal species previously known from Gola Forest have been recorded. Some species only known from signs or reports have been seen or otherwise confirmed (Zebra Duiker sighted, Bongo dung and horns) and two new species (Water Chevrotain sighting and Spot-necked Otter sighting) have been observed. Yellow-backed Duiker remains the only large mammal yet to be located. Primate numbers are significant with regular encounters with the endangered Diana Monkey and Western Red Colobus, and records of Chimpanzee. African Elephant is also still present, noted from signs (dung and prints) and reports, as are Buffalo (tracks, dung, horns and close encounters).

A living collection of orchids from the forest has been started, and so far several species new to Sierra Leone have been identified.

Reconnaissance surveys and analysis of satellite imagery show that the forest is largely intact in its extent, though there has been more intensive logging in certain localities. See appendix 8 for a map of forest cover. Most recent cases of logging concern small-scale logging by community leaders colluding with outside business interests. The logging has occurred mainly in community forests but has occasionally strayed into the reserve. A more serious problem is bush meat hunting which the project is still trying to assess the impact of and ways in which to address it.

In addition to the systematic surveys, four other surveys have been undertaken by visiting researchers. These are: a rapid assessment of the butterflies of the forest, a focussed survey of the birds and plants and an assessment of the conservation status of the White-necked Picathartes colonies around the reserve conducted by two RSPB sabbatical staff in collaboration with project staff; surveys along watercourses in the forest including a dragonfly survey, by three more RSPB sabbatical staff in collaboration with project staff. See appendix 9 for sabbatical reports.

The butterfly survey (appendix 10) located some 370 species of butterfly and several more species have been added since then. The picathartes survey visited 30 colony sites, two thirds of them in unprotected areas outside the reserve. Most of these were under threat from disturbance and some were already abandoned. Recommendations have been made for conservation work to protect these colonies and for the future monitoring of them and of the colonies inside the reserve. River surveys resulted in a collection of what may be as many as 60 or 70 odonata. These are still being identified in collaboration with recognized regional experts. The river surveys also made several new mammal records, located on particular area with an abundance of Pygmy Hippo signs

and made the first record of endangered Rufous Fishing Owl inside the reserve. The bird survey confirmed the presence of the Rufous Fishing Owl and the Gola Malimbe last seen in Gola in 1976. Over 330 bird species are now known for the Gola Forest area, over 260 having been recorded during the current surveys. See appendix 11. for the detailed report. Several new species for Sierra Leone have also been recorded. The plant survey resulted in some 770 species being identified with specimens collected of c 300 species. Specimens were collected in triplicate so that one could be sent to Kew, one to the National Herbarium in Sierra Leone and one retained at the project. See appendix 13 for a plant list.

Four papers have been accepted for publication as in appendix 14.

- ***Training and capacity building activities***

On-the-job training has been the major activity of the Technical Advisor and other senior staff, and two major training programmes have been developed for the 11 staff on the biodiversity surveys and for forestry staff. Community groups also receive training on a variety of issues (e.g. beekeeping) and 7 community members (one from each chiefdom) are part of the biodiversity survey team.

Survey team members have been trained in a variety of techniques relevant to the survey requirements which they are now having to put into practice on a daily basis.

They are now competent in:

- use of compass, clinometers, rangefinder, binoculars, GPS (all trainees now able to locate by GPS, and supervise the cutting of a straight transect through the forest, following a compass bearing, unaided)
- identification of large mammals and key birds (trainees are rotated round the three main taxa groups, in each group accompanying an expert leader to assist in the spotting and measurement of targets; most team members are now able to identify key bird and mammal species by sight and sound)
- distance sampling techniques (all survey team members have been lectured on the theory of line transect and point sampling techniques; in addition, the techniques have been practiced in the field and subsequently carried out during the survey – this includes species identification, distance and compass angle measurements, and data recording).

Besides biological field techniques, all survey team members have been extensively trained in administrative and data recording skills, as well as the supervision of transect cutting teams. This includes e.g. the systematic recording of field data on recording forms, handling field data in a responsible way, managing payments of transect cutting teams and making detailed financial overviews of field expenses.

A programme of in-service training for Forestry Division staff within the project is being implemented by senior Forestry staff with assistance from other technical staff. Every month, 14 forest guards receive training on various topics for one or two days. So far, 20 days of training have been carried out.

4. Project Impacts

Communities have been, for the most part, brought on board, and have an understanding and are committed to conservation and national park, participating actively in planning as well as day-to-day work through employment on the project. The key indicator for the achievement of the project purpose has been the agreement with the key stakeholders as the content of the management plan, although the final plan has yet to be published, a key component of this, the community benefits agreement has been

signed (Appendix 5).

Government has gone way ahead of where they were at project formulation, also committed to the National Park and agreed in the financial issues.

Local capacities for conservation work and planning way ahead of where they were at the beginning of the project

At the national level there has been much support expressed for the programme, particularly from the president of SL, who launched the Programme in 2005 (see appendix 15), and has mentioned the programme in 3 other key speeches that he has made in the past 2 years. It would not be an exaggeration to say Gola programme has helped stimulate govt to move towards a national system of protected areas, with Gola as a flagship.

Although the agreement is yet to be signed the partners have entered a new phase to establish Gola as a national Park, the need for a conservation concession is no longer needed, due to the high level political support that the project has. The National Park commitment was not planned for but hoped for and is a huge boost. Although conservation concessions are an interesting approach, there is a level of uncertainty attached to them. The MOU for the next phase of the programme is ready for signature; we expect this to be done by early July and will last for 5 years. See Appendix 16 for the final draft.

The NBSAP of 2003 and, we believe, the onset of the Gola Programme prompted the government, and particularly the President, to announce in 2005 the formation of the National Commission for Environment and Forestry (NaCEF) as an executive agency. The Forestry Division and Environment Division were removed from their line ministries and have been made part of NaCEF. This was an indication of the government's commitment to the implementation of the NBSAP and its commitment to the CBD. It was also a response to improve the governance of environmental and forestry matters and to streamline them. There is huge overlap and contradiction of various laws in particularly in respect to natural resources, and traditionally organised line ministries are poor at raising funds and adapting to new situations. Despite some significant teething problems for NaCEF, we believe that NaCEF of a good move for Sierra Leone and for improved biodiversity conservation in the country.

The RSPB recruited a Research Biologist with a local counterpart, to lead the training of Sierra Leone staff to conduct the biodiversity surveys. This has been a great success and the members of the team have performed admirably during the surveys and have acquired extensive field survey skills. The 7 members of the team are from Forestry Division, CSSL and local communities. Most will continue to be employed on the project during its next phase. It is eventually hoped that some of the more senior research staff will be sent for PhD training.

A CSSL staff member, was one of the three project managers during this project, he has now been promoted to become the protected area manager for the Gola Forest, a significant illustration of improved capacity.

The Programme has worked extremely well and has made a significant impact as a collaboration between the RSPB, CSSL and the Government. This remains true and has been quite successful in building the relations between the institutions. There is a real indication of strong collaboration between GOSL, local government, local and international NGOs and communities. All parties agree that these partnerships form an excellent model for future protected area management in Sierra Leone.

We believe also that the project has had a positive impact on local communities. The majority of the staff employed on the project are from the local communities. As the project is yet to be evaluated, we can only speak from the projects perspective on

community attitudes. The project does have agreements with each of the communities on long-term development support that we provide to the communities and the community leaders have signed up to the management plan and the benefits promised in an agreement signed in January 2007.

The project will be responding to the eventual evaluation (to be done in late 2007) with modifications of the approach to community relations and benefits. Perhaps ultimately most important is support for forest protection, expressed not only in meetings and agreements but also in action. For example, for most of two years, despite trouble spots, chiefs were doing more to stop logging than forestry staff were.

5. Project Outputs

The Project outputs are quantified in Appendix II. These have broadly been achieved.

A training programme was never formalised for the programme, and training has broadly been on the Job – job experience and mentoring. Specific training programmes have been targeted toward the Research team and forest guards.

The research programme was carried out successfully, write-up is still ongoing. The research component needed additional technical support from the RSPB, above what was planned. Additional RSPB funding was found for a contract research biologist to support and lead the biodiversity surveys and for a counterpart.

There has been extensive dissemination of the project's activities in country. The dissemination in the UK and Internationally has been less so.

Key Biodiversity findings are to be published in international journals for the international conservation community to review. The management plan will be produced as a management tool but it is expected that a summary, glossy version with key objectives will be produced for decision makers and the wider public.

6. Project Expenditure

<i>Expenditure</i>	Budget (£)		Expenditure (£)				Variance
<i>Category</i>	Original	Final	Y1 (04-05)	Y2 (05-06)	Y3 (06-07)	Total	(%)

The following amendments from the original budget were implemented during the course of the project.

- The Darwin Secretariat approved a carry-forward of £5,000 from the 'Staff Costs' category for 04-05. This amount was initially wholly allocated to the 'Others' category for 05-06.
- A Transfer of £2,050 from the 'Others' category to the 'Printing' category was approved during 05-06.

Variations in expenditure of +/- 10% of budget were observed on the following categories:

- Rent, rates, heating, lighting, cleaning, overheads. This was due to lower-than-expected actual expenditure under this category during Year 2, especially relating to office administration costs in Sierra Leone. The project was hosted by the District Forestry Office in Kenema.
- Conferences, seminars. Significant underspends under this category was observed in year 1 when planned workshops were delayed, and year 3. This latter variance looks to be due to the fact that some costs budgeted under this category have been allocated to 'Travel and Subsistence', which was overspent during year 3.

- Note that the Travel and Subsistence category has been artificially limited to 10% above budget. In reality, significant overspends were encountered on this category, partially due to allocation issues described above, but also due to higher than expected travel costs observed in the project area, however, instead of requesting a budget amendment so that true travel costs could be claimed, we chose to finance the overspend from our own funds.
- The total grant expenditure is £41.38 lower than the available grant amount. This is because, at the time of claiming, our accounts showed us to be underspent against the year 1 budget by £5,041.38. yet, a round £5,000 was carried forward to year 2. Hence, the remaining £41.38 that was not carried forward was left unclaimed.

During the first quarter of year 3, a significant variation between the exchange rate used to calculate project costs incurred in Sierra Leone in GBP, and the actual exchange rate used to convert cash transfers to the project area was identified. It transpired that the field office Sierra Leone had managed to secure a rate for converting transfers from the RSPB to Sierra Leone 'Le' that was much higher than the average market rate. In effect, this meant that project costs had been slightly overestimated up to that point. The figures in the above table have been revised to show project spend based on actual exchange rates, rather than the market average.

It is for the above reason that the total spend shown above in year 3 is much higher than the budgeted spend for that year, as this shows that, when viewed as a whole, the entire claimed grant was expended on project costs, despite the initial overestimation. Indeed, expenditure was such in year 3 that in total, £10,987.63 of project costs that could have been justifiably claimed from Darwin were instead covered by ourselves as we had already claimed all available grant.

7. Project Operation and Partnerships

The project partnership remains true the project document. The project was managed on site by a team of the 3 partners; RSPB – Project Leader, CSSL – Project Manager - Community Development and Outreach and Biodiversity, FD – Patrolling and Law Enforcement. This partnership was supported by the Project's Planning committee where the 3 partners and the communities (represented by one of the 7 Chiefs).

The project collaborated with the BirdLife International led 'Strengthening Capacity for Biodiversity Conservation in West Africa' (Darwin # 13/021) project that worked in 5 Upper Guinea forest Countries including Sierra Leone through CSSL. Two Biodiversity training events were supported by this programme and trainees we invited to carry out field work and training at Gola.

The project also collaborated with The Global Conservation Fund (GCF) at Conservation International as a partner and donor for this phase and for the Gola Trust Fund. Overseas institutions and individuals have visited the project site to carry out research. Institutions have been the Wild Chimp Foundation and Cranfield University. Individual researchers have come from the UK, France, Cote d'Ivoire, Denmark and Italy.

The partnership is now continuing into the new phase with maintained roles and ownership by the local partners.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation, Lesson learning

Different aspects of the project are monitored in a variety of ways, both formal and informal, however there has been no overarching monitoring framework for this 2-year project. Reports prepared for donors against the log frame and work plans also serve for internal monitoring of progress.

Project Planning Committee. This committee meets quarterly to scrutinise and approve reports, work plans and budgets presented by the project leader. The committee comprises the project Manger from RSPB -UK, and Director of the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone and Director of Forestry Division and one Chief. This committee is tasked with keeping the project on track with meeting it's objectives.

Biodiversity monitoring. The Biological surveys being conducted at present are establishing a **baseline** of key threatened species and establishing a series of permanent monitoring plots. This forms the basis of the Monitoring plan to be developed in the next phase of the project to monitor protected area and biodiversity objectives.

Forest Guards, Community forest monitors and incidence reports. Forest guards and forest monitors have been trained to record illegal activities within the forest and have data sheets for such activities, this data will eventually be collated to monitor changes and patterns in illegal activities and will feed back into the projects management plan.

Community development support and collaboration. We have agreements and basic contracts with each chiefdom for the development support that they receive. Project staff monitor implementation of these agreements.

Indicators in the log frame are mainly process type indicators due to the core aim being the development of the management plan and that the relevant consultations being held. These process indicators and milestones need little in terms of baseline studies.

The Project became a much bigger scale programme that was initially envisaged and the capacity building and training issues that had to be addressed where also much more extensive than envisaged. The project had limited time or organisation to develop a forma training programme other than on the Biodiversity Team, who attended a project organised field course at the beginning of the project. Training is a key component of the next phase of the programme. Will first need to do a Training Needs assessment.

The major constraint to project implementation has been the shortage of suitably qualified and experienced local staff who can take greater ownership for the various activities. In the case of the biodiversity survey, this issue has been addressed by recruiting an experienced team leader from out of Sierra Leone to intensively train the local staff on the job. This position was created using additional funds allocated by the RSPB. However, the budget does not permit us to recruit specialists internationally for each area of activity. As a result, the few experienced staff have to do their best to train and coach other staff on the job, in addition to running formal training activities.

Because of feedback from communities and other partners, more emphasis is being put on livelihood-enhancing activities for communities. These have included training in beekeeping and plantain multiplication, as well as the creation of demonstration farms in each chiefdom, with a woman farmer recruited to take care of each site.

Thee have been no external evaluations of project activities. There have been three financial audits to date. The project is entering a new phase and there have been some internal, individual evaluations by the CSSL and FD managers, the reports are attached in appendix 17. The project will also be doing a socioeconomic baseline in 2007 that will partly be used to assess the impact on communities and set a baseline for

development initiatives. The next evaluation will be in late 2009.

It was learnt that it has been critical for NGOs not to work in a vacuum, particularly when it comes to working in large-scale projects such as this. The strength in the project is a result on the transparent links that we have with national government and communities and the ownership, benefits and involvement that they have.

Sustained funding is also critical, a large part of the project leaders time has been spent on fundraising with the partners. This sustained effort has paid dividends but there is such a limited range of funding sources for conservation across the world. Projects should also consider their long-term future realistically, as should donors and the time span of the projects that they offer. In the case of this project, it has always been an aim to ensure that we can attract sustained funding for a dedicated endowment fund. Many projects forget to consider such options and should be realistic in planning – either they should be sure that they can sustain the project or decide from day one that the project will be a one off project.

9. Actions taken in response to annual report reviews

Annual review reports are always shared with the partners for their information, and the project management on site take the comments into account when planning. Specific review responses and issues:

Year 1 review

The project gave a 3 page response detailing our reactions and actions taken to the questions. Specially actions taken of note:

Water Quality and climate modulation studies: These were dropped on Darwin review advice. However, since this, the RSPB has found separate funding for the Water quality study, this survey is now ongoing.

Reviewer advised the project to do a Social impact survey– the project was unable to do this due to staff and time constraints. However, the next phase of the project will be doing a survey this FY with funding from other sources to assess the impact of the project and to set a new baseline for community development monitoring.

Year 2 review

The Reviewer proposed to include Steering committee minutes: Attached here in appendix 18 as a sample.

Impact related indicators needed: Not really tackled in the lifetime of the project due to time constraints.

Community annual meeting reports: No specific minutes produced. Attached is long term agreement in appendix 5 - the result of the consultations.

Newsletters and booklets: These were not done due to capacity and time constraints.

Final Research report should be made available: Still being updated but interim report is attached.

Dissemination materials made available: See section 5 and appendix 2 and appendix 15 for details of what was produced.

Collaboration of local partners in writing reports: The project has been managed in country by a team of managers, one from each of RSPB, CSSL and FD. RSPB leads the team and consults the FD and CSSL managers in report writing. However, we do agree

that report writing could be more inclusive and we have now instituted internal project monthly reporting procedures and regular project staff meetings.

10. Darwin Identity

Sierra Leone on-site publicity. The Project erected numerous project signboards in the project headquarters town in Kenema showing the Darwin logos. The project vehicles also have the Darwin Log on their bonnets and on the Motorcycles.

In UK: The Project has been promoted twice in the RSPBs Birds Magazine (circulation c.620,000), once in 2005 mentioning Darwin Support.

Internationally: RSPB website. A dedicated Brochure for the Project used during a side event at the COP7 in Brazil, March 2006. . Article In World Birdwatch (2006) NC-IUCN Magazine Ecologie en Ontwikkeling in 2005.

See appendix 15 for a range of Darwin Promoting Publicity materials.

CSSL is very much aware of Darwin Identity having now been involved in 2 other BirdLife International led Darwin Programmes. The Initiative is also well known in the University of Sierra Leone and to Government Forestry Department. En environment forum for Action, and forum of all of the environmental organisations in Sierra Leone is also well aware of the Darwin Initiative.

The programme was designed partly in relation to the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan published in 2003. See points 11 and 16 of the project document. This has reinforced by the development of the World Bank-GEF Sierra Leone Wildlife Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Project (SL-WPBCP), of which Gola is the flagship project.

11. Leverage

As per point 31. of the project document we made concerted efforts to raise funds from Conservation International (Global Conservation Fund). We were successful with this with a £200,000 grant for 2 years. This allowed the programme to step up activities significantly with extra vehicles and staff being employed. This was also a 2-year programme with complementary aims to the Darwin funding but with emphasis on forest protection, patrolling, infrastructure and community engagement. See 12. for further fundraising successes.

When recruiting for the biodiversity staff the programme failed to attract a local scientist with significant and relevant enough research experience. The RSPB therefore decided to fund a post for an International research biologist to act as a counterpart to the project scientists. The RSPB also committed additional funds to carry out the valuation studies.

The RSPB invested huge support to the Government and CSSL to develop the concept note and proposal for the SL-WPBCP. This is a US\$18m programme with initially \$8m committed from WB sources, a programme to develop a Protected Area network and capacity for PA management in Sierra Leone. This is in its final development stages and the WB/GEF commitment is now \$5m. The Gola Programme is often quoted in the project document as a pilot and flagship programme for Protected Areas in Sierra Leone.

12. Sustainability and Legacy

Darwin funding was sought to lay the foundations for a long-term programme to protect the Gola Forest. When the project began, the intention was to manage Gola in the long term as a conservation concession. However, senior government support for the programme has been strong enough to gain commitment to establish Gola as a national park. The project is now entering a new phase, over the next 5 years to lead this protected area process. The Management plan developed with Darwin funding is core to this 5-year phase. The programme is thus moving on from management plan development to a protected area implementation phase. As a result, the organisation structure has been changed and we are in the process of recruiting all staff again. Where they have performed project staff from the development phase will be recruited into new positions for the Protected area phase. All project assets and resources will be handed onto the next phase.

At the current time the Gola Forest Programme is the only active major conservation programme ongoing in the country. Over 100 people are employed. The Gola Programme is thus being seen as a pilot/flagship programme for Sierra Leone, particularly in light of the upcoming SL-WPBCP. The Gola Forest is being used as the model for protected area planning and management in the country. The projects lessons and conclusions will therefore be applied now and for the foreseeable future.

We utilised significant efforts in the past 18 months to raise funds for two key aspects of the dedicated trust fund and for ongoing operation costs. Progress is as follows:

Ongoing Costs. The Gola Programme has entered its National Park phase as of May 2007. This 5 year phase will see the implementation of the Management Plan, whilst working towards the establishment of Gola and Sierra Leones First National Park. The project partners have successfully raised €4.2 Million from the European Union (€3million) and the –Fonds Fraçais pour l’environnement Mondiale -French GEF (€1.2million) for this 5 year phase which will cover all project costs.

Trust Fund. The project estimates that a minimum of US\$10m capital (revised upwards from £3million in the project document) will be needed to fund the annual operational costs at Gola of approx US\$500,000 once it becomes a National Park. This will fund all salaries, logistics and community development support funds. To date US\$3.6million has been committed through an agreement between RSPB and Conservation International. The project has the next 5 years to raise the US\$6.4million. The RSPB has established an ‘Eco-fund’ in the UK which the funds will be invested into in 2007. It is hoped that the fund can eventually be moved to and managed from Sierra Leone.

13. Value for money

We believe that the project, whilst being quite expensive, is good value for money. The project has laid the foundations for a protected area network for Sierra Leone and it has succeeded in attracting funding for 5 more years and we are 40% of the way to securing sustained financing for the project. This is not small achievement. The project also invested in building a cadre of Sierra Leonean conservationists whom we believe will go on to be at the forefront of environmental conservation in the country.

14. Appendix 1: Project Contribution to Articles under the CBD

Please complete the table below to show the extent of project contribution to the different measures for biodiversity conservation defined in the CBD Articles. This will enable us to tie Darwin projects more directly into CBD areas and to see if the underlying objective of the Darwin Initiative has been met. We have focused on CBD Articles that are most relevant to biodiversity conservation initiatives by small projects in developing countries. However, certain Articles have been omitted where they apply across the board. Where there is overlap between measures described by two different Articles, allocate the % to the most appropriate one.

Project Contribution to Articles under the Convention on Biological Diversity		
Article No./Title	Project %	Article Description
6. General Measures for Conservation & Sustainable Use	5	Develop national strategies that integrate conservation and sustainable use.
7. Identification and Monitoring	5	Identify and monitor components of biological diversity, particularly those requiring urgent conservation; identify processes and activities that have adverse effects; maintain and organise relevant data.
8. In-situ Conservation	30	Establish systems of protected areas with guidelines for selection and management; regulate biological resources, promote protection of habitats; manage areas adjacent to protected areas; restore degraded ecosystems and recovery of threatened species; control risks associated with organisms modified by biotechnology; control spread of alien species; ensure compatibility between sustainable use of resources and their conservation; protect traditional lifestyles and knowledge on biological resources.
9. Ex-situ Conservation	0	Adopt ex-situ measures to conserve and research components of biological diversity, preferably in country of origin; facilitate recovery of threatened species; regulate and manage collection of biological resources.
10. Sustainable Use of Components of Biological Diversity	10	Integrate conservation and sustainable use in national decisions; protect sustainable customary uses; support local populations to implement remedial actions; encourage co-operation between governments and the private sector.
11. Incentive Measures	20	Establish economically and socially sound incentives to conserve and promote sustainable use of biological diversity.

12. Research and Training	20	Establish programmes for scientific and technical education in identification, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity components; promote research contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, particularly in developing countries (in accordance with SBSTTA recommendations).
13. Public Education and Awareness	10	Promote understanding of the importance of measures to conserve biological diversity and propagate these measures through the media; cooperate with other states and organisations in developing awareness programmes.
14. Impact Assessment and Minimizing Adverse Impacts	0	Introduce EIAs of appropriate projects and allow public participation; take into account environmental consequences of policies; exchange information on impacts beyond State boundaries and work to reduce hazards; promote emergency responses to hazards; examine mechanisms for re-dress of international damage.
15. Access to Genetic Resources	0	Whilst governments control access to their genetic resources they should also facilitate access of environmentally sound uses on mutually agreed terms; scientific research based on a country's genetic resources should ensure sharing in a fair and equitable way of results and benefits.
16. Access to and Transfer of Technology	0	Countries shall ensure access to technologies relevant to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity under fair and most favourable terms to the source countries (subject to patents and intellectual property rights) and ensure the private sector facilitates such assess and joint development of technologies.
17. Exchange of Information	0	Countries shall facilitate information exchange and repatriation including technical scientific and socio-economic research, information on training and surveying programmes and local knowledge
19. Bio-safety Protocol	0	Countries shall take legislative, administrative or policy measures to provide for the effective participation in biotechnological research activities and to ensure all practicable measures to promote and advance priority access on a fair and equitable basis, especially where they provide the genetic resources for such research.
Total %	100%	Check % = total 100

15. Appendix 2 Outputs

Please quantify and briefly describe all project outputs using the coding and format of the Darwin Initiative Standard Output Measures.

Code	Total to date	Detail
Training Outputs		
4c	2 botanists	1 botanist has had 1 month training with survey team, another sent to Cameroon to attend W Africa Botanical Training conference
6a	214 people trained from Communities, CSSL and Forestry Division	7 community members trained in aspects of biodiversity surveys as part of survey team 180 men and women from forest-adjacent villages given introductory training in beekeeping 3 Forestry Division members trained in aspects of biodiversity surveys as part of survey team 14 forest guards received 20 days in-house training on forestry issues by senior staff 1 CSSL staff trained in aspects of biodiversity surveys as part of survey team 8 CSSL staff participated in in-house computer training 1 secretary doing advanced computer training
6b	13 weeks	Survey team: (community and forestry staff) 4 weeks initial, then on-the-job Forest guard training: 3 weeks Beekeeping training: 3 days Computer training: 2 days Advanced computer training: 2 weeks
7	10 Materials of various media	3 general leaflets produced for different audiences (including the 2 produced in the UK) 1 leaflet produced on beekeeping 1 2006 calendar produced (in the form of a poster) Display materials produced for the Agricultural Fair December 2005; subsequently used at Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund workshop, March 2006. T-shirts of endangered wildlife produced for project launching Produced short information video on Gola programme Collaborated with BBC in production of documentary on wildlife in Sierra Leone; video now being used as an educational tool
Research Outputs		
8	23 weeks by UK based staff 3.5 years between Technical Adviser [project Leader] and Research Biologist)	Technical Advisor on project full time RSPB Research Advisor 8 weeks. RSPB Research Biologist (Full time in SL) RSPB Project Manager 15 weeks
9	1	1 Draft Gola Management Plan Produced.
11a	5	5. Mostly relating to ornithological findings, and initial review of impact of civil war on the Gola forest.
12a	2	All bird, mammal and tree data collected are being held in an Access database Historical data on different taxonomic groups known in the forest are also being held in a database.

Code	Total to date	Detail
13a	1	Reference collection of orchids being established – both living and preserved specimens, as well as photographs of most species in flower.
Dissemination Outputs		
14a	5	2 day meeting held in Kenema with chiefs Gola Project Launch in Kenema, June 2005 Presentation organized for members of parliament, Freetown, 2006 Project presented at the CBD COP8 meeting in Brazil, March 2006
14b	4	Wildlife Week October 2005 – organized by our partner, CSSL – two presentations made specifically on Gola Made presentations at 4 other seminars or events organized by others in Sierra Leone RSPB Conservation Science department Full Department Meeting, November 2005 RSPB International Division meeting, March 2006
15a	5	Five articles in national newspapers
15b	1	Signing of Community Participation agreement, Jan 2007
15c	2	Gola project featured in articles in Guardian and Sunday Times
18a	4+	Had TV coverage at least 4 times. (project launch etc)
18b	1	The project activities featured on a BBC Film, 'Wildlife in a War Zone, aired on BBC3
19a	4	4 (Radio UNAMSIL)
19b	1	One national radio interview/feature in UK, BBC Radio 4
19c	25	25 (Eastern Radio, Kenema and Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service, Kenema)
Physical Outputs		
20	£4286	This is part of a larger set of project assets. Which includes 3 project 4x4 vehicles, computers, GPS units, field equipment 5 motorcycles
21	5	Field station/office renovated, 3 forest guard station constructed, 2 renovated
22	c. 10,000	Trees in survey plots have been permanently tagged for revisits
23	£318,500 £2.83million £2million	For this phase, with £224,500 from the Global Conservation Fund and the balance from the RSPB. For the next 5 year phase of the programme raised from the EU – Tropical Forest Fund and the French GEF (FFEM) Committed by the RSPB and Conservation International for a dedicated Gola Endowment Fund

16. Appendix 3: Publications

Provide full details of all publications and material that can be publicly accessed, e.g. title, name of publisher, contact details, cost. Details will be recorded on the Darwin Monitoring Website Publications Database that is currently being compiled.

Mark (*) all publications and other material that you have included with this report

Type *	Detail	Publishers	Available from	£
Scientific Article (In Press)	Lindsell, J.A., van der Winden, J., & Siaka, A. In press. Extension of breeding range of Preuss's Cliff Swallow <i>Hirundo preussi</i> into south-east Sierra Leone	Bulletin of the African Bird Club		-
Scientific Article (In Press)	Lindsell, J.A., Klop, E. & Siaka, A. In press. Brown Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus binotatus</i> in Gola Forest, the first record for Sierra Leone.	Bulletin of the African Bird Club		-
Scientific Article (In Press)	Lindsell, J.A., Klop, E. & Siaka, A. In press. Brown Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus binotatus</i> in Gola Forest, the first record for Sierra Leone.	Bulletin of the African Bird Club.		-
Scientific Article (In Prep)	Lindsell, J.A., Klop, E. & Siaka, A. In prep. The status of Gola Forest, Sierra Leone, following protracted civil war.	TBC		-
Scientific Article (In Prep)	Lindsell, J.A., Klop, E. & Siaka, A. In prep. Birdwatching in the Gola Forest in Sierra Leone.	TBC		-
Scientific Article (In Prep)	Klop, E., Lindsell, J.A. & Siaka, A. et al. In prep. Distribution and abundance of forest birds in Gola Forest, Sierra Leone.	TBC		-
Scientific Article (In Prep)	Klop, E., Samai, S.K. & Lindsell, J.A. et al. In prep. A survey of the trees of Gola Forest.	TBC		-
Scientific Article (In Prep)	Klop, E., Siaka, A. & Lindsell, J.A. In prep. Conservation status of primates and other large mammals in Gola Forest, Sierra Leone.	TBC		-
Scientific Article (In Prep)	Klop, E., Lindsell, J.A., Dowsett, R.J & Dowsett-Lemaire, F. In prep. Birds of Gola Forest, Sierra Leone.	TBC		-
Scientific Article (In Prep)	Ake-Assi, L., Samai, S.K., Klop, E. & Lindsell, J.A. In prep. Plants of Gola Forest, Sierra Leone: a preliminary checklist.	TBC		
Scientific Article (In Prep)	Klop, E., Kanneh, M. & Soriba, P. In prep. Preliminary observations on the ecology of Rufous fishing-owl <i>Scotopelia ussheri</i> .	TBC		
Report to RSPB	Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire & Robert J. Dowsett (2007) Faunistic survey of Gola Forest (Sierra Leone) in January-February 2007, with an emphasis on birds	N/a	RSPB	-
Report to RSPB	Claudio Belcastro* & Torben B. Larsen (2006) Butterflies as an Indicator Group for the Conservation Value of the Gola Forests in Sierra Leone unpublished	N/a	RSPB	
Internal RSPB Report	Klop, E. (2006) Trees of Gola Forest, Interim Report. Unpublished			

Internal RSPB Report	Klop, E. (2006) Biodiversity Survey Gola Forest, Sierra Leone Interim report. Unpublished	N/a	RSPB	-
Report to RSPB	Professeur L. AKE-ASSI (2006) SIERRA LEONE La flore de Gola Forest Reserve Quelques inventaires effectués Unpublished	N/a	RSPB	
RSPB Sabbatical Report	Simon Wotton & Tony Morris (2007) White-necked Picathartes <i>Picathartes gymnocephalus</i> surveys in Gola Forest, Sierra Leone	N/a	RSPB	
RSPB Sabbatical Report	Guy Anderson, Guy Shorrocks and Fiona Hunter (2007) Surveys for key threatened birds and mammals, a preliminary survey of Odonata and casual records of Amphibians along major river systems in Gola Forest; November – December 2006.	N/a	RSPB	

17. Appendix 4: Darwin Contacts

To assist us with future evaluation work and feedback on your report, please provide contact details below.

Project Title	Pioneering an Innovative Conservation Approach in Sierra Leone's Gola Forest
Ref. No.	162/13/031
UK Leader Details	
Name	Alex Hipkiss
Role within Darwin Project	Project Leader
Address	RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, SG19 2DL, UK
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Fax	
Email	
Other UK Contact (if relevant)	N/a
Name	
Role within Darwin Project	
Address	
Phone	
Fax	
Email	
Partner 1	
Name	Daniel D. Siaffa
Organisation	Conservation Society of Sierra Leone
Role within Darwin Project	Joint implementer of project
Address	2 Pike Street, Freetown
Fax	-
Email	
Partner 2 (if relevant)	
Name	Chris Squire/Bartholomew Kamara
Organisation	National Commission for Environment and Forestry
Role within Darwin Project	Joint Implementer, custodian of Forest
Address	Youyi Building, Freetown
Fax	
Email	

18. Other Appendices

- Appendix 5. Community Benefits Agreement
- Appendix 6. Draft Management Plan Table of Contents
- Appendix 7. Interim Biodiversity Report
- Appendix 8. Management Plan Map
- Appendix 9. RSPB Sabbatical Reports
- Appendix 10. Larsen Butterfly survey report
- Appendix 11. Dowsett Bird survey report
- Appendix 12. Complete bird list Report
- Appendix 13. Ake-Assi Botany list
- Appendix 14. Papers Accepted for Publication
- Appendix 15. Selection of Publicity Materials
- Appendix 16. Gola MOU 2007-2011
- Appendix 17. Gola Phase 1 evaluation reports.
- Appendix 18. Steering Committee Minutes
- Appendix 19. Logical Framework