

## Darwin Fellowship - Interim Report

(Please check guidance for submission deadlines, max 3 pages.)

Darwin Main 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(s)	Madagasikara Voakajy
Your role within your Organisation	Research assistant within the Sustainability and Outreach Programme
Start/end date of Fellowship	15 Sept 2012-15 Sept 2013
Location	Bangor University
Darwin fellowship funding (£)	£ 20945
Type of work (eg 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 has appointed its first Malagasy director in 2011 (a Darwin fellow in 2007) but recognises the need to further develop the capacity of its staff. Therefore, I have been 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 is 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) is providing training and administering the project funds. Dr Hussain Omed is the course Director of Conservation and Land Management and is my personal tutor. I have a special link with Dr Julia Jones who is my main supervisor for my MSc project. The National Zoo of Wales provided matched funding to cover my fieldwork's cost in Madagascar. Dr Caroline Harcourt, a primatologist and trustee of the National Zoo of Wales, will support, advise and discuss my Master project. My fieldwork will be carried out within MV and I retain a close link with them, discussing issues arising in MV and also helping represent them to funders and possible future funders in the UK.

## 2. Progress

- Provide a brief account of your work since the start of your fellowship, showing progress against the programme of work.

-August to September 2012, I participated in ELCOS English course, Bangor University. I was awarded a mark of A- which was the highest in the class.

-25 to 28 September 2012: welcoming week for all Master students

-September-October 2012: I was involved in the organisation of an event "Go green Wales" to help raising money for MV's work in Mangabe protected area.

-October 2012 to March 2013: I participated in four main taught modules, research planning, and did fieldtrips alongside the modules. I have had consistently good grades and in fact got a distinction in my module Conservation Biology.

-January 2013: I have visited CCW to present the progress of MV's work in Mangabe protected area

-19-21 March 2013: I attended the 14<sup>th</sup> SCCS in Cambridge and gave a talk on the impact of a big mining project on illegal bushmeat hunting in Madagascar (work done as part of the previous Darwin funded project)

-On going: organising with Bangor students and Dr Julia Jones a fundraising event in the National Zoo of Wales to help raise money for MV's work in Mangabe protected area. This is a fantastic opportunity to promote MV's work with existing and potential funders.

- Provide an account of any problems encountered and how you have or are planning to overcome them.

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.

- Are there any issues you would like to raise?

I have not any issues at the moment. This scholarship has provided enormous opportunities to learn new skills. I have vastly improved my English language skills which will be vital for supporting MV in writing grant proposals and reports for UK funders. The Master course itself, and the student conference in Cambridge have both been incredible experiences and I am the most grateful to Darwin fellowship programme. I strongly believe the skills I have learnt will support the development of MV into the future.

### **3. Achievements and Outcomes**

- What have been the main achievements and outcomes to date, and how do they relate to the overall aim and objectives of the Fellowship.

-Successfully completing the ELCOS English course

-Successfully completing the three main modules: Conservation biology, Evidence-Based Practice in Conservation, Agriculture and the Environment

-Successfully completed some parts of the research method module (reports and poster)

-Contacts with students and personalities working in conservation organisations (e.g. Dr Noelle Kumpel, Dr E.J. Milner-Gulland) during the Student Conference in Cambridge in order to exchange experiences about conservation.

### **4. Next Steps**

- Briefly describe forthcoming activities, events, milestones

-Submit the assignment for the last main module (Management Planning) on 26<sup>th</sup> April

-Working on the Master proposal project on feasibility study of alternatives to illegal bushmeat hunting around Mangabe protected area, to submit on 03<sup>rd</sup> May

-Co-organise the fundraising event at the Welsh Mountain Zoo on 27<sup>th</sup> April

-Fieldworks within Madagasikara Voakajy on June-July 2013

-Writing up the dissertation on July-August 2013

-Deadline submission of the Master project dissertation on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2013