

The Darwin Initiative: Achieving the 2010 Biodiversity Targets

The CBD's 2010 targets

In the run-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, the Parties of the CBD realised a need for a concrete statement of their commitment to tackling biodiversity loss. The 2010 targets were developed to provide this. Biodiversity conservation is a complex issue, so setting and achieving targets for it was never going to be easy, and the 2010 targets are very ambitious. However, as a globally agreed set of targets, they have been endorsed in:

- 2002 by the World Summit on Sustainable Development
- 2005 by the United Nations General Assembly
- 2009 as a target under the Millennium Development Goals.

In order to plan implementation and reporting against the 2010 targets, the CBD parties elaborated a system of seven focal areas, eleven goals and twenty-one sub-targets. But the 2010 targets are broad and aspirational, so assessing progress towards their achievement is a real challenge. A framework of global indicators was developed and is being used by the CBD, with the



Photo credit: P.Cannon CABI

Ophiocordyceps sinensis: The conservation biology of this important Himalayan fungus has been significantly improved thanks to the Darwin Initiative - Project 14-030 in Bhutan addresses Goals 2, 4, 8, and 11 of the 2010 Targets.

evidence being that - on a global scale - there are many challenges in implementation of the 2010 targets.

The Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP - <http://www.twentyten.net/>) co-ordinates the implementation of the global indicators.



Working together to track global biodiversity trends

Photo credit: Anson Mackay



The Darwin Initiative's achievements

Goal 1

About half of all Darwin Initiative projects have explicitly promoted this goal, and many more have contributed indirectly. Over the years, the DI has increasingly actively promoted ecosystem-based conservation, especially in forest habitats. Darwin projects have built capacities to make conservation more effective, with strong support to protected areas and ecosystem restoration.

Project 15-022 Supporting Timor-Leste to establish its first national park.

Surveys at Nino Konis Santana National Park

In the 'world's newest country', this DI project has developed the capacity to preserve important biodiversity, building partnerships between the Government and civil society to support protected areas development. After prolonged civil war in Timor-Leste (often known in the UK as East Timor) and new independence, the Government's capacity constraints were understandably significant. This project worked with the Government and local NGOs to identify important biodiversity areas, consult with local communities, establish the country's first National Parks and develop the necessary institutions to carry the work forward. Since its establishment, no major biodiversity loss has been reported in the new Park and a proposed commercial venture has been relocated – a real success story!



Photo credit: Colin Trainor

Goal 2

Any action that has an impact on biodiversity will ultimately affect one or more species, but many (around 45% of) Darwin Initiative projects have had a specific taxonomic focus, mainly on vertebrate animals and on plants. A real strength of Darwin projects is when they focus on species which otherwise do not receive much attention – this can and has made a real difference to species conservation.

Project 15-009 The future is bright for the Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher

This flycatcher was in danger of extinction before this DI project, with only 300 individuals remaining on just one of the small Seychelles islands. The Darwin team faced significant public opposition when it proposed relocating some of the population from La Digue, where human pressures on the habitat were a real threat, to Denis Island, where the birds would be less threatened. The project carried out a successful social marketing campaign - this built support for the relocation and also for conservation measures on the native La Digue for the remaining birds and for habitat restoration on Denis Island. Population increases of the flycatcher are now being seen.



Paradise flycatcher

Photo credit: Will Meinders

Goal 4

Around a quarter of all Darwin projects have dealt with sustainable use in terms of agricultural systems, wild food resources and wild relatives of domestic crops or livestock (especially with the more recent focus on CITES in the DI), as well as on sustainable tourism.

Project 12-014 and EIDPO014 – Devising strategies to integrate biodiversity conservation in plantation dominated landscapes in Brazil.

There is increasing concern at the loss of biodiversity associated with clearance of natural forest for plantations. This project looked at a landscape in northern Brazil, where the natural forest was cleared in the 1960s and replaced by plantations. It studied the relationship between landscape, plantation management and biodiversity conservation, comparing diverse areas of natural forest, secondary forest and plantations. The results have provided guidance on best practice land use and forest planning for plantations, and have generated huge interest from Government and the private sector in Brazil (and beyond).



Nessaea obrina

Photo credit: C.Peres

The 11 goals of the 2010 Biodiversity Targets

Goal 1

Promote the conservation of the biological diversity of ecosystems, habitats and biomes

Goal 2

Promote the conservation of species diversity

Goal 3

Promote the conservation of genetic diversity

Goal 4

Promote sustainable use and consumption

Goal 5

Pressures from habitat loss, land use change and degradation, and unsustainable water use, reduced

Goal 6

Control threats from invasive species

Goal 7

Address challenges to biodiversity from climate change and pollution

Goal 8

Maintain capacity of ecosystems to deliver goods and services and support livelihoods

Goal 9

Maintain socio-cultural diversity of indigenous and local communities

Goal 10

Ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources

Goal 11

Parties have improved financial, human, scientific, technical and technological capacity to implement the Convention

Goal 6

A number of Darwin projects have explicitly addressed invasive species. Research results inform management strategies that reduce the impacts of invasive species and provide sound scientific research. Additionally, projects develop the capacity for research and management of invasives, building a foundation for real contributions in the future.

Project 14-027 and EIDPO027 Enabling the people of Montserrat to conserve the Centre Hills

The volcanic eruption of 1995 led to widespread destruction of Montserrat, and people have spent the past 13 years rebuilding their lives and livelihoods. The Centre Hills provide an essential water catchment and resource for the islanders' needs, and they are the focus of hopes for a future tourism industry. The Darwin project contributed to the management plan and capacity building to support the Park. The post project (EIDPO027) responds specifically to mitigate the highlighted threat of feral livestock – invasive goats and pigs which are damaging key habitats.



Feral goats on Montserrat are a real threat to key habitats.

Goal 7

A small number of Darwin projects have explicitly addressed climate change (this was the subject of an earlier review and briefing note) or pollution. They have had significant results and hold real lessons for future Darwin projects.

Project 14-029 Simulating the impact of climate change on aquatic biodiversity in the Okavango Delta.

The Okavango Delta in Botswana is one of the world's largest inland wetlands. It has exceptionally high biodiversity and is listed as one of WWF's top 200 eco-regions of global significance and is the world's largest Ramsar wetland site. This project has developed climate prediction scenarios for the Okavango Delta, which support the managers of the Delta in planning for the protection of this highly diverse ecosystem. A key finding is that human impact, whilst generally seen as a real threat to the biodiversity, is minimal compared to the much greater potential impacts of climate change, in the Okavango Delta.



Painted reed frog

Photo credit: Anson Mackay

Goal 8

Darwin projects work to support local livelihoods through: research; helping communities to manage resources (including ecotourism, non-timber forest products, fisheries); and education and awareness-raising. Projects are increasingly focusing on the wider societal benefits of ecosystem services and ecosystem restoration, including carbon storage.

Project 14-030 Good Science supporting traditional ways of life in Bhutan

Ophiocordyceps sinensis is a parasitic fungus found on Himalayan ghost moth caterpillars and is the most valuable fungus in the world, with retail prices of over US\$30,000 per gram. Its value is as



as a traditional Chinese medicine, but little was known about its biology or sustainable harvesting levels, and the livelihoods of the yak herders who rely on it for half their income were therefore uncertain. Working in extreme conditions at altitudes of up to 5,000m above sea level (or asl), this project established a monitoring scheme which has given the Royal Government of Bhutan the data on which to base regulations regarding the harvest of the fungus. Market prices of cordyceps increased dramatically just after the start of this project – but the Government was able to resist deregulating collection of it partly on the basis of this Darwin Initiative project.

Cordyceps harvest

Photo credit: P.Cannon CABI

Goal 11

The Darwin Initiative has a core objective to improve capacities to implement the CBD, so all Darwin projects address this goal.

Links between the Darwin Initiative and the 2010 Targets

The Darwin Initiative and the 2010 targets are manifestations of the same aim: the maintenance of biological diversity. Whilst the Darwin Initiative was established ten years prior to the 2010 Targets and is not, in global funding terms, a large investment, it has made notable contributions to implementing the 2010 indicators. A thematic review of how the Darwin Initiative has contributed to the 2010 targets concluded that

“It is likely that the Initiative has had a disproportionate impact for its budget when compared to some other funding sources, such as the GEF”

This briefing note synthesises some of the key points in the review.

Notable contributions to the 2010 targets

In its sixteen years the Darwin Initiative has funded a remarkable range of projects concerned with biodiversity conservation, addressing the CBD as well as (more recently) the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Not surprisingly, the Darwin Initiative has made a notable contribution to the global attempt to meet the 2010 biodiversity target.

The main emphasis has been on targets relating to conservation of species and ecosystems, habitats and biomes, as well as those dealing with sustainable use. The Initiative has addressed often neglected topics or groups of species, and projects have achieved considerable successes,



Photo credit: N. Singh

The Saiga antelope: A sentinel species of the central Asian steppe. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it experienced a catastrophic decline in population through poaching. A DI project (10-028 and post-project 018) has integrated technical and social approaches to conservation, giving this species a future to look forward to.

often in difficult circumstances. With a focus on capacity building and medium-term projects, and on injecting funds into highly underfunded national institutions, the Initiative’s modest budget has represented excellent value for money, with a disproportionate impact for its resources compared to other larger funding sources.



Looking to the future

The Darwin Initiative makes real efforts to build on its experience and the review highlights a few areas where it could make an even more positive impact in future.

Balancing the portfolio. There is no reason that the Darwin Initiative should contribute to all the 2010 targets, but some of the 2010 targets that Darwin has not contributed to significantly are also areas that developing countries prioritise. More emphasis on issues such as genetic diversity, access and benefit sharing, traditional knowledge, and climate change could strengthen the responsiveness of the Initiative to needs of the beneficiaries. The Initiative is already placing priority on UK Overseas Territories in response to needs arising.

Catching up with Conventions. The CBD has evolved significantly since the Darwin Initiative was established. Reviews like this one help to

identify areas where the DI can further improve its procedures, such as ensuring that project proposals and reports should relate to current issues, including thematic work programmes, CITES, CMS, and possibly to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Local ownerships and participation. Many of the best Darwin projects are highly demand-driven, with real involvement of host nation institutions, especially CBD focal points, from inception of the project concept onwards. This ensures the project is needed, wanted, tailored and gives the best chance of sustainable impacts. This is to be fully encouraged.

Reflecting new targets. Later in 2010 the Parties to the CBD are expected to agree a more quantified set of targets for biodiversity conservation. The Darwin Initiative is currently in a good position to be able to respond to the new targets.



Photo credit: RSPB

Project 12-010 has built the capacity of the people of Tristan de Cunha to implement the CBD. The small population now takes a lead on both terrestrial and marine conservation measures. There is a new Conservation Officer post, and a five-year Biodiversity Action Plan, which is a real achievement for a small Overseas Territory.

The Darwin Initiative aims to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of resources around the world including the UK's Overseas Territories. It uses UK expertise working with local partners to help countries rich in biodiversity but poor in resources to fulfil their commitments under the CBD, CMS and CITES. The Initiative is funded and administered by the UK Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Since 1992, the Darwin Initiative has committed over £73m to over 650 projects in over 100 countries.

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For information on the Darwin Initiative see <http://darwin.defra.gov.uk>. For more information on the CBD, CITES or CMS see www.cbd.int, www.cms.int or www.cites.org.

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