

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2011)

Project Ref. No.	17019
Project Title	Developing Wildlife Forensic Capacity for ASEAN biodiversity conservation
Country(ies)	UK (host), Malaysia, Thailand.
UK Organisation	TRACE Wildlife Forensics Network
Collaborator(s)	TRAFFIC South East Asia; ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network.
Project Leader	<i>Dr Ross McEwing, TRACE WFN</i>
Report date	30 th October 2011
Report No.	HYR2
Project website:	www.asean-wfn.org

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).

A: Soft issues pertinent to project progress

Jen Mailley returned to the project as Project Manager (PM) on 1st September and has relocated to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to work on the final year of the project. Her key roles will be to maximise the legacy of the project; organise the final conference planned for Q3 of year 3; report on project progress and budget internally and to Darwin; and coordinate efforts to identify follow-on and spin-off funding sources.

In our 2nd annual report, we flagged the risk posed to project legacy due to uncertainty about whether the ASEAN WEN would continue to be financially supported. The ASEAN WEN forms the umbrella under which all wildlife enforcement actions in the region are coordinated, and they are key project partners. Since that report, USAID have allocated a 5 year grant called the ARREST programme, which will in effect continue to support the ASEAN WEN via its Secretariat, the Programme Coordination Unit. The monies will be allocated through FREELAND, an American NGO, who specialise in enforcement officer and ranger training throughout the region. The funding stream ensures the ASEAN-WEN will remain operational for another 5 years, increasing project legacy. The stream also includes some money allocated for wildlife forensics, meaning coordination between TRACE and Freeland will be necessary. This has already begun and is discussed further below.

B: Measurable outputs against project activities

Activities 2.3 (raining of host-country staff in the UK) and 3.2 (Development of forensic) tools

UK based training was successfully completed. Four scientists attended the 3-week long advanced training programme hosted by TRACE WFN in Edinburgh. Both Indonesia and Malaysia funded the participation of a scientist each, in addition to the two scientists funded by the Darwin budget. This signifies the level of government interest in and commitment to this project and means that project deliverables in terms of matched-funding and, more pragmatically, person-hours of lab-based training were exceeded. Scientists were trained in DNA techniques specific to tigers, and in how to develop new tests so that they could meet future capacity needs. Both subjects address activity 3.2, development of key forensic tools to address identified priorities. The outcomes of the training included a paper co-authored by TRACE and the four scientists, which describes a novel method for determining the gender of tigers using DNA. The paper is due to be published in the journal Conservation Genetics shortly.

Activity 3.3: Creation of a species reference collection of DNA samples for shared use.

A key indicator of project impact in the past 6 months was the official opening in December 2010 of the Wildlife Forensics Services (WIFOS), of Thailand's Department of National Parks. The dedicated laboratory is headed by Dr Kanita Ouithaven, the individual identified by TRACE as the best person in which to invest project resources. The lab is being furnished with the relevant equipment and computing facilities, based on advice from TRACE WFN, and Dr Kanita has a team of four staff under her. Significantly, these activities have occurred at the expense of the DNP. The investment in Dr Kanita and official recognition of her as Head of Unit are the direct result of the letters of recommendation sent to DNP by TRACE WFN following initial Needs Assessment in 2009/10. At that time the assessment highlighted that there was no single line of responsibility for wildlife DNA case work in Thailand. Next steps include minimising the perception at DNP that the lab poses a greater health and safety risk than it does, which will help to ensure that the lab is kept within DNP HQ. There currently exists a small risk that the lab will be moved to a rescue centre located some distance from DNP HQ. This location is inconvenient for staff and for sample and supply movement, but was probably suggested to ensure that Dr Kanita was not working in close proximity to other individuals in DNP who wish to be responsible for wildlife DNA forensics, but are not suitably qualified to do so. In the context of Thai culture, physical distance from HQ might pose significant barriers to Dr Kanita's ongoing effectiveness. The project team are supporting Dr Kanita in ongoing casework with the aim of practically demonstrating her expertise and establishing the central role of the WIFOS laboratory.

Additional laboratory-based training in the ASEAN region was given to Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia when Drs Rob and Ross visited the ASEAN region in October 2012. The in-country laboratory-based training and work on live case work are ongoing and exceed project goals. It is hoped that the outcome of one significant case in Thailand might occur during the lifetime of the project. The case involves inter-regional cooperation- a Thai sample is being analysed by scientists from a different country, something which never occurred prior to this project. In addition, the project team have collated the reference sample database formats of both Malay and Thai scientists and the next year will see the development of a common database format for launch on the ASEAN WFN website.

Activities 4.1 and 5.3, Inter-agency cooperation and Network coordination

These activities were progressed in October 2011 when Drs Rob Ogden and Ross McEwing visited South East Asia. A meeting was held in Thailand to discuss the wildlife forensics policy of the Department for National Parks (DNP), where the need for coordination between local agencies and internationally between laboratories was discussed. Support from the Deputy Director of the DNP was given to advance the project in future cases where CITES permits were needed for sample movement between laboratories.

As part of the same trip, RO and RM also visited Vietnam and met with the CITES Management Authority and government laboratories (within the CITES SA), as well as key local NGOs. These meetings were all very fruitful and stemmed from the continued interest and enthusiasm of the Vietnamese authorities to develop wildlife forensic capacity – further work in Vietnam is now planned during the next six months.

A meeting with the ASEAN-WEN Secretariat was held in October 2011. The ASEAN-WEN is keen to formally endorse and 'adopt' the ASEAN Wildlife Forensics Network, and the Secretariat will inform the project team how to progress this through official channels.

Furthermore, the USAID funds recently granted to the NGO Freeland present an opportunity for cooperation between NGOs to maximise the impact of investments. On a practical level, the project team are communicating with Freeland via the A-WEN Secretariat to ensure that Freeland can utilise the lessons learnt by the Darwin project team and minimise unnecessary repetition of Needs Analyses etc., which would also cause confusion for ASEAN stakeholders.

The project team were invited to inform Interpol of their activities with a 40 minute slot at the

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

Darwin informed the project team that the second annual report, submitted in April 2011, was not formally reviewed. Therefore there are no responses to a review which the team can provide in this half-year report. Instead, the team is maintaining contact with the Darwin/ LTS management with regard to the issues flagged above such as the alterations to the species of focus; the return of the PM Jen Mailley to the region, and the processes for applying for follow-on funding.

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: 14-075 Darwin Half Year Report**