

Darwin Initiative

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the increased number of reports expected in 2005, we will not be able to confirm receipt of reports but will contact you individually should any questions arise

Project Ref. No.	14012
Project Title	Imbovane: Exploring South African Biodiversity and Change Outreach Project
Country(ies)	United Kingdom and South Africa
UK Organisation	University of Sheffield
Collaborator(s)	BIOME Group of the University of Sheffield and DST-NRF Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology, Stellenbosch University
Report date	31 October 2006
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 1
Project website	www.sun.ac.za/iimbovane

- 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).**

Apr 06: Teacher training workshop on sampling and implementation

The teacher training workshop scheduled for April 2006 took place in January 2006, and was reported on in the 2005/2006 annual report.

June 06: Database system established and populated with test data

A database system has been established and has been populated with test data. The Imbovane Project Team (IPT) is currently testing the database to ensure that it meets the requirements of the project. From April to June, the IPT spent a great deal of time sorting and identifying ants that were collected during the March 2006 sampling period. In summary, 26,664 ants were caught, belonging to 25 genera and approximately 81 species. The final number of species is still to be confirmed. Time was also spent on the development of an ant identification guide and key, as well as the compilation of eleven ant reference collections (one for the IPT and one for each of the ten schools).

Sept 06: Schools implementation visits

The first school implementation visit took place in March 2006 and was reported on in the first annual report. The second implementation visit is currently underway (October 2006).

Additional information on progress

In June/July 2006 the IPT undertook an equipment handover trip, where each of the schools were presented with a Leica EZ4 Microscope, an IBM laptop, their reference collection and an ant identification guide and key. All the equipment was funded by the Darwin Initiative. The impact of the microscopes was immediate and obvious, in that learners that were present for the handover were trying to find anything to look at under the microscope.

Initially, the project planned to supply microscopes and computers to only five of the ten Imbovane Schools. Following discussions with microscope suppliers and with the release of the new “EZ” Leica microscope range, the project was able to purchase one microscope and one computer for each of the ten schools taking part in the Imbovane project. This will help to ensure that Imbovane has a much broader impact on the schools involved in the project.

The handover trip also provided the opportunity for the Imbovane School principals to sign an MoU,

which formalised the relationship between the schools and Stellenbosch University, as the South African project partner.

In June the IPT was also asked to display the Imbovane project at Manzomthombo, an Imbovane School that was having a science “open” day. This was extremely successful and we had a long line of learners wanting to have a chance to look through the microscope which was provided through Darwin funding.

The Cape Academy for Maths, Science and Technology, also an Imbovane School, launched a new Science Centre during August. The Imbovane Project Team was specially requested by the school to attend this launch and to take part in a ceremonial handover of the equipment which was funded by the Darwin Initiative. The gesture from the school to the Imbovane Project Team was appreciated.

The hand-over of results from the ant samples collected during March 2006 took place during August 2006. The teachers at many of the Imbovane Schools had expressed an interest in having additional lectures on data handling given at the same time as the data handover. In light of this request, a worksheet on data handling that incorporated the schools and their control sites was prepared. These lessons were extremely well received and the learners were able to do most of the sums required, including the calculation of some basic biodiversity indices. During this handover session the IPT also gave the learners a lecture on the importance of biodiversity from an ecosystem services perspective and discussed some of the threats to these ecosystem services, including climate change, habitat fragmentation and invasive alien species.

The data handover sessions also provided an opportunity to remain in contact with the schools. This “keeping in touch” appears to be an important part of the project, providing an opportunity for teachers to ask questions and request additional assistance, and maintaining the profile of the Imbovane Project in the schools.

The progress and planning workshop for the Imbovane Project Team, scheduled for December 2006, was held in August 2006 in Stellenbosch, South Africa. It was attended by Prof. Kevin Gaston, Dr Brigitte Braschler & Dr. Sue Shaw of the University of Sheffield and Prof. Steven Chown, Ms. Kirsten Mahood, Ms. Natasha Kruger & Ms. Sarah Davies of the C-I-B.

We have also obtained the services of a student assistant (a third year BSc student at Stellenbosch University) for the project. Ms. Matlakala Mapatha has been helping with the sorting of pitfall traps and the preparation for the October field trip, and is gaining excellent experience working with the IPT in the lab and in their preparations for field work. This has added to the capacity building impact that the Imbovane Project is having in South Africa.

The Western Cape Education Department approached the IPT to assist them in their Provincial Teacher Orientation Session for Life Sciences 2006, which was aimed at assisting teachers to implement the new National Curriculum Statement. Although this training fell outside the scope of the Imbovane project, it was eventually carried out under the auspices of the Centre for Invasion Biology. Without the impetus from the Imbovane project, it is unlikely that the C-I-B would have been involved.

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.

In the last 6 months, no notable problems have occurred. However, an unexpected development that has occurred is the need (from the teacher’s perspective) for regular person to person contact sessions with the Imbovane Project Team. It does not appear at this stage that this requirement will require additional funding, but it will require an additional time commitment from members of the project team. This is in addition to the requests from Western Cape Education Department for assistance/training. The large number of ant samples collected also puts great time demands on the IPT in sorting and identifying the ant species present. We have started to address this time issue by employing a student assistant to help with some basic laboratory tasks, and plan to continue this in the next 6 months. This will affect the budget breakdown, but not the budget totals.

