Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report Form

Project Title	Developing local capacity for biodiversity surveys in Papua New Guinea
Country	Papua New Guinea
Organisation	University of Sussex and Parataxonomist Training Centre, Madang, PNG
Project Ref. No.	162 / 10 / 030
Report date	30 October 2001

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months against the agreed baseline timetable for the project.

The delayed start-date for this project was 1 September 2001. This report therefore refers to the <u>first month</u> of the project; 1-30 September 2001

Progress in UK:

- Capital equipment has been purchased (microscope, fibre-optics light source, laptop computer)
- Most field and laboratory equipment has been purchased

Progress in PNG:

- All locally available equipment (computer monitor, printer, electric generator etc.) have been purchased and set-up
- A loan of 10 insect cabinets from the National Agriculture Research Institute has been obtained and the cabinets transferred to laboratory in Madang
- A team of 8 senior parataxonomists has been established
- 4 new parataxonomist trainees have been enrolled
- All new parataxonomists have been through initial computer literacy training sessions
- The first biodiversity survey has teken place in the Finisterre Mts. in September; the samples await processing and analysis
- Seven parataxonomists attended a conference '*Science and Technology in Developing Countries: emerging trends in the new millennium*' at the University of Goroka, Goroka (PNG); they presented two posters and gave two oral presentations
- Two students from University of Papua New Guinea started their 4-week long training with the project.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments, that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will effect the budget and timetable of project activities. Have any of these issues been discussed with the Department and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

- The project start date was delayed by three months due to problems in setting up contracts with the collaborating partner organisation and uncertainty about DETR/DEFRA audit requirements. The main impact of this was the postponement of the visits to the UK by two parataxonomists for training; these had been planned for summer 2001, but will now take place in summer 2002. This change was agreed by DETR/DEFRA before finalisation of the contract.
- Applications for research visas for Dr Stewart and Dr Wilson to visit PNG were submitted in April 2001 but have not yet been granted, in spite of considerable prompting both locally from Dr Novotny and by Dr Stewart from the UK. This has forced the postponement of visits by Drs Stewart and Wilson to PNG which had been planned for October and November respectively. It has also meant that the annual planning meeting scheduled to take place with Dr Novotny and the parataxonomist team in PNG has not yet taken place. We are now hoping to make these visits sometime in January-

March 2002. Inevitably, this will mean a postponement of the spending associated with these activities; these issues have been brought to the attention of the Darwin Secretariat. There should be no significant impact of these delays on progress with survey and other field work. However, it will mean that certain aspects of the training (provided by the UK partners) will be delayed somewhat, although this should not jeopardise the achievement of the agreed targets within the lifetime of the project.

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

- The requirement for an annual financial audit caused significant delays in the establishment of this project. It would be very helpful to receive precise guidelines from the Darwin Secretariat on exactly what is required from such an audit, to ensure that unnecessary (and potentially very considerable) expenditure is not incurred on providing something that is not required.