



DARWIN INITIATIVE



Pre-Project Funding Report

This report should be completed and submitted with a Stage 1 Darwin Application

Project Title	Afro-Asian Elephant Community Conservation Network
Country(ies)	Thailand & Kenya, and neighbouring countries in each region
Project Ref No. (if known)	App1 401
UK Organisation	Friends of Conservation (UK)
Names / Titles of those who travelled to the host country	Ms Belinda Stewart-Cox (BSC) Dr Matt Walpole (MW)
Grant Value	£2,620
Start and Finishing Dates	20 th - 31 st August 2004
Report Date	11 th September 2004

1. Please provide a concise overview of activities undertaken during the pre-project development visit. (Please also include relevant activities before and after, as appropriate). Please highlight those that were not planned.

BSC went ahead to finalise meetings/site visits. Then, with MW, spent 4 days in Kanchanaburi province meeting principle project partner, local collaborators (inc. local operator of community / nature-based tourism) and other local stakeholders (wildlife sanctuary chief / rangers & 3 village leaders), visiting the protected forest and 5 crop-raiding sites in problem elephant area, discussing need, feasibility and details of proposed project activities. After that, 3 days in Bangkok meeting key stakeholders/advisors in government, academia, NGOs to discuss needs, activities (inc. collaborative ones), feasibility of proposed project, to learn how changes in government structure & policies would affect it, and how it could augment other work. BSC stayed on 5-days to meet other stakeholders previously not available, the British Ambassador (to brief him on proposal), and to visit another human-elephant conflict (HEC) site.

The only part of the trip that was not pre-planned was BSC's visit to another site of human-elephant conflict in SE Thailand. This visit was recommended by the Director of Wildlife Conservation and facilitated by a senior wildlife research official who is keen to collaborate with us.

2. Were any difficulties or setbacks encountered? If so, how did they impact on the intended achievements for the visit, and on the intended Darwin project proposal.

None whatsoever. Quite the contrary in fact. Everyone we aimed to meet made time for us, in spite of prior commitments or other demands on them. We were heartened by the support expressed for the proposed project from everyone we met, from local community level (villagers, local leaders and the wildlife sanctuary warden who is, unusually, a native of the area) to more senior levels of government & academia, and by NGOs familiar with human-elephant conflicts in Thailand. By the end of the visit, we were confident that there is a critical need for the proposed project, we were assured of backing for it at local and national level, and were convinced of its operational feasibility.

3. Briefly explain how the pre-project funding has helped to confirm or change the planned project intervention – what difference did getting the grant make?

The grant made a huge difference (a) by enabling MW to understand the way in which the situation in Thailand compares to East Africa (b) by allowing us to discuss the approach and practical details *in situ* with the proposed partners, participants & stakeholders (c) by reassuring us both that the project is needed, wanted, feasible and well supported and (d) by allowing us to find out that recent changes in government structure & policy for conservation and tourism enhance, rather than hinder, the aim, activities and approach of the proposed project. Moreover, the number of HEC sites and incidents per site is increasing in Thailand, so a model conflict resolution project like this is timely.

We are now much more certain that we can achieve the proposed project objectives, including small-scale ecotourism, and that these objectives fit local requirements and government policy. We are also convinced of the value of developing an Afro-Asian co-operation network to tackle HEC.

4. Describe outcomes & conclusions arising from discussions with host institutions. What is the value of the project to them and what are their intended contributions. Have any other partnerships evolved as a result of the pre-project grant?

- With Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment (MONRE) and Department of National Parks, Wildlife & Plant Conservation (DNP): we met 8 officials at all levels and learned that this project would not only be approved, but would be actively welcomed & therefore supported because:
 - *HEC*: human-elephant conflict is a growing problem in Thailand & needs this kind of solution.
 - *Ecotourism*: the current policy is to promote ecotourism as a tool for provincial development, but MONRE/DNP has little experience of implementing such an approach and would like help.
 - *CITES MIKE*: the proposed project area is a MIKE site, but the DNP has little capacity to gather the kind of data required, much of which would be gathered more effectively by this project.
 - the project would provide data, and a working model, for Phase II of the Western Forest Complex Ecosystem Management Project, part of MONRE's Joint Integrated Management Initiative.
 - *CBD*: it would help with Thailand's CBD obligations (addressing 10 Articles listed in pre-project application) plus all 7 priority strategies outlined in National Report (2000): (1) capacity building (2) enhancing sustainable protection (3) give incentives for species conservation (4) species conservation (5) monitor and control process/activities that threaten biodiversity (6) encourage biodiversity management in environment / traditional culture (7) promote co-operation between national/international organisations in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.
 - With Tourism Authority of Thailand: TAT (a parastatal) is an able promoter of mass tourism but is unclear about developing & implementing effective ecotourism. This project would be a model.
 - With Jumbo Travel, a native Kanchanaburi tour operator engaged in community & nature-based tourism, keen & able to develop small-scale ecotourism venture in collaboration with this project.
 - With Mahidol University (and likely others): a strong possibility of student study placements / training seminars (Mahidol has new field studies campus in Kanchanaburi province), and some technical co-operation (e.g. GIS training / mapping).
 - With NGOs: collaboration with HEC project of WCS in southwest Thailand, with Tenasserim Range Transboundary Project of Minnesota University & Smithsonian Inst, and with WildAid in Khao Yai.
 - For government researchers / protected area staff + several national / international NGOs, there would be huge value in having an Afro-Asian technical co-operation/exchange network to address the growing problem of human-elephant conflict in Thailand/SE Asia where there is little capacity to address it or other human-wildlife conservation issues effectively.
- Contributions from host institutions / partners would be practical and in kind, providing personnel, equipment and supervision, as required, and covering their own time and expenses.

5. Conclusion and lessons learned from the Pre-Project Grant : highlight the main conclusions (positive & negative) gained from the pre-project grant. Please include any suggestions you may have for improving the impact of this funding scheme.

- there is growing need for this project as human-elephant conflicts are increasing in Thailand / Asia, and an Afro-Asian technical exchange network would facilitate more effective HEC interventions.
- the proposed project approach (participatory, collaborative, community-based) fits well with current attitudes (especially among NGOs & local people) and government policies in Thailand
- there would be strong support for the project from key government/parastatal agencies, academia and NGOs because of growing HEC problems, CBD & CITES MIKE commitments, & current policies
- recruitment of suitable staff is recognised as the most serious limitation for most projects, but the project partner has two committed, well qualified women who would be local project co-ordinators.
- BSC's long-standing collaboration in Thailand (1986-2001) provides strong, constructive links with key people / organisations, and increases the likelihood and efficacy of co-operation at all levels.
- Strong personal links with a local tour operator keen and able to collaborate with the project to implement its ecotourism objectives greatly increases the chances of a successful outcome.

The pre-project scheme worked very well for us for reasons given in (3) and we have no suggestions. It enabled us to consult key people *in situ* & be more confident of the plan than we otherwise could be.

Signed:	Date:
Name / Title:	