Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No. 162/12/030

Project Title Building Capacity for Plant Biodiversity, Inventory and Conservation in Nepal

Country(ies) Nepal

UK Organisation Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Collaborator(s) Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, Nepal (RONAST).

HMG Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Department of Plant Resources,

Nepal (DPR).

Tribhuvan University, Central Department of Botany, Nepal (TU-CDB).

Report date 29th November 2004

Report No. (HYR

1/2/3/4)

HYR 2

Project website http://rbg-web2.rbge.org.uk

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) 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).

During the last six months there has been one major activity, that of the First Training Expedition in June 2004. Organisation and permissions for the botanical expedition went smoothly, aided by good collaboration with our Nepalese partners. Five Nepalese botanists accompanied three from RBGE on a 19-day trek-based expedition to Sagarmatha National Park (Everest region). 368 gatherings were made, including 228 herbarium collections (in sets of six, i.e. about 1200 specimens), with an additional 500 field records. Three sets of herbarium specimens have been left in Nepal (with DPR, TU-CDB and the National Park administration), three were brought back to RBGE and will be used during the identification process. A separate report on the expedition has been produced and will soon be available on the project website.

The feedback from the expedition participants was very favourable, and we were all very pleased with the outcomes. Due to the switch to a higher altitude than planned (see below), we were rather early in the flowering season for the area we visited and consequently the actual numbers of collections were lower than we anticipated. Nevertheless, all the training objectives of the expedition were met, and the reduced volume of plant material enabled us to focus more on training and testing of collecting and data recording techniques.

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.

The most significant problem encountered was the location of fieldwork. The original plan for the three training expeditions was to journey to botanically less well known parts of Nepal: the midlands in the east, the central lowlands and the highlands in the west. Unfortunately, since then the political situation with the Maoist insurgency in Nepal has deteriorated, it is not longer safe to visit remote areas that do not have government security. On the advice of HM Government of Nepal we decided to change the location of this first fieldwork from east Nepal to the Sagarmatha National Park in the highlands on the border of

central and eastern Nepal. This area would be safe for us to work in, but the timing would be less favourable for the peak collecting season in this area (the dates of the expedition were set with lower altitudes in mind). Nevertheless, there are benefits to exploring these areas out of the normal season as you are more likely to discover new things and the focus was on training and quality not quantity of collections.

It is likely that the second training expedition will be able to target the lowlands of central Nepal, as planned, but it is looking increasingly unlikely that the third expedition will be able to go to west Nepal. Currently we have a fall back plan to revisit Sagarmatha National Park in the autumn 2005. This will give the added benefit that we can target botanically rich areas already located during the June expedition and build on the good contacts that we have developed with the National Park Officials.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

The changes in location of the fieldwork have not been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat, and we would appreciate feedback on whether any formal changes need to be agreed and documented.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: no/yes, in...... (month/yr)

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

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

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any <u>planned</u> modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should <u>not</u> be discussed in this report but raised with the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme, . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**