

Darwin Initiative Main Project Half Year Report (due 31 October 2015)

Project Ref No	22-002
Project Title	Complete Altitudinal Rainforest Transect for research and conservation in PNG
Country(ies)	Papua New Guinea
Lead Organisation	University of Sussex
Collaborator(s)	Binatang Research Center, Papua New Guinea
Project Leader	Dr Alan J A Stewart
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	18/11/15, HYR1
Project website/Twitter/Blog/Instagram etc	
Funder (DFID/Defra)	Defra

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 project has started well, with significant progress on a number of activities (descriptors taken from logframe are presented in italics):

Output 1:

Activity 1.1 Establish 8 study sites spaced at 500m elevation intervals from 200 to 3700 m asl; design replicated study plots at each site.

A field trip including four Binatang Research Center (BRC) paraecologists visited all eight potential study sites for the Complete Altitudinal Rainforest Transect (CART) project to gauge the level of interest amongst the local communities, discuss the logistics of biodiversity surveys and their interest in hosting research and developing conservation areas on their lands. This was an essential preliminary exercise as shown by the fact that the prospective site at 1,700 m had to be relocated due to community disputes regarding land ownership that would ultimately have made conservation difficult. A new site along the transect was found and is being developed by BRC staff.

Activity 1.2 Design and test sampling protocols for the six focal taxa (plants, ants, moths, butterflies, amphibians and birds); execute the sampling

BRC staged a survey of herbivorous insects and pollinators on *Ficus* trees along the altitudinal gradient. Sampling protocols for the other taxa are being worked on. Additionally, sampling protocols for the study of bat communities along the transects were tested by Peter Amick, a local Hons student recruited for the project, thus adding to the range of focal taxa to be studied.

Output 2:

Activity 2.1 Select suitable candidates for training from local communities and BRC.

We have started screening suitable candidates for training, recruited from local communities along the CART transect. Also, one recently graduated BSc student from the PNG University for Natural Resources and Environment – Mr Jacob Yombai – was recruited to the BRC staff and his training in insect ecology has started.

Activity 2.3 Design training programme, then implement training with regular feedback from the trainees in UK

Two BRC para-ecologists (Joseph Yalang and Salape Tulai) visited Europe for approximately two months for intensive training. They spent one month in the Czech Republic working with researchers at the Czech Academy of Sciences, assisting with field surveys and experiments and visiting local field sites. During a month-long stay in the UK, they spent one week at each of the following locations: University of Sussex (forest carbon estimation; visiting local temperate habitats); Entomology Department, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff (museum curatorial and insect specimen examination techniques); Stourhead National Trust estate (Basic Canopy Access course); University of Oxford (introduction to various sampling and experimental techniques with researchers who are currently working in collaboration with BRC; visits to local field sites). On their return journey, they spent two days in Singapore and two days in Brisbane visiting BRC's scientific collaborators.

Output 3:

Activity 3.1 Select four candidate students, enrol them at University of PNG and select suitable dissertation topics

We have recruited two students – Mr Peter Amick (BSc Hons) and Mr Billy Bau (MSc) to work on their biodiversity surveys along the CART transect (Amick: bats, Bau: plants). They both have staged a 1-month-long field expedition along the transect to explore the study sites and establish survey protocols for their particular groups.

Output 4:

Activity 4.1 Conduct detailed consultations with communities interested in conservation; identify land ownership in the field

We have initiated discussions on conservation with all the communities along the transect.

Output 5: Prepare research and tourist infrastructure etc.

No activity yet.

Other developments:

Equipment procurement: Toyota Landcruiser vehicle purchased for the project.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt 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.

No significant problems encountered.

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/No

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

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

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Estimated underspend: £
<p>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.</p> <p>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:</p>		

<p>4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</p>
<p>No</p>

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 e.g., Subject: 20-035 Darwin Half Year Report**