



Darwin Initiative Annual Report



To be completed with reference to the Reporting Guidance Notes for Project Leaders – it is expected that this report will be about 10 pages in length, excluding annexes

Submission deadline 30 April 2009

Darwin Project Information

Project Ref Number	15/037
Project Title	Distance Learning for Biodiversity conservation in Small Island Developing States
Country(ies)	Pacific Island States
UK Contract Holder Institution	International Centre for Protected Landscapes
Host country Partner Institution(s)	University of the South Pacific
Other Partner Institution(s)	South Pacific Regional Environment Programme
Darwin Grant Value	£209,500
Start/End dates of Project	May 2006 - March 2009 – with no-cost extension granted to September 2009
Reporting period (1 Apr 200x to 31 Mar 200y) and annual report number (1,2,3..)	1 April 2008-31 March 2009 Annual Report 3
Project Leader Name	Dr. Elizabeth Hughes
Project website	www.protected-landscapes.org/South_Pacific_Programme
Author(s) and main contributors, date	Dr. Elizabeth Hughes and Professor W. Aalbersberg

1. Project Background

Small island developing states (SIDS) often have high levels of endemic biodiversity and many unique and specialised species of importance for human use (e.g. in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism). Much of this biodiversity is owned by local communities who are overwhelmingly reliant on natural resources for survival. However, with rapid population increases and rising material expectations there has been a disproportionate amount of habitat and species loss on small islands throughout the World.

The Asian Development Bank states that: “The natural wealth of Pacific SIDS underpins their formal and subsistence economies” and that “the biodiversity of the Pacific region is recognised to be of global significance, yet the threats to its conservation are among the highest anywhere in the world”. The Bank also states that: “It is vital to the well-being of the Pacific people that their biological resources be sustainably managed”, yet, “the capacity to educate growing populations in the Pacific is generally weak and deteriorating” (ADB Pacific Region Environmental Strategy 2005-2009).

The South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme coordinates the efforts of 29 member governments in tackling environmental problems in the region. The SPREP Action Strategy identifies the urgent need for training of biodiversity conservators and environmental managers and, because of low staffing levels, remoteness and difficulties of communication in the region, also recommends that training be delivered *"using the distance and flexible learning (DFL) model"*.

This project to develop a Distance and Flexible Learning (DFL) programme for the region has also grown out of an earlier Darwin Initiative short-course training scheme for the Pacific (162/8/009), that received excellent reviews from independent DI assessors, and recommendations to extend the training reach and impact of the programme by employing the distance-learning format.

The project aims to build the capacity of the University of the South Pacific in Fiji to develop and deliver a DFL programme across the region that provides the vocational education and training needed for conservation practitioners to address the environmental issues facing small islands. In doing so, the project will also assist SPREP member countries in meeting their commitments to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),

The Project is also in line with other SIDS multi-lateral environmental agreements - including the Barbados Program of Action, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and Mauritius Strategy - all of which emphasise biodiversity conservation, environmental management and sustainable development in island nations with limited natural resources and skills bases. It is also fully congruent with the priorities of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas "Task Force on Island Conservation and Protected Areas" (TAFICOPA).

2. Project Partnerships

The key partners in this project are the International Centre for Protected Landscapes in the UK and the Institute of Applied Sciences of the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. This partnership was initially developed through the former Darwin Initiative project 162/8/009 (Biodiversity Conservation Training – Pacific Island States) and the very existence of the current project is itself a reflection of the continued commitment of this partnership. In 2001 the IAS established the Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable development (PACE–SD) to work with relevant sections of the University, regional and international organisations, regional governments and NGOs to promote environmentally sustainable development in the Pacific through teaching, training and research-based capacity building. The primary focus of this project is to build the capacity of this Centre to deliver high quality and accessible biodiversity conservation training across the region.

In addition to the core project 'team' at ICPL and USP, another partner in the project is the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

SPREP is the Pacific region's major inter-governmental organization charged with protecting and managing the environment and natural resources. Its mandate is to promote cooperation in the Pacific islands region and to provide assistance in order to protect and improve the environment and to ensure sustainable development for present and future generations.

SPREP was a core partner in the former Darwin project and remains engaged in the current project activities, particularly in respect of promoting the training opportunities for conservation practitioners.

Other conservation and development organisations in the region have also been engaged for the purpose of this project, particularly with a view to their continued support for the key project outcome (the DFL programme) – their support is seen as critical to its future sustainability. They include: the Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI), the National Trust of Fiji, Birdlife International, WWF, and the IUCN Regional Office in Suva, Fiji.

The project has also benefited in earlier years from the support of colleagues at the UK-based NGO Wild Resources Ltd. Wild Resources (WR) is engaged in applied ecological research on products harvested from tropical and temperate forests in particular, and provides training and

facilitation in the development of new support tools and services for wild product management around the world. With WR's support we have been able to incorporate in our materials, cutting-edge approaches and methodologies, particularly in respect of the sustainable development of natural resource-based enterprise.

Inevitably, while the commitment to these partnerships remains strong in principle, it is necessary to reflect on our concern that the current global financial crisis threatens the longer term capacity of USP to deliver the outcomes of this project. In particular, the Institute of Applied Sciences (our partner at USP) for example has lost both academic and administrative staff during the latter part of this project.

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project activities

It should be noted in the first instance that an extension of this project (to end of September 09) has been granted to address a request by South Pacific partners to re-schedule activities to enable back-to-back delivery of two of our accredited training courses. Thus this report does not represent the Final Report of the three-year project nor, in effect, the full 'annual' report of this period's activities.

3.2 Progress towards Project Outputs

The baseline project implementation timetable for this period states:

June 2008, second phase of course development complete

June 2008 workshop to review second phase materials and advertise final form of DFL programme

Certificate trainees complete

September 2008 second cohort of students to begin their studies

Progress:

The second phase of course development is now complete with the exception of the delivery (in July 2009) of back-to-back courses on community conservation and invasive species in the South Pacific (see 3.1 above).

A visit was made to ICPL in September 2008 by Prof. W. Aalbersberg, project leader from USP. The purpose was to review second phase materials and deal with other outstanding project issues. The visit was very productive. DL materials were reviewed; planning for residential courses and respective contributions discussed; and issues relating to accreditation and University validation clarified. Discussions were also held on opportunities for promoting the programme and mode of delivery within other island regions. Prof. Aalbersberg developed this further through networking at the World Conservation Congress shortly afterwards.

Final refinement of DL materials was based on the September review and has now been completed by ICPL. The menu of modules and courses that comprise the DFL programme at USP is complete (see list below). This enables various combinations of distance learning modules and / or short residential courses to be undertaken, to enable students in the South Pacific region to pursue post graduate certificate, diploma or (ultimately) masters' level programmes through alternative (residential and/or distance learning) channels. Elements now include:

- Foundations of Protected Area Management (distance learning – single unit)
- Tools and skills for Protected Area Management (distance learning – single unit)
- Management and Business Planning for Conservation Areas (distance learning – single unit)

- The Science behind Protected Areas (residential short course – single unit)
- Pacific Islands Community Conservation Course – PICCC (residential course – double unit)
- Invasive Species in the South Pacific (residential short course – single unit)

Candidates may complete one double or two single units to qualify for a PG Certificate. To receive a PG Diploma they must complete four single units or one double and two single units. The masters' programme will comprise the PG Diploma plus a dissertation. Students cannot combine the DL module on Tools and Skills for Protected Area Management and the PICCC.

The DFL programme in general is now receiving broad promotion in the region through its dedicated brochure, other institutional (USP) channels, and a regional conservation distribution list. Some specific elements still await USP validation before they can be formerly promoted as part of the programme.

The first tranche of students are working their way through the Diploma programme. A second tranche are in the process of being enrolled and numbers will be reported in the Final Project Report in September 2009.

While the above reflects the development of a comprehensive and flexible programme of education and training for community conservation practitioners in the South Pacific region, partners note that:

It has been reported to the UK partner that candidates of the distance learning modules to date are finding it difficult to apply themselves to the learning and in particular to write academic essays. They are generally much slower than anticipated in completing the modules (despite the support of University staff). This is being monitored by the South Pacific partner and the position is to be reviewed in July at the next visit of the UK partner.

Due to the slower than anticipated completion rate as raised in (1) above, the USP partner is reluctant at this stage to focus on wider promotion of the programme in other island regions - as had been proposed in the project documentation - pending a more established track record in the South Pacific.

3.3 Standard Measures

Table 1 Project Standard Output Measures

Code No.	Description	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	No. planned for this reporting period	Total planned from application
8	person weeks spent by UK staff in host country	3 person weeks spent in Fiji in two visits: October/November 2006 for programme planning; consultation; and networking; and March/April 2007 for contribution to PICCC	(No visits by UK staff as primary role this year was module development; electronic communication was sufficient to deliver. <i>NB ICPL is now focusing on reducing its carbon footprint wherever possible, in line with its Welsh Assembly Government's Green Dragon Environmental Standard</i>	4 person weeks to be spent by UK staff in host country in June/July 2009, as per project extension. 2 person weeks spent by South Pacific partner in UK. (scheduled to coincide with visit to World Conservation Congress – saving on additional long haul travel.	3(5 including visit of south Pacific partner to UK)	4 (6 including visit of partner to UK)	12
15A	2 local press releases in UK (2006/7 and 2008/9)	1 press release in the Western Mail (national newspaper of Wales) Making Waves in the Pacific: Aberystwyth Centre helps conservation initiative in Fiji. 19 April 2006		Propose press release upon completion of project (September 09).	1	1	2
15D	2 national press releases in host country (2006/7 and 2008/9)	USP website article about Darwin project only. Waiting for programme launch for further press releases for maximum benefit.		Press release in host country scheduled in connection with course in June/July		1	2

Code No.	Description	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	No. planned for this reporting period	Total planned from application
17B	Dissemination network enhanced to provide for publicity and feedback on DI distance learning scheme	Network of local and regional organisations for consultation and support re. the DFL programme established. PICCC trainee support engaged for feedback and as possible DFL candidates.	As for Year 1. Networking continues.	Ongoing. Has provided some useful feedback on distance learning materials and contributed to reviews.	1	1	1
21	Distance learning secretariat established at Darwin Pacific Training Centre at USP, Fiji	Secretariat / management team for the DFL programme has been set up within USP (Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development)	Management team continues.	Continues but personnel reduced due to economic crisis.	1	1	1
6A (NB Not included in original bid)	Trainees complete conservation course	12 trainees completed Part I (4 weeks training) of PICCC. Part II will take place in November 07. (see below)	PICCC continued in 2007 with 6 month home-based projects, followed by Part II (2 weeks taught course) completed in November 2007. Included awareness raising and introduction to the new Protected Areas Programme on offer through this project. Now being accredited as part of DFL programme.	Residential course scheduled for June/July. Numbers not yet known.	12	12 ? (final number not yet available)	20
6B	Training weeks to be provided	Members of the project team made a major contribution to a 4 week training course (PICCC). Their contribution helped to		UK partner will engage throughout the four week course, as under 6B in Year One.			

Code No.	Description	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	No. planned for this reporting period	Total planned from application
		ensure (a) that the training continues to provide cutting edge concepts, skills and approaches; and (b) to secure interest of trainees and their feedback in relation to the developing DFL programme.					
3	Number of people to attain other qualifications (in this case PG Certificate and PG Diploma)		8 candidates enrolled for Certificate (February 2008)	Early candidates slow to complete but continuing. Enrolment for 09/10 underway. Final numbers will be given in Final Project Report later this year		8 completions anticipated	10
14A/ 14B	Conferences / seminars organised / attended to present / disseminate findings		Seminar organised as a side-event of 8 th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas	Representation at the World Conservation Congress, Barcelona July 09 visit to include seminar presentation	2	1	1

Table 2 Publications

Type (eg journals, manual, CDs)	Detail (title, author, year)	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (eg contact address, website)	Cost £

3.4 Progress towards the project purpose and outcomes

The project purpose is stated as being to: “assist small island developing states to address the decline in biodiversity and habitat loss through training of trainers in community-based conservation and sustainable development using the distance learning model”

The focus of the project to date has been on the development of distance learning modules and short courses for the establishment of a DFL programme to run through USP, for candidates from the South Pacific Island States. By building the capacity of the Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (Institute of Applied Sciences) at USP to deliver a programme that will address these critical issues to a specific target group in the region (particularly community conservation practitioners and trainers), the project will in due course achieve its purpose.

The important assumptions for achieving the project purpose relate to continuing support from regional actors – specifically the key partners, USP and SPREP, and other conservation agencies and organisations in the region. While in principle the portents for this continuing support remain good, it is clear that the global economic crisis is already impacting on the higher education sector in the South Pacific as it is on other sectors. Staff numbers in the Institute of the project partner at USP are reduced and support structures for the running of the DFL programme (in-kind contributions) are increasingly limited.

Otherwise, progress towards providing the ‘vehicle’ to deliver the project purpose has been satisfactory. Although the development of distance learning modules fell a little behind schedule and, as often happens, institutional validation has taken longer than partners would wish, a wider and more flexible approach to the education programme than had originally been anticipated, has been prepared. Candidates from across the region have already begun to follow some of the modules/courses and thereby the project has begun in a small way to build the regional expertise necessary to address the critical issues relating to conservation and sustainable development.

The project has been granted a no-cost extension to September 2009 to allow for the UK partner to support a further element of the DFL programme – back-to-back accredited short courses on community conservation and invasive species. The visit will also provide a final opportunity for reviewing progress in the overall delivery of the DFL programme.

The final project report to be produced thereafter will include electronic copies of the DL modules developed and summary content of the residential courses offered.

3.5 Progress towards impact on biodiversity, sustainable use or equitable sharing of biodiversity benefits

As has been stated in previous reports, the Darwin funding for this project covers what is, in effect, a development period. The main benefits of the project in terms of its impact on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development will only be experienced some time after the funding period ends, when the education programme is well established and accessible through a variety of mechanisms to practising professionals throughout the region... and when they have had the opportunity to put into practice what they have learned through the programme. Long term sustainability of the education programme at USP is what we are aiming for in order to achieve this goal.

4. Monitoring, evaluation and lessons

Updating of modules – frequency will vary from one module to another. The first module of the programme has already been updated.

Revision of materials according to feedback from colleagues in the region - ongoing

Monitoring of student progress on the DL modules is causing partners to consider changes to the academic demands of the programme. The position will be reviewed in July at the next visit of the UK partner to USP.

Final review of the project activities will take place in July.

5. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

Questions raised by the previous review were addressed on our six month report in October 2008, as follows:

‘Three of the students enrolled for the Certificate programme are former participants of the PICC Course that was the subject of our initial Darwin Project in partnership with USP. Others were enrolled through the promotional brochure that was developed as part of this Darwin project. Advertisement is now also being done via regional conservation distribution lists.

Current students include: three from Papua New Guinea (conservation NGO workers); two from the Solomon Islands (one NGO person and one from the Government Environment Department); one from Samoa (Forestry Department), and two from Fiji (NGO staff). All of the above work in protected area management in some way, largely in relation to locally-managed marine areas.

6. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

It should be noted that this Report does not cover the whole year’s activities. A no-cost extension to the end of September has been granted by the Darwin Initiative, to allow for a re-scheduling in the delivery of short courses, as requested by the USP/SPREP partners. A Final Project Report will be produced thereafter (as agreed), which will provide a full account of outstanding activities and will incorporate programme materials developed through this project.

7. Sustainability

The aim of the UK partner in this project has always been, and continues to be, to reach the point where USP is able to sustain the delivery of this DFL conservation programme in the region, without ICPL’s support. With the exception of the final element of support for the project in July 2009, the systems and resources are now in place for this to be the case. However, it is becoming clear that funding issues at the University of the South Pacific may threaten the future sustainability of the programme. For example, the project leader understands that both academic and administrative staffing at the institution are being reduced. Clearly, it must also be recognised that the global economic crisis will affect the conservation sector as it does others – we are aware that organisations are reducing staff numbers and training budgets are being cut. These issues were broadly covered in our project assumptions (See logframe analysis in Annex 2).

8. Dissemination

The University of the South Pacific continues to promote the distance learning modules and residential short courses through its usual channels. They also receive promotion through the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme.

9. Project Expenditure

Table 3 Project expenditure during the reporting period (Defra Financial Year 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009)

Item	Budget (please indicate which document you refer to if other than your project application or annual grant offer letter)	Expenditure	Variance
Rent, rates, heating, overheads etc			
Office costs (eg postage, telephone, stationery)			
Travel and subsistence			
Printing			
Conferences, seminars, etc			
Capital items/equipment (specify)			
Others (specify)			
Salaries (specify by individual)			
TOTAL			

10. **OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project during the reporting period (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes**

I agree for LTS and the Darwin Secretariat to publish the content of this section

Annex 1 Report of progress and achievements against Logical Framework for Financial Year: 2008/09

Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2008 - March 2009	Actions required/planned for next period
<p>Goal: <i>To draw on expertise relevant to biodiversity from within the United Kingdom to work with local partners in countries rich in biodiversity but constrained in resources to achieve</i></p> <p><i>The conservation of biological diversity,</i></p> <p><i>The sustainable use of its components, and</i></p> <p><i>The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources</i></p>			<i>(do not fill not applicable)</i>
Purpose			
<p>Output 1. One distance learning course in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development for SIDS</p>	Distance and flexible learning programme established and running efficiently.	Distance and Flexible Learning (DFL) Programme running through the University of the South Pacific at PG Certificate, Diploma and Masters' level.	
Activity 1.2 Optional DFL materials completed		Achieved but first running of optional residential course in July 2009; expanding menu of modules/courses planned by USP beyond end of project.	
<p>Output 2. Ten conservation workers trained with DI bursaries by Year three</p>	Enrolment numbers at University of South Pacific; participant numbers on residential courses	First tranche of students enrolled February 2008 and following distance learning modules; Second tranche of students currently being enrolled (numbers will be given in September 2009 Final Report)	

Activity 2.1. Activity 1.1 Certificate trainees complete June 2008		Not yet achieved – first tranche of students started late in February 2008. Completion rates of coursework are variable – to be reviewed in July 2009
Activity 2.2. Second cohort of students to begin study September 2008		Behind schedule. Enrolment currently underway. Numbers and progress will be reported in final Report, September 2009.
Activity 2.3 Diploma trainees complete, June 2009		Behind schedule. Enrolment currently underway. Numbers and progress will be reported in final Report, September 2009.
Output 3. Project Reports and 2 published articles on training scheme	Project Reports submitted Article 2008	Project reports submitted as required. Final Project Report outstanding – to be submitted by November 2009 as agreed.

Annex 2 Project's full current logframe

<i>Project summary</i>	<i>Measurable Indicators</i>	<i>Means of verification</i>	<i>Important Assumptions</i>
<p><i>Goal:</i></p> <p><i>To draw on expertise relevant to biodiversity from within the United Kingdom to work with local partners in countries rich in biodiversity but poor in resources to achieve</i></p> <p><i>the conservation of biological diversity,</i></p> <p><i>the sustainable use of its components, and</i></p> <p><i>the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources</i></p>			

<p>10.1 Purpose:</p> <p>Assist small island developing states to address decline in biodiversity and habitat loss through training of trainers in community-based conservation and sustainable development using the distance learning model.</p>	<p>Numbers of scheme-related SIDS conservation projects</p> <p>Duration of resources for sustainability of Pacific Training Centre and network</p> <p>Amount of leveraged funding for scaling-up of activity to global SIDS community</p>	<p>Project reports, trainee and employer feedback</p> <p>Project, SPREP and USP official reports and accounts</p> <p>Project-wide accounts (DI plus project partners and other agency funding)</p>	<p>Favourable climate among trainee employers for <i>de novo</i> conservation project activity.</p> <p>SPREP and USP continue support for DFL network</p> <p>Favourable climate for support of environmental action in wider SIDS stakeholder and donor communities</p>
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<p>10.2 Outputs</p> <p>1 Distance learning course in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development for SIDS</p> <p>10 conservation workers trained with DI bursaries by Year 3 (>20 with leveraged funding)</p> <p>2 module development workshops and 2 trainee induction courses</p> <p>Project Reports & 2 published articles on training scheme</p>	<p>Distance and flexible learning programme established and running efficiently</p> <p>Annual numbers of conservation workers trained in-post, and scheme-related community beneficiaries</p> <p>Numbers of, and participants in, project workshops/cours</p> <p>Number of project publications</p>	<p>USP/SPREP and project reports</p> <p>USP/SPREP and project reports plus trainee and employee feedback briefings</p> <p>USP/SPREP and project reports</p> <p>USP/SPREP and project reports</p>	<p>SPREP and USP continue support for programme and DFL network</p> <p>Favourable climate among SIDS conservation agencies for (subsidised) employee training</p> <p>Continuing stability and commitment of main project partners.</p> <p>Project principals work to schedule</p>
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10.3 Activities	10.4 Activity Milestones	10.5 Assumptions
Project commences	May 2006	Political stability in primary host country (Fiji)
Core and compulsory DFL materials completed	June 2007	Continuing stability and commitment of main project partners
Programme Workshop 1	June 2007	Host institution continues support for DFL network
First cohort of trainees begin	September 2007	Favourable climate for support of environmental action in wider SIDS stakeholder community
Certificate trainees complete	June 2008	(portents are positive and favourable for all these assumptions)
Ancillary/optional DFL materials completed	June 2008	
Programme Workshop 2		
Second cohort of trainees begin study	June 2008	
	September 2008	
Diploma trainees complete	June 2009	
Programme articles published	July 2007, July 2008	
Global SIDS training scheme funding secured	January 2009	

Annex 3 Onwards – supplementary material (optional but encouraged as evidence of project achievement)

This may include outputs of the project, but need not necessarily include all project documentation. For example, the abstract of a conference would be adequate, as would be a summary of a thesis rather than the full document. If we feel that reviewing the full document would be useful, we will contact you again to ask for it to be submitted.

Checklist for submission

	Check
Is the report less than 5MB? If so, please email to Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk putting the project number in the Subject line.	
Is your report more than 5MB? If so, please advise Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk that the report will be send by post on CD, putting the project number in the Subject line.	
Have you included means of verification? You need not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	
Do you have hard copies of material you want to submit with the report? If so, please make this clear in the covering email and ensure all material is marked with the project number.	
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	