

Darwin Initiative

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	14-037
Project Title	Building University Capacity to Train Future Cambodian Conservationists
Country(ies)	Cambodia
UK Organisation	Fauna & Flora International
Collaborator(s)	Royal University of Phnom Penh, Ministry of Environment (MOE) and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries (MAFF)
Report date	31 October 2006
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 2
Project website	N/A

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).

The project is still on schedule.

Planned Project Implementation Timetable:

Financial Year Apr 2006-Mar 2007. Key Milestones: Q1&2: Exams and identification of junior research officers ('Darwin Scholars'); Develop research programme with GO and Intl. NGOs; Begin research projects and specimen collection.

Actual Project Implementation Timetable:

April: The **first cohort of students completed courses on GIS, Research Analysis, and Data Presentation, and began Environmental Law** (the latter included a study visit to the Senate). More progress was made on the **museum for plant and animal specimens**: the rooms were completed and air conditioners and main shelving units installed. Darwin Scholar and botanist Khou Eang Hourt assisted the FFI Coordinator to build the herbarium to international standards, with guidance from Dr Sovanmoly Hul (National Museum of Natural History, Paris, which will donate 2,000 mounted specimens) and Dr Philip Thomas (Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh). The **USFWS Rhino and Tiger Fund approved a grant of \$50,000** to this project. The **project's Steering Committee** met to discuss feedback, attendance and how the courses had gone. (This joint FFI-RUPP committee continued to meet monthly for the rest of the year). The **university provided a second project office room**, because the number of affiliated researchers and resources is growing rapidly.

May: The **first cohort of students completed a course on Environmental Impact Assessment**, delivered by the Deputy Director of the EIA Department, Ministry of Environment. The **Forestry Administration gave official endorsement of the new herbarium and zoological reference collection** (this being a prerequisite for specimen collection, under the Cambodian Forestry Law). **PhD candidate, Carly Starr, joined the project office**, where she will conduct research and provide field supervision for 18 mo with the Darwin Scholars.

June: **More than 150 titles were purchased** for the project library, and a **library database**

established and populated by Carly Starr and Darwin Scholar Rath Sethik. The FFI Coordinator furthermore arranged **free access for the students to online journals and archives**. The students embarked on **original research assignments** as part of their Masters courses, in collaboration with the Darwin Scholars, lecturers, and affiliated NGOs and government agencies. (Every student must conduct a number of assignments in Year 1, and a more extensive thesis in Year 2). **Final examinations were held** for the main courses of the first semester: Research Analysis and Natural Resource Management.

July: The **Bridging Course was reviewed and redesigned** by the FFI-RUPP Project Steering Committee to more effectively prepare new students for the Masters course. It will include a new course on Evolution, as we have found that few students have adequate knowledge of this fundamental subject. **Re-sits** were held for students who failed the key examinations in June. The **project office at RUPP was officially renamed the Centre for Biodiversity Conservation**, and a handsome new logo/ header was donated by a graphical designer.

August: Summer break for the Masters candidates. The **Masters course was advertised** in all the leading national newspapers and sent to all environmental NGOs and government agencies in Cambodia. 40 candidates applied from a wide range of backgrounds, e.g., geography, tourism and management. The **project's Financial Management procedures were reviewed**: the FFI Coordinator was trained to handle the allocation of project expenses against budget codes and donors, but will continue to be supervised by the FFI Project Leader and Director of Finance. **Discussions commenced with Dr Philip Thomas (Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh)** about a new Darwin Initiative proposal to build botanical capacity in Cambodia, including further stocking of the national herbarium created by the present project.

September: The **second semester of the Masters course began**, with 16 students from the first intake (six students having failed their re-sits in critical courses of the first semester). Project leader, **Dr Jenny Daltry, delivered a course on Ecological Survey Techniques**, with input from five leading British and Cambodian biologists in Cambodia. All but three of the students passed the theory exam, but the practical field component was postponed to November due to severe weather conditions. Throughout September, **Dr Simon Loader, British Museum of Natural History, further advanced the curator training programme** for the new staff of the national herbarium and zoological reference collection, and established clear protocols for quarantining, cataloguing and storing incoming specimens. A variety of animal and plant specimens have been deposited from various sources. Several important **course books were donated by the UK's Natural History Book Service**. By the end of the quarter, **10 Darwin Scholars have become associated with this project** and are assisting with teaching and research.

NB All project material outputs to date, including newspaper adverts, application posters, course information packs, application forms, and teaching materials, acknowledge the support of Darwin Initiative and feature the Darwin logo. Copies will be forwarded to Darwin Initiative on request.

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.

No notable problems. Some costs have been higher than predicted (e.g., completion of reference collection facilities), though the weak US\$ has gone a long way to compensate for this. FFI has also successfully secured a further \$50,000 co-funding from USFWS.

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

N/A

Discussed with the DI Secretariat:	<u>n/a</u>
Changes to the project schedule/workplan:	<u>n/a</u>

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.

Response to Reviewer Comment No. 6: "Revise output 3 and its indicators"

In response to the first Annual Review of this project, we propose that Output 3 is slightly modified as follows:

The development of new inter-institutional partnerships to implement conservation-oriented research and education projects in Cambodia.

The Indicators of this output are:

University staff and students work alongside staff from local NGOs and government agencies in at least 20 conservation-oriented research and education projects, including 3-5 joint workshops.

The means of verification shown in the original proposal can still apply.

Having started from a position of almost zero interaction between the universities, NGOs and ministries in Cambodia, there has already been striking progress in this output through this project. We can provide more supporting evidence of progress against this indicator in the next annual report. We have not discussed these draft changes with the Darwin Secretariat directly, but will attend to this immediately. The proposed changes do not affect the project budget or work plan, and are merely intended to give greater clarity to Output 3.

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.**