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Third Annual Report, 2007-08 (July to september)

Project: 14-002

“Environmental educational programme promoting biodiversity conservation on Socotra, Yemen”

Darwin Initiative

Annual Report

1. Darwin Project Information

Project Ref. Number	14-002
Project Title	<i>Environmental educational programme promoting biodiversity conservation on Socotra, Yemen</i>
Country(ies)	<i>Yemen</i>
UK Contractor	<i>Durham University (Geography)</i>
Partner Organisation(s)	<i>Socotra Conservation and Development Programme, Yemen, and the Soqotra Society for Heritage and History</i>
Darwin Grant Value	<i>£186,440</i>
Start/End dates	<i>July 2005 to September 2008</i>
Reporting period (1 Apr 200x to 31 Mar 200y) and report number (1,2,3..)	<i>Third annual report: July 2007 to June 2008</i>
Project website	
Author(s), date	<i>Roderic Dutton</i>

2. Project Background

- *The project is located on the Yemeni island of Soqotra (350km by sea from Makullah), the main island of the Soqotra archipelago, as special as the Galapagos in terms of endemic species, and unique also in that the population (c.45,000) has an indigenous language (in addition to Arabic) and culture. The flora and fauna have been under research since the 1880s, with large grants to enhance the research process during the past 20 years including a major GEF grant and a previous Darwin grant. The research has resulted in a growing number of scientific books and peer reviewed papers almost all in English and effectively inaccessible to the education system on the island.*
- *Most of the children are now at school. At the same time life-security and economic diversification have been enhanced for many reasons, including year-round flights to/from Aden and Sana'a, making the need for conservation less obvious. Education has many advantages but a disadvantage is that it takes children from their parents during the most active parts of the day, thus they are not imbibing parental 'innate' understanding of the need for and means to achieve conservation.*
- *The Government of Yemen is aware of the special nature of Soqotra and has created the Socotra Conservation and Development Programme (SCDP), now headed by the Minister of Water and Environment, who is also Director of SCDP, to guide and oversee research and sustainable development on Soqotra.*

3. Project Purpose and Outputs

- *To ensure, through curricular education, that future generations of people on Socotra know about and are concerned for the sustainable management of their islands' unique flora and fauna heritage. Teachers, many from the mainland and other Arab countries, need appropriate training. The project will work with MoE to include a requirement within the curriculum for children to learn about and maintain respect for their unique natural heritage (including the many practical, medicinal and livelihood values of the plants and the traditional land and livestock management practices that have conserved the biodiversity) and play future roles with EPA to establish and manage the network of community-based protected areas and foster community support for biodiversity conservation. It will convert scientific knowledge into stimulating educational materials. Outputs: Nothing was achieved in the field during the period July 2007 to September 2008. See below for explanation.*
- *Operational plan changes:*
 - *The anticipated visit by Roderic Dutton to Sana'a and Soqatra in the summer of 2007 was rendered impossible by his severe illness (septicaemia). No other field visits were undertaken during the year. See below for explanation.*
- *Output changes*
 - *There were no tangible outputs*

4. Progress

Progress in year 2. All was going according to plan in the period July 2006 to June 2007 until a bureaucratic confusion between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Water and the Environment in the March-April period meant that the visit by Roderic Dutton and Sue Christie to Sana'a in April was not able to achieve agreement with MoE about on-going testing of the educational materials in Soqatra schools. No progress could therefore be made on re-drafting the materials or printing them for wider dissemination. It was only on 15th May that MoE told SCDP that the Minister of Education had approved the MoE's curriculum specialists' proposals for working with Darwin. The proposal reached SCDP, in Arabic, a bit later and was translated by SCDP and sent to Roderic Dutton on May 21st (Annex 1). Essentially it was a very good draft proposal including a timeframe of activities that would take us to our goal of training teachers ahead of the 2007-8 academic year and then widely testing the materials during the year. Some queries were addressed by email exchange in the period to early June, as detailed below:

- *Queries:*
 - *Are we just talking about schools on Soqatra [not elsewhere in Yemen which had been a possibility given our discussions in February about using the materials for the whole of Yemen];*
 - *Will the work be with the same 12 schools and the same 50 teachers identified by SSHH;*
 - *Who in Sana'a will act as the main link and co-ordinator;*
 - *At what stage will they do the printing [the proposal seemed to indicate an inappropriate timing for this]*
 - *How do we agree about costs? Can we start work before finalising the costs in order to save time? I am sure we will make an agreement about the budget but we need to start the work now*
 - *Where do we do the training [Sana'a or Soqatra]*
- *Responses from MoE, via SCDP*

- *Schools on Soqatra, not elsewhere in Yemen;*
- *We can 'negotiate' with MoE about the working in the 12 schools;*
- *Essam said: need more discussion within SCDP about the link / coordinator;*
- *MoE will do the printing [in time] but Darwin will pay for the printing;*
- *Essam said: budget and costs need to be estimated after agreeing all the activities;*
- *Training location is negotiable, but Essam said that Soqatra will be cheaper.*
- *This would have been the perfect time for Roderic to make a visit to Sana'a to finalise all points. However, he had only just emerged from a week of severe illness in hospital and was starting a several-week period of convalescence, making a visit in June or July impossible.*
- *Our options for the year ahead were limited by the MoE / SCDP delays in the period up to early June and by Roderic's illness. The central problem was that it was impossible to have the curricular materials (and approvals for them from MoE) ready for the start of the 2007-08 academic year. This left the following basic options for the year:*
 1. *Darwin to close the project, fearing that further expenditure would not lead us to achieve the main goal of working in partnership with MoE, to incorporate biodiversity and environment messages into the curriculum on Soqatra, with interest being shown by MoE in doing something similar in other parts of the country.*
 2. *The project team to close the project for much the same set of reasons.*
 3. *We could have limited our ambitions to working for extra-curricular awareness raising, in partnership with the EPA EE team on Soqatra, and to learning-by-growing.*
 4. *Darwin could have permitted the project to retain its full aim by relaxing (or specifically modifying) the timeframe so that we could in practice have adapted our approach to fit the speed at which MoE could realistically operate.*
- *A revised timetable (and associated budget modifications) agreed by all parties would have required a visit by Roderic Dutton to Yemen. However, as mentioned above, for health and other commitment reasons, and the fact that we were then approaching mid summer to be followed by Ramadhan and the Ramadhan Eid, from mid September to mid October, a Yemen visit could not usefully have been undertaken until late autumn. We believed that MoE was sincere in wanting to continue working with us; the problem was bureaucratic delay (and illness) rather than lack of interest or commitment by MoE.*

Roderic sent a series of emails to the Minister and to others in SCDP in the autumn and early winter of 2007 including a phone call in mid-December to Dr Paul Scholte, the International Adviser for SCDP, seeking the go-ahead for a visit to Yemen to discuss all options for future activities. Paul in mid-December hoped that a January visit would be possible after he had spoken with the Minister. However, on 16th January 2008 he emailed as follows:

“Subject: Darwin: the future? Dear Roderic, Sorry for my silence (the internet on Socotra has not been working for the last 2 wks, and since my return to Sana'a last week I'm accompanying all sorts of missions). Anyhow Abdul Rahman [the Minister] has been travelling most of the last few wks, and it seems to be difficult to pin him down for a specific period (that's the reason I did not want to advise you to come to Sana'a without a clear commitment from his side that he would be here). Regarding what to do, I can only reiterate what I mailed you earlier in taking a step back and limiting your efforts in clear extra-curriculum activities, e.g. in preparing school packages for the Socotra exhibition that will soon move to Sana'a (march 2008). kind regards, Paul”

This communication was not helpful especially his bizarre suggestion completely to change the project aims in order to produce a package to support a Soqotra exhibition. However, the underlying reason for the lack of useful communications from Soqotra became clear on February 17th 2008 when Paul sent, to me and many other people, a lengthy email, whose key passages were:

“Dear colleagues and friends, I am writing on behalf of the Socotra team, the Minister of Water and Environment, There has been a series of developments on Socotra that call for your attention, and we need your immediate help. ... a few weeks ago, coinciding with the departure of the UNDP Resident Representative, we received clear confirmation that the UNDP Yemen is no longer interested in supporting and leading the Socotra Conservation and Development Programme. (!!) In practice this means that the contracts for all the EPA/SCDP team in the island and Sana'a (60 full-time staff plus 45 part-timers), as well as the Chief Technical Advisor[Paul Scholte himself] will end in July/August 2008 (5 months from now!), and will not be extended. Why? The UNDP Country Office team in Yemen feels that the ongoing Socotra Programme is an expensive exercise. Therefore they do not plan to extend it, but rather plan to scale it down to a handful of national staff (5-6!), directly managed by the UNDP office, as a UNDP operation. ... Thanks for your attention...”

This very unfortunate news, which Roderic communicated to Darwin, meant that SCDP could no longer support the Darwin project. Discussion between Roderic and Eilidh Young and Pat Hardcastle led to them suggesting that: *“the best option would be to close the current project as planned by 30 June 2008, using the funding available to the project after 1 April 2008 (£26k) to make a visit. This visit should focus on capturing as many outcomes as possible while recognising where changes preclude any progress or result. At the same time, you should consider whether a post-project or even a new project would be appropriate. A new project would not be discounted, as the specific events of illness and government changes are unlikely to occur again.”* (Eilidh, 28th March 2008). Subsequent communications led to the following suggestion: *“I think in the light of the strategy we agreed to maximise what we can salvage from the project it would be well worthwhile your contacting the NGO on Socotra with a view to making a visit and helping them to take up and make use of as many of the project outputs as possible within the confines of this final year's budget.”* (Pat, 20th May 2008) and to a meeting between Roderic and the Director of the NGO (“Development for Isolated Peoples”), Len Pearse, in Bristol on 24th June. Roderic gave Len the latest digital versions of the educational materials (loaded onto his laptop) and a black and white printout of the same materials and other relevant explanatory documents. In Bristol he and Len worked their way through all the material, discussing how best it might be used and would need to be modified, and could be extended, for the NGO to make best use of it.

The NGO's primary concern is to teach English, and related computer studies, to up to 120 students (in different classes) for which the students pay a contribution towards the costs (which are otherwise subsidised); some payment is required to ensure that the students are serious. In fact the NGO gets more applicants than they can cater for because decent-to-good English is required for a growing number of jobs on Soqotra and is important for any work that links the Soqotrans with the ever increasing number of

tourists and other visitors to the islands. Relatively speaking the 'graduates' from the NGO are becoming people of local influence. A small number of them go on to higher education elsewhere, including three currently doing Masters degrees, which will give them access to higher level positions on the island in the future. Future jobs include English language teaching in the local schools.

The NGO uses Headway courses for its English teaching which, naturally enough, do not include reading and comprehension materials directly related to Soqotra; in that sense they are neither 'culturally sensitive' nor 'lifestyle relevant'. Thus the biodiversity and conservation materials produced by the Darwin work will be of real value to the NGO and, at the same time, inform young people, especially those from the main town of Hadiboh who are typically not very knowledgeable about such things, not only about the island's unique biodiversity (and its local, national and world importance) but also about the need for – and aspects of the means of – conserving and managing it. The materials, in English, will be of most value to the 3rd and 4th year students (whose level of English will then be sufficient for them to appreciate the materials) and for the tour guide crash course that the NGO runs in June, which is proving to be very popular.

We thus believe that there is a natural 'marriage' between the NGO's needs for relevant English language materials and the Darwin needs to promote knowledge of biodiversity and conservation of the environment. A high proportion of the graduates will use the Darwin-type knowledge in their future employment, which will keep it fresh in their minds, so they will become good ambassadors for conservation. Those involved in tourism (all tourists primarily come to Soqotra to see the biodiversity and its habitats) will have a direct interest in conservation (if there is no biodiversity, there will be no tourists) and will have ever more powerful voices on the island in debates about conservation in the longer-term. Those who become teachers will pass on their knowledge to future generations of school children.

The current materials are aimed at four aspects of the children's curriculum - Arabic, Math, Social Science/Geography and Science. Some work will be required to reorganise the lessons to be appropriate for language teaching (in particular the math lessons may need considerable work) but all have fundamental conservation messages embedded within the lesson. At present all are in both English and Arabic; the latter may not be necessary in all cases so that rewrites/additional lessons can be easily done in English.

On the basis of the meeting in Bristol and of subsequent inputs from Sue Christie an 8-point set of suggestions was put to Darwin in early July:

1. Len will have the opportunity to go through all the materials more systematically in the coming weeks and be able to give a more informed set of thoughts by the end of July.
2. The NGO will be able to test run the materials in their present form in the first semester of the coming year (starting in September) so that all the staff will be able to reach a common set of conclusions about them.
3. Interim thoughts, expressed by email back to us in the UK, could result in some modification of the materials in an ad hoc fashion so that variants can be tested during the first semester.
4. In January 2009 (the break between the two semesters) they will be able to report comprehensively about the value of the materials and how, perhaps, they can be / should be modified to fit into the English courses.
5. The materials could then be systematically modified, as appropriate.
6. No doubt, ideas will emerge during the above for additional topics. These could be prepared, using photographs made available by the NGO.
7. Over a 2-3-year period a comprehensive package of materials, tried, tested and modified in the light of on-going experience, could be put together.

8. All this information could be fed back to the Ministry of Education to see if they would be interested to use the materials more widely (in either English or Arabic, or both) in other schools.

Points 1-4 above can be entirely covered during the current financial year, using all or part of the remaining budget.

Points 5-6 above may be initiated during the current financial year, using part of the remaining budget.

Points 5-8 above could be undertaken during a longer-term new project that might also include other items (to be discussed and agreed).

The response from Pat Hardcastle of Darwin/DEFRA was: *"I like your proposals very much, they seem to open the possibility for capturing what has been done so far and making sure it is used creatively. I suggest that you continue as provisionally agreed using the remaining budget with a focus on your Points 1 to 4 and including preliminary work on your Points 5 and 6 as becomes feasible and appropriate during the year. Depending on progress and the situation with the funding of the wider Darwin Initiative, we can consider a range of options, including a post project and a new project. I think it is important to advise you that Darwin funding will be very tight and highly competitive. I think that while you are progressing the revised project, you should also try and identify alternative sources of funding for a future extension or new project."* (21st July 2008).

Len Pearse was in Australia during the summer (partly on leave and partly strengthening ties on different topics with collaborating organisations) and essentially out of touch until the beginning of September when he had returned to Melbourne. Emails in early September confirmed his interest, having by then had the time to study all the materials in detail. He returns to Soqotra at the end of September and the academic year will start after the Ramadhan Eid holiday, around October 5th. Our understanding is that he will discuss everything fully with his colleagues who will then start to use the materials and will comment individually back to us on specific questions. By mid October they will have developed a preliminary collective view of the materials. By mid-November we hope to have a joint view on whether to go ahead with the post-project application, and if so to complete a proposal by the deadline of December 1st. Ad hoc comments from Len and his staff on the use the materials will be followed up by a visit to Soqotra in the mid-Semester break (in January) for brain-storming sessions leading to the deeper revision of those materials which need most adaptation in the light of experience. The adaptations will be made by the end of March 2009. If there is a two-year post-project project that work will continue during those two year and new materials will also be produced. Meanwhile, we will keep in communication with the Ministry of Education and encourage them to use the materials more widely.

5. Partnerships

- In spite of the problems mentioned above, a key (potential) partner remains the Ministry of Education. However, it is right now just not possible to communicate with them because, according to the original programme our partner was SCDP which was associated with a different Ministry, the Ministry of Water and Environment – a link which strengthened when Roderic's counterpart, Abdul-Rahman Al-Eryani became Minister. MoE will only be in a position to consider linking with us again when time and the new arrangements with the NGO make it clear that MoWE is no longer involved and when we are all clear about the successor organisation to SCDP, if indeed there is a successor organisation.
- Our dominant partnership now will be with the NGO (Development for Isolated Peoples). It is only if our work until March 2009 leads into the proposed two-year post-project programme that we will again be in a position to attempt to re-engage with MoE.

6. Impact and Sustainability

- We anticipate having good quality on-going communication with the NGO and that it will be able to make, based on the experience of using the original materials with their students, very reasoned and appropriate suggestions for modifying the materials and adding to them. The NGO plans to continue its work on Soqotra which will ensure long-term impact. Even though the number of their students is small they are to an important degree self-selecting by determination and commitment. And, when they have their English qualifications (which in a few cases enables them to take Bachelor and Master degrees) they will be very well placed on Soqotra to teach in the schools and the college and/or to work in different parts of the growing tourist industry. In both of these types of occupation they will definitely use their biodiversity and conservation knowledge gained from our materials that the NGO uses in improved form. They will also have a growing voice in discussions on the island about the balance between development and conservation.

7. Post-Project Follow up Activities (max 300 words)

This section should be completed ONLY if your project is nearing completion (penultimate or final year) and you wish to be considered to be invited to apply for Post Project Funding. *Each year, a small number of Darwin projects will be invited to apply for funding. Selection of these projects will be based on promising project work, reviews to date, and your suggestions within this section. Further information on this scheme introduced in 2003 is available from the Darwin website.*

- From project progress so far, what follow-up activities would help to embed or consolidate the results of your project, and why would you consider these as suitable for Darwin Post Project Funding?
 - If the work to end March 2009 goes well, and if we have a post-project programme for two years, we will do all we can to encourage MoE to use the materials more widely.
- What evidence is there of strong commitment and capacity by host country partners to enable them to play a major role in follow-up activities?
 - The NGO will have an on-going role using the revised materials in its teaching and training programmes. For reasons explained above we are not currently in contact with MoE.

8. Outputs, Outcomes and Dissemination

- If MoE likes what they are then seeing on Soqotra they may wish to adopt the principles (using local materials) to basic education in other parts of the country. It has already been recognised, by a curriculum specialist in MoE, that by that stage local specialists need to be engaged in preparing suitable materials.

● Table 1. Project Outputs (According to Standard Output Measures)

Code No.	Quantity	Description
14A	5	(a) Several- day workshop: with the Director and teaching staff of the NGO, in the between-semester break on Soqotra to brain-storm details of changes recommended to the original educational materials, and to collect and relevant new raw materials

- **Table 2: Publications** Nothing formally to be published, though the set of draft lessons revised

9. Project Expenditure

Table 3: Project expenditure during the reporting period (Defra Financial Year 01 April to 31 March)

The financial year 2007-08

<i>Item</i>	<i>Budget (please indicate which document you refer to if other than your project schedule)</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Balance</i>
<i>Rent, rates, heating, overheads etc</i>			
<i>Office costs (e.g. postage, telephone, stationery)</i>			
<i>Travel and subsistence</i>			
<i>Printing</i>			
<i>Conferences, seminars, etc</i>			
<i>Capital items/equipment</i>			
<i>Others (capacity building)</i>			
<i>Salaries (specify)</i>			
TOTAL			

- *Highlight any recently agreed changes to the budget and explain any variation in expenditure where this is +/- 10% of the budget.*
- *It was agreed by Darwin that of the £64,325, in the previous year £10,000 could be vired to the final quarter-year of the project, April to June 2008.*

The financial year 2008-09; proposed budget allocations based on the sum available, £26,250

<i>Item</i>	<i>Budget (please indicate which document you refer to if other than your project schedule)</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Balance</i>
<i>Rent, rates, heating, overheads etc</i>			
<i>Office costs (e.g. postage, telephone, stationery)</i>			
<i>Travel and subsistence</i>			
<i>Printing</i>			
<i>Conferences, seminars, etc</i>			
<i>Capital items/equipment</i>			
<i>Others (capacity building)</i>			
<i>Salaries (specify)</i>			
TOTAL			

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Lessons

- Lesson: The success and continuation of our partner organisation, SCDP, was critical. This seemed assured given that it was led by a well respected man, Abdul Rahman Al Eryani, from a very influential family, who became Minister of Water and Environment in mid project. However, SCDP was too dependent on funding from Italy via UNDP and when, for reasons that I do not fully understand, UNDP decided to use the money to fund other projects in Yemen, SCDP was left powerless to support the Darwin project any longer.

Annex 1

Document subject: The joint venture program between MOE & MOWE & Darwin initiatives for conserving and saving Socotra which is about " Making awareness materials for saving and conserving Socotra island"

[Translated from Arabic to English by Essam al-Sulaihi in the SCDP office in Sana'a, and emailed to Roderic Dutton on 21st May 2007]

Details removed

Annex 2 – Logical framework (much revised as per our discussions and new agreement)

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

19. Please enter the details of your project onto the matrix using the note at Annex B of the Guidance Note. This should not have substantially changed from the Logical Framework submitted with your Stage 1 application. Please highlight any changes.

Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
<p>Goal:</p> <p>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 benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources 			
<p>Purpose</p> <p>To create, through the educational work of the NGO, a growing number of people on Socotra knowledgeable about and concerned for the sustainable management of their islands' unique natural heritage of flora and fauna</p>	<p><u>During the project:</u> The NGO teachers playing a key role in modifying and improving the materials and using them in their school.</p> <p><u>Post-project:</u> Growing numbers of school-leavers positively influenced by what they learned in school.</p>	<p>School records</p> <p>Participatory evaluations with teachers and children.</p> <p>Periodic participatory evaluations, with adults taught using the teaching modules</p>	<p>The Ministry of Education supported by other central decision-making bodies (nb EPA) expands the project concepts and practices and reapplies them more widely on Soqotra and more widely in Yemen.</p>
<p>Outputs</p> <p>1: Original educational materials tested by the NGO, revised by the project and further tested by the NGO.</p>	<p>1: Materials to inspire nature exploration and conservation, drafted, tested by teachers and in use.</p>	<p>1: Copies of the texts.</p>	<p>Additional teacher training and teaching materials are produced post-project.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education takes an interest in maintaining and promoting this conservation and environmental element of the curricula long-term in Socotra.</p>

<p><i>Activities</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Roderic having met with the Director of the NGO in June 2008, the NGO to confirm its interest in using the materials during the academic year 2009-09.</i> 2. <i>The NGO to test run the materials in their present form in the first semester of the coming year (starting in October) so that all the staff will be able to reach a common set of conclusions about them.</i> 3. <i>Interim thoughts, to be expressed by email back to the team in the UK, to result in some modification of the materials in an ad hoc fashion so that variants can be tested during the first semester.</i> 4. <i>In January 2009 (the break between the two semesters) to hold a workshop on Soqatra for the NGO to report comprehensively about the value of the materials and how, perhaps, they can be / should be modified to fit into the English courses.</i> 5. <i>The materials could then to be systematically modified, as appropriate.</i> 6. <i>New ideas and raw materials to be used in the preparation of new educational materials.</i> 7. <i>Over a 2-3-year period a comprehensive package of materials, to be tried, tested and modified and finalised in the light of on-going experience.</i> 8. <i>All this information to be fed back to the Ministry of Education to see if they would be interested to use the materials more widely (in either English or Arabic, or both) in other schools.</i> <p><i>Points 1-4 above to be entirely covered during the current financial year to March 2009.</i></p> <p><i>Points 5-6 above may be initiated during the current financial year, using part of the remaining budget.</i></p> <p><i>The full achievement of points 5-6 and the achievement of points 7-8 would be made during an envisaged post-project follow up programme.</i></p>	<p>Activity Milestones (Summary of Project Implementation Timetable)</p> <p><i>1: Submission of post-project proposal by December 1st 2008 if we and the NGO are both confident that this would be worthwhile;</i></p> <p><i>2: By end January 2009 comprehensive understanding achieved of modifications to be made to the original education materials by the Darwin team;</i></p> <p><i>3: Materials modified, tested, approved and in use by the NGO by the end of March 2009.</i></p>
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