

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2007)

Project Ref. No.	14-050
Project Title	Africulture Project
Country(ies)	South Africa
UK Organisation	GardenAfrica
Collaborator(s)	Umthathi Training Project (UTP). Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.
Project Leader	Georgina McAllister
Report date	24 th October 2008
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	DI/AC/05
Project website	www.africulture.co.za

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).

Project Area:	Nature of Progress:
Production of indigenous plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Target species ID through THP consultation complete• ID of key (15) species for propagation• Stock increased to service projected training needs• Continued cultivation to populate site for ex situ conservation
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On site monitoring & support visits with those trained• Review of cultivation training underway – with concern re the appropriate level of engagement. Materials & approach now undergoing review – with expertise from Rhodes Dept of Environmental Education.
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kew compiling information on target species.• Continued and regular contact with THPs trained,• Incorporation of new associations.• Workshops to explore concerns and issues important to each assoc that the Project can address.• Advocating extension of programme to harvesters
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Core UTP staff changes affecting Project – Centre Manager / acting director left in April, and facilitator in May. New acting director, finance and training managers, and community liaison officer. Posts of Projects Manager & Director have been advertised, with applications now being deliberated.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The UTP Board chairman resigned alongside other long-standing members. Board has now been replenished with specific expertise relevant to the Project.• Steering Committee has met twice, and recognises the importance of increasing expertise as the project grows.• ToR for the steering committee – requires revision given changes within UTP governance and organogram.

Funding

- Interim visit by GA to meet new UTP management team for information transfer & forward planning (July 08)
- EuropeAid application (July 07) budget has undergone some revision to reduce level of cash contribution required. In final stages – deadline end Nov 08.
- Revised research & push on proposals by UTP. Application made to Ackerman Foundation for £33,000 EC fund matching. Decision expected end Nov.
- Additional applications being considered to cover local staffing & UK costs.

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.

Pressure placed on Centre Manager and project horticulturalist, Philip Crous, asked to take on the role of acting director by the UTP board, resulted in the resignation of Philip from UTP – who moved to Rhodes Parks & Gardens team. This has left a serious expertise gaps within the Project.

Staffing issues continued to hamper the Project until April 08, with wide ranging staff retrenchment to reduce organisational overheads. UTP was left with a skeleton staff with which to run its remaining programmes, and extremely low staff morale. This was followed by the resignation of UTPs Chairman of Trustees, and other long-standing board members.

In April 08 a new management team was appointed, by a newly constituted Board, under the capable chairmanship of Shireen Badat (previously of the Dept of Education & wife of the Vice Chancellor of Rhodes University). The result has seen the matter of staff salaries addressed, assisted by the new team, in particular the new finance manager Ken Mitchener, allocating funding for this purpose from staff retrenchments. Acting Director, Marlene Mitchener (previously a private sector MD) has worked with staff to build confidence and morale through staff development & team building exercises, which has included introducing all staff to Africulture concepts, and integrating training across all programming areas. The benefits of this are already being felt, with a dedicated team now in place, and key appointments made, and advertised.

Despite earlier resistance by UTP, key relationships are now being built with various Rhodes departments (Botany, EE, Pharmacy, and Parks & Gardens) to fill skills gaps. This will also be an important part of the DI funded foundation phase exit strategy.

It was recently revealed by this more open team, that the basis upon which *General Cultivation Course* materials were commissioned by UTP, involved only the development of outlines which were to be further developed by training facilitator & horticulturalist (Ludwe Fane). Unfortunately these expectations were not appropriate to Ludwe's experience. This has resulted in the team (local & international) agreeing that a revision of materials (with assistance from Rhodes EE) is now required to deliver the expected outcomes. This is now underway, but will naturally have an impact on delivery times – which will experience delays. A review of appropriate materials is underway (including GA & other materials where relevant) and will be applied to the development of the remaining courses (*Micro-Nursery Development & Agri-Business*) in order to kick-start development.

Despite the efforts of the new team to raise funds for the Project (with an excellent track record in fundraising for all other UTP programmes which had been poorly funded under the previous administration), it has become clear that traditional healthcare, combined with conservation fails to capture the imagination of South African donors (corporate and institutional). This is thought to be a result of South Africa's media-driven relationship with THPs, which still views this sector with a large degree of suspicion. The focus therefore remains firmly with international donors, specifically institutional - with the EuropeAid (locally administered through the Eastern Cape Local Development Fund – Thina Sinako). Despite the agreement having been signed in

December 07, attempts to source match funding have been ongoing, and are now almost exhausted. The final hope now rests solely upon SA supermarket chain Pick & Pay (Ackerman Foundation). If this cash contribution cannot be found, the project will limp forward with minimal resources with which to implement remaining activities under the foundation phase. Under these circumstances the Project cannot be expected to deliver against its goal. However, should this funding materialise, the Project will be in a position to restart activities, and move forward at a solid pace, filling essential posts (beginning with Projects Manager, Facilitator & horticulturalist) hence a request, referred to below, for additional delivery time, should this be possible.

The UTP management team, and UK partners are committed to working together to find creative ways of ensuring that the Project delivers for both the donors and the stakeholders within the remaining six months, should further funding and an extension not be possible.

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

A request for additional time – 6 months – within which to achieve the Project goals for the DI funded foundation phase, has been submitted, but hinges upon acceptance of the EC grant under the agreed conditions (cash & in-kind contributions). The delay in submitting this request was due to the timing of the recent review (2nd week Oct) during which time all partners were able to meet (UTP, GA & Kew) to agree on the parameters for moving forward with existing resources and limitations as they stand. We await formal notification that this is acceptable.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: Yes, in Oct 08

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: Not yet agreed/recalculated

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin’s management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

None

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 email** to Eilidh Young, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme at Darwin-Projects@ectf-ed.org.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 14-075 Darwin Half Year Report**