

Darwin Initiative

Annual Report

1. Darwin Project Information

Project Ref. Number	14-049
Project Title	Participatory Management of Priority Biodiversity Sites in Taraba State, Nigeria
Country(ies)	Nigeria
UK Contractor	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Partner Organisation(s)	Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF), Taraba State Government
Darwin Grant Value	£98,634
Start/End dates	April 2005, March 2008
Reporting period (1 Apr 200x to 31 Mar 200y) and annual report number (1,2,3..)	1 April 2005–31 March 2006 Annual Report #1
Project website	None
Author(s), date	Alex Hipkiss (RSPB), Ibrahim Inahoro (NCF), April 06

2. Project Background

The forests of the Mambilla Plateau and Donga Basin are part of the Guinea Forest biodiversity hotspot, which extends from Sierra Leone to Cameroon. This is one of the most fragmented hotspots on earth with only 10% of the 1,265,000 km² of forest it originally contained remaining. Within the hotspot, there are 270 endemic terrestrial vertebrate species – of which 70 are threatened and seven are critically endangered (including the Western Chimpanzee which occurs in the project area) – and more than 2,250 endemic plants. Within the project area, there are two globally threatened birds, *Zoothera crossleyi* and *Ploceus bannermani*, and seven restricted-range birds. Moreover, the Mambilla Plateau montane forests are home to 24 Red Data List plants. The project area falls within the Cameroon Mountains Endemic Bird Area and includes the Ngel Nyaki Forest and Donga River Basin Forests Important Bird Areas.

This proposed project is part of a larger programme of work that aims to ensure sustainable management of the forest resources of Taraba State through the establishment of a greater role for communities in forest management. Previously, communities were not involved in forest resource management and therefore cared less what happened to the forests. There is a high level of poverty, which drives the conversion of forests to agricultural land. This has caused tremendous loss of forest resources and biodiversity, which in turn leads to increases in poverty in the communities. The project aims will be achieved at the site level through the establishment of community forests in unreserved areas and participatory management regimes in forest reserves, coupled with income generation and livelihood schemes. At the local, state and federal government levels, the broader programme will seek to influence decision- and policy-makers with regard to both the role that communities can

play in forest management and the contribution that sustainable forest management can make to poverty alleviation and livelihood enhancement. As highlighted in the project document, the project was hopeful of support from DFID's Civil Society Challenge Fund; this bid was also successful. Darwin funding is therefore contributing to a wider programme to sustainably manage the forests of Taraba state.

3. Project Purpose and Outputs

The project purpose is as follows: *Four priority sites for the conservation of forest biodiversity in Taraba State, Nigeria are managed sustainably through innovative, collaborative mechanisms.* This will be achieved through the following outputs.

- Project sites are selected.
- Participatory Forest Management (PFM) plans are developed for project sites and approved by state governments.
- The capacity of community organisations, NCF and the Forestry Division (FD) to implement PFM plans is enhanced.
- The PFM approach is promoted in Taraba state and countrywide.

Project implementation timetable changes were proposed in October 2005 and approved as follows.

Project implementation timetable (October 2005)			
<i>Original Date</i>	<i>Revised Date</i>	<i>Financial year</i>	<i>Key milestones</i>
<i>June 05</i>	October 05	05/06	<i>Project staff recruitment</i>
<i>July 05</i>	Jan-Mar 06	05/06	<i>Biodiversity surveys to establish priority project sites.</i>
<i>August 05</i>	Jan-Feb 06	05/06	<i>Establish project presence at each site</i>
<i>August 05</i>	Procurement by November 05 Site infrastructure by March 06	05/06	<i>Project procurement and site infrastructure complete.</i>
<i>September 05</i>	April 06	06/07	<i>Forest User Groups and Forest Management Committees established at each site.</i>
<i>Aug 05 – May 06</i>	Begins Jan 06	05/06 06/07	<i>Training needs assessments completed for FD, NCF, Forest User Groups and Forest Management Committees</i>
<i>By March 06</i>	April 06	06/07	<i>Monitoring tools and methodology to inform revision of training programmes developed</i>

4. Progress

Progress against the logical framework is summarised in Annex 1.

Project implementation timetable – activities achieved	
<i>Date</i>	<i>Key milestones</i>
<i>October 05</i>	<i>All nine project staff recruited</i>
<i>Jan-Mar 06</i>	<i>Biodiversity surveys carried out in Jan to March 06</i>
<i>March 06</i>	<i>Project presence established at each site by March 06</i>
<i>March 06</i>	<i>Project procurement and site infrastructure completed by Mar 06.</i>
<i>April 06</i>	<i>Forest User Groups (FUGs) established at four sites. FUGs in the process of electing their representatives to constitute Forest Management Committees at the four sites.</i>
<i>Began Jan 06</i>	<i>Training needs assessments carried out and draft report produced. Assessments were for Forestry Division, FUGs, community leaders and project staff.</i>

Project setup

The project recruitment process took some time to complete. There was difficulty in finding an appropriately skilled project manager during the first round of interviews and the post had to be re-advertised. All nine project staff were eventually recruited by October 05 and immediately sent to the field to begin familiarisation with the sites. They then underwent an orientation and induction process for 2 days at the NCF head office in Lagos. The team was also given a Rapid Rural Appraisal induction course in Jalingo before being sent to the field for the initial survey.

Project procurement also took a substantial amount of time. The following items were procured for the overall project; those marked with an asterisk were purchased with Darwin funds.

- Toyota Hilux Jeeps (2)
- Motorcycles (5)
- *Generating Sets (2)
- *Computers (with accessories + printers) (3)
- *SAT phones (2)
- *Digital Cameras (2)
- *GPS units (4)
- *Binoculars (4)

Site selection design and surveys

A workshop to agree criteria for site selection was held over 2 days in November 05 and was followed by 2 weeks of Rapid Rural Appraisal in eight potential forest edge communities. The RRA exercise was conducted between 21st November and 5th December 2005 in the following places: Akwabe, Akhabo, Afrobe and Zokwi/Zondo (Donga Valley) and Kune, Inkiri and Akwaizantar (Mambilla Plateau). The report from this exercise was used in an in-house workshop conducted at NCF headquarters in Lagos to select the Akwabe/Afrobe Community Forest in the Donga Valley and the Akwaizantar Forest Reserve on the Mambilla Plateau as project sites, alongside Buru

Community Forest (Donga) – where PFM work is already underway – and the Ngel Nyaki Forest Reserve (Mambilla). The RRA report is appended as Annex 2.

Set up at project sites

The project has been established at all four project sites. At each site an office and staff accommodation has been established. At Buru and Ngel Nyaki existing community structures have been renovated and furniture has been procured. The project head office is located at the Ngel Nyaki site.

Research

A biodiversity survey design and training workshop was held in Jalingo on February 4–5, 2006 to review proposals developed by external consultants and to approve methodologies to be used for the survey of selected flora and fauna. Proposed methods for surveys of birds, mammals, insects and vegetation were presented by the consultants and discussed by the workshop participants (NCF Director, the Project Coordinator, the consultants, the project team, resource persons and Forest Department representatives). Terms of Reference were prepared for each consultant, and initial training was provided to the field assistants who were to take part in the surveys.

The surveys were carried out to provide a baseline biodiversity inventory of the project sites, and also served to enhance NCF's biodiversity database. The taxa selected were limited by the project budget. It is expected that in the future we will be able to survey others, such as herpetofauna and lower plants. Surveys of larger mammals, insects, birds and vegetation were carried out in Akwaizantar, Akwabe, Afrobe and Akabo community forests; Akabo was surveyed as a control site. A draft report is available for birds (see Annex 3). Vegetation, insect and larger mammal reports are in preparation.

Beginning the Participatory Forest Management process

The first step in the Participatory Forest Management (PFM) process has been to assess the status of forest management activities in each of the communities.

- Buru Site

The Buru site was established during the previous project that led up to the design of the current project, and the PFM plan for the site was completed in this previous phase. In Buru, three meetings were held in February with existing Forest User Groups (FUGs), which represent farmers, women, bee-keepers and hunters/fishers. These meetings were effective in revitalising the groups, which had lost momentum to a greater or lesser extent. As a result of the meetings, new executive members were put in place. We will take account of the Buru experience at the other project sites, and in particular will take steps to ensure that FUGs remain active and effective.

- New sites

A meeting was held in March in Akwabe/Afrobe, leading to the formation of four FUGs, representing the same groups as those in Buru. In Yelwa (Ngel Nyaki), a women's group, farmers' group, graziers' group and bee-keepers' group have been formalised, and these groups now hold meetings and implement activities without external input. In Akwaizantar, exploratory meetings have been held with various groups. Formalisation of these groups will be carried out early next quarter. The different FUGs already established include a bee-keepers' association, a hunters'/fishers' association, an association for non-timber forest product collectors, and a livestock-keepers' association.

Training

Training has been conducted formally and informally during the project set-up phase. Firstly, a training needs assessment was conducted in Jan 2006. This was targeted to core project staff, and more broadly to Forestry Division staff in the State Government and selected community forest management groups. A draft report from the assessment is appended as Annex 4.

Further training was carried out on Rapid Rural Appraisal through a formal training event for 12 staff for 1 day, followed by 2 weeks of practical exercises during the site selection surveys. Staff were trained in questionnaire design and participatory appraisal methods.

Training was also provided for staff during the biodiversity surveys. Three staff were trained in vegetation survey (plant collection, pressing and mounting), two in mammal survey, and two in bird survey. The training was informal and 'on-the-job'.

Difficulties

There were delays in the recruitment of project staff, due to the difficulty of finding appropriate candidates within the project area. However, all staff have now been recruited and subsequent progress has been very good.

Contractual arrangements with the other core donor for the project, the Civil Society Challenge Fund of DFID, took until August to complete. The decision was made that, as far as possible, the Darwin and DFID contracts and work plans should be integrated; this delayed start-up somewhat.

In the course of the RRA exercise in our target communities in November 2005, we were not well received in Akoforo community in the Kurmi local government area because of a proposed dam project whose proponents had promised them jobs and infrastructural development. On further investigation we found out that seven dams were proposed, all in the two local government areas hosting our project, and some of which would have adverse impacts on forest ecosystems. This was reported to the NCF headquarters in Lagos. An advocacy workshop was organised at Kurmi Local Government HQ to enlighten people about the potential long-term adverse effect of dams on the environment, and a media event was organised and broadcast on TV. If the Akoforo dam does go ahead the fall-out may have negative implications for our project and our site selection may need to be revised. However, our workshop has informed people about the potential negative effects of dams, and we plan to reinforce these gains by continuing work on this issue among the relevant communities. We may need to make flyers in local languages to further raise awareness of the potential impact, as no public consultation mechanisms seem to be being implemented by the State or National Governments.

The project terrain has made planning and implementation a little more difficult than expected and activity planning may need to be amended accordingly (see below).

Project design revision

The project will have an internal planning meeting followed by a steering committee meeting in May 06 to review and recommend plan amendment as necessary.

Provisional project implementation timetable for next working period (to be discussed in May 06)		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Financial year</i>	<i>Key milestones</i>
<i>September 05</i>	<i>05/06</i>	<i>Consolidate initial work on Forest User Groups and Forest Management Committees that have been established.</i>
<i>Aug 05 – May 06</i>	<i>05/06 06/07</i>	<i>Training needs assessments for FD, NCF, Forest User Groups and Forest Management Committees will be completed and a training programme designed and implemented</i>
<i>By March 06</i>	<i>05/06</i>	<i>Monitoring tools and use for necessary feedback and revision of training programmes developed</i>
<i>April-June 06</i>	<i>06/07</i>	<i>Participatory forest resource assessments designed and carried out to inform management plans.</i>
<i>April 06 – March 08</i>	<i>06/07 07/08</i>	<i>Facilitate development of PFM plans for each site with communities and Forestry Department</i>
<i>April 06- March 07</i>	<i>06/07 07/08</i>	<i>Monitoring plans and tools to monitor forest product off take and forest condition developed</i>
<i>June 06- March 08</i>	<i>06/07 07/08</i>	<i>Training delivered to Forest User Groups and Forest Management Committees – 40 people over 5 weeks</i>
<i>June 06- March 08</i>	<i>06/07 07/08</i>	<i>Training delivered to Forestry Department 5 staff over 5 weeks</i>
<i>June 06- March 08</i>	<i>06/07 07/08</i>	<i>Training delivered to 5 NCF staff over 5 weeks</i>
<i>April 06- March 08</i>	<i>06/07 07/08</i>	<i>Community-level environmental awareness-raising programme implemented.</i>
<i>March 06</i>	<i>05/06</i>	<i>Implement national awareness-raising programme with annual publications</i>

5. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

N/A

6. Partnerships

Generally the NCF and RSPB partnership has gone very well, and a lot has been achieved in the relatively short time since project set-up was completed. The project team has worked admirably.

There have been some minor problems with communication about project planning and implementation. NCF has tended, during this first project year, to carry out aspects of the technical work without full consultation with RSPB and experts there. This issue has been identified and will be rectified during the coming year.

The project has collaborated with a number of other projects and organisations, as follows.

Nigerian Montane Forest Project (NMFP)

NMFP staff (rangers and field assistants) were involved whenever we visited the Ngel Nyaki forest. We are also getting valuable information from their plant collections. Steven Gawaissa, a PhD student with NMFP, participated in our biodiversity surveys. The mere presence of the NMFP researchers and their assistants helps to protect the biodiversity of the forest.

Gashaka-Gumti National Park

The Park Director participated in the criteria-setting workshop for site selection. In addition, the NCF Gashaka project was involved in both this workshop and the survey design workshop, and supported the biodiversity surveys by making a Hilux jeep available for the project to use.

Gashaka Primate Project

The NCF Project Manager visited the Gashaka Primate Project Research Station at Kwano and met Prof Sommer of this project. Discussions were held about possible ways of collaboration between the two projects. During the discussion, Prof Sommer promised to equip our vehicle and our Yelwa office with a radio communication link with Gashaka.

Exchange visit to Ekuri Initiative in Cross River State

The project team was led by the Project Coordinator to visit the Ekuri Initiative communities in Cross River State to see first-hand how these communities are carrying out participatory forest management in their community forest. The forest covers about 33,000 hectares. A land use plan has been created, dividing the forest into six zones: 1) agroforestry stream buffer zone, 2) commercial cash crop zone, 3) farms and fallow zone, 4) NTFP zone, 5) protected forest zone and 6) timber management zone. All activities are regulated under these zones. The initiative is governed by a board of trustees elected by the people on the basis of their commitment and usefulness to the community. The trustees make policies for the consideration of the general assembly. The community derives income from taxes on forest products and registration of dealers. Income is used to build roads and school buildings and provide other common services, such as bursaries to deserving students, and part is shared between the two Ekuri communities. Governance is democratic and women have their own organisation which participates in governance. Any defaulters pay prescribed fines or are prevented from benefit sharing. We will take lessons from this visit to inform our approach at our project sites.

7. Impact and Sustainability

The training needs assessment generated much interest from State Government Forestry Staff. In addition, the project has gained profile within Nigeria through press releases on dam issues and coverage on the Taraba State TV station of the anti-dam advocacy workshop. It is too early for there to be significant evidence of biodiversity benefits.

8. Outputs, Outcomes and Dissemination

Outputs were achieved in accordance with the revised project implementation timetable (see section 3 above).

Dissemination work by project

The project has commenced visits to schools to initiate conservation clubs in the project area. Government Day Secondary Schools at Maisamari, Nguroje and Zongo Ajiya were visited in order to form conservation clubs and kick-start their activities. Staff members from Gashaka Gumti National Park, the Nigerian Montane Forest Project and the Forestry Department visited the project office. In addition, the Honourable Jonathan

Nyambo, the Chairman of Sardauna Local Government, visited the project on 22nd March 2006. We received two members of a fledgling NGO called Youth Green Initiative. We encouraged them because their emphasis is on school children's awareness and enlightenment programmes on environmental issues.

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

Code No.	Description	Year 1 Total
Training Outputs		
6a	PRA training	25 trainees
	Biodiversity survey techniques	20 trainees
	Informal training in computer use and photography for project staff	5 trainees
6b	PRA training	1 day formal training plus 2 weeks 'on the job'
	Biodiversity/computer/photography training	'On-the-job'
	Exchange visit for project staff to PFM project in Nigeria, Ekuri Initiative	4 days
Research Outputs		
8	12 days spent by RSPB Project Manager to assist in project setup	12 days
12b	NCF biodiversity database enhanced	1
Dissemination outputs		
14a	Biodiversity survey design workshop Site selection workshop, Criteria setting workshop Anti-dam advocacy workshop	4
15a	One national press release in Nigeria relating to project	1
18	One national broadcast on dam-building issue in project area	1
Physical Outputs		
20	Value of capital items purchased	£5,919
Financial Outputs		
23	Co-funding	£99,863

Table 2: Publications

Type *	Detail	Publishers	Available from	Cost £
(e.g. journals, manual, CDs)	(title, author, year)	(name, city)	(e.g. contact address, website)	
None yet				

9. Project Expenditure

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Lessons

Monitoring is primarily based around reviewing the quality and timeliness of both project narrative and financial reports and their accuracy compared against what has been planned. The project will be establishing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the development and implementation of the PFM plans, as this is a complex process. This framework will involve simple and measurable biodiversity indicators that will be derived from the biodiversity surveys.

Lessons

Responses by certain communities to intervention approaches have not been as forthcoming as expected. We are working hard to explain the potential benefits of the project (and the potential negative impacts of dams) to these communities and will continue to do so.

The exceptionally challenging terrain in the project area has increased certain project costs – e.g. fuel costs are higher than expected. Payment of porters is an additional cost. We will maintain a careful overview of expenditure to ensure that this does not adversely affect our ability to deliver the key project objectives.

Institutional bureaucracy within the Forestry Division has slowed down some planned activities. For example, responses to Training Needs Assessment questionnaires were late in coming in, and a letter which was written to the State Government through the FD Director about the dam issue has not yet been addressed. We will take this into account in planning future dealings with the FD.

11. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project during the reporting period (300-400 words maximum)

■ **I agree for ECTF and the Darwin Secretariat to publish the content of this section**