

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 (WCS)-Congo; Institut Développement Rural (IDR); Centre d'Etudes sur les Ressources Végétales (CERVE).
Project Leader	Dr. David Harris
Report Date	31 October 2008
Report No.	HYR 3
Project Website	http://www.rbge.org.uk/science/tropical-diversity/inventory-research-in-threatened-areas/darwin-congo

1. Outline of progress, April – September 2008

Over the past six months, significant progress has been made in four areas of project activity:

- One Congolese national from project partner WCS-Congo has successfully enrolled on the University of Edinburgh MSc in *Biodiversity and Taxonomy of Plants*; this is a key component of our training activities as, on completion of this course (in September 2009, as agreed with the Darwin Secretariat), she will return to Congo to continue the activities of the project in terms of training and forest inventory, ensuring a long-term legacy for the project.
- David Harris, with Emile Kami of CERVE and Jean-Marie Moutsamboté of Marien Ngouabi University, conducted a further training and collecting trip to northern Congo in conjunction with a French government-funded *Sud Expert Plantes* project. Although not funded by the Darwin Initiative, this trip contributed directly to the project's outputs, aims and legacy, and demonstrates that our exit strategy is working, with our Congolese partners able successfully to apply for grants and see their activities through. One hundred and ninety-one collections were made, including new species records for Congo, and 1,500 digital images were taken, allowing us to surpass the total number of images projected in our original application. During this trip, project partners were provided with checklists and specimen labels, clipper-poles and GPS handsets. Drs Harris, Kami and Moutsamboté also discussed future strategies for funding and training, particularly at the CERVE herbarium, part of our long-term strategy of support for the maintenance of this important facility.
- Following the publication of the training and identification manual *Sangha Trees*, a UK press release was issued in August and was taken up by both the Edinburgh *Evening News* (half-page spread) and Herald & Post. Drs Harris and Wortley were interviewed live by David Miller on BBC Radio Scotland's *Good Morning Scotland*, with a listenership of c. 200,000, and Dr. Harris was also interviewed by Nigel Williams of *Current Biology*, all of which provided valuable publicity for the Darwin Initiative.
- Development of the Virtual Herbarium and website have also continued during this period, in collaboration with Denis Filer and Dr. William Hawthorne at the University of Oxford.

2. Details of problems or unexpected developments

No problems have been encountered. Following discussions with project partners, we have modified our project activities to focus more strongly upon knowledge transfer to high level

scientists rather than lower level (e.g. undergraduate) training. This was considered to be more suited to the needs of the taxonomic community in Congo, and the best way to improve capacity for forest inventory and conservation long-term. This changes has no effect on the project budget or outputs.

Discussions with Darwin Secretariat

This change in focus, and consequent shift in activities, has been discussed and agreed with the Darwin Secretariat, through a *Change Request Form*.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: yes, in September 2008

Changes to the project workplan: yes, in October 2008, as agreed above

3. Other issues

As requested, a response to the review of AR2 is attached.