

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2007)

Project Ref. No.	15/035
Project Title	<i>Ex situ</i> conservation of the rare and threatened plants of Mauritius
Country(ies)	Mauritius
UK Organisation	Royal Botanic Gardens Kew
Collaborator(s)	Ministry of Agro-Industry & Fisheries, Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute, National Threatened Plants Technical Committee
Project Leader	Steve Alton
Report date	31/10/2007
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 2
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).

During the reporting period a great deal of effort has gone into making up time lost through the delays that affected the start of the project. Seed collecting is now in full swing, with up to 21 species being collected per month (compared with the average of 10 originally envisioned). This is before the busiest fruiting season (November – December) commences. Two voucher duplicates are being taken for each collection and photos taken of rare species. The collecting is now being aided by a target list generated in June – July from herbarium voucher information, covering flowering and fruiting times. Fear s about the storability of Mauritian species so far appear to have been unfounded, with only 3 species proving to be recalcitrant out of 66 collected.

Training was carried out in country from 23-29th April by Stephanie Miles of the Millennium Seed Bank's Curation Section. 11 key staff from the Mauritian Seed Bank, the National Parks & Conservation Service, the MSIRI Herbarium, the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation and the government Forestry Service attended. The training was both theoretical and practical, and covered all aspects of seed collection and curation.

Additionally, from 22 July – 14 August Ms Pushpa Seepaul, the Darwin-funded Seed Bank Technician, visited the Millennium Seed Bank. Practical hands-on training covered seed collection, curation, storage, germination testing, x-ray analysis, herbarium sample mounting and use of the BRAHMS collection management database. This training is now being cascaded to the other staff members involved in the project – Ms. Nabiihah Roomaldawo, the Darwin-funded Seed Bank Assistant, and Mr. Ranjit Seecharan, the government-funded Nurseryman, as well as a number of other government and NGO staff and student volunteers.

The final items of seed bank equipment were delivered and installed during the reporting period – the herbarium dryers in May and, after a delay in Customs, the freezers in August.

A press release about the project resulted in an article in 'Weekend Scope' magazine in Mauritius.

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.

Occasional transport issues, resulting from competition for Government vehicles have caused collecting trips to be cancelled. This has now been resolved internally.

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

Not deemed necessary, as the issue has been resolved.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: **no/yes, in..... (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 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**