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## ***Darwin Initiative Annual Report***

### **1. Darwin Project Information**

Project Ref. Number	13-012
Project Title	<i>Integrated River Basin Management in the Sepik River</i>
Country(ies)	<i>Papua New Guinea</i>
UK Contractor	<i>WWF-UK</i>
Partner Organisation(s)	<i>PNG Department of Environment and Conservation, Ambunti Local Level Government, Ambunti District Local Environment Foundation (ADLEF) and project area communities</i>
Darwin Grant Value	<i>£120,000</i>
Start/End dates	<i>1 April 2004 – 31 March 2007</i>
Reporting period (1 Apr 200x to 31 Mar 200y) and report number (1,2,3..)	<i>1 April 2004 – 31 March 2005</i>
Project website	<i><a href="http://www.wwfpacific.org.fj/wetsepik.htm">http://www.wwfpacific.org.fj/wetsepik.htm</a></i>
Author(s), date	<i>Dave Tickner (WWF-UK) &amp; David Peter (WWF PNG) – 12 July 2005</i>

## 2. Project Background

The Sepik River Basin in the north of Papua New Guinea (PNG) is one of the least developed regions in a very poor country. Communities in the area rely almost entirely on the environment for subsistence resources.

The Sepik is also one of the most ecologically valuable rivers in the Asia Pacific region. The river basin includes one of the highest priority wetlands and three priority terrestrial landscapes identified under the PNG Conservation Needs Assessment (1993); the most important and commercially significant crocodile population in New Guinea, the largest lowland rainforest protected area in PNG; and important habitats for nationally listed threatened species such as the Victoria Crowned Pigeon, the Harpy Eagle and the Cassowary.

Specific environmental threats include falling water levels; invasive species including Paku (*Piaractus briachypumus*), Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) and Water Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*); grassland/wetland fires; hillside gardening causing landslides; river pollution and over-harvesting of crocodiles, eaglewood and bivalves. In addition, future threats may arise from mining, oil exploration, hydropower development and oil palm plantations.

The project aims to build the capacity of PNG institutions at a national and local level to manage catchments of high biological value and low human development. In particular, the project aims to assist government and local stakeholders to design an Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) framework for the Sepik River that will promote the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources.

## 3. Project Purpose and Outputs

### Project Purpose:

To assist government and local stakeholders to design an IRBM framework for the Sepik River Basin. This framework will protect biological diversity and ecological processes while promoting the sustainable management of natural resources supported by properly implemented catchment management policy.

### Project Outputs:

1. A comprehensive IRBM plan: Achievements/progress include
2. Strong stakeholder awareness of and commitment to effective river basin management: Achievements/progress include
3. Mechanisms to ensure stronger protection for areas of ecological importance: Achievements/progress include

### Changes to operational plan

Due to difficulties in recruiting a project manager in PNG, and to a greater than expected lack of capacity in two of the key project partners (PNG Department of Environment and Conservation and Ambunti District Local Environment Foundation) progress on the project has been delayed. The Darwin Secretariat are aware of this and have kindly agreed a carry-forward of funds from 2004-05. We are in the process of drawing up a revised operational plan and budget and will submit this to the Darwin Secretariat shortly.

## 4. Progress

The Sepik River Basin is among WWF's 50 priority river basins in the world. As such, it is a place where WWF has long aimed to work. The Darwin grant gave us the opportunity to do so. As mentioned above, progress on this project has been slower than expected due to the delay in recruiting a Freshwater Programme Manager for the WWF PNG office. The Freshwater Programme Manager (David

Peter) was eventually appointed in February 2005 and, in the short-time that he has been in place, considerable progress has been made on key foundation activities for this project including: consolidation of WWF's internal strategy for this project during an internal workshop; agreement with the PNG Department of Environment and Conservation about related staffing and about implementation of the PNG government policy for Total Catchment Environmental Management (TCEM); successful completion of a field trip to review potential sites for specific elements of the project and to engage key stakeholder groups assess their needs and expectations; production of an information leaflet; and planning of a Sepik River Crocodile Festival as a vehicle for raising awareness of local communities and other stakeholders of the importance of integrated management of the Sepik River. This progress in a relatively short space of time indicates that, while there is still ground to make-up, it is possible to successfully complete this project.

The following progress has been made against year 1 milestones:

- Confirm partnership agreements: Agreements confirmed in writing or in principle with several organisations including PNG Department of Environment and Conservation, Bauabaua Theatre Group; additional discussions with other potential partners such as Sepik Wetlands Management Initiative and the Sepik River Basin Watch Group.  
  
Note that one of the key partners originally envisaged, the Ambunti District Local Environment Forum (ADLEF) is now almost defunct so discussions have been held with other organisations that could play a similar role, including Help Resources Inc. (HRI) in Wewak. HRI is a Community Group focusing primarily on social issues such as HIV/AIDS and literacy but interested in becoming involved with river basin management.
- Consultants and staff hired: The WWF PNG Freshwater Programme Officer has been hired. The DEC has agreed to fund the Catchment Management Officer. Potential consultants have been identified, including experienced staff in the aforementioned partner organisations.
- Complete back ground reviews of programme sites: Two field trips have been undertaken to review the programme sites and identify key stakeholders. The primary locations for activities will be in Ambunti and Wewak districts.
- Formulate education strategy & produce public awareness materials: A project leaflet has been drafted (attachment A). In addition a Sepik River Tourism brochure is planned for 2005. HRI and Bauabaua Theatre Group are keen to develop further awareness materials on river basin management.

Due to the delay in identifying a suitable Freshwater Programme Manager, progress on the following year 1 milestones is now expected early in year 2:

- Training in IRBM
- Design for implementing IRBM policy in the Sepik basin
- Monitoring database and baseline established
- Communications on values of the Sepik River
- Initiate awareness campaign
- Begin management planning in protected areas
- Define mechanism for operationalising TCEM policy

At this point in time it is still premature to point to any concrete achievements from the project, mainly due to its late commencement. Nevertheless, we would like to point to the following significant steps:

- recruiting a well-qualified and experienced Freshwater Programme Manager (this has been a considerable achievement considering the relatively limited pool of qualified professionals in PNG)
- finalising the initial assessment of programme sites and reviewing potential partners
- ensuring strong interest in the project from key partners, especially community groups and the PNG government – vital to ensure that implementation of the IRBM approach in the Sepik is well-grounded in local economic and social reality. Two examples of this are that 1) the PNG Department of Environment and Conservation is keen to trial implementation of its TCEM policy in the Sepik; and 2) HRI, despite its lack of previous interest in conservation work, is keen to work with WWF in implementing this project.

As a consequence of these early achievements, the project is now better-placed for successful implementation.

Significant difficulties have included:

- Delay in staff recruitment: already discussed above, now overcome by the recruitment of a competent and experienced Freshwater Programme Manager by the WWF PNG office
- Lack of capacity in certain key partners: The PNG Department of Environment and Conservation has not succeeded in appointing a dedicated Catchment Management Officer despite reserving resources for this position. WWF has succeeded in persuading the DEC to allocate an existing staff member to this position as an interim measure until a permanent appointment is made later in 2005. The Ambunti District Environment Forum (ADLEF) is almost defunct and, consequently, cannot host the Field Co-ordinator position as originally envisaged. Instead, HRI have been approached and seem likely to host this position.
- Ongoing logistical difficulties in PNG: To some extent the lack of transport and communications infrastructure in PNG – necessary for project management – was foreseen. However, it was not possible to foresee the drought, and consequent low river levels, and the national fuel shortage which made it difficult to successfully complete by boat the initial field trips to review potential project sites and meet stakeholders. In addition, the road to Wewak has deteriorated considerably since the start of the project so vehicles rarely travel this road now. Appointing a field co-ordinator based at the HRI office in Ambunti will go a long way to mitigating such events in future.

WWF PNG has comprehensively reviewed its internal Freshwater Strategy in the last year (attachment B), especially since the appointment of the Freshwater Programme Officer. While this does not impact specifically on this particular project, it does strengthen the wider institutional context within which the project will be implemented (e.g. by raising the profile of freshwater issues within the WWF PNG programme). In addition, WWF International has appointed a Freshwater Co-ordinator for the Asia-Pacific region (Peter Ramshaw, ex-WWF-UK). The Freshwater Co-ordinator has identified PNG as one of his priorities and has already spent significant amounts of time in PNG supporting the Freshwater Programme Officer there in developing the revised Freshwater Strategy.

A Gantt chart showing the revised workplan for the next reporting period is attached separately (attachment C).

## **5. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)**

Not applicable

## **6. Partnerships**

Collaboration between WWF-UK and WWF PNG is good. Inevitably, communications between the UK and PNG can be difficult due to time differences and lack of reliable infrastructure in PNG. The fact that PNG staff spend considerable amounts of time in the field, while good for the project, means that finding mutually convenient time for contact, is a challenge. Nevertheless, we have instituted quarterly conference calls on project management issues, there is very regular ad hoc e-mail contact, and the fact that WWF-UK also supports a larger programme of work on the Forests of New Guinea provides an excellent wider framework for collaboration. The recent recruitment of Peter Ramshaw, ex-WWF-UK, to be WWF Freshwater Co-ordinator for the Asia-Pacific region, has also helped.

As discussed above, the Freshwater Programme Officer has discussed collaboration with organisations such as the Sepik Wetlands Management Initiative and the Sepik River Basin Watch Group, both locally-based.

## **7. Impact and Sustainability**

The profile of the project has increased recently due to the field trip by the Freshwater Programme Officer to the Sepik River and his meetings with stakeholders and communities. It is set to increase with a) the signing of an Memorandum of Understanding with the other project partners, b) the involvement of higher government officials, c) the Sepik Crocodile Festival, and d) the launch of a Sepik River Tourism brochure.

One clear impact from the field trip by the Freshwater Programme Officer is increasing interest from project partners – such as HRI - to work closely with WWF on this project as well as to promote the idea of river basin management and conservation as a whole. In addition, the PNG Department of Environment and Conservation is beginning to embrace its Total Catchment Environment Management Policy as a result of WWF's work in the Sepik. This bodes well for increasing capacity for biodiversity.

## **8. Post-Project Follow up Activities (max 300 words)**

Not applicable.

## **9. Outputs, Outcomes and Dissemination**

As discussed under 4. above, actual outputs in Year 1 of the project were limited due to the delay in recruiting a Freshwater Programme Officer in PNG. The following Year 1 outputs from the "Project implementation timetable" in section 21 of the Darwin grant application form were not achieved in Year 1 but will be in Year 2:

- Training in IRBM
- Design for implementing IRBM policy in the Sepik basin
- Monitoring database and baseline established
- Communications on values of the Sepik River
- Initiate awareness campaign
- Begin management planning in protected areas
- Define mechanism for operationalising TCEM policy

Dissemination activities in Year 1 included the drafting of a Sepik IRBM project brochure (attachment A). Target audiences for this include government partners (e.g. in the Department for Environment and Conservation), project partners such as HRI, and potential donors for complementary project activities.

No project outputs in Year 1

**Table 1. Project Outputs (According to Standard Output Measures)**

Code No.	Quantity	Description

**Table 2: Publications**

Type * (e.g. journals, manual, CDs)	Detail (title, author, year)	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. contact address, website)	Cost £
Leaflet	Sepik River Integrated River Basin Management	WWF PNG	WWF PNG (dpeter@wwfpacific.org.pg)	-

## 10. Project Expenditure

**Table 3: Project expenditure during the reporting period (Defra Financial Year 01 April to 31 March)**

Item	Budget (please indicate which document you refer to if other than your project schedule)	Expenditure	Balance

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## **11. Monitoring, Evaluation and Lessons**

WWF has recently developed a standard M&E framework for all its international programmes and projects. WWF-UK and WWF PNG will work to apply this to the Sepik project during Year 2.

Lesson 1: The key stakeholders in the Sepik river basin have changed, e.g. ADLEF becoming defunct. In future, the location of a HRI project officer in the project site will enable WWF to keep its finger on the pulse and to rapidly adapt project management to changing circumstances.

Lesson 2: The needs and aspirations of communities and their views of conservation efforts are also changing, with a greater demand now for socio-economic development. In future, wide and deep involvement of local communities in planning and decision-making will ensure the ground-truthing of conservation projects and a sense of ownership of the project among the communities.

Lesson 3: Institutions in PNG struggle with resources and to recruit high quality professionals. In future, recruitment efforts may need to be innovative (e.g. more collaborative workers), salary levels more competitive in order to continue to attract the best project managers.

## **12. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project during the reporting period (300-400 words maximum)**

Not applicable.

Annex 1 Report of progress and achievements against Logical Framework for Financial Year: 2003/2004

Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2003-Mar 2004	Actions required/planned for next period
<p><b>Goal:</b> To draw on expertise relevant to biodiversity from within the United Kingdom to work with local partners in countries rich in biodiversity but poor in resources to achieve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The conservation of biological diversity,</li> <li>• The sustainable use of its components, and</li> <li>• The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Purpose</b> <i>(insert original project purpose statement)</i></p> <p>To assist government and local stakeholders to design an integrated river basin management framework for the Sepik River Basin. This framework will protect biological diversity and ecological processes while promoting the sustainable management of natural resources supported by properly implemented catchment management policy.</p>	<p><i>(insert original purpose level indicators)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Existence and use of a management framework in the form of databases, procedures and materials guiding catchment management in DEC and Department of East Sepik</li> <li>◆ Stronger policies for catchment protection</li> <li>◆ Increases in the levels of protection to areas of biological and ecological significance</li> </ul>	<p><i>(report impacts and achievements resulting from the project against purpose indicators – if any)</i></p> <p>None in Year 1</p>	<p><i>(report any lessons learned resulting from the project &amp; highlight key actions planning for next period)</i></p>
<p><b>Outputs</b></p>			
<p><i>(insert original outputs – one per line)</i></p>	<p><i>(insert original output level indicators)</i></p>	<p><i>(report completed activities and outcomes that contribute toward outputs and indicators)</i></p>	<p><i>(report any lessons learned resulting from the project &amp; highlight key actions planning for next period)</i></p>

1. A comprehensive integrated river basin management plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ An agreed catchment management plan for the Sepik basin</li> </ul>	None in Year 1	Establish Sepik Environmental Steering Committee consisting mostly of stakeholders
2. Strong stakeholder awareness of and commitment to effective river basin management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Number of partnership agreements</li> <li>◆ Number of successful community initiatives</li> <li>◆ Number of management actions implemented from Sepik catchment and community PA management plans</li> <li>◆ Number of posters, press releases, media articles and radio stories</li> <li>◆ Number of LLG annual development plans showing commitment to effective IRBM</li> </ul>	<p>Informal partnership agreements with HRI, DEC and Bauabaua Theatre Group</p> <p>None in Year 1</p> <p>None in Year 1</p> <p>1 general project leaflet produced</p> <p>None in Year 1</p>	<p>Sign agreements with HRI, DEC and Ambunti local govt; capacity survey of local CBOs</p> <p>Produce awareness materials and educational strategy; comms initiative including radio, tv &amp; newspapers</p>
3. Mechanisms to ensure stronger protection for areas of ecological importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Management plans for community-managed protected areas</li> <li>◆ Policies that support the protection of ecologically important areas</li> <li>◆ Gazettal of protected areas established in priority wetland and forest areas</li> </ul>	<p>None in Year 1</p> <p>DEC commitment to TCEM policy renewed</p> <p>None in Year 1</p>	<p>Guidance on operationalising TCEM policy</p> <p>Complete baseline biological surveys, water sampling and programme site reviews</p>

*Note: Please do NOT expand rows to include activities since their completion and outcomes should be reported under the column on progress and achievements at output and purpose levels.*