

Darwin Fellowship - Final Report

(Please check guidance for submission deadlines, max 6 pages.)

Darwin Project Ref No.	EIDPS028
Darwin Project Title	Darwin Fellowship programme round 18-MSc in Conservation and Land Management, University of Bangor
Name of Darwin Fellow	Voahirana Claudia Randriamamonjy
UK Organisation	Bangor University
Your Organisation	Madagasikara Voakajy
Your role in your Organisation	Regional Manager
Start/end date of Fellowship	15 Sept 2012-15 Sept 2013
Location	Bangor University
Darwin Fellowship funding (£)	XXX
Type of work (e.g. research, training, other, please specify)	Research
Main contact in UK Organisation	Dr Julia Jones Senior lecturer in conservation School of Environment, Natural Resources and Geography (SENRGy) Bangor University
Author(s), date	

1. Background

- Briefly describe your involvement in the Darwin project before the start of your fellowship.

I joined the organization “Madagasikara Voakajy” (MV) in 2009 as a DEA student from the University of Antananarivo, under the Darwin project 17-006 led by Dr Julia Jones (Bangor University). For my thesis, I did an evaluation of the knowledge of hunting rules by environmental managers (government and NGOs) based in Antananarivo. Then, I was recruited to be a member of staff as research assistant in Sustainability and Outreach programme within MV in 2010 working with the Darwin bushmeat project until its end in March 2012 as leader of the fieldworks in the Alaotra Mangoro region. I also contributed to writing the project report.

- Describe aim and objectives of the Fellowship, and programme of work.

MV grew out of links with UK universities (funded by the Darwin Initiative). It appointed its first Malagasy director in 2011 (a Darwin fellow in 2007) but recognised the need to further develop the capacity of its staff. Therefore, I was identified to benefit from higher education in the UK and to ensure that what I have learnt is shared and communicated within my organisation.

As well as improved capacity, MV needs to expand and build on its international funding base. The National Zoo of Wales have recently built a state-of-the-art walk-through lemur enclosure and are keen to expand their in-situ conservation work by supporting lemur conservation in Madagascar. They recently decided to support the work of MV through donations raised through their members and an exhibition and collection box at the lemur exhibit.

The aim of this fellowship was to build capacity within MV to address biodiversity conservation issues while considering sustainable development and local livelihoods. The objectives are:

- 1) To receive high-level training and research instruction (at a level not available on Malagasy post-graduate courses).
- 2) To obtain an MSc in Conservation and Land Management from Bangor University (the qualification itself having a value in addition to the training it represents).
- 3) To build the incipient link between the National Zoo of Wales and MV and engage the members of the Zoological Society of Wales and visitors to the zoo in lemur conservation issues.
- 4) To conduct bushmeat research on strategic priorities identified as part of the Darwin grant (17-1127).

- Briefly describe the roles of the UK and Fellow's institutions.

The School of Environment, Natural Resources and Geography (SENRGy) has the highest possible independent rating for the quality of teaching, and a world-class reputation in research (with particular expertise in forest ecology, biodiversity conservation and tropical ecosystems).

The School of Environment, Natural Resources and Geography (SENRGy) provided training and administering the project funds. Dr Hussain Omed is the course Director of Conservation and Land Management and was my personal tutor. I had a special link with Dr Julia Jones who was my main supervisor for my MSc project. The matched funding to cover my fieldwork's cost in Madagascar was supported by the National Zoo of Wales. My fieldwork was hosted by MV, and MV provided computing materials for the writing up of my thesis.

If you have undertaken a formal course of training, please provide a brief explanation of the course and a link to the course website if available.

The course was a one-year programme aiming at providing students with a broad and balanced understanding of the fundamental science underpinning Conservation and Land Use. The course addressed issues concerned with sustainable use of the countryside. It examined habitats, wildlife, landscapes, and the natural and human factors influencing them. The course also examined how economic activities such as farming and forestry can be managed in an environmentally acceptable way, and how human enjoyment of the countryside can be incorporated within an integrated land use approach. The MSc programme had two parts:

Part 1 (120 credits): ran from September to May and consisted of four taught modules, a Field Visit, and a Research Methods module component.

Part 2 (60 credits): was the dissertation phase and ran from end of May to September.

<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/courses/postgrad/taught/courses.php.en?view=course&prospectustype=postgraduate&courseid=272&subjectarea=19>

2. Achievements

- Summarise the work undertaken during your Fellowship. What were the main activities undertaken. Highlight any work undertaken but not originally planned and explain why this happened. Highlight any problems encountered and how they were overcome.

The activities undertaken during the Fellowship included a six weeks English training course at ELCOS, a welcoming week in September as an introduction to the Master course and a trip to Henfaes centre as an introduction to conservation context in Wales, formal lectures followed by field and/or lab-based practical, and a research project. The modules I attended were: Conservation Biology, Evidence-Based practice in conservation, Agriculture and the environment and Management planning for conservation. Each module was assessed by one to four courseworks. I also completed the research methods module and the field visit module.

My research project was carried out in five villages around the Mangabe protected area aiming at evaluating whether introducing small animal husbandry will reduce illegal bushmeat hunting in Madagascar.

I also worked with the National Zoo of Wales to develop an education board and a fund raising event. I took part in a promotional and information film. The event raised £3000 for Madagasikara Voakajy. I presented research results at an international conference (Cambridge Student Conference on Conservation Science).

The major problem was my lack of sufficient English at the start. With the support of Darwin (who paid for an English course) and UK friends (who let me live rent free while doing the course-Darwin couldn't fund living costs) I was able to complete the course (top of the class). With hind sight I am glad I was able to do this course as to be honest-without it, even if my English had just scrapped the level needed, I would have struggled with the course's demands. My high level of English is a major achievement of the fellowship and is greatly valued by Madagasikara Voakajy.

- What have been the main achievements of your fellowship? Key documents should be annexed to this report.

The first achievement of my fellowship is the result of my English course at ELCOS (A- overall mark). I came top of the class.

The second achievement is the talk I gave at the Student Conference in Conservation Science in Cambridge about the influence of a major mining project on consumption of illegal bushmeat in Madagascar. This got very good feedback.

The third main achievement is the research project, which is a feasibility study to alleviate illegal bushmeat hunting by introducing small animal husbandry around Mangabe protected area. This was challenging independent research but it was useful research and was awarded a merit for quality,

The fourth main achievement is the degree of Masters in Conservation and Land Management, although the official graduation will only be in July 2014 when the certificate will be obtained. I achieved a merit grade overall which I am very proud of.

The fifth achievement has been building the links with the National Zoo of Wales. With other Bangor students I organised a Malagasy evening which raised £3000 for Madagasikara Voakajy and, more importantly built deeper support among the zoo staff and the 'friends of the zoo'. There are some films available about this event

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kx8MAmwQTkY> (I am presenting this video)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qy46wKWV6lq> (I am dancing in the green sarong)

3. Outcomes, lessons and Impact

- Do you feel that the work undertaken during your Fellowship has improved skills that are relevant and important for your work in your organisation? How are you planning to apply those skills in future work?

Yes, the skills I have learnt and improved during this Fellowship are all relevant and important for my work with Madagasikara Voakajy.

I have learnt the principles of conservation biology and the importance of taking an evidence-based approach to the management of biodiversity. Through the Evidence-Based practice in conservation, I understood the interface between conservation science, policy and practice. Through the Agriculture and the Environment module, I have learnt the sustainable use of the countryside, incentives schemes such as Payment for Ecosystem Services. The management planning for conservation module has shown how different information sources and considerations can be best integrated to make a spatial plan for management of an area. Through the field visit module, I have learnt different approaches used by UK conservation

organisations, the constraints they face and how they deal with them. I have learnt through the research methods module the principals of research design, statistics, and planning. I am also able to express myself clearly in semi-formal presentations and debates and I am able to access and use the primary literature. I have now been promoted to regional manager of Madagasikara Voakajy. In this role I need the skills I learnt at Bangor to be effective. I manage a big team and I need the science skills in designing our work and supporting research students, and the English skills in report writing and fund raising. My improved communication skills and confidence are also essential

- What arrangements have been made for your future involvement, what more could be done, what discussions have taken place with your original employer to ensure that your new skills are utilised?

The aim of this fellowship is to build capacity within Madagasikara Voakajy to address biodiversity conservation issues in Madagascar while considering sustainable development and local livelihoods. It will help Madagascar work towards articles 6, 10, 12 and 13 of the Convention of Biological Diversity.

My new skills will help MV continue its work with the CBD contact person in Madagascar supporting the Ministry of Environment and Forests in delivering its commitments under Article 6 (General Measures for Conservation and Sustainable Use) and Article 10 (Sustainable Use of Components of Biological Diversity).

Article 12 concerns research and training. This fellowship directly addresses the limited capacity for research and training in many organisations in Madagascar by increasing substantially the level of capacity of a key individual within an active Malagasy conservation organisation. MV is dedicated to training and I have already contributed to the training of Malagasy undergraduate students. Following my fellowship I will increase this part of my role and contribute to graduate training.

Article 13 concerns public education and awareness. I will work to ensure that the results of my research as part of the fellowship are communicated to the public.

To ensure that my new skills are utilised, I will be responsible for applying more funding to maintain an active research and conservation programme that will include requests to international and Madagascar-based donors. Essentially, I will be expected to develop new projects on the improvement of people's livelihood around protected areas in alignment with Madagasikara Voakajy strategic plan, the government's Madagascar Action Plan and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and to ensure it integrates with the other programmes within my organization. Recently, I have applied to CLP award 2014 and I am waiting for the result.

- Has the Fellowship helped to improve your capacity to solve practical problems related to the sustainable use and/or conservation of biodiversity in your country?

The Fellowship provided me with tools needed to analyse and solve the problems related to the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity in Madagascar.

In a country as poor as Madagascar but as rich in biodiversity, sustainable development must be a major priority. This fellowship will contribute to sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods in a number of ways; both directly and indirectly. Directly: Madagascar's biodiversity, including its world famous lemurs, are vital to the country's economic development and to its future. Ecotourism is a major earner of foreign income and provides particularly valuable sources of income in remote rural areas.

Many people visit the country to see the lemurs and therefore lemurs are worth much more to the economy alive than as bushmeat. The research I carried out as part of this fellowship will build on the work initiated as part of Darwin project 17-1127 which is identifying priorities for addressing the lemur hunting issue in Madagascar. Indirectly: One of the 4 branches of MV's mission is to 'promote the sustainable use of biodiversity to support and improve livelihoods'.

By building the capacity of MV, the fellowship will allow the organisation to continue to flourish and grow and improve its ability to deliver on its mission.

- Have you had the opportunity to make contacts with other UK biodiversity institutions, intergovernmental organisations, NGOs or the private sector during your fellowship? Will these contacts be useful for your future work, and how are you planning to maintain them?

I have been in touch particularly with the National Zoo of Wales which raises money for MV particularly in the Mangabe new protected area. Building links with the national Zoo of Wales was a real success. I co-organised a fund-raising evening at the zoo. One hundred and twenty people enjoyed Malagasy food, music and dancing and my speech about Madagasikara Voakajy's work in Madagascar inspired many to make generous donations. The event raised £1500 and attracted matched funding from the Size of Wales (£1500) so £3000 in total.

I have also met people from the Natural Resources Wales and I presented MV's activities around Mangabe area. They are willing to continue supporting Size of Wales and the Mangabe project. I will maintain contact with them by keeping them updated about activities held in the Mangabe area.

Attending and presenting at the Cambridge student conference of conservation science was an amazing opportunity and I met colleagues grappling with similar challenge to us in Madagascar but from all over Africa, Asia and South America,

- Any other issue emerging from your experience as Darwin Fellow that you would like to raise, or suggestions for improvements to the Darwin Initiative Fellowship scheme.

I had a lower IELTS score (5.5) than the Bangor University requires (6.0), therefore I am grateful to the Darwin Initiative for providing extra funding for my ELCOS course (intensive English language training in Bangor). Looking back we should perhaps have ensured I had sufficient English skills before applying for the fellowship however it is hard to judge ones skills before the expensive IELTS test is taken. To overcome this issue more practical solution should have been intensive English language practice following the initial application of the fellowship. I would also like to note that the funding is only just sufficient to allow people to do an MSc (it was possible due to a fees reduction and that Bangor allowed me to return to Madagascar to write up). I think having an overseas qualification like an MSc and the deep training that represents can't be easily replicated in a shorter visit or training so I urge Darwin to consider increasing the funding available so fellows can do an MSc