

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2007)

Project Ref. No.	13-012
Project Title	Integrated River Basin Management in the Sepik
Country(ies)	Papua New Guinea
UK Organisation	WWF-UK
Collaborator(s)	WWF Papua New Guinea, PNG Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), Ambunti Local Level Government, HELP Resources Inc, Bauabaua Theatre Group, East Sepik Provincial Government, Sepik Wetlands Management Initiative (SWMI) and project area communities
Project Leader	Dr. David Tickner
Report date	March 2007 to September 2007
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 4
Project website	http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/where_we_work/project/projects/index.cfm?uProjectID=PG0036

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).

i) Confirm partnership agreements

- The Sepik River Network Initiative workplan review due in summer 2007 has been delayed pending the inception workshop for the new EC Sepik Livelihoods project. The intention is to combine both events to encourage stakeholder involvement in the EC project.

ii) Complete Background Review of the site / Monitoring database and baseline established / Monitor changes to baseline environmental conditions and achievement of planned activities

- The draft "State of the Sepik" report is still being developed. Information gaps have been identified and a new cohort of 3-4 students from the University of PNG joining WWF PNG for internships in autumn 2007 will be asked to track down as much of this information as possible through literature review. A dissemination plan is also being drafted so that key academic institutions in PNG, Australia, the UK and elsewhere can benefit from the recommendations in the report for further research.

iii) Formulate education strategy and produce awareness materials / Communications materials on values of the Sepik River / Continue awareness campaign

- Further funding of Kina 5,800.00 has been provided to the Sepik Wetland Management Initiative to work with local communities on: i) post harvest nesting survey; ii) Crocodile night counts; iii) Additional Participatory Rapid Assessment (PRA) exercises; iv) Conservation awareness meetings. These activities cover 15 villages along 200km of river from Pagwi to Freeda.

iv) Communications

- WWF PNG has prepared a Communications Plan for its own purposes which includes a section on Communicating the Sepik. The primary focus will be activities for World Wetlands Day (2nd February) 2008 and the preparation of the second Sepik Crocodile Festival.

- Stories about the Sepik project have been compiled on the WWF website (http://wwf.panda.org/news_facts/newsroom). The National Television (EM TV) story of the Sepik River Crocodile Festival won a runners-up prize in the Pacific Islands News Conference in Honiara, Solomon Islands in June this year. The EMTV footage of the Festival received the best footage of the year award. The footage of the Festival has been seen regularly as part the trailer for EM TV's "Tok Piksa" programme.

iv) Training in IRBM

- As reported above, a new cohort of three or four students from the University of PNG will join WWF PNG in autumn 2007 to support the Sepik IRBM project.

vi) Design for implementing integrated river basin management policy in the Sepik basin / Define mechanism for operationalising Total Catchment Environment Management Policy / Assist DEC in the preparation of draft catchment management plan / Form catchment management institutions

- The plan to establish a sub-catchment management committee for the Niksek has been delayed pending to allow it to coincide with the inception meeting for the EC Sepik Livelihoods project.
- A draft integrated catchment management plan for Niksek sub catchment is still in development. As with the "State of the Sepik" report, information gaps have been identified and the new students from the University of PNG joining WWF PNG in autumn 2007 will be asked to track down as much of this information as possible. In addition, stakeholders in the sub-catchment will be consulted to clarify key threats and issues to be addressed by the plan. This will involve the mapping of such things as spiritual areas, crocodile habitat, high biodiversity areas and customary lands.
- Further discussions have been held with the Department for Environment and Conservation and the National Research Institute on operationalising the Total Catchment Environment Management policy and on ratification of the closely allied 1997 UN Watercourses Convention. Partly as result of these discussions, DEC has now recruited four out of seven catchment officers (one for each of the seven major catchments in PNG) including an officer for the Sepik. DEC is in the process of decentralising many of its operations to catchment-based offices.

vii) Support LLG legislation and District development plans that reflect integrated river basin management objectives

- The review of the existing Ambunti Local Level development plan will is now in draft. The input of stakeholders is being sought before finalisation. A meeting to discuss the plan was held between Hon. Tony Aimo, MP for Ambunti/Drekikir and David Peter, WWF PNG Freshwater Programme Manager, in September this year. Some delay in the finalisation of the plan may be inevitable due to Mr Aimo's schedule (he is a government minister).

viii) Assist communities to declare new wetlands protected areas and complete management plans / Begin management planning in protected areas / Support community management and enterprise initiatives

- All the copies of the Sepik Tourism Brochures - which was launched at the Sepik Crocodile Festival - have been distributed to hotels, government agencies and airports. Systems for monitoring the leaflet's impact do not currently exist within the PNG tourist industry, but anecdotal evidence from the owner of one of the main tourist lodges in Ambunti District suggest that numbers of inquiries and bookings are increasing as a result. In addition, David Peter has taken a number of queries himself from people who have read the brochure and who are interested in find out more information about tourism in the Sepik.

