



Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2014)

Project Ref No	21-017
Project Title	Community-based conservation for livelihood development in Lake Ossa Manatee Reserve
Country(ies)	Cameroon
Lead Organisation	Zoological Society of London
Collaborator(s)	Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) Cameroon, Watershed Task Group (WTG), Cameroon Wildlife Conservation Society (CWCS), Cameroon-Ecology
Project Leader	Chris Ransom
Report date and number (eg HYR3)	31st October 2014, HYR1
Project website	http://www.zsl.org/conservation/regions/africa/lake-ossa-wildlife-reserve-cameroon ; http://net-works.com/locations/cameroon/ .

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 first two months of the grant period were spent recruiting a project manager and organising logistics. An internal candidate, Lauren Redmore, an experienced social scientist who was involved in the scoping and design of the project and previously ZSL Cameroon's Social and Communications Advisor was offered the post. A house in Beach, the administrative town where the primary implementing partners (the MINFOF Conservation Service) are located, was rented to provide accommodation and work space for project staff. Equipment was also purchased for the project, including a vehicle, a computer, a boat, local fish ID guides and GPS units. Refurbishments were made to the MINFOF Conservation Service office, including the construction of a two-stall latrine behind the office.

In June initial partner meetings were held to plan the implementation of project activities. Prior to starting with activities in the field, ZSL and the Conservation Service organized held free prior and informed consent meetings with all 11 Lake Ossa communities (Mevia, Songueland, Lindema, Pongo Pitti, Beach, Holland, KM3, KM6, KM8, Kongue Lac Ossa, and KM11) to present the global project to them and discuss specific activities. These meetings were important to increase knowledge about community rights, to establish community participation, and to obtain community consent prior to commencement of project activities.

One of the challenges that participating community members highlighted during these meetings was the lack of legal basis for Community Management Committees to enable them to effectively intervene in lake management. Ensuring Committee legality will facilitate re-establishment of equitable and representative Community Management Committees. Discussions have been held with the Sous-Prefet of Dizangué, who is very supportive of the project, to ensure that Community Management Committees will receive legal support for interventions in lake management.

Additionally, community members participating in FPIC meetings mentioned disappointment following previous projects that have made promises but not followed through and delivered. This presents a challenge to the project which will have to be taken seriously and managed. We will ensure frequent meetings with community members, including through VSLA

establishment and trainings, as well as door-to-door techniques, to update them on project progress and ensure they are consulted and engaged in project activities. ZSL is beginning household-level data collection which will also help develop relationships with community members.

Discussions have been held with Pascal Desmedt, Assistant Director General, and Caroline Sonck, Social Coordinator, of SAFACAM, the neighbouring agroindustry. These discussions focused on project collaboration, particularly as it relates to the impact of workers on the lake, as well as the possibility for their participation in the Net-Works net recycling initiative. These discussions were positive and we are currently in discussions for developing an MOU. In addition to direct collaboration with SAFACAM for improved lake management, a family agricultural school (Ecole Familial Agricole) for youth from villages around Dizangué has opened within the SAFACAM plantation. This school provides good opportunities for communication with parents of students and their relative lake-side villages. The school is also developing modules on environmental protection with related practical components, and this provides an opportunity to encourage tree nurseries and reforestation around the boundaries of the lake.

ZSL's project team have developed methodologies for data collection and monitoring using approaches from ZSL's work in the Philippines and early data collection has begun to establish baseline data and indicators. During this data collection a participatory assessment of enterprise opportunities, including Net-Works and community tree nurseries, will also be carried out. It is important to ensure that the Conservation Service ecoguards who will participate in data collection and community outreach have a basic understanding of science-based approaches in order to effectively implement project activities. As such, two workshops have been organized to train ecoguards on freshwater ecology and social science-based approaches and community interventions.

One workshop was organized during a project support visit from Dr. Nicholas Hill, a ZSL freshwater and marine ecology expert. This workshop was centred on experiences in establishing locally managed marine areas in the Philippines, which provided the Conservation Service a better understanding of how and why community-based interventions work abroad. A second workshop for the Conservation Service provided more in-depth training in freshwater ecology and lake management, community-based approaches, Net-Works and lake clean-up activities, community banking systems, and community tree nurseries and reforestation. Presentations used during these workshops serve as early drafts of training modules to be delivered to community members, both through VSLAs and through Community Management Committees. Additionally, various outreach tools for working with community members were presented to and practiced by the Conservation Service to develop the capacity of the ecoguards to appropriately train VSLAs and Community Management Committees.

In the coming months, a training of trainers workshop will be carried out for VSLA field agents and VSLAs will be implemented in at least 3 fishing communities. The training modules on lake ecology, lake clean up, and tree nurseries that have been developed will be revised to be integrated into the VSLA and Community Management Committee programme. Additionally, ZSL and NGO partners will initiate activities to ensure comprehensive delivery of project outputs related to Community Management Committees, VSLA monitoring, socio-economic studies, and community tree nurseries.

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.

One unexpected development has been the outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa which has had thus far minimal impact on the project activities in the field. However, the preferred boat manufacturer in South Africa was unable to find a shipper willing to ship to Douala, delaying the purchase of the project boat. We do not expect this to have a significant impact on the project budget, though until we receive the project boat, the project will be reliant on local fishers for transport, which may slow down project activities in the lake. We are monitoring the Ebola outbreak to ensure the safety and security of all staff and project partners.

Overall, data collection to establish biological baselines has been delayed, partly due to low quality of data available from previous work carried out in Lake Ossa. Specifically, measurements for catch per unit effort of fish populations have been difficult to establish due to the limited available knowledge on scientific identification of fish species in Lake Ossa. ZSL's freshwater team will provide further support for identification. It has also been difficult to establish contact with the local delegate for the Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Fishing (MINEPIA) in charge of monitoring fish catches. It will be important to work in collaboration with MINEPIA to ensure that fish catch information is being collected in line with government protocol and can be useful to the Ministry for monitoring and reporting.

These issues have caused delays in the project progress. Efforts are being made by the project team to address these and put in place a plan to ensure that project activities can be implemented in a timely manner.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement? No

Discussed with LTS: Yes/No

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

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: £5000-£15000

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:

Due to the issues explained in section 2a and the delay in project start up due to recruitment of the project manager we are currently behind schedule with the project and therefore spending. Plans are being implemented to make up the time and we expect to be in a position to review progress and expenditure at the start of January 2015 at which time we would like to discuss available options if we are still anticipating an underspend on the project budget.

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**