



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, UK
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 (UK) – Dr Saliue Sankoh (Sierra Leone)</i>
Report date and number (eg HYR3)	<i>2 Dec 15 – HYR2</i>
Project website	<i>http://www.stir.ac.uk/aquaculture-mangrove-oyster/</i>

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).

The on-going Ebola crisis continued to restrict UK partner travel to Sierra Leone between April and September. This has continued limit implementation of project activities several months beyond the expectation that 'travel restrictions to Sierra Leone should be relaxed by the middle of 2015' in our request for a no-cost project extension sanctioned by LTS International in early 2015.

Sierra Leone was formally declared Ebola-free by the World Health Organisation on 7 November 2015. Planning is now in an advanced stage for a first joint mission to the research areas in the third week of January 2016 (coinciding with the major spat-fall season knowledge of which is essential for selection of intervention sites).

In the interim period of travel delays steps have been taken to cement our collaboration with Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) coordinators of a highly complementary oyster project in the Sherbro River Delta (further details in project technical annexe).

Pending finalisation of an MoU, a joint field visit to the Sherbro field area was scheduled by local coordinator Dr. Saliue Sankoh (IMBO) and EJF specialist Mr. James Green (Whitstable Oysters) for October 2013. Joint data-collection (and sharing) protocols have been agreed on environmental sampling considering 4 key background variables affecting oyster production performance and potential food-safety risks (a) position in estuary (b) wet - dry season (c) spring - neap tides (d) diurnal tides. Key data collection parameters will include water salinity, turbidity and temperature, dissolved oxygen (& potentially chlorophyll-A). Dr. Richard Quilliam (UoS, Dept. of Biological and Environmental Science), a specialist in pathogen ecology will also join the mission in January to support local capacity building for assessment of faecal indicator organism (FOI) oyster contamination risks. The potential to deploy Ebola legacy laboratory inherited by Njala University is also being explored.

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.

A period of administrative uncertainty following a change in the Vice Chancellorship of project partner Njala University now appears to be settling. The new VC Dr Ndomahina was formally director of our second project partner IMBO where he has been superseded by Dr Raymond Johnstone. Dr Ndomahina currently remained IMBO project signatory over this reporting period.

Issues around working boat safety and sustainability have also been raised through the joint mission described above. Traditional dug outs were constructed from larger hard-wood tree species which are now relatively rare. Locals are resorting to use of faster growing species (especially *Ceiba pentrandia*) with much shorter life-spans (around only 18 months) with greater attendant safety issues. Although not strictly within the envisaged project design, solutions to this problem do need to be considered as/if the project encourages people to harvest from off-shore racks.

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 (details in first yearly report)

Formal change request submitted: Yes (details in first yearly report)

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes (details in first yearly report)

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: £

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. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project and would like to talk to someone about the options available this year, please indicate below when you think you might be in a position to do this and what the reasons might be:

Following the recent WHO 'Ebola-free' declaration in Nov 2015 - delays in expenditure due to the Ebola crisis are starting to be redressed. However the extension of the crisis beyond mid 2015 as anticipated in our extension request is likely to push underspend further forward into successive financial years. Further clarity on the key area of intervention related costs will be had after the planned joint-consortium mission to research areas planned for in Jan 2016. A revised dispersement schedule will be communicated to LLS thereafter (as part of the Year 2 annual report due on 1 Apr 2016). If and as necessary we will then make a further request for permission to carry this underspend into the 2015-16 and 2017-18 financial years.

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

NA