

## Darwin Fellowship - Final Report

(Please check guidance for submission deadlines, max 6 pages.)

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| Darwin Project Ref No.  | Project 162/12/002 and Fellowship EIDPS018   |
| Darwin Project Title  | Managing and Monitoring the Bushmeat Trade in Gabon                                    |
| Name of Darwin Fellow   | Anne Marie Ndong Obiang  |
| UK Organisation   | School of Biological and Environmental Sciences, University of Stirling                |
| Your Organisation   | Department of Wildlife and Hunting, Ministry of Water and Forests, Government of Gabon |
| Your role in your Organisation                                | Point person for Bushmeat  |
| Start/end date of Fellowship                                  | 1 July 2007 – 31 October 2008  |
| Location  | UK-Gabon   |
| Darwin Fellowship funding (£)                                 | £24,420  |
| Type of work (e.g. research, training, other, please specify) | Training – Academic study  |
| Main contact in UK Organisation                               | Dr Katharine Abernethy   |
| Author(s), date   | Anne Marie Ndong Obiang, Katharine Abernethy<br>December 2008.                         |

### 1. Background

- Briefly describe your involvement in the Darwin project before the start of your fellowship.

I had been a long time a Key person under the Darwin Initiative Funded Project (No 162/12/002) "Managing and Monitoring the Bushmeat Trade in Gabon" as the link to the Department of Wildlife and Hunting, Ministry of Water and Forests, Gabonese Administration. This has helped the project to organise a meeting on the role of administration in upholding the Gabonese wildlife law.

I had also had a vital role in organising missions carried out by the Gabonese anti-poaching team, and before the end of Darwin funded project Gibier until now I had been working full time on Bushmeat issues (CITES Bushmeat Point person for Gabon) and also become the facilitator between the NGO WCS Gabon, a partner in the Darwin project, and the Gabonese administration.

- Describe aim and objectives of the Fellowship, and programme of work.

The aim of the Darwin Fellowship is to allow the applicant, a civil servant in the Department of Fauna and Hunting (DFC) part of Gabonese Ministry of Water and Forestry, to gain a better understanding of conservation issues, including Biodiversity, Wildlife trade, Management and statistics. Through increased understanding, I and my colleagues will be able to participate in more active manner when working with international conservation NGO's that have project running in Gabon, such as WWF, WCS, and ZSL and represent the Gabonese Administrations position on International issues.

Through the training The DFC become better equipped to manage the unique wildlife of Gabon with me being able to also advise fellow civil servants in the Gabonese Ministry of Water and Forests with what I had learnt trough the training I was received trough this fellowship.

The first step of program work was to complete a TOEFEL English course in Gabon in July 2007. In September 2007 I went start a Diploma course in Ecology at University of East Anglia during which my progress through each module was monitored by Dr Katharine Abernethy of the University of Stirling and Dr Diana Bell (Dr Harriet Jones) of the University of East Anglia.

In January 2008 I moved my major subject from Biological Science to INTO UEA, to take intense English lessons. I continued to take ecology courses also.

1<sup>st</sup> July 2007 to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007 – TEFEL English course, Gabon

1<sup>st</sup> August 2007 to 30<sup>th</sup> August 2007 - Visa and preparation for trip to UK, Gabon and Cameroon to get visa to the UK, there being no UK Consulate in Gabon.

September 2007 to April 2008 – UEA Graduate Diploma in Ecology, with English

(Jan 2008 to Sept 2008 – English intensive courses at INTO, with Ecology courses in BIO)

October 2008 – retour au Gabon et Presentations to Ministries and NGOS in Gabon

- Briefly describe the roles of the UK and Fellow's institutions.

University of Stirling (School of Biological and Environmental Sciences) is to pursue research and scholarship at an international level of excellence and provide flexible and innovative programs of teaching and learning. Explore and explain the world of Ecology, and Biodiversity Conservation. It has an international reputation as a school for excellence.

UEA has wide –ranging education activities which include PhD, MSc, Diploma degrees, BSc, HND courses as well diverse public education programmes.

This Delivery of flexible and high quality educational programs designed to promote the self-fulfilment of students and staff. Support for research at nationally and internationally recognised levels of excellence, meeting economic, environmental, social and cultural needs.

University of Stirling and UEA contribute too many projects worldwide, and also manage some biodiversity projects in collaboration with others universities around world. In addition to the University of Stirling has usefully undertaken Darwin Projects in Gabon.

Anne Marie Ndong Obiang is from Department of Wildlife and Hunting (DFC), Ministry of Water and Forests, Government of Gabon. The Department's role is to protect the fauna of Gabon by controlling illegal hunting and managing protected areas, it was through an initiative of DFC that project Gibier was initiated. It is within the DFC that the point persons for Bushmeat, GRASP (Great Apes Survival Project of IUCN) and MIKE (Monitoring Illegal Killing of Elephants, IUCN) are based. The DFC also controls CITES licences and hunting permits.

During my fellowship, the University of Stirling provided financial management and supervision; UEA provided academic teaching and the DFC provided support for the application, support during study and maintained my position on return to Gabon

- If you have undertaken a formal course of training, please provide a brief explanation of the course and a link to the course website if available.

As part of course work I undertook, compulsory units in this course include Univariate Statistics, Multivariate Statistics, Ecological census methods and Research skills for ecologists. Optional units include Conservation genetics, Population dynamics and modelling, Introduction to GIS, Restoration ecology and Understanding environment change.

As part of course work I undertook a research project, the fieldwork for this were based on bushmeat issues. I was and still supervised by Dr Katherine Abernethy of University of Stirling.

## **2. Achievements**

- Summarise the work undertaken during your Fellowship. What were the main activities undertaken. Highlight any work undertaken but not originally planned and explain why this happened. Highlight any problems encountered and how they were overcome.

Anne Marie Ndong Obiang has actively participated in the first one taught session of Diploma in Ecology and started International Foundation science course for three taught sessions, she completed and passed all written assignments. Anne Marie successfully passed all her written exams at the end of the taught component of course in October 2008.

The friendly environment in University of East Anglia and very cooperative staff and students in the institutions never let me feel any problems both academic and social issues. However, sometimes on first time limitations in my language hindered me on getting the first class results on my assignments and exams which I had hoped for.

Move from Biological School to INTO was a better decision, I learnt more in English on how to make presentation in English, lead scientific project work in team, summarise data and make the laboratory reports.

- What have been the main achievements of your fellowship? Key documents should be annexed to this report.

The academic knowledge I gained was a major achievement.

Major courses included those on sciences courses (Chemistry, Biology and Human Physiology, Statistics, Physics, Ecology, Taxonomy and Plants) These provided training and familiarization with updated information and Research methodologies on a wide range of subjects.

The one week field trip visit in the FSC Flatford Mill for Science in Action Course at Suffolk (East Anglia County), provided knowledge on the study of ecology and biodiversity interactions in rich and diverse habitats. This fieldwork was most significant to learn the plant identification techniques used by highly dedicated world experts of both tropical forests and temperate forests.

Theoretical exams in ecology were successfully passed.

I have previous experience on French studies, studying at UEA has given me the opportunity to broaden my language skills making me a good communicator in English. This course has made me to become in my profession a good communicator in both English and French. I can work in close collaboration with NGOs and colleagues from various parts of the world.

Now I am actively working on facilitation between administration and WCS NGO, and also on the bushmeat project issues in Gabon.

## **3. Outcomes, lessons and Impact**

- Do you feel that the work undertaken during your Fellowship has improved skills that are relevant and important for your work in your organisation? How are you planning to apply those skills in future work?

With the knowledge that I had been able to gain through this course I will be able to improve cooperation between the Department of Fauna and Hunting (DFC) and NGO's as well as researchers. This cooperation will ease discussions on policies that have a direct impact on fauna, such as the wildlife laws and how to disseminate information on these policies to the general public.

It also helps me in my role as Gabonese Bushmeat focal person for CITES and being able to give a picture of what is happening in Gabon for the outside world. I can also help DFC to put in place monitoring strategies in the bushmeat database and by searching for finances through the various Embassies and donors.

- What arrangements have been made for your future involvement, what more could be done, what discussions have taken place with your original employer to ensure that your new skills are utilised?

To disseminate what I learnt within the Ministry of Water and Forests as well in the Department of Fauna and Hunting by giving fortnightly presentations on what I had learnt during my course work; talks will also be given to various NGO's working in Gabon during this year.

To help my colleagues by giving advice and recommendations on the different projects that the Department handles. Also help them out extract information from bushmeat's project database and English literature, for my own management responsibilities.

On top I will participate in the teaching with Dr Fiona Maisel's yearly biological monitoring course for central Africa workers in conservation in protected areas, given at Lopé National Park.

- Has the Fellowship helped to improve your capacity to solve practical problems related to the sustainable use and/or conservation of biodiversity in your country?

I will participate in the teaching with Dr Fiona Maisel's yearly biological monitoring course for central Africa workers in conservation in protected areas. Also I lead the DFC's involvement in the GEF project that is the Gabonese government strategy to protect more of 11% of its biodiversity in protected areas for the next few years.

- Have you had the opportunity to make contacts with other UK biodiversity institutions, intergovernmental organisations, NGOs or the private sector during your fellowship? Will these contacts be useful for your future work, and how are you planning to maintain them?

I met several UK Biodiversity institutions, such as ZSL in London, Defra, Proforest and some conservationist in Banham Zoo. All of these contacts were useful for my future work by learning the new skills in biodiversity conservation. To maintain them I will need to participate in meeting and exchange and writing scientific articles.

- Any other issue emerging from your experience as Darwin Fellow that you would like to raise, or suggestions for improvements to the Darwin Initiative Fellowship scheme.

This intensive highly advanced one year course is quite a step up from the still traditional education available in Gabon. It was sometimes hard to catch up with the knowledge gaps given the time available.

I think – designated DARWIN person in UK who can help you with understanding how the universities work, how coursework and exams are managed and how courses work together. Identify courses particularly helpful for overseas students, or francophone students, or rainforest management.

Better assessment of English needs at outset, as TOEFL didn't really do it

More contact with DARWIN during course – invite fellows to Darwin days/ Help with practical problems like bank accounts, negotiating rent and so on, managing living in UK safely, communications with home?

Darwin should also nominate a person who act as counsellor or mentor to the fellow, for example to help with establishing bank accounts, phone accounts, medical registration and medical issues, communications within University and home. Including medical insurance in fellow stipend will be an important point.