

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2007)

Project Ref. No.	15-010
Project Title	Buffer Zone Restoration and Development in Knuckles Forest Reserve
Country	Sri Lanka
UK Organisation	University of Aberdeen
Collaborator(s)	University of Peradeniya (UP), Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Banchory (CEH)
Project Leader	M Pinard
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Report No.	HYR3 1 April 2008 – 30 Sept 2008
Project website	WWW.ABDN.AC.UK/KNUCKLES

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

Rehabilitation Options

The work on restoration and rehabilitation options progressed as planned over the 6 months. The grassland restoration experiments were monitored over the period and the student working on the experiments submitted a report to his thesis committee in July. The team is currently assessing the value of continued monitoring as the findings appear to be stable and the field costs are substantial; it seems likely that we will stop the monthly monitoring and instead invest in confirming the identification of plants that have recruited into the experimental plots. This change should improve the relevance and importance of the research results. The field work for the pinus invasion study is nearly complete, one small germination experiment was added to supplement the earlier study that was inconclusive. The student has drafted five chapters of his thesis and expects to submit in December 2008. The research on the conservation benefits of agroforestry innovations is progressing well. The student is analysing data and has drafted two chapters of her thesis.

The community-led restoration and conservation farming interventions were delayed because of drought. Plants have been distributed and are being kept in nurseries until planting can begin. Conditions improved in October and planting has restarted.

The experiment on cardamom eradication continues to be monitored and preliminary analyses of data are underway. As with the grassland experiment additional work is required to complete the identification of tree seedlings and saplings in the plots. We had planned to complete a stakeholder survey to determine attitudes towards the cardamom enriched forest and priorities for interventions but decided to delay this work until we had agreed a structure for the workshop planned for January 2009. At the end of this reporting period the project team met and discussed the workshop. It seems clear now that the objective can not fully be met during the workshop itself and an additional investment in interviews and focus group discussions will be required. This work is currently being planned.

Capacity building

We had planned to hold two events related to training of forestry staff in relation to pinus plantation conversion. The two groups were brought together for a capacity building workshop in July. A workshop entitled "Enrichment of Pinus plantations with broad-leaved species: the way forward" was held at the University of Peradeniya on 24 July 2008. This was organized with the Forestry Department and was directed at divisional forestry staff and teaching staff at the forestry college. The programme included a number of technical presentations, a site visit to the Hantana Pinus Enrichment experiment, and a workshop focused on a discussion of

species selection and ways forward. A synthesis of research findings were disseminated at the meeting.

Two of the project team members participated in a regional conference in Kuching in April 2008, the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation. Both were able to participate in a postgraduate student training event at the end of the conference.

We had planned to facilitate exchange visits for farmers from communities in Knuckles to share ideas and visit model sites but this has not yet happened. We are planning to organize this for the later part of 2008. In the communities of Udailaka, Kosdanda and Kalugala, Extension officers with the Agricultural Export Crop Division and BioFoods joined our project team in delivering two training workshops focused on the cultivation and management of cinnamon. Training was provided in relation to the land preparation requirements for planting, as well as methods for soil conservation and compost fertilizers. Three field demonstrations were organized in Kalugala and Udailluka (21 July, 30 Sept, 9 Oct) and villagers were trained to construct improved stoves.

Empowerment

Work in two new sites was initiated during this period. A participatory workshop was held in Dawatagala to identify concerns and priorities for interventions with the villagers. Dawatagala is within a tea estate and the 28 families that participated in the PRA expressed a preference for development involving cultivation of tea or cardamom in the highlands. A semi-structured survey was conducted in order to gather more information about priorities for livelihood development interventions. The data from the survey have been summarized.

The second site where work was initiated is Rambukoluwa, a remote village in Knuckles that has been recently provided with a micro-hydro plant but little in the way of support for pursuing community development to take advantage of the electricity being generated. Participatory workshops and assessments were conducted and the household surveys have been completed. The data from these surveys is currently being summarized.

Dissemination

Activities have been implemented as planned in the logframe and milestones. The project team produced a second newsletter and distributed this to partners and other stakeholders working in the Knuckles region. To increase the sustainability of the newsletter, the team has agreed to focus on sourcing material from our partners for the next publication in December.

Pamphlets and dissemination materials were created for the problem of *Pinus* invasion in the Knuckles and also for the potential for *Pinus* conversion through enrichment. Additional pamphlets are being developed for dissemination at the International Forestry Conference in Colombo in December and the Networking workshop in January.

Newspaper briefs were published for the problem of *Pinus* invasion and the potential for conversion of *Pinus* plantations to agroforestry systems. A brief television interview by Anuradha Madawattae was aired presenting concerns over the invasiveness of *Pinus* in the Knuckles as part of a documentary "Gambare" for the independent TV station in Peradeniya.

Outreach

Two school programmes were organized at Mahalakotuwa Vidyalaya in Riverston, one to discuss pinus invasion and pinus conversion (June), and a second to discuss grassland degradation and restoration in Knuckles (July). Three of the project team members visited the school and gave presentations and the pupils visited the research sites with the team members. The project donated white boards, pens, books and a small portable generator for their computer lab which won an award for the best lab in the district. The school has decided to develop a small enterprise activity to raise funds to buy fuel for the generator. Originally we had planned to host a school visit to the pinus enrichment experiment in Peradeniya but due to concerns over the security of pupils travelling long distances in buses (i.e., risk of terrorist attacks) an alternative programme based in the Knuckles was developed.

An awareness programme was organized and delivered for undergraduate students at the University of Sabaragamuwa. Similar to the programme above, presentations were made to the students about grasslands in the Knuckles and the restoration issues. The students visited the research plots with the project staff.

Partnerships

We continue to discuss the project objectives and activities with our partner organizations. Specific follow-up activities that were held during this period include the following: Prof Wickramasighe gave a presentation of the livelihood activities of the project to the Plantation Human Development Trust and a discussion was held over how our collaboration might develop. A second meeting was sponsored by the PHDT where Prof Wickramasighe was invited to present a talk on gender mainstreaming in community development. Several proposals have been put forward by members of the PHDT for activities that could be conducted by the workers within the estates. Some of these include a restoration function but without a community development function; the project may support these efforts by providing technical assistance. One proposal was put forward that included both restoration and community development; it involves establishing bananas on degraded estate lands and creating banana processing facilities that could be managed by the workers' community. These interventions are in the planning stage.

The Mahaweli Authority in Kotmale agreed to provide bamboo plants free of charge to the community members working on riparian belt development. In return we (with the farmers) will provide them with information about the performance of the plants over time. We have been working with the Export Agricultural Minor Crops Department to provide farmers with technical advice for setting up and maintaining plant nurseries on their farms. Also, they have helped them to source good quality seed. A presentation on community livelihood development in the Knuckles was given by Prof Wickramasighe to the Kandy Rotary Club and they agreed to provide a water pump for the households in Dawatagala; this pump will open opportunities for the community to practice highland agriculture.

Workshop planned and scheduled for Jan 2009

Discussions have been held with several officials in the Forestry Department about our plans for a workshop in January 2009. The Forestry Department agreed to work with us in planning and delivering the workshop. In addition, the Central Provincial Administration has agreed to support the workshop; their support will encourage the participation at the workshop of the six District Environmental Officers. Informal meetings with a number of groups working on development, restoration and conservation in the Knuckles regions have been held to discuss the scope of the workshop and to invite them to attend. We have developed a proforma that we are distributing to request all participants to complete in order to compile in advance of the workshop, a summary of activities underway, recently completed, or planned that can be presented at the workshop. We have developed a draft programme and are currently securing a venue.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

There are several unexpected developments, drought, slowness of partners, leave request from local project manager. Field conditions were unusually dry between May and September. The consequence of this has been that planting activities were put on hold until conditions improved. This delay has meant that we are behind schedule for the implementation of some of the rehabilitation options in the villages of Kalugala, Udailuka and Kosdanda. It looks like the budgetary implications will be minimal but the time frame for monitoring impacts and developing participatory monitoring activities will be condensed.

During this six month period we have been working with several partners to try and initiate community development initiatives at replication sites (Dawatagala and Rambukoluwa).

Progress has been slower than expected, principally due to the investment in time that is required to discuss and negotiate the conceptual framework and motivation for an intervention, and the time that is required to agree on suitable times and dates for meetings. We continue to make progress nevertheless and it looks like we can still complete our objectives within the project lifespan, although the interventions will still be quite young. We will continue to focus on empowerment and capacity building to build sustainability and legacy.

Mr Balram Dhakal, the research assistant that manages the project office and logistics in Peradeniya has requested 2.5 months leave to allow him to deal with domestic and family issues. We have granted him unpaid leave (apart from the two weeks of paternity leave that is embedded in the longer period) and are hoping to hire someone to assume his administrative and managerial role during Balram's absence. We will need to approach Darwin to request a shift in the budget to reallocate the UA salary saving to the Peradeniya budget.

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

No, not yet.

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

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

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures? No.

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

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

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