

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

Project Ref. No.	15-011
Project Title	Building capacity for forest inventory in the Republic of Congo
Country	Republic of Congo
UK Organisation	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
Collaborators	Wildlife Conservation Society-Congo (WCS-Congo), Institut Développement Rural, Centre d'Etudes sur les Ressources Végétales (CERVE), Centre National d'Inventaire et d'Aménagements des Ressources Forestières et Fauniques.
Project Leader	Dr. David Harris
Report date	31 October
Report No.	HYR 2

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

The project has continued to progress well and on schedule, with many of the project activities and outputs planned for Year 2 already achieved during the first half of this year. These are outlined below (excluding those already achieved ahead of schedule and therefore reported on in Year 1).

In April, two UK project staff (David Harris and Alexandra Wortley, one more than originally proposed), conducted a 3½-week trip to Congo. This research and training trip included three days intensive training by Dr. Harris of two key Congolese project partners (Ms Mireille Ndoundou Hockemba (WCS-Congo) and Dr. Emile Kami, (CERVE), and two weeks training of Mr. Sydney Ndolo Ebika (WCS-Congo). Dr. Wortley spent the trip identifying over 5,000 specimens from Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park and buffer zone. Dr. Harris spent the time in training and collecting in the National Park. Discussions with project partners at WCS were also conducted and plans for future joint outputs such as papers, reports and broadcasts taken forward.

In June, Dr. Harris returned to Congo for a second 3½ week training trip, during which he completed the collection of specimens for the inventory of tree species in Nouabalé-Ndoki and provided three weeks of focused training for the two project para-taxonomists, Mr. Fabien Nzolani Silaho and Mr. Gabriel Moukassa. A further week was spent in knowledge transfer with project partner Dr. Jean-Marie Moutsamboté of Marien Ngouabi University, Brazzaville, including plans for developing undergraduate courses. At the end of this trip, one duplicate of each of the 10,000 botanical specimens taken was provided to each of the herbaria at CERVE, WCS headquarters Bomassa, and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

In August Dr. Harris and Dr. Wortley attended the biennial meeting of the Systematics Association. Both presented papers at this meeting (one more paper than planned), entitled *Sangha Trees: an identification and training guide to the trees of the northern Republic of Congo* and *Identification of tropical plants in the field: training and transferring skills*. These papers will be published in the symposium proceedings volume *Floras and Faunas Serving Biodiversity Research*. In addition, the conference provided an opportunity to demonstrate and seek feedback on a draft version of the identification and training guide. Funding for attendance at the conference was leveraged from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

Additional significant achievements in this half year include supporting CERVE to make two successful grant applications to the French Government *Sud Expert Plantes* programme. One of these applications was to provide infrastructure for the National Herbarium in Brazzaville. The second grant provides €20,000 (c. £14,000) to conduct an inventory of Lac Télé reserve in

northern Congo in collaboration with the RBGE. A further £14,971.50 was leveraged from the Sibbald Trust at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, to enable Dr. Wortley to continue working with the project, including completing the identification and training guide. Dr. Wortley also received a grant of €2180 (c. £1,500) from the European Union Synthesys project, to visit the herbarium (BR) at the National Botanic Garden of Belgium, in order to study the Rubiaceae, the most species-rich family of trees in the northern Congo, for the guide. Our other proposed Year 2 activities and outputs, including work towards a virtual herbarium, production of protected area checklists, preparation and testing of the identification and training guide, analysis towards the submission of reports and papers, and production of posters and a Congolese radio broadcast, are all continuing as planned.

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.

In June, Ms Ndoundou Hockemba was offered a conditional place on the Edinburgh University MSc course, Biodiversity and Taxonomy of Plants. Unfortunately she has been unable to take this up in September 2007, due to a failure to reach the required level of English. Her place has been deferred by the university until September 2008, and we are confident that she will achieve the required qualification by this time. Ms Hockemba is continuing to study English and to conduct botanical fieldwork in Congo, supported by WCS. This deferral will significantly affect the project budget and timetable, and this has been fully discussed and agreed with the Darwin Secretariat (see below).

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

We have made certain to keep the Darwin Secretariat informed, as quickly of possible, of the unexpected delay to Ms Hockemba's MSc course enrolment (and subsequent completion). The Secretariat have been very accommodating and agreed to delay her enrolment to Year 3, and to alter the project budget to enable us to fund this. Several minor related changes to the budget (viring between budget lines within years) were also agreed. The Secretariat also agreed to the move a proposed two weeks of undergraduate training from December 2007 to April 2008, to fit better with the course timetable at Marien Ngouabi University.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: yes, in September 2007

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: yes, in September 2007

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

We found the review of our first annual report to be very useful. We think it was extremely professional and insightful. The specific comments in that review which we were requested to answer here are detailed below:

- **To what extent could the permanent plots be used to provide additional information such as on regeneration and useful plants other than the tree component?** Although outside the plans for this project, the permanent plots form the basis of a significant research programme into regeneration conducted by our project partners. The permanent plots at present comprise data on tree species only. However, it would be easy to extend this to the herbaceous and liana components in future. Some of the project's training has focused on collection of non-tree species, and Ms Hockemba is planning to study herbaceous plants in NNNP as part of her MSc research project. With regard to useful plants, many of the species in the permanent plots are sources of non-timber forest

products. At present we are concentrating on accurate identification of all tree species in order to achieve our project objectives. In future, the data from the plots will be suitable for a range of studies of useful plants.

- **More information on the standards of curation in Congo and the long term security of collected material would be useful.** The herbarium at CERVE (IEC) has a reasonable infrastructure and permanent staff for the curation and maintenance of collected material. We have been actively involved in supporting their application for further funding from the Sud Expert Plantes Programme (see above). The situation at NNNP headquarters in Bomassa has fewer obvious sources of long-term funding but our project partners are committed to work towards this. Since this is where the majority of identification work using these collections is likely to be carried out, we consider it is worthwhile leaving a duplicate set of specimens here.
- **The logical framework as it appears in Annex 1 (Report of Progress) is much clearer than the current logical framework. It could be usefully adopted as the structure from now on.** This has been done; in addition we hope to modify the logical framework further when new guidelines are released by the Darwin Secretariat, as discussed at their workshop in June this year.

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**