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TRAINING COURSE FOR THE STAFF OF THE
SEYCHELLES NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

DARWIN INITIATIVE PROJECT REPORT (Final)

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, LONDON

N.Fergusson

November 1999

FINAL REPORT FOR DARWIN INITIATIVE: SEYCHELLES TRAINING COURSE

1 Project Details

- **Project Title:** Training course for the staff of the Seychelles Natural History Museum (SNHM)
- **Contractor:** The Natural History Museum, London (NHM)
- **Host country collaborating institute:** The Seychelles Natural History Museum
- **Grant Round:** 1999/2000
- **Grant Value:** £ 21,125

2 Project Expenditure

- **Total grant expenditure:** £21,124.97
- **Breakdown of expenditure (using expenditure categories in the original application form):** see spreadsheet in appendix for more details.

SUMMARY

Heading	Grant	Spend	Variation
Travel			
UK subsistence			
Total T&S			
Printing			
Seminar			
Staff			
Overheads			
TOTAL			

- **Explain any variations in expenditure +/- 10%:** There was only one notable variation to the finances in that a better deal was achieved on the cost of flights than our estimate which was based on a telephone quotation provided by Wexas. This gain was used, with the agreement of Maria Stevens (DETR), to extend the training to include a period of *in situ* training at the Seychelles Natural History Museum by Dr Fergusson (see below).

3 Project Background/Rationale

- **Why was the project needed? Please explain the project development process.**
Dr Ahlberg (NHM) identified the need for this training course as a top priority during a 10-day consultative visit to the SNHM at the invitation of the Seychelles Environment Trust Fund. Although the SNHM staff are very enthusiastic it was recognised that a complete lack of museum training had prevented the SNHM from fulfilling its potential as the key resource centre for biodiversity conservation in the Seychelles. Dr Ahlberg then involved Dr Fergusson (NHM) because of his experience in organising collections management training projects. Dr Fergusson consulted many NMH colleagues before establishing the course structure and then, with Dr Ahlberg, applied for the DI grant.
- **How was it related to conservation priorities in the host country?**
Assistance: The Republic of Seychelles is very rich in biodiversity but poor in resources. This course provided training, not available elsewhere, that will allow the SNHM to meet its mission – to promote conservation and sustainable resource use among both locals and tourists. The course significantly expanded the capability of the SNHM to deliver the message of environmental awareness, work more effectively at implementing the Biodiversity Convention, and safeguard their natural heritage (that includes many endemic species).

Institutional capacity building: The project has improved significantly the specimen based expertise of the SNHM collections facility (a secure repository of baseline / historical information). This will be of long-term value to the documentation of biodiversity in Seychelles.

- **How was the project intended to assist the host country to meet its obligations under the Biodiversity Convention?**
Although poor in resources the Seychelles have an especially rich biodiversity with many endemic species. The Seychelles economy is heavily dependent on tourism (17.5% of GDP in 1993) based on an unspoilt environment. However, human activity is causing serious problems with soil erosion, freshwater abstraction and harvesting of reef animals for the souvenir trade. The SNHM seeks to promote the protection of this endangered heritage and effective conservation education is thus essential for sustainable development of Eco-tourism and the future prosperity of the country. This training course has helped the SNHM to enhance its key role in educating both locals and tourists.
- **Was there a clear 'end-user' for the project in the host country? Who?**
The seven staff of the SNHM who attended the course were the primary end-users. However, through collections activities the project will reach the scientific community and through the outreach activities the project will affect the local community and tourists. Being a small population, most of the more educated and aware Seychellois know each other. In this atmosphere the effects of the education are likely to have more significant ramifications than we are used to in our much larger UK population.

4 Project Objectives

- **What were the objectives of the project (as stated in the original application form)?**
To train SNHM curatorial and technical staff (Allen Camille, Barbara Hoareau, Bertilde Belle, Beryl Joubert, Charles Morel, Georges Ravinia and Terence Vel) in the following areas: education and exhibition outreach, plus curation, preservation and documentation of natural history specimens. The aim of the training is to create among the SNHM staff a self-sustaining culture of effective education, outreach and collections care, which will allow the museum to fulfil its potential as a major resource centre for conservation education and biodiversity documentation in Seychelles.
- **Were the objectives of the project revised? If so, how?**
No.
- **Have the objectives (or revised objectives) been achieved? If so, how?**
Yes the training course was run as planned: 28th June - 17th July; this was followed up by an 8-day training and advisory visit to the Seychelles 18th - 27th September.
- **If relevant, what objectives have not been achieved, or only partially achieved, and why?**
N/A

5 Project Outputs (from list of project outputs)

- **What output targets, if any, were specified for the project? (Please refer to the project schedule agreed with the Department where relevant.)**
Darwin outputs 6A=7, 6B=3, 7, 15A=3, 15C=1 17A=1, 18A=1 19A=1, 23
- **Have these been achieved?**
All outputs achieved or exceeded, see below.

6A=7/6B=3: Seven SNHM staff trained for 3 weeks in London (See Appendix for details). Plus additional training and advice was provided in the Seychelles by Dr Fergusson (See appendix for details). All the students reached a good standard and were awarded course certificates.

7=1: A Course training manual was produced, this was based on the lectures, practicals and other events, plus handouts. This manual will form a guide and provide a basis for future development at the SNHM (Manual folder given to Maria Stevens in July - If required a full copy of the manual can be supplied). The manual was conspicuously branded with the Df logo.

15A=3: Three national press releases were issued in the Seychelles. Copies are enclosed of press releases and a covering letter from the Ministry of Youth and Culture. On 30th June the main National daily *The Nation* carried an article on the course and on 23rd August the same paper ran a good-sized spread on the Environment page (page 3) that featured the Darwin Logo. On 2nd July the story appeared in the second main paper *The Seychelles People*. On 23rd September, as part of Dr Fergusson's visit, an extensive "Meet the Press" morning was held in the SNHM. *The Nation*, plus *The Seychelles People* and Seychelles TV and Seychelles Radio were all invited. Dr Fergusson and Mr Alain Lucas (the representative from the Ministry of Culture) gave interviews and there was a photo opportunity involving all the SNHM staff. I have not as yet had copies of the newspaper articles resulting from this press session.

15C=1 The NHM press office issued a press release (26th July) and contacted several media sources during the summer, but apart from the radio interviews (see below) none of the scientific press or newspapers that were contacted took up the story. (A copy of the NHM press release is attached).

17A=1 One dissemination network has been established linking the SNHM (and the Ministry of Youth and Culture) with the NHM in London via e-mail.

18A=2 Television coverage of the training course occurred at the very end of June (see letter from Ministry). In addition, a news story about the visit by Dr Fergusson was broadcast on Seychelles TV as part of the main 8pm national news programme on Thursday 23rd September. The item lasted about 15 - 20 minutes and was seen by many people, judging by comments on the following day.

19A=4 The NHM press office contacted several media sources during July. This led to four brief radio interviews (about 7 minutes each) of Dr Fergusson by Howard Spicer of London Radio Services on 26th July. His pieces are syndicated over 128 stations in 80 countries - including the Seychelles. One of the items was exclusively about the Darwin Initiative and the way funding is so well targeted.

19C=1 Radio coverage of the training course occurred at the very end of June (see letter from Ministry.) It has not been established whether or not a radio broadcast resulted from the press session on 23rd September.

23 NHM Staff time contribution was [REDACTED] However, several members of staff gave extra time in response to the needs of the students. Plus the NHM has donated three boxes of Museum equipment and other items to the SNHM. This includes a long run of the Museum Journal (donated by staff and consisting of over 5 years subscriptions value approx [REDACTED] plus mounting, entomological and collecting equipment etc. Much of this equipment was part of a stores clearance and therefore fully depreciated and of no value to the NHM. Nevertheless, this gift was highly valued by the SNHM and in particular by the technical staff at La Bastille outstation. The SNHM contribution of [REDACTED] was almost certainly exceeded because of staff time required to cover for the absence of the seven students. (See Section 8)

- If relevant, what outputs were not achieved, or only partially achieved, and why?
N/A

- **Were any additional outputs achieved?**
See above. An outline of the extra advice and training provided during the eight-day visit to the Seychelles by Dr Fergusson is provided in the Appendix.
- **If output targets were not specified, please state the outputs achieved by the project. As far as possible, we would like you to work through the list of outputs attached to this paper and to report on those which are relevant to your project.**
N/A

6 Project Operation/Management

- **Research projects - please provide a full account of the scientific work undertaken, outlining the methodology adopted, the staff employed and the research findings. The extent to which research findings have been subject to peer review should be addressed.**
N/A
- **Training projects - please provide a full account of the training provided. This should cover the content of the training, arrangements for selecting trainees, accreditation, etc.**
See appendix for course structure, timetable, names of speakers, copy of NHM short course certificate. The seven trainees were selected as being all the curatorial and technical staff working at the SNHM.
- **Did any issues or difficulties arise in running and managing this project?**
No the project ran remarkably smoothly and was a great success.
 - The post course evaluation concluded that a few minor changes would have been helpful, it was concluded that we could have dropped one lecture and merged two others.
 - The students were provided with so much course literature that several of them incurred excess baggage charges - despite forwarding some materials by freight. In future we should include an item in the costings for freight.
 - Lastly, we felt that the course was very intensive and had the Darwin Initiative been prepared to fund a fourth week at a cost of another [REDACTED] the students would have benefited from the extra time to take in the vast amount of information.

7 Project Impact

To what extent has the project assisted the host country to meet its obligations under the Biodiversity Convention, or to what extent is it likely to do so in the future? Please take account of the following in preparing this section of the report:

- **The way in which research findings have been used to address biodiversity objectives. What actions have been taken, or are expected to be taken, as a result of the project? How will these contribute towards the conservation of biodiversity in the host country concerned?**
N/A
- **The extent to which training provision has improved the capacity of the host country to conserve biodiversity in the future, and the extent to which the training has addressed real skill needs. Information should be provided on what each student/trainee is now doing (or what they expect to be doing in the longer term), and the extent to which their skills are being used in a positive way to promote biodiversity conservation in the host country.**

The training course was deliberately and closely tailored to the needs of the students by the NHM lecturers and so provided a massive upgrading of the capability of the SNHM staff. The students were totally lacking in exposure to modern methods of museology and education outreach and they left the UK with a wide ranging understanding of both theory and practice. The skills obtained represent a quantum leap forward from their starting position. Although the SNHM staff were aware of their biodiversity conservation role they did not really understand the nature of their problems or how to go about finding solutions. Now the limiting factor will be the universal problem of

insufficient resources rather than any lack of knowledge. In this position local ingenuity and use of what funding is available will provide ways forward.

The reason for training the entire SNHM staff as one group was to ensure that they acquire a team spirit and a culture of good practice, where staff members support each other in the maintenance of high standards. The training course has thus yielded a benefit, of significantly higher value than if each team member was trained separately, ensuring that a permanent culture of good practice becomes established at the SNHM.

The trained staff will themselves become trainers of others through the SNHM's education programme, which includes travelling exhibitions as well as school visits and courses. In this way, the benefits of the training will be disseminated to all that come into contact with the SNHM either professionally, through school, as serious amateurs or as casual visitors. We believe this represents good value for money

Current responsibilities of the trainees

(Virtually all of these duties directly relate to the project because the training course was focused on the two main areas of Museum skills- education outreach and collections management).

Marie
Beryl Joubert is responsible for the marine and geological section of the Natural History Museum. This includes:

- ◆ Exhibition: responsible for the museum permanent display
- ◆ Documentation: maintaining inventory and catalogue specimen documentation
- ◆ Assisting with field work relating to museum
- ◆ Education: lecturing to school children assisting with the SNHM educational programme

Sally
Barbara Hoareau is responsible for the terrestrial, Arthropod and Herbarium sections of the SNHM. Her work includes:

- ◆ Museum: conducting guided tours for visitors
- ◆ Assisting with field work relating to museum
- ◆ Documentation: maintaining inventory and catalogue specimen documentation
- ◆ Education: lecturing to school children assisting with the SNHM educational programme

Berthilde Belle is responsible for the museum's reserve collections and movement of objects. Her work includes:

- ◆ Responsible for the museum's Resource Centre (e.g. books, photography of objects etc.)
- ◆ Assisting with field work relating to museum
- ◆ Documentation: maintaining inventory and catalogue specimen documentation
- ◆ Education: assisting with the SNHM educational programme

Allen Camille is responsible for artwork and modelmaking and his duties include:

- ◆ Preparation of moulds and casts from specimens.
- ◆ Painting the casts
- ◆ Sculpting models using literature and visual data
- ◆ Control of tools, apparatus, chemicals, and materials
- ◆ Health and Safety relating to the above, including safe disposal.
- ◆ Collection, preservation, classification and mounting of specimens.
- ◆ Care of permanent exhibits at the SNHM

George Ravigna is responsible for the following:

- ◆ Preparation of moulds and casts from specimens.
- ◆ Painting the casts.
- ◆ Control of tools, apparatus, chemicals and materials required in the laboratory.

- ◆ Health and Safety relating to the above, including safe disposal

Charles Morel is responsible for Botanical specimens, his duties include:

- ◆ Supervise the other staff at La Bastille outstation
- ◆ Exhibition: preparation of exhibits (collection, preservation, restoration, classification)
- ◆ Model making and moulding.
- ◆ Inventory and control of tools, apparatus, chemicals, and materials
- ◆ Health and Safety relating to the above, including safe disposal.
- ◆ Responsible for the collection and the classification of herbarium specimens.
- ◆ Cameraman.

*Nature
Seychelles*

Terence Vel has taken advantage of the opportunity to move to Birdlife Seychelles and is now undertaking invertebrate surveys of several of the many Islands, with an aim to investigate the viability of endangered and other Bird populations. Terrence is a well-known figure in the environmental scene in Victoria; he will retain his links with the Seychelles Wildlife clubs - a brilliant vehicle for transmitting environmental awareness to the young. His training, especially the public relations and outreach training, will be of great benefit to bird and invertebrate conservation in the Seychelles.

- The wider impacts of the project in terms of the level of collaboration achieved between UK and host country institutions, and the prospects for greater joint working/information exchange in the future. To what extent has good collaboration been achieved?

This course linked two museums that share exactly the same biodiversity mission to promote the discovery, understanding, responsible use and enjoyment of the natural world. An e-mail link has now been established and regular exchanges are taking place. The visit by Dr Fergusson means that both course organisers have now been to the SNHM and can understand the problems being discussed in the e-mails. See below for notes on possible future projects.

8 Sustainability

- Did the host country institute(s) contribute resources to this project (these may have been provided in-kind, for example staff, materials etc)?

The Republic of Seychelles provided the staff time of the seven students for the three week training period, plus staff time from to cover their absence, plus general assistance and staff time during Dr Fergusson's visit to the SNHM. Also, the seven students were given some money to buy educational materials in London.

- If so, what is the monetary value of the resources committed to the project by the host country institute(s)?

The Seychelles authorities have not made these figures available but based on the salary of a junior member of the SNHM staff, the resources committed by the host country was probably about [redacted] (detailed in the project schedule).

- To what extent was Darwin funding a catalyst for attracting resources (including in-kind contributions) from other sources? Please provide details on the other sources from which resources were secured for this project.

British Airways supported the project by providing free flights for Dr Fergusson's Seychelles visit - price approximately [redacted] although actually club class was provided [redacted]

- What is the monetary value of resources generated for the project from other sources (please provide an estimate for each funding source)?
see above

- To what extent is work begun by the project likely to be continued in the future (if this is relevant - some projects may come to a natural end at completion)? This is more likely to be relevant for research-based projects.

The three-week training course ended in July. The project was extended to include Dr Fergusson's visit to the Seychelles in September, but all is now completed.

- **Has the project acted as a catalyst for other projects/initiatives in the host country? Is it likely to do so in the future?**

The training course was designed to increase the capacity of the SNHM and this may well lead to future projects. The staff are currently undergoing a settling in phase following their return. However, they have already talked about the need to expand outreach, but this will require a period of planning before any new initiatives can be launched. The Ministry of Culture has limited resources and so must take a considered and intelligent approach to selecting projects that will provide a good return on the investment.

The course aroused considerable interest in the NHM and it has led to at least two other potential projects. One of the students (T. Vell) has already started co-operating with Dr J. Noyes (NHM) with regard to the taxonomy of chalcid wasps (Hymenoptera Chalcidoidea) from the Seychelles and Dr Vane-Wright (NHM) is also interested in working with the SNHM regarding the distribution of a rare Lepidopteran. Plus co-operation with another DI project, the RGS Shoals of Capricorn programme, remains a possibility.

9 Outcomes in the Absence of Darwin Funding

- **Had Darwin funding been unavailable for the project, what would have been the most likely outcome:**

Item 4 - The Seychelles project would not have proceeded.

- **Had this project not been undertaken, how would the users/beneficiaries of the project have met their requirements? Would other organisations/ initiatives have been able to meet their needs (at least to some extent)?**

The SNHM staff were isolated and largely unaware of best practice, they would have struggled to meet their requirements and probably would have become very frustrated. The DI funded course provided by the NHM was unique and is not available elsewhere. Training in these skills is normally provided as part of Masters degree - not as a short course.

10 Key Points

- **What would you identify as the key success factors of this project?**

- ◆ **Depth of skill base of NHM**

- Number of expert speakers
- World leading expertise in many of the subjects taught
- Breadth of experience of the lecturers
 - in training
 - In knowledge of other Museums and institutions
 - In taxonomic groups
 - in range of technical aspects of modern museum skills - collections skills
- outreach skills
- The massive collections of the NHM - providing unique study experience
- including study of local specimens

- ◆ **Mentoring of the students**

- ◆ Training all the SNHM staff as a single unit in order to build team spirit
- ◆ The trips to other museums – especially the Chiltern Museum
- ◆ Following up the project with a training and advice session at the SNHM in the Seychelles. This was very helpful, locking in the gain and relating the knowledge to the situation in the SNHM
- ◆ Support by British Airways.
- ◆ The enthusiastic nature of the SNHM staff.

- **What were the main problems/difficulties encountered by the project?**

No major problems were encountered. Minor points are listed under Item 6.

- **What are the key lessons to be drawn from the experience of this project? Please try to provide as much information on this point as you can so that others can learn from the experiences of your project.**
 - This was a very successful (and quick) course that could easily be repeated for other museums elsewhere in the World. If the DI have any suggestions the NMH would be interested in repeating the idea (either alone or in conjunction with others) - please contact N. Fergusson.
 - Also, it demonstrated that small projects can be well targeted, good value for money and provide good DI mission delivery.
 - Recommendations to others would be to concentrate on subjects featuring outstanding UK expertise, organise very well, and concentrate on the outputs.
- **Does the experience of this project imply a need to review arrangements for developing and managing projects funded as part of this Initiative?**
No - DI/ DETR management was superb, responsive and highly professional. [NB Maria Stevens visited the NHM during the three-week course and met the students]. Also the Darwin lectures showed the need to focus on outputs at an early stage.

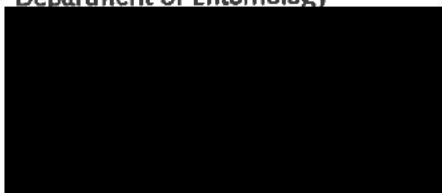
11 Project Contacts

To assist future evaluation work, please provide contact details (name, current address, tel/fax number, e-mail address), for the following:

- **UK project leader (and other key UK staff involved in the project)**



Project leaders:

Dr Nigel Ferguson
Department of Entomology



Dr Per Ahlberg
Department of Palaeontology



- **Host country project leader/co-ordinator (and other key people involved in the project at the host country collaborating institute)**
Alain Lucas, Assistant Director, National Museums & Archives Ministry of Youth and Culture. 

- **'End users' for the output produced by the project in the host country (ie. government departments, agencies, universities, local communities etc).**
The Seychelles Natural History Museum - National Museums & Archives - Seychelles Ministry of Youth and Culture. Plus the entire conservation community in the Seychelles - not specifiable.
- **Project trainees/students**
Allen Camille, Barbara Hoareau, Bertilde Belle, Beryl Joubert, Charles Morel, Georges Ravinia and Terence Vel. [Contact via Alain Lucas]
- **Other project beneficiaries**
Not specifiable.
- **Other key players involved in the funding/operation/utilisation of the project.**
Caroline Bolton, Environment Coordinator, British Airways. 