



Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2014)

Project Ref No	21-013
Project Title	Alternative livelihood opportunities for marine protected areas fisherwomen
Country(ies)	Sierra-Leone
Lead Organisation	University of Stirling (UoS)
Collaborator(s)	Fourth Bay College, University of Sierra Leone Institute of Marine Biology and Oceanography (IMBO), Njala University (NJU), Macalister Elliot and Partners Ltd. (MEP).
Project Leader	<i>Dr Francis Murray</i>
Report date and number (eg HYR3)	<i>31 Oct 14 – HYR4</i>
Project website	

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) 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 to end September).

Project activities in Sierra Leone have been constrained by the regional Ebola outbreak (section 2a).

An in-country project inception meeting and joint preparatory activities scheduled for June 2014 had to be postponed in anticipation of the situation improving. Eventually in August two of the project partners were able to meet at the University of Stirling for a planning workshop with the other partners joining by teleconference. Criteria for selection of target communities were refined, mapping, survey methods/ formats formulated, administrative issues communicated to partners and a collaboration agreement formulated.

Dr Sankoh (IMBO) and Dr Wadsworth (NJU) managed to coordinate to field visits of 3-4 days each to the Sherbro River MPA in April and May 2014 (both visits during the dry season). Key aims of the visits included stakeholder analysis, market assessments, identification of potential intervention sites/ communities and collection of baseline socio-economic data. In the absence of the UoS aquaculture technical specialists, the surveys concentrated more on the socio-economic conditions of mangrove resource users and mapping of resources. Findings were augmented by secondary data from literature reviews. Some key findings summarised from the visit reports are as follows:

a) In all 10 communities visited around Bonthe, population pressure is increasing reflected in a higher proportion of children than adults in the population. Some communities consist of a single family (for example 4 brothers, their wives and children) and generally social cohesion seems to be very high (although sometimes rural elites are difficult for an outsider to identify and we need to be aware that there may be hidden segregation and discrimination).

b) Education levels are very low (we found only one functioning and one non-functioning primary school in 11 satellite communities). Because the communities depend on trading knowledge of Krio (the lingua franca) is good among men, but they are more communicative in local Shabro and Mende dialects necessitating appropriate translation skills.

c) Limited resource base; Fishing, oyster collection and associated trading activities provide the

principle source of livelihood for all the communities. 5 years ago, there were less than 10 fishing boats and now the 10 communities visited around Bonthe had over 50 boats. In almost all communities visited, wild mangrove oyster-harvesters reported increased travel time to harvesting sites over the year. This also gave rise to growing safety concerns as the risk of canoes capsizing is higher when fully loaded with oysters is increased. Two recent such fatal accidents were reported on the Island. In half of the communities even water has to be brought in from outside (up to a 6 hour round trip).

d) The distribution of oyster beds is very patchy, a broad belt can be identified but within that belt densities vary widely, but whether this is environmental, random or a result of exploitation is unknown. A more detailed mapping of oyster locations is urgently needed.

e) There is no published data on bathymetry and the turbid nature of the water makes it very difficult to know where shallow and deep water are. This has an impact on the types of technology (rafts, long lines, floating baskets etc.) that might be appropriate.

f) There is no published data on typical wave heights and directions, descriptions of storms and wave conditions are difficult to appreciate (we've only ever seen the area in the dry season).

g) Some communities are only accessible at high tide making planning trips complex.

h) There is very little variation in how oysters are prepared and consumed, presumably because of the very limited access to food. Diet is very limited, published data (from an NGO) confirms the fragile state of the economy.

i) Oysters are the only source of income for some households (generally female headed household), and these households are extremely fragile. The interaction with the Marine Protected Area co-management committees will need very careful management.

k) Value chains: Some villages have insulated ice boxes where more valuable seafoods are kept chilled until a middle-man comes to purchase them (possibly by Korean trawlers - the middle-man also supplies the ice).

l) Final short-listing of communities to work with still requires further understanding of the environmental suitability of the sites. From preliminary interaction we anticipated good cooperation potential from all communities visited; although each is unique they share characteristics to all efficient extrapolation based on key independent socio-economic variables.

In October Dr Murray made a four-day trip to S. Wales to benchmark initiatives to establish shellfish (inc. oyster) culture and marketing as livelihood diversification strategies for traditional shellfish gatherers whose livelihoods have been blighted by disease outbreaks in the Burry Inlet (formally one of the most productive cockle-fisheries in the UK). Results summarised in a trip report.

2a. 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.

An outbreak of Ebola started in Guinea in December 2013. By May 2014 when we undertook the last field trip to Bonthe there was already a “no non-essential” travel-advisory in place. Road blocks and quarantines are increasingly applied making even local travel by in-country partners progressively more difficult. Ebola has continued to spread, until last week it looked possible that the isolation of Bonthe might protect it; but it appears that there is now at least one case in Bonthe. The Red Cross believe that the outbreak can be controlled in 6 months but this depends on promises of help actually being delivered and implemented in an effective manner.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS:	Yes
Formal change request submitted:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Pending response

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £28,000 (Est. from Q1 & Q2 advances)

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully as it is unlikely that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year.

The Ebola crisis has severely constrained our ability to conduct field work during the first 6 months of the project resulting in significant underspend. Based on the most recent Red Cross reports (Section 2a) we are hopeful that international travel may be resumed after a further 6 months. However we must acknowledge that this represents a best-case scenario and further delays could occur. Accordingly we are requesting a 9 months no-cost project extension - though this will necessarily be subject to continual review of the efficacy of on-going attempts to combat the epidemic (and linked to this lifting of the FCO travel advisory to Sierra Leone). In the meantime we will continue to progress desk-based activities. IMBO is also seeking to recruit a full-time research assistant – if possible from the research area to coordinate additional primary base-line data collection.

4. 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 can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 20-035 Darwin Half Year Report**