

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2008)

Project Ref. No.	16-013
Project Title	Strengthening partnerships for Ramsar implementation in South-East Asia: Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam
Country(ies)	Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam
UK Organisation	BirdLife International
Collaborator(s)	Ramsar Administrative Authorities (RAA) in Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam; Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BCST); Malaysian Nature Society (MNS)
Project Leader	Richard Grimmett
Report date	31 st October 2008
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).

1. Round table discussions were held in three of the four countries to prepare for Ramsar COP 10. The round table meeting in Cambodia was postponed (although several meetings between the RAA and BirdLife were held). The Darwin project provided a briefing to the four countries on each of the 31 COP 10 draft resolutions and 32 information documents. The briefings proved to be a valuable resource in the preparation of country positions on the resolutions. In three of the four countries (not Thailand), input from the Darwin project made a significant contribution towards the preparedness of the country delegations for COP 10.

2. National reports were prepared for each of the four countries, with the project providing major support to the RAAs in preparing these. There is frequent mention of Darwin project activities in the national report for Malaysia.

3. Site conservation strategies were reviewed during a three week visit in July by Simba Chan (member of project management team). The visit covered four of the sites where conservation activities are supported by the project (in Thailand and Malaysia). Community meetings were held at Bako Buntal Bay, Malaysia in May and July to solicit comments and input to the planned activities. The meetings were held jointly with the Sarawak Economic Development Corporation and included discussions about the proposed visitor centre at Buntal. Discussion on the conservation of the North Central Selangor Coast (NSCS) is underway with government representatives. Position papers and proposals have been submitted to the State Executive Council member for Environment regarding the potential designation of NSCS as a Ramsar Site. In Cambodia, an inter-ministry sub committee has been established to resolve outstanding matters prior to the designation of Kampong Trach as a Sarus Crane Reserve.

4. Training was provided for local stakeholders at Beung Preak Lapouv, Cambodia. This was largely refreshment training in monitoring, patrolling, education and awareness raising, held to coincide with monthly monitoring meetings. Local people were also trained in the removal of the alien invasive species *mimosa pigra* which is invading the grasslands/wetlands. A training programme was organised for volunteers on protection of the Inner Gulf, Thailand. The volunteers will seek to strengthen knowledge among local communities, organise networks of residents, and arrange educational programmes for local schools.

5. Key papers on Ramsar; at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Cambodia, and with the approval of the RAA (Ministry of Environment, MoE), the project commissioned a legal study to clarify whether sites under the authority of MAFF can be designated as Ramsar Sites (MAFF has been unwilling to allow important wetland sites under their jurisdiction to be included in a list of candidate Ramsar Sites, nor sanction any feasibility studies to assess their suitability for Ramsar Site designation - five sites had been identified for feasibility studies). The study concluded that it was legally impossible for any wetlands under MAFFs jurisdiction to be designated as Ramsar Sites.

6. Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) were prepared by the project for three Ramsar Sites in Cambodia (the RIS were more than six years old). The project helped the RAA for Vietnam draft the RIS for a proposed Ramsar Site (Tram Chim) although this was not submitted in time to be designated before COP 10. The project also drafted an RIS for the Inner Gulf, Thailand.

7. Wetland monitoring; MNS has completed its wetland monitoring framework, and this is being reviewed at the BirdLife Secretariat. This will be tested in January (in three countries) when training will be provided.

Work to explore linkages between wetlands and poverty reduction, and on sustainable financing for wetland conservation, has been deferred until the second half of year 2.

In **preparation for COP 10**, a side event has been booked for 2nd November, where the project will present some results from government-civil society collaboration for wetland conservation. Presentations will be made for each of the four countries on site-based work with local groups, and collaboration to advance Ramsar designation. Two RAA and four civil society members will be funded to attend the COP. During this presentation the RAA for Cambodia is expected to announce the intention to declare Preak Toal in the Tonle Sap as a new Ramsar Site.

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.

1. There have been significant changes in personnel in RAAs in Vietnam and Malaysia. The new staff have very little relevant experience. This has slowed progress (including finalisation of the tool kit in Malaysia– see Year 1 report). The Darwin project is providing significant capacity building support to these new staff, including considerable assistance in preparing for COP 10. Momentum is expected to pick up after the COP.

2. Uncertainty in Cambodia over whether sites under MAFF can be designated as Ramsar Sites led to major difficulties during project implementation in Cambodia. This resulted in the need to withdraw a leaflet on candidate Ramsar Sites, halt plans to undertake feasibility studies for five Ramsar Sites, and the postponement of a national intergovernmental/ngo workshop. The situation was clarified through a legal review, accepted by both Ministries (see above). It will not now be possible to circulate the list of candidate Ramsar Sites (despite its approval by the RAA), and any new Ramsar Sites can only be areas under the jurisdiction of MoE.

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

No, no change in agreement is necessary

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?

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**