



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Department
for International
Development

Darwin Initiative Newsletter

December 2012

Welcome to another issue of the Darwin Initiative newsletter. This one gives us an opportunity to share some details about an important transition the Darwin Initiative is part way through.

Since 1992, the Darwin Initiative has been solely funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). In 2011, the Department for International Development (DFID) joined forces with Defra to fund the new applications round (Round 19). With the launch of the UK Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund (or Darwin Plus as it is otherwise known) we see the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) also contributing funding to the Darwin Initiative. The development of now having 3 different Departments contributing funding to the Darwin Initiative means that funding for the Darwin Initiative is more secure, and that considerations of poverty alleviation are an explicit objective.

A call for applications is currently open for the UK Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund (Darwin Plus), Scoping Awards and Fellowships. Application forms can be obtained from the Darwin website.

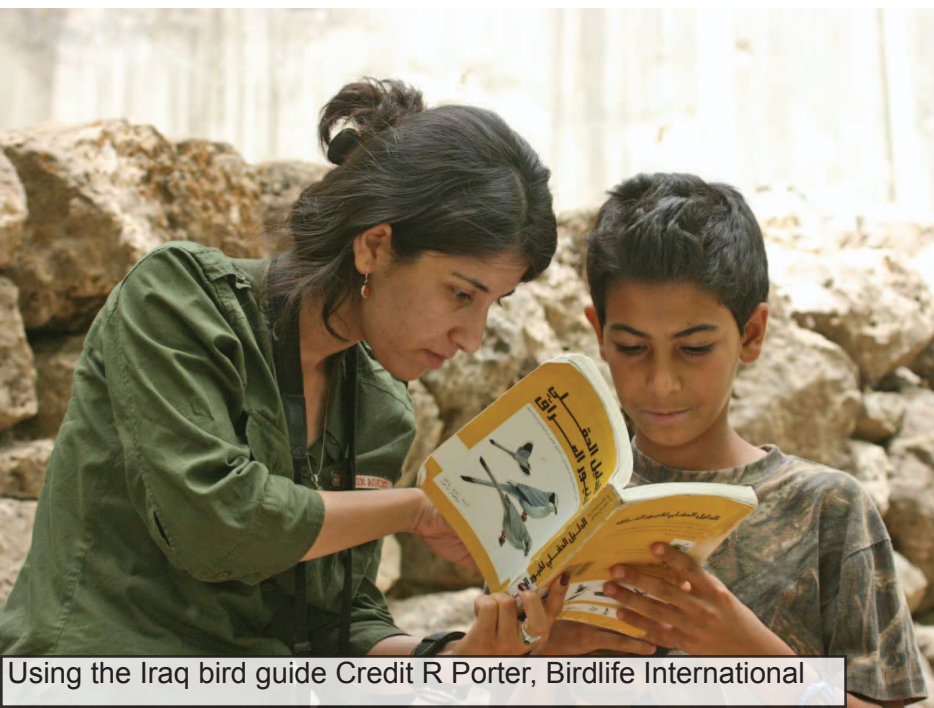
To find out more, check out the website darwin.defra.gov.uk and Twitter [@Darwin_Defra](https://twitter.com/Darwin_Defra).

Building capacity for in situ conservation in Iraq (19-007)

The Centre for Middle Eastern Plants (CMEP, part of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh) and BirdLife International have been working with Iraq's environmental NGO Nature Iraq (www.natureiraq.org) on a Darwin Initiative

funded project that builds upon several years of collaboration in establishing a Key Biodiversity Area approach to conservation. Reciprocal visits have been made, discussions held, training workshops and field visits undertaken, and progress made on all of the diverse goals that will enable Iraq to better assess and conserve its biodiversity.

The project deals with two main themes: education and training at all levels, and biodiversity inventories that will enable the completion of



Using the Iraq bird guide Credit R Porter, Birdlife International



Iraq's Key Biodiversity Areas system. These two goals go hand in hand. Much of the focus of the project is at the focal site Piramagroon Mountain, an area that meets Key Biodiversity Area criteria, and where Nature Iraq have established an ecocamp for training and ecotourism.

The provision of training about biodiversity and conservation follows three main trajectories: schools outreach, university courses, and practical (field and theoretical) training for conservation professionals.

A schools outreach program has been initiated in villages close to Piramagroon Mountain. This program will help children in the area to become connected to their local environment, and learn how basic science can underpin local conservation initiatives. Shoxan Baba Rasul from Nature Iraq visited Edinburgh in September 2012 and spent time observing and interacting with school groups at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and also the RSPB at their Vane Farm Nature Reserve. She went on to formulate ideas for schools outreach in Piramagroon, and has just hosted a Teachers Open Day at the Nature Iraq ecocamp at Mergapan. This was attended by teachers from local schools, who met Nature Iraq and CMEP staff and discussed how such biodiversity lessons could be incorporated into their school curriculum. All those who attended were interested in taking part in this programme.

Over the past months, CMEP and BirdLife International have been developing online course materials for a Certificate in Biodiversity and Conservation, which is open to students at the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Sulaimania. A Memorandum of Understanding

was signed between the four partners in November 2012, with the course due to go online early in 2013. This follows on from a similar project CMEP has been running at Kabul University in Afghanistan.

Professional training for Nature Iraq, University and Ministry staff has also commenced. In June 2012, Tony Miller (CMEP) and Richard Porter (BirdLife International) travelled to Kurdistan for discussions with Nature Iraq, and to present a three day practical workshop on IUCN Red Listing procedures. Courses in photographic plant profiling, and a session with the Independent Media Centre of Kurdistan have recently been delivered. It is planned that further courses in the field will be delivered in 2013.

Intensive fieldwork, building on several years of work already undertaken predominantly on the birds of Iraq, will go towards fulfilling the requirement of cataloguing and red listing all of Iraq's birds and plants by the end of the project. This red list data can then be used to assess and prioritise Protected Area designation. As part of this process, conservation of traditional land management practices is being undertaken. Bwar Khalid is responsible for collecting and summarising this information at Piramagroon Mountain. He attended a series of practical and theoretical sessions given by Dr Oonagh O'Brien (Queen Margaret University Edinburgh) on Participatory Rural Appraisal, and has already begun making contact with local village elders about the project. Bwar has been delighted that, so far, responses to the project and its conservation goals have been very positive, and contact has been made with several villages and the local forest police

office.

Botanical field work, which has lagged behind work on birds due to a lack of trained professionals and relevant field guidebooks, will continue in early 2013. The most relevant botanical texts, Flora of Iraq and Flora of Iran, are both incomplete, and due to the technical nature of their text they are completely inaccessible to Iraqi professionals and students. The development of electronic and pictorial keys that can be accessed via mobile devices will facilitate and speed up botanical field

recording. Data-basing of photographs and pictorial keys has commenced, and field trials will start in Piramagroon in 2013.

The project has just started to see the fruits of a long planning process, and we hope to be able to share the experiences of this project during 2013, when all of its components start to bear fruit for the benefit of Iraq, its unique biodiversity, and its people.

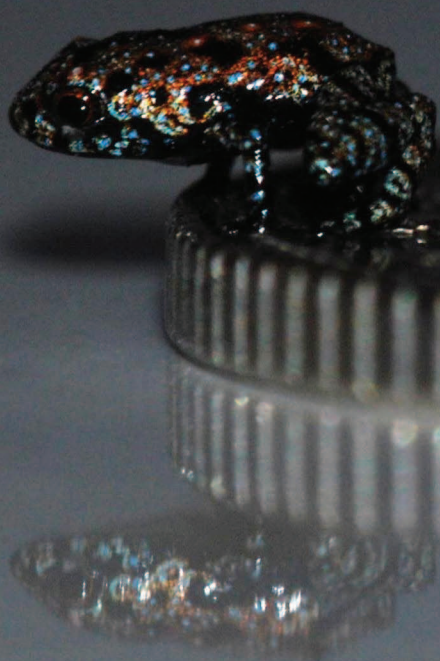
A cutting-EDGE approach to saving Seychelles' evolutionarily distinct biodiversity (19-002)

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) launched the EDGE of Existence programme in 2007 to promote awareness and conservation of the world's most Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered species. During the process of identifying these 'EDGE' species it became clear that the Seychelles had an unusually high concentration of EDGE species. As a result, a workshop (funded by a Darwin Scoping award) was organised in Seychelles in 2011 by ZSL and long-term project partner the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE, University of Kent), bringing together

Seychelles' Government and non-Government organisations to discuss priority actions essential to conserve this unique assemblage of EDGE species.

The Seychelles is home to 12 currently recognised EDGE species, forming a natural 'EDGE-zone' and presenting a unique opportunity to deliver resources, training and conservation action to conserve multiple EDGE species in a single location. The 12 EDGE species endemic to Seychelles are: Seychelles sheath-tailed bat *Coleura seychellensis*; Seychelles black parrot *Coracopsis barklyi*; Sooglossid frogs (four *Sooglossus* species); Cooper's black caecilian *Praslina cooperi*; and 5 coral species (*Anomastreaa iregularis*, *Horastrea indica*, *Parasimplastrea sheppardi*, *Catalaphyllia jardinei*, *Physogyra lichensteini*.)

This three-year Darwin Initiative project (October 2012-2015) will implement the



A juvenile *Sooglossus schellensis* on a 10 pence coin. *Sooglossus gardineri*, another Seychelles EDGE amphibian, is even smaller and possibly the smallest frog in the world. Seychelles Sooglossid frogs are a very ancient and unique family of frogs all listed as EDGE species. Image credit J. Labisko.

recommendations from the scoping workshop. The project is a partnership of local Seychelles organisations tasked with the conservation of these EDGE species (Government of Seychelles Ministry of Environment and Energy; Seychelles Islands Foundation; Seychelles National Parks Authority; Natural History Museum of Seychelles; Wildlife Clubs of Seychelles; and Nature Protection Trust of Seychelles) and UK organisations with specialist expertise in the taxa involved (DICE, University of Kent; Zoological Society of London, EDGE of existence programme; Natural History Museum/University College London; and University of Exeter).

The project will be implemented through intensive specialist training and support

to five local Seychellois trainee biologists embedded in local partner organisations who will together champion the Seychelles' EDGE species in order to progress the knowledge and conservation of these evolutionarily distinct species, and simultaneously to build much-needed long-term in-country conservation capacity.

At the time of writing, this project has just commenced. The project's first EDGE species champion Sylvanna Antat from the Seychelles National Parks Authority who is championing EDGE corals in Seychelles is currently attending a month-long ZSL EDGE Fellow conservation tools training course in Kenya. Watch this space for further news as this project progresses.

Implementing a Darwin Initiative Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for Ascension Island (19-026)

The British Overseas Territory of Ascension Island is an isolated volcanic peak in the South Atlantic Ocean. The island is small (just 34 sq. miles), yet supports exceptional biodiversity, including at least 55 endemic species of

plants, fish and invertebrates, as well as globally important seabird and marine turtle populations. However, as with many oceanic islands, Ascension has a significant invasive species problem. The primary aim of this new Darwin project, which commenced in July 2012, is to design and implement a national BAP for Ascension Island that will integrate information on the spatial distribution of biodiversity and threats and set out clear mitigation measures and targets for sustained progress in the long term. The BAP will comprise multiple Species Action Plans (SAPs) with defined targets

Frigate Bird Credit W Dimmlich



to promote the recovery of populations of endemic and threatened species including actions to increase their protection through legislative changes and the protection of key habitats. Action plans will also be produced and implemented for key invasive species and major habitat types.

Ascension Island currently has a small government-run Conservation Department with just three core staff. This project aims to increase local capacity to carry out research to further inform the development and implementation of the BAP. Two Darwin post-doctoral research fellows (Dr Nicola Weber and Dr Sam Weber) have been appointed to oversee the project on-island with the support of the local conservation team and lead partners in the UK at the University of Exeter (Dr Annette Broderick and Professor Brendan Godley). Also, many other organisations and individuals are involved with taking this project forward and making it a success, and will consult on specific SAPs and carry out training workshops when visiting Ascension Island. They include, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Queen Mary University London, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Army Ornithological Society and the Universities of Lund, Birmingham and Liverpool.

In addition to research and restoration work, campaigns will be initiated to increase awareness among key stakeholders and the general public as to the importance of the biodiversity of Ascension Island. The project seeks to facilitate knowledge and skills exchanges with Governmental and NGOs in the other South Atlantic UK Overseas Territories – St Helena, Tristan da Cunha and Falklands. The project team would like to take this opportunity to thank the Darwin Initiative for generously providing the funding for this ambitious project and anticipate that a significant Darwin legacy will remain with the BAP marking the way forward for conservation practices on Ascension Island.



Conservation team and volunteers Credit University of Exeter

Assessing habitats and biodiversity on organic indigenous farms in Guatemala (19-018)

This project has initiated studies to evaluate biodiversity on coffee farms in Guatemala. The study is led by Diego Pons from the University of Valle with support from Francisco Pacay of the Foundation for the Defence of Nature who manage the Sierra Las Minas Biosphere reserve. The project is studying the land-use structure of indigenous K'Chi communities. Initial results show that despite having very small areas of less than a hectare of productive coffee and cardamom, the communities still maintain significant forest patches. These together with the maize-fallow rotations

create a rich mosaic of forest and agroforest habitats that still contain some of the mature forest species such as *Swietenia macrophylla* (mahogany), *Hyeronima alchorneoides* and *Callophyllum brasiliense*.

The project is evaluating insect biodiversity in the different elements of this landscape mosaic to understand to what degree the agroforest systems support natural forest biodiversity. As part of the process training has been given to the biosphere forest guards and collaborating farmers on collecting and evaluating insect diversity (from the litter layer using Winkler sacks to extract the insects, and from herbaceous vegetation using sweeping with nets). The project has also contracted two Guatemalan specialists Laura Saenz and Pablo Bolanos to help with the identification of the insects collected identifying ants and hemipteran bugs respectively. Although the project has only reviewed less than 10% of the



Laura Saenz training forest guards and project staff on extracting ants from litter samples. Credit F Pacay

samples (which contain some 1200 ants) already Laura has found an ant species only known from one other specimen in Guatemala and other forest specific species, so they are hopeful of other interesting finds as the work progresses.

The challenge for the future is to find ways that can help the indigenous communities conserve this biodiversity into the future. Unfortunately one of their main sources of income, cardamom production, is being threatened by the arrival of a new thrip pest that has devastated production, reducing income from this crop to less than 20% of normal levels. Traditionally the cardamom has been produced without the use of pesticides, but this new pest may oblige farmers to turn to these products if they are to maintain their already meagre incomes, but with unfortunate effects on insect biodiversity. As always there are new challenges for the farmers in these areas, and the project will try to support them in finding new sources of income in the future compatible with conserving biodiversity.



Forest, coffee and cardamom landscape mosaic in Cancoy, Sierra Las Minas Credit O Gonzalez and D Pons, Universidad del Valle

Supporting Madagascar's mangroves (19-016)

Madagascar's 5,600 km coastline includes Africa's third largest extent of mangrove ecosystems with an estimated 213,000 hectares. These "blue" forests sequester significant amounts of carbon dioxide and support high levels of, and in many cases unique, floral and faunal biodiversity. For residents of coastal communities along Madagascar's west coast, who are amongst the poorest and most vulnerable to climate change in the world, livelihoods are inherently dependent on numerous goods and services directly associated with healthy, intact mangrove ecosystems.

In addition to the lead partners Blue Ventures, the project has been augmented by a mixture of Malagasy, Canadian, American and Zimbabwean scientists and conservationists. This is in addition to the knowledge and expertise of community members, the Blue Ventures Blue Forests (BVBF) team who are hard at work assessing the feasibility and establishment of payments for ecosystem services (PES) and carbon financing mechanisms associated with the restoration, conservation and sustainable use of Madagascar's mangrove forests. Following a national assessment of mangrove dynamics, the BF team has focussed their efforts on areas exhibiting alarming rates of over-exploitation and forest loss. Within these areas they are quantifying above- and below-ground carbon stocks; documenting and understanding the

reasons behind degradation and deforestation; and modelling future rates of loss, all of which facilitate establishing pertinent PES and carbon financing mechanisms.

Collectively, their field experiences make it clear that massive over-exploitation is certainly an issue in many of Madagascar's mangrove ecosystems. For example, the vast majority of the Ambondrolava mangroves in southwest Madagascar have been degraded, deforested, or both within the last several decades. Recognising the severity of the situation, the BF team has partnered with the Belgian NGO Honko and is working hand in hand with locals to create a pilot site for Madagascar's first mangrove forest carbon project. To this end, the past few months have been extremely productive, resulting in successful consultations and project development with community members, detailed analyses of land tenure and use rights, establishment of community management plans, and design and implementation of socio-economic surveys and a comprehensive ecological inventory. The community has also taken part in a participatory mapping exercise which focussed on depicting historic and contemporary distributions of land-cover types and land-use categories. This exercise also involved documenting goals for land-cover and land-use transformations in the coming decade. In addition, at the time of writing, the project is preparing for a biomass inventory to occur over the next several weeks which will result in estimates of total forest carbon stocks and work towards local capacity building through training community members in measurement techniques.

A fishing pirogue (canoe) in the channel of Ambondrolava's mangrove forest. Credit S Gandhi



Using the results of these field activities and Honko's history of replanting and afforestation efforts since 2008, the project is currently making tangible progress towards securing carbon credits through a UK-based charity, The Plan Vivo Foundation. These credits can help fund continued mangrove restoration and expansion, sustainable use, and the implementation of various alternative livelihoods projects, all of which can greatly benefit these ecosystems and their residents in the long-term.

In all of its work, the project aims to make an important contribution towards poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation in tropical coastal areas. Following ongoing feasibility assessments, all future projects will continue to be community centred and implemented in accordance with internationally recognised free, prior and informed consent standards. As the team grows, so does its experience and understanding of the localities it works in, all of which continues thanks in large part to a very generous and prestigious Darwin Initiative grant.



Participatory planning of conservation activities with the Mameho Honko 'Growing Mangroves' management committee. Credit B Taylor

A Global Guide to Restoring Tropical Forests (17-021)

Twenty years ago, the decline of the world's tropical forests was seen as an inevitable and irreversible consequence of economic development. Now, thankfully, attitudes have undergone a paradigm shift. Restoration is seen as complementary to protecting primary forest, especially where protected areas have failed to prevent deforestation.

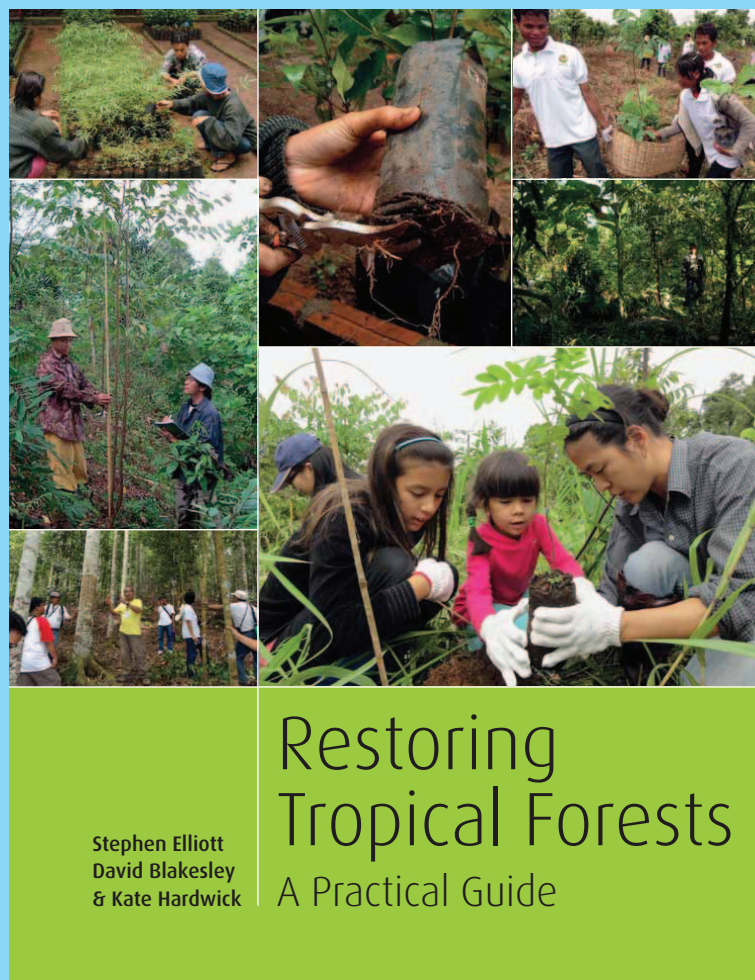
Two decades of research have yielded tried and tested methods that have transformed forest restoration from a romantic "pipedream" into an achievable goal. By combining nature's regenerative capacity with tree planting and other management practices, it is now possible to rapidly restore both the structure and ecological functioning of tropical forests and achieve substantial biodiversity recovery. The Darwin Initiative has supported such research in Thailand and Cambodia, as well as extension and outreach projects throughout SE Asia, so that restoration is now seen as essential to

reviving degraded landscapes and improving rural livelihoods. Its inclusion in the UN's REDD+ scheme, to "enhance carbon stocks" and mitigate global warming, has resulted in unprecedented demand for restoration knowledge, skills and training, but very little practical advice has been published to satisfy this demand.

Consequently, DI supported this project to produce a generic global guide to restoration practices, based on more than 20 years of research, carried out by Chiang Mai University's Forest Restoration Research Unit (FORRU-CMU), as well as local knowledge and experiences exchanged at hundreds of workshops, conferences and project consultations since the early 1990s. The authors are Stephen Elliott (FORRU-CMU), David Blakesley (Wildlife landscapes) and Kate Hardwick, restoration specialist from RBG Kew, the institutional host of the project. The foreword is written by Prince Charles. After 3 years of writing and review, the book is scheduled for distribution in the New Year.

"Restoring Tropical Forests: A Practical Guide" presents scientifically tested techniques

to restore diverse climax tropical forest ecosystems that are resilient to climate change, using indigenous forest tree species, for biodiversity conservation, environmental protection and to support the livelihoods of rural communities. It covers generic concepts and practices that can be applied to revive forest ecosystems on all tropical continents, in an accessible format and in three languages (English, French and Spanish) and with case studies that illustrate a diversity of successful restoration projects from around the world. It is aimed at the full range of stakeholders, whose collaboration is vital to the success of restoration projects. It provides planners, policy makers and funding agencies with viable and practicable alternatives to conventional monoculture plantations, to attain reforestation goals. For protected area managers, communities, and the NGOs that work with them, there is solid advice on planning restoration projects, as well as scientifically tested instructions for growing, planting and caring for native forest tree species. And for scientists, the book suggests dozens of research project ideas and provides details of standardised research protocols, to develop new restoration systems to meet local needs.



Community-based organisations contribute to new Plan of Action on Customary Sustainable Use at CBD COP11 in India (18-003)

In October 2012 the Darwin Initiative supported community-based organisations from Bangladesh, Cameroon, Guyana, Suriname, Thailand and Panama to attend the 11th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP11) in Hyderabad, India. One of their priorities was to inform and influence the COP's decision-making related to indigenous and local communities' traditional knowledge and customary sustainable use of biodiversity (Article 10(c) of the Convention).

The CBD increasingly acknowledges the value

and importance of customary sustainable use and traditional knowledge in conserving and upholding land- and seascapes. However, in practice customary sustainable use of biological resources at national and local levels is often undermined and threatened, due to legal frameworks that do not recognise communities' collective land and tenure rights, restrict access to customary lands and resources, and/or do not recognise traditional authorities and customary laws. In many places, traditional knowledge and customary practices still hardly play a role in biodiversity management and conservation initiatives, and indigenous and local communities are seldom allowed to participate in resource management and decision-making. External developments frequently severely affect or degrade traditional territories, and biodiversity-relevant knowledge is sometimes under pressure from western education and economies as well.

To address these obstacles and shortcomings,



Louis Biswane (KLIM Suriname) and Messe Venant (OKANI, Cameroon) participating in the Working Group discussions on customary sustainable use in the Indigenous and Local Communities (ILCs) seats at COP11. Credit C de Jong.

the Parties to the Convention, in consultation and collaboration with indigenous and local communities united in the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) are developing measures to more actively and efficiently protect, support and promote customary sustainable use. To achieve this, in Hyderabad the Parties agreed on the development of a “plan of action on customary sustainable use”. Eventually this plan should serve as a set of guidelines (similar to the Addis Ababa principles and guidelines on sustainable use) to help Parties in their full implementation of Article 10(c) on customary sustainable use and to make this a cross-cutting issue in all areas of biodiversity policy, planning and management.

While it was too early to agree on the full scope and content of this plan of action – further work will be done on it by the Secretariat, Parties, and indigenous and local communities’ organisations in the period between now and the next COP – the Parties decided to identify a few initial (priority) tasks to start off with:

- To incorporate customary sustainable use practices or policy into national biodiversity strategies and action plans

- To support community-based initiatives that enhance customary sustainable use
- To identify best practices in relation to customary sustainable use in protected areas, for instance communities’ full involvement in the establishment and management of protected areas, encouragement of the application of traditional knowledge and customary sustainable use in protected areas, and promotion of the use of community protocols.

While a lot of more work needs to be done in the coming years to further shape this new CBD work component, the Darwin Initiative partners said it was a good start and that there is a lot of scope for their future involvement in the further development of the plan of action. Darwin’s partner organisations will continue to remain involved in sharing their knowledge and experiences on best practices on promotion of customary sustainable use and providing recommendations for the further development of the CBD’s plan of action on customary use.

Strengthening the World's Largest Marine Protected Area, Chagos Archipelago. The Chagossian Community Environment Project

(19-027)

Chagos is a world apart, with 644,000 km² of protected, near pristine marine life, surrounding fifty five islands. This Indian Ocean archipelago represents a unique natural heritage and a site of enormous scientific interest, invaluable in its contribution to our understanding of how unexploited and unpolluted coral reefs might be affected by climate change. It has been over 40 years since Chagossians last inhabited these islands, and new generations of Chagossian families can only imagine what life on these islands was like from the stories they have heard since birth, and the pictures they have seen while growing up. Connecting people with their natural heritage is often a challenge - even when it is on the doorstep - and a much greater challenge when you are thousands of miles away.

The Darwin Project 19-27 Strengthening the World's Largest Marine Protected Area, Chagos Archipelago has collaborated with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and the Chagos Conservation Trust (CCT) to engage in outreach activities and co-funds the Chagossian Community Environment Project. Responding to a need expressed by the community themselves, the aim was to raise awareness of relevant environmental issues and provide training to encourage Chagossian stewardship of conservation actions within the protected area.

On the 7th July, the project welcomed hundreds of Chagossians from Crawley in the UK to a family open day at London zoo. Activities included educational children's games, such as a mock 'Reef check' - where children put on a mask and snorkel and dashed off to count how many species of fish they could spot in one breath hold. Families also completed the 'Finding Nemo' treasure trail, which introduced them to species found in Chagos. The London School of Diving provided SCUBA diving equipment for everyone to try on to get a feel



for what it is like to be an underwater explorer. The event was mirrored for Chagossian families in Manchester at Manchester Museum, giving this smaller community the chance to discover and learn about Chagos and the conservation work being done to protect the archipelago. Discussion sessions were held on both open days, with forums to debate environmental protection, community involvement and project expectations, providing valuable feedback to the outreach and project teams.

Between August and November, the outreach and project team put on a Chagos Environment Training Course for Chagossians interested in learning more, and gaining skills with an opportunity to get involved in the scientific work in Chagos. Modules held each Saturday over 9 weeks focussed on marine and terrestrial ecosystems, conservation and communication. The programme was designed to build environmental capacity by providing a basic understanding of environmental conservation, providing mentoring for trainees in career skills development; and in methods of communication to build networks and exponentially increase the reach of the project.

Project partners provided venues and trainers, and the trainees demonstrated their enthusiasm for coral reef survey and marine life identification, bird monitoring, sustainable fishing theory and practice, and island restoration techniques, amongst other topics. The final session gave the trainees a chance to experience SCUBA with a try dive held at the London School of Diving. Each course graduate has become a 'Chagos Ambassador 2012', with increased awareness of the importance of the Chagos environment and increased knowledge of how to help

protect it. Their tagline ‘Join us in preserving our Chagossian heritage from the land to the sea, and the sea to the land’, exemplifies their

ambition to inspire others, within and beyond the Chagossian communities to protect the biodiversity of this unique part of the world.

Mali mobilises to protect the desert elephants (19-010)

Despite the significant unrest and political turmoil in Mali over the past 7 months, The WILD Foundation and the International Conservation Fund of Canada (ICFC) are glad to report that our Mali Elephant Project (MEP) has continued to work with the local communities and create a multifaceted response to protect the desert elephants in conjunction with the Mali government.

Lake Banzena – this is the lynch-pin of the elephant migration, being the last water available to elephants at the end of the dry season. In recent years human settlement and livestock numbers have increased exponentially causing the lake to dry completely in 2009. Since then the MEP has been working with the local people to relocate to an area outside

the elephant range and leave Banzena for the elephants. Working together the project identified a suitable area with good pasture that was currently waterless, and raised money to drill three new boreholes.

In May they were able to report that the three boreholes had been completed and that four of the eleven clans had already moved. We can now report that all have moved to the relocation area: Lake Banzena is free of human activity and left for elephant use only.

One of the women told the project, “Since we have moved here we no longer suffer from stomach aches. The men can go back to Banzena if they wish, but we are staying here.”

As a result of the diminished use by humans and their livestock, the lake retained water throughout this year’s dry season, and this is despite the poor rains of last year.

Elephant protection – in the last blog post the project recounted how the local communities

Lake Banzena Credit C Ward



were responding to the increased menace, both to their assets and to the elephants. Since then it has devised a strategy to protect the elephants that builds on this. The communities are fully aware that killing the elephants steals from the local people, and is to no avail because the ivory is small, brittle and of low value, and at a large community meeting on the poaching crisis, community leaders undertook to communicate this information far and wide, including to the groups responsible for the current insecurity in Mali.

Through the community leaders and brigades the project has helped establish vigilance networks throughout the elephant range, and their effectiveness has meant that they discovered the identities of those who killed the three elephants, as well as the identities of community leaders paid to look the other way. They were subsequently imprisoned as collaborators. There have been no further killings but they need to act fast to ensure backup for the community information networks.

They are also working closely with the Malian government to deploy an armed, elite anti-poaching force to work closely with these networks. The community will effectively be the eyes and ears, while the anti-poaching unit will be “the strong arm” able to act on this information. This builds on the close collaboration established by the project’s community-forester patrols and natural resource management institutions. Indicating the national commitment to the elephants, the Malian wildlife department (DNEF) have reassigned their best personnel to this team; the Minister has inaugurated their training, and spoken of the initiative in cabinet.

The MEP is a joint project of The WILD Foundation and the International Conservation Fund of Canada (ICFC), with support from numerous others including USFWS; the US DAO of the Malian Embassy in Bamako; and the UK Government’s Darwin Initiative.



A clan chief declares a resolution at a community meeting. Credit Nomba Ganame, copyright The Wild Foundation

Enhancing taxonomic capacity to underpin tropical biodiversity conservation (SE Asia) (18-002)

As a result of an ongoing Darwin Initiative project, on 11 November, 2012, Princess Chulabhorn Walailak presented Dr Paul Bates of the Harrison Institute, UK an Honorary Doctorate Degree on behalf of the Prince of Songkla University, Thailand for his contribution



Dr Paul Bates of the Harrison Institute, UK with Associate Professor Dr Chusak Limsakul, the President of the Prince of Songkla University, Thailand. Credit Harrison Institute

towards enhancing biodiversity science in Thailand and in Southeast Asia generally.

The Prince of Songkla University is most grateful to the Darwin Initiative for its capacity-building support of two separate projects based in peninsular Thailand. These have been co-ordinated by Dr Paul Bates of the Harrison Institute and have ensured that the Prince of Songkla University is currently en route to becoming a national, regional and international

centre of excellence in biodiversity research and training. Thanks to the Darwin Initiative and the Harrison Institute, there is now a new, active cadre of young postgraduate students from Asia and Africa (supported by international networks) who will become the next generation of teachers, lecturers, and researchers with expertise in all aspects of wildlife studies but especially in taxonomy, the bedrock of good biodiversity science.

Building capacity for participatory ecosystem-based marine conservation in Central America (19-017)

The world's oceans are home to a rich diversity of species and ecosystems and provide essential resources and services for people. Healthy marine biodiversity is vital for livelihoods. Globally, fisheries and other marine and coastal resources are of major importance for coastal communities' livelihoods and well-being. They are important sources of employment, income, food security and are key to environmental, social, economic and cultural resilience. However, ecosystem degradation and the depletion of resources are causing an ever increasing amount of biodiversity and cultural loss. Reduced fisheries are in turn affecting small scale local fishers and coastal communities who depend on these resources for their livelihoods.

Today just 2% of the ocean is protected. When working towards strengthening marine conservation it is vital to take into account the participation of communities and their livelihoods to ensure the sustainability of marine conservation and human well-being. In many countries marine governance is top-down, leaving local fishing communities and stakeholders disempowered, with the fate of their livelihoods at the whim of high level decisions about marine protected areas.

Adapting an innovative marine conservation model implemented in Ecuador with support from a previous Darwin grant (2009-2012), Fauna & Flora International (FFI) ([\[flora.org\]\(http://flora.org\)\), in collaboration with host country partners CoopeSoliDar R.L. in Costa Rica, \(\[www.coopesolidar.org\]\(http://www.coopesolidar.org\)\), Recoturh in Honduras \(\[www.recoturh.com\]\(http://www.recoturh.com\)\), Fundenic in Nicaragua \(\[www.fundenic.org.ni\]\(http://www.fundenic.org.ni\)\) and Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano in Ecuador \(\[www.flla.net\]\(http://www.flla.net\)\), are now developing a regional marine approach in Central America.](http://www.fau-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Working across three sites in Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua the project aims to support coastal communities and other key local stakeholders in influencing and taking an active role in the governance of marine protected areas. Focusing on key features, such as access rights, sustainable resource use, ecosystem-based management and participatory, community-based governance, the desired outcomes are to contribute to marine conservation, responsible fisheries management and to enhance livelihoods whilst respecting the cultures, traditions and rights of

Workshop assessing the threats to the coastal area at the Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge Credit FFI



local communities.

Working within a marine protected area in Honduras, Recoturh are collaborating with the local fishing associations and coastal communities. They are working to strengthen actions from an already existing sub agreement between the fishing association, the Honduran government and Fundación Cuero-Salado for the effective co-management of fishing areas, whilst strengthening community participation in the conservation and governance of the protected area, Refugio de Vida Silvestre Barras de Cuero-Salado.

In Costa Rica the focus to date for CoopeSoliDar R.L has been analysing lessons learned from the recently approved community-based governance model which created responsible fishing areas. They have been working closely with the network of coastal municipalities at the national level and the National Conservation Area System identifying strategies to increase their role in supporting community-based governance models for marine conservation. A focus on responsible fishing and participatory governance issues, equity and artisanal fishing access rights has been prioritised.

The Tola Municipality in Nicaragua is currently reviewing a proposal for a new marine protected area. The result will influence the direction of the work in La Anciana. Fundenic is facilitating discourse between the municipality,

national government institutions, local tourism groups and fishers, a dialogue that is working to strengthen potential livelihood diversification strategies for local fishers, including tourism opportunities. They are also supporting a process that will see local fishers licensed and legally working in partnership with municipalities, adopting a responsible fishing code based on UN Food and Agriculture Organization guidelines. Significantly, the local communities have recently seen a number of 'foreign' fishers using extremely damaging dynamite fishing techniques, which they have vocally denounced in the national media, highlighting some of the ongoing concerns and issues that this project seeks to address.

The challenges presented and being addressed at each site are unique, but the issues and themes being experienced across fishing communities in this region are universal. Each partner will continue to employ the techniques which best suit the context of the individual site, whilst sharing experiences and lessons learnt as the project develops. Integral to all locations is the development of national and regional alliances in support of marine conservation, whilst simultaneously building capacity and empowering coastal communities, making their voices heard and enabling their participation in the governance decisions taken about their valuable coastal resources and environment.

Artisanal fishing boats in the Vida Silvestre Caletas refuge, Ario. Credit FFI





Darwin Project members side event at COP 11 on Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Poverty Eradication and Development Credit D Babin

Mainstreaming Biodiversity and Development at CBD COP 11 (19-023)

NBSAP 2.0 project partners the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), and representatives of the four participating African countries in the project, recently participated in the 11th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD COP 11). The project ran a side event on 'Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Poverty Eradication and Development' jointly with the secretariat of the Convention. The event served to launch the Biodiversity Mainstreaming Diagnostic Tool - one of the project's first year outputs. The launch of the mainstreaming tool was widely covered in the media, including in the host country's highest circulation national newspaper, the Times of India.

Country partners from Botswana, Namibia, The Seychelles and Uganda presented the results of their preliminary efforts using the tool (all presentations available from the project webpage) at the event. Overall feedback on the mainstreaming diagnostic tool was that Parties to the CBD who are revising their NBSAPs would find it very useful in the stocktaking and assessment phase, identifying relevant stakeholders and targets groups, in the stakeholder outreach and priority-setting phases, for identifying mainstreaming in various sectors, and to support implementation on an ongoing basis.

In the Q&A session other countries shared their lessons and experience with mainstreaming biodiversity and development. Many of the lessons were around building a strong case using robust evidence from valuation, and speaking in terms that others can relate to – jobs created, poverty and vulnerability alleviated, contributions to GDP made. There are many stakeholders involved in or influencing biodiversity management, and therefore many business cases to be made in the journey towards improved biodiversity management.



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The Darwin Initiative aims to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of resources around the world including the UK's Overseas Territories. The Darwin Initiative projects work with local partners to help countries rich in biodiversity but poor in resources to fulfil their commitments under the CBD, CMS and CITES. The initiative is funded by the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for International Development. It is administered by the UK Government's Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Since 1992, the Darwin Initiative has committed over £88million to over 750 projects in over 150 countries.

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For more information on the Darwin Initiative see <http://darwin.defra.gov.uk>

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