

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2011)

Project Ref. No.	17/011
Project Title	A participatory conservation programme for the Comoro Islands
Country(ies)	Comoro Islands (Western Indian Ocean)
UK Organisation	Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation (BCSF)
Collaborator(s)	Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (Durrell), International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN,), Cranfield University, Government of the Union of the Comoros, University of the Comoros, Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (AVSF)
Project Leader	Neil Maddison
Report date	31 October 2011
Report No.	HYR 3
Project website	www.bcsf.org.uk/comoros

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

Output 1: Innovative participatory biodiversity conservation and community sustainable development model defined for the Comoro Islands, supported by local policymakers, and publicised locally and internationally

As programmed in the Year 2 annual report, AVSF performed a first mission to Anjouan in June in order to evaluate progress to date and propose improvements to strategy, and also to identify where their expertise in rural development could be most beneficial. Their close involvement will lead to important developments to the conservation model over the last year of the project, with a second mission anticipated before the end of the year.

Efforts have continued to improve communication of the approach and results at all levels. The project's steering group meeting in May was used as an opportunity to update partner institutions on the project's progress and strategy developments through an open morning of presentations and discussions. Media organisations were also invited resulting in articles published in the three major national newspapers, and coverage on national and local television and radio stations. The second edition of the biannual project newsletter *Mahabari* was also produced and distributed to over 200 contacts nationally and internationally. A stand-alone bilingual French/English project website is currently in development, and project t-shirts have been printed to build the ECDD brand in Anjouan.

Output 2: At least 9 local communities surrounding remaining forest on Anjouan empowered to develop sustainably in a manner compatible with forest conservation and management

Work in the villages is based on intensifying agriculture and providing alternative sources of income in order to reduce pressure on remaining forest. The project now has a total of 39 farmers' demonstration fields in place, used to showcase improved crop varieties, improved production techniques, and the integration of livestock and agriculture. Communication based on results has attracted other beneficiaries. Structural improvement works to prevent erosion have started in 83 fields (overall target for 2011-12 is 365 new fields) collaborating with 12 relay trainers. 93 farmers are being supported in market gardening through the supply of seeds, equipment and improved production techniques.

AVSF's expertise in conservation agriculture will be important in identifying crop types, rotations and vegetative cover that can be introduced in different agro-ecological zones to improve both

soil fertility and water management, and a yearlong partnership is being finalised.

At the communal level, activities over the semester have concentrated on restoration of informal water protection zones through tree planting coupled with small investments in improving water infrastructure. Rehabilitation of water catchment and distribution infrastructure in Outsa and Ouzini has been completed, with works in Nindri and Salamani are ongoing.

Output 3: Protected area zoning plan produced from a biodiversity perspective, and biodiversity and habitat quality monitoring system created

The land cover maps for Grande Comore and Anjouan are complete. These are being used along with the field data collected over the past two years to produce species distribution models, which will be finalised in the next six weeks. These models will enable us to identify the areas of highest biodiversity value. Species richness indices are also being developed to show statistically which classified habitats are most important for biodiversity in the Comoros.

More in-depth research continues on target endangered species. Analysis is underway on the results of the Anjouan Scops Owl surveys to improve the population estimate before publication of results in a peer-reviewed journal. A pilot study on Livingstone's fruit bat started in September 2011 to evaluate different methods for habitat assessment and roost population counts before full surveys are conducted in December.

Output 4: New local NGO created and shows commitment to become a major independent force for conservation in the Comoros.

The strategic planning workshop programmed with Conservation International has been put back to the next semester whilst integration of AVSF is prioritised. In the meantime, capacity development of the local team has continued, including further IT training, English lessons, and practise in report writing.

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.

AVSF's intervention is recognised as key to the development of the landscape management strategy and project implementation. The strategy is focussed on increasing agricultural productivity to help alleviate the need to develop new areas through deforestation. AVSF involvement has been delayed due to their Madagascar office currently being overstretched. If this continues through to the New Year, there is risk of impact on progress, particularly with the communities, who see 'quick wins' as crucial to changing behaviour. A new Head of Agriculture is also required as the current post holder has decided to return to Belgium; this position will be filled through open recruitment in the next few weeks.

Project management needs re-organising, mainly due to the administrative requirements of one of the funders (the French Development Agency, FDA) and consequently a reduction in time on strategic development and capacity building for a new NGO. A need for closer senior support in the field and specific administrative support have been identified, with discussions with the FDA underway on how to fill the gaps. Two months' sick leave for the Project Manager from September caused further difficulties in the Comoros, with species distribution modelling delayed in particular as existing staff divided tasks.

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

Mohéli salaries have been requested for transfer to staff salaries (as last year) as Mohéli intervention was cancelled.

Discussed with LTS:	No
Formal change request submitted:	Yes, in October 2011
Received confirmation of change acceptance	No

3. Do you expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No

4. 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 LTS International directly.

Please send your **completed form by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.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: 17-075 Darwin Half Year Report**