

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	13/018
Project Title	Building Genetic Forensic Capacity to Reduce South Africa's Illegal Trade
Country(ies)	South Africa
UK Organisation	University of Sheffield
Collaborator(s)	University of KwaZulu-Natal (Prof Mike Perrin)
Report date	30 September, 2004
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Project website	

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).

Our partner organisation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, has appointed Dr Tiawanna Taylor as the local coordinator on the project. Dr Taylor was previously a visitor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and has significant knowledge and experience relevant to both the molecular forensic and wildlife aspects of the project.

Guidelines on South African Legislation:

South African, National, International, Provincial and local legislation relating to wildlife and this project are currently being collated for review. Much of the legislation relating to endangered wildlife including CITES is administered within the 8 regional provinces. This includes many old and overlapping Acts and Regulations. Many Provinces are currently in a process of reviewing and updating their legislation that relates to the environment and biodiversity. Contacts have also been made with a number of academics interested in South African environmental legislation.

CITES regulations, although recently covered in the new Biodiversity Act, require additional regulations to be written before the legislation will be effective. This is currently ongoing; some sections of the Act are already in effect and the remaining sections are coming into effect in April 2005. Contact has been made with the Scientific Authority responsible for the implementation of CITES.

Contacts have also been made with relevant NGOs involved in wildlife crime and illegal trade and relevant documentation from these sources is also being collected.

Contact has been made with a TRAFFIC/DANIDA capacity building project aimed at training individuals involved in wildlife investigations across three provinces. It might prove mutually beneficial to collaborate with this organisation and this will be investigated further.

Guidelines on South Africa's Forensic Requirements:

Enquiries are ongoing with a number of organisations to determine South African requirements for forensic laboratory procedures especially related to wildlife, and across all areas from removing a DNA sample and chain-of-custody requirements up to the production of an

evidential statement. Contacts have been made with labs offering a service in respect of animals (e.g. cattle theft), academics researching this field and the South African Police Service. Protocols will be developed accordingly. Details have been obtained of the South African National Accreditation System (SANAS) responsible for the accreditation of forensic DNA facilities.

MSc Students

The Darwin-supported MSc studentship positions have been advertised and applications received. Applications are currently being reviewed and references taken up. Potential students will be interviewed shortly. It is envisaged that the students will commence their studentships in January 2005 (the beginning of the South African Academic year), when they will travel to the UK to begin developing the microsatellite markers for the focal species.

Additional:

Dr Taylor has submitted a grant application to the NRF (SA government funding body, similar to NERC). If awarded this would expand the project and fund two additional MSc students, plus consumables etc., starting in January 2005. An application has also been made for support for two honours projects to research the illegal trade in wildlife in South Africa.

Dr Taylor attended a 5-day course providing an overview of South African Environmental Legislation.

Dr Taylor attended a Cape Parrot Working Group meeting where she spoke about the work of this 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 affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

There have been a few developments that have impinged on initial progress or that are otherwise worth noting:

University of KwaZulu-Natal

There were some unexpected administrative delays which arose due to the recent merger of the University of Natal with the University of Durban Westville. This led to a delay in an agreement being drawn up with the University of Sheffield in order that funds could begin to be transferred. However, Dr Taylor was fortunately able to continue with the initial set-up of the project.

Molecular Biology Unit:

Recently the University has begun discussions with a not-for-profit organisation who wish to lease the MBU facility in which this project is to be based. The not-for-profit company hopes to undertake research and development of projects aimed at building capacity in areas of biotechnology that can provide services. At this stage it is not known if this venture will prove successful, as funding is still to be confirmed. If this venture was to commence the impact of this would include:

The majority of staff would work for the not-for-profit company as opposed to UKZN, although some UKZN staff would be employed within the facility. These staff would be the most appropriate to be trained in forensic skills, and the equipment required to provide the service would be operated by them.

The impact is likely to be positive and has the potential to increase the longer term prospects for the project, providing a more substantial platform in which to situate the end-product of the Darwin Initiative Project.

The not-for-profit company has expressed an interest in assisting to develop and expand the forensic service to a wider range of biodiversity. They would bring with them expertise in plants; illegal trade in endangered plants (e.g. cycads) is also a problem in South Africa and there is a demand for forensic expertise in this area.

It is envisaged that this would have no impact on the budget or timetable.

MSc Students:

Ideally the students would have commenced earlier than January 2005. However, most applicants are in their final degree year and will not finish until December and this possibility had been allowed for in the timeframe. It is likely that the milestone “students optimise microsatellites prior to analysis” will not be achieved until after April 2005, but this should have no impact on the completion of the overall project within the overall 3-year timeframe.

Impact of Delays to Budget:

The impact of the unexpected delays in getting the contracts organised, providing funding to UKZN as per the budget and the MSc students starting in Jan 2005 will be that some of the consumables and equipment will not need to be bought as early as anticipated.

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

We made an informal telephone enquiry about one month ago. Following this, we will be contacting the Darwin Initiative secretariat with a proposed modified spending profile at the beginning of November 2004.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: yes (Carrie Haloun, by phone), in Sep 2004 (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?

No

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 planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not 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, stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk. The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**