

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report Form

Project Title	Darwin Initiative Research Exercise on Community Tree Seeds (DIRECTS)
Country	UK
Organisation	Seed Conservation Department, Wakehurst Place, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Project Ref. No.	162 / 12 / 001
Report date	31 October 2003 (for the period June- September 2003)

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

June 2003; The DIRECTS Advisory Committee, etc.

A Kew Advisory Committee to the DIRECTS project was set up, composed of Dr Kate Gold (Training Officer), Dr Paul Smith (International Coordinator for Southern Africa) and Dr Colin Clubbe (Kew Herbarium). The management role of IPGRI is not resolved (see later comments). The committee met for the first time on 2 July at Kew to discuss an overview of the DIRECTS project (implementation, the forthcoming workshops, etc). The meeting was particularly informative about, for instance, how field data on the tree populations could be used to contribute to species' status reports for IUCN. One possibility is to consolidate this information (produce reports) with the partners at the final workshop (2006). The paperwork for the appointment of Dr Sacandé as DI Research Officer (0.5 Band D post) was approved. The 3-year appointment started 1 July 2003. Preparations were made for the UK workshop, but protocols were not distributed as we thought it best to seek partners comments and to work through protocols at the workshops. A review of seed handling information for the species was submitted on 30 June to the journal Plant Genetic Resources Newsletter.

July 2003; The UK inception workshop, etc.

All prospective DIRECTS partners were invited to participate in the UK planning workshop with one delegate per institute, including IPGRI. Thirteen countries were represented (Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Tanzania and Uganda). Six other countries (Benin, Gambia, Senegal, Sudan, Togo and Zambia) and IPGRI were not able to participate. The week-long programme (7-12 July 2003) at Wakehurst Place, included information on the project, its implementation and management (training, research, data, finances, reports etc.) and discussions on the two, planned regional workshops. The delegates reviewed information on the 59 target species, and identified 23 other species of interest from three target genera. They shared information on availability of seeds, quantities in store, the state of production and accessibility to the trees in their natural stands. With the excellent help of Trevor Butler (Kew Press Office) a 'news release' was issued, resulting in interviews and subsequent media coverage in The Times newspaper (national; 11 July), the East Grinstead Courier (local; 17 July), Southern Counties Radio (local; 10 July) and Southern FM (local; 11 July), British Satellite News (recorded on 14 July, and used by CNN; global) and Reuters (global).

August 2003; The West Africa regional research training workshop, etc

The West Africa regional formal training in seed conservation research techniques was held at Centre National des Semences Forestieres, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso from 20-26 August 2003. Although the target was 16 participants, the 7-day course (mainly delivered in French, partly in English) involved 21 participants from Benin, Burkina, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Togo. A representative of IPGRI attended the whole week. To enable wide impact and long-term sustainability, two trainees per institute were present, following receipt of training needs assessment forms that confirmed they had at least a year's seed lab experience and formal education from BSc to doctoral degrees. The workshop science programme was 60 % theory / 40 % protocols and lab practicals. A whole day each was spent on (i) developmental studies and collection of quality seeds, (ii) seed germination and quality assessment, and (iii) seed desiccation tolerance and storage longevity of seeds. Because most attendees were not at the UK workshop, the proposed institutional involvement in DIRECTS was reviewed and evaluated, and all management issues (information exchange, outputs, finance, reporting, a draft MoU, etc) explained / discussed. Except for a few organisational problems (late information due to internet failure) the

workshop ran smoothly with all completed evaluation forms indicating very positive views about the content and quality of the workshop. The trainees were very keen and enthusiastic about the project activities, which they found, would address their main concerns about their tree seed lab performance as articulated by them in their presentations at the workshop. This was a fruitful exchange and a good step towards establishing an understanding of shared, regional problems. Copies were provided of all presentations and supporting documents (e.g. reprints), and attendees were presented, by a representative of the national government, with a Certificate of Participation in the workshop. The workshop was given the top headline on Burkina National TV, and had a good coverage in the four main national newspapers, with titles like 'Conservation des semences, l'Afrique pense a demain' (*seed conservation, Africa thinks of tomorrow*).

September 2003; The East-South Africa regional research training workshop, etc.

The MoU (with a short summary translation in French for the francophone countries) was finalised (10 pp including Appendices). It was sent out to the West-Africa partners and hand delivered to participants at the East-South African partners at the regional training workshop held at the Forestry Research Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 25 Sept – 1 Oct 2003. The one-week programme, similar to the West African training programme (see above) was delivered in English for 20 participants (the target was 16) from Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda. Evaluation of this workshop was also positive. A film crew was present at the opening ceremony, but precise data on press coverage in Ethiopia (and the other countries except Burkina Faso) is not yet available. Ministerial level officials were present at both the opening and closing ceremonies and involved in the awarding of Certificates of Participation to the delegates. DIRECTS was promoted at the 17th Association d'Etudes Taxonomiques de la Flore d'Afrique Tropical (AETFAT) congress (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 21-26 September). Dr Sacandé presented a talk in the session on 'Taxonomy and ecology of African plants and their conservation and sustainable use,' attended by 200 delegates, including 75 from African institutions. This will be published in the conference proceedings [Sacandé M, Pritchard HW. (2004). African tree seed conservation research: opportunities and implementation]. The review submitted to PGR Newsletter in June was reformatted to separate the science from the network content, resulting in two submissions: 1) Sacandé M, Pritchard HW and Dulloo EM. Seed science and technology needs for SAFORGEN trees for conservation and sustainable use. *Plant Genetic Resources Newsletter*. IPGRI, Rome, Italy; and 2) Sacandé M, Pritchard HW. Seed Research Network on African Trees for Conservation and Sustainable Use. *Forest Genetic Resources Newsletter*. FAO, Rome, Italy. Finally, DIRECTS was covered in the Newsletter of the Millennium Seed Bank Project (SAMARA, issue 5), which is available in English, French and Spanish.

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 affect 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 cost of running the three workshops in July – September is likely to have slightly exceeded the budget (NB not all bills in for the African meetings). This is partly a consequence of an increased number of participants (54 compared to 48 anticipated). The complete signing of the MoUs may take more time than expected, as administrative procedures and the signing bodies are different from country to country. For example, some MoUs have to be re-addressed because of the different authorised signatory. Dealing with the MoUs before continuing officially the project activities (i.e. lab and field work, African staff) may impede on some of the activities this year, as the collecting period may be over before the transfer of money to the relevant institutes. This will probably mean fewer species worked on and thus species reports by the end of Year 1. Pro-rata savings on activities in Year 1 can though cover modest overspending on the workshops. This scenario has been explained to all attending the Burkina and Ethiopian workshops. But the Management Team would also like to discuss with the Department whether the balance of such 'activity' money can be carried forward to Year 2 so that the species work can be accelerated.

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

The partners of the DIRECTS project have strongly recommended a mid-term general workshop to be held about 15 months before the final workshop, which is planned for early 2006 in Nairobi, Kenya. Such a workshop will allow a critical appraisal with partners of how much progress has been made on the project (management issues, presentation of the data already collected for the writing up of scientific articles, etc). However, such a justifiably workshop has not been budgeted for and would need extra funding. This issue has been raised with IPGRI in the context of their role as co-ordinators of SAFORGEN programmes. It has also been made clear by participants that for detailed studies to be completed on all the species targeted, and particularly if individual species are to be studied in more than one country to facilitate the combination of data sets, more resources are needed. The Management Team are considering additional funding options, but the realisation is that without it it is likely that the species activity targets for the 3 years will need to be downgraded. Much will depend on how many partners sign MoUs and how well the network kick-starts in the next few months.

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Project Manager, Email: stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk