

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2013)

Project Ref No	20-022
Project Title	Enhancing habitat connectivity through sustainable development around the Gola Rainforest
Country(ies)	Sierra Leone
Lead Organisation	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Collaborator(s)	Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP), Welt Hunger Hilfe (WHH), Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), Forestry Division, Cambridge University Department of Land Economy and Rainforest Alliance.
Project Leader	<i>Nicolas Tubbs</i>
Report date and number (eg HYR3)	<i>October 2013, HYR1</i>
Project website	<i>n/a</i>

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) 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).

The project's start date was the 1st of July 2013, therefore this first half year report against the agreed baseline timetable for the project actually reflects activities which took place in the first quarter of Year 1.

The first quarter of Year 1 was marked by (i) the recruitment of project staff, (ii) development of methodologies for field work, (iii) partnership agreements established and (iv) capital investment.

- (i) A Technical Advisor for Agriculture, Co-management and Livelihoods (TACLA) was recruited by the RSPB as part of the Gola Rainforest National Park. Bert Neevel has long standing experience in sustainable agriculture and particularly with cocoa. Bert oversees all field based activities and ensures that GRNP staff members deliver against agreed work plans. Bert will play a key role in engaging with Forest Edge Communities and in enhancing local capacity around cocoa cultivation. Bert led the recruitment of Cocoa and Agricultural Officers as part of the GRNP's Community Development Department. There were over 100 applicants from which 3 Cocoa Officers and 3 Agricultural Officers were recruited. The GRNP is in the process of finalising the fourth and last Agricultural Officer position. Bert is based in Sierra Leone. Bert is line managed by Nicolas Tubbs, project leader.

A Conservation Scientist in Tropical Agriculture and Biodiversity, Dr Mark Hulme, was recruited to head the project's scientific field work such as the camera trapping/point counts of wildlife and crop raiding. Mark is based in Sierra Leone half the year, the other half being spent in the UK to analyse the data collected. Mark is line managed by Dr Fiona Sanderson who ensures the methodologies are robust and that statistical analyses are sound. Mark travelled to Sierra Leone for the first field work activities in October.

- (ii) Several potential fieldwork sites have been identified in Malema and Nomo chiefdoms, where WHH plan to start cocoa rehabilitation activities within the next few months and hence wildlife communities in actively farmed cocoa, abandoned cocoa, farm bush and community woodland can be compared (Output 1, Indicator 1). Mark and Bert will visit Malema chiefdom to view potential field sites in late October. Mark is currently testing

bird survey methods (point counts and timed species counts) in order to ascertain the most appropriate methodology for the habitat, and trialling habitat mapping methods (Output 1, Indicator 2). Mark is also developing habitat survey methods, which as well as recording habitat features that may influence wildlife populations, will collect the habitat data relevant to Rainforest Alliance certification (Output 1, Indicator 2). From November, Mark will oversee bird surveys within the historically least disturbed part of Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP), which will provide a baseline for comparison of bird communities in other habitats with “pristine” forest (Output 1, Indicator 5). Bert and Mark are developing community questionnaires in order to collect relevant socio-economic data, particularly to assess the extent of human-wildlife conflict in cocoa (Output 2, Indicator 1). Mark is starting to map cocoa plantations, which will provide a dataset for ground truthing a remotely sensed dataset to assess whether cocoa plantations can be mapped around GRNP using remotely sensed data (Output 1, Indicator 4).

- (iii) A sub-contract was developed and agreed with the Rainforest Alliance (RA) who will provide technical advice on certification processes and the related requirements. Dr Jeff Milder, a Conservation Scientist with the RA, has provided technical input on the development of field methodologies.

Though a contract was anticipated with Welt Hunger Hilfe (WHH) originally, WHH informed us during this first quarter that the funding they had now secured from the European Commission for their A4D project was substantial and that they could cover all their costs related to this project from that source of funding, hence benefitting the project by releasing funds for which we plan to submit a change request form, see section 2.a.

- (iv) A Land Rover Station wagon was purchased during this period. This vehicle will be dedicated to the project. Other equipment was purchased ahead of the fieldwork.

Finally, all the activities of this first quarter took place during Sierra Leone’s rainy season; hence the focus has been to put everything into place for the actual implementation for the 2nd quarter of the project. The cocoa harvest has just begun by the end of this quarter; therefore the timing envisioned during the project proposal phase is matching the implementation thus far.

2a. 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.

An unexpected development that the project has encountered these last 4 months is the fact that WHH no longer requires the project funding to deliver its activities. This we see as a positive development as it releases funds amounting to £9,227 for which we plan to submit a change request. We plan to do so, as soon as the first field work activities have taken place which will allow us to better assess whether the budget meets the actual needs on the ground. This has not yet been discussed with LTS, as WHH only confirmed the details very recently.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: Yes/No

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

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

Yes No

3b. If yes, and you wish to request a carryforward of funds, this should be done as soon as possible through the formal Change Request process. However, it would help Defra manage Darwin funds more efficiently if you could give an indication now of how much you expect this request might be for.

Estimated carryforward request: £6,000*

*this estimate results from the time required for recruitment of project staff during the 1st quarter and the change indicated above from WHH. It is anticipated though that the first field work might well reveal some needs which were not originally planned and will then likely reduce if not even avoid a carryforward of funds over £5,000. The change request is expected to be submitted before the end of the calendar year.

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

The sub-contract developed with the Rainforest Alliance relies on the project's budget breakdown per financial year. However, the Rainforest Alliance have communicated that a slightly different breakdown between financial years would be advisable as they anticipate to provide more input in years 1 and 2, with less in the final year of the project. Additionally, we anticipate some changes will be required after the initial fieldwork has been carried out.

The aforementioned change request to be submitted before the end of the calendar year, will address this issue.

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 through a Change Request.

Please send your **completed report 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**