



# Mid-Term Project Evaluation: Lessons Learned



## Project Title

Ecosystem Conservation for climate change adaptation (19-022)

## Timeline

April 2012-March 2015

## Lead Organisations



Partnership for nature and people

BirdLife International Secretariat (UK) and BirdLife International Africa Partnership Secretariat

## Implementing Partners

Association Burundaise pour la Protection de la Nature (ABN) - **Burundi**  
 Association pour la Conservation de la Nature au Rwanda (ACNR)- **Rwanda**  
 Nature Kenya - **Kenya**  
 Nature Uganda - **Uganda**

## Project Objective

The project provides guidance to develop and implement effective adaptation policies and plans that integrate ecosystem based approaches to adaptation (EbA). It seeks to share best practices and raise awareness through training and capacity building to influence new strategies and policies that meet biodiversity objectives internationally, nationally and locally in the four partner countries.

## Project Summary

This project operates in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi and promotes ecosystem based approaches to adaptation (EbA). The design links up four, well established national partners who work at the national level to influence policy processes. In addition to this, there are activities directly on the ground at the local level to test processes and produce evidence related to EbA. Scientific thinking indicates that EbA will have a positive impact on the livelihoods of people reliant on those ecosystems and biodiversity conservation. The project aims to transfer lessons from local implementation to national, regional and international processes and influence policy.

## Evaluation Summary

In October 2013, an evaluation was conducted to assess progress achieved to date and to collect lessons to share with the wider Darwin community. The evaluation demonstrated that during the first 18 months, the project has achieved many of its intended outputs and has also successfully applied an adaptive management approach to address challenges. There is evidence from activities that **the project has the potential to influence policy changes.**

The bulk of the activities have focused on increasing awareness of EbA, developing an innovative vulnerability assessment tool and strengthening CSO-governmental interactions related to climate change.

**The evaluation identified lessons from this project, both best practices and challenges faced, that would be useful to the wider Darwin community to improve future applications and projects. These are shared in this briefing note.**



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs





# Evaluation Outcomes

## Partnerships

In each country the project operates through well-respected NGOs that are established BirdLife International partners, building on a history of capacity-building with these organisations. This allows for the project to capitalise on the strengths of the organisations and more easily influence national dialogues. By leveraging on other projects that operate through the same national partners, synergies have been made to deliver results efficiently.

## Relevance

The project responds to the inclusion of EbA in several international conventions and addresses the knowledge gaps identified by international organisations. The project coincides with national policy review processes within the four partner countries, ensuring that the project has the opportunity to influence the revisions of these policies. The project is also well aligned to UK government objectives, including DFID, Defra and the UK climate change goals.

## Efficiency

This project has been efficient at delivering outputs through the creation of synergies and leveraging on other projects. It also identifies activities that build on existing relationships and structures. This has generated efficiencies as it removes the financial, time and human resources generally required to

establish relationships and structures needed to deliver project outputs.

## Effectiveness

The project has been effective at responding to challenges to implementation, something most Darwin projects face. The application of an adaptive management approach has allowed for the activities to be tailored to be more effective as the context changes.

## Impact

The project has made progress in building national partnerships and awareness of EbA amongst key stakeholders who are engaged in developing national adaptation plans. However, the influence of the project on the relevant national policies is difficult to determine until EbA considerations are integrated into policies. There is evidence that this has the potential to happen, for example, as Nature Uganda has been influential in providing input through consultation to the national climate change policy which should be published this year.

There is evidence that this ambitious project has the potential to have a significant impact on biodiversity conservation and livelihoods, if an ecosystem management approach is integrated into policies.







## Key Lessons for the Darwin community

### Take a holistic approach to conservation and poverty alleviation

In 2011, DFID became a co-funder of the Darwin portfolio, requiring projects to work towards delivering poverty benefits as well as biodiversity conservation. This project successfully frames the issues facing conservation and human development in the project design, which recognises the impact that conservation will have on people, especially those adjacent to conservation areas.

Many projects have struggled to incorporate poverty and human development concerns into Darwin applications since the introduction of DFID funding. This project successfully uses activities that address the human benefits of biodiversity conservation to achieve results.

The integrated way the project design frames biodiversity and human poverty reduction as two equally important project outcomes could usefully be shared throughout the Darwin portfolio.

### Real regional collaboration needs investment

The project was well designed in its regional approach, but in practice the regional collaboration between implementing project partners has been limited. A lesson for future regional projects is the importance of establishing (and testing, and adapting if required) a mechanism for the project to share information between partners at an early stage.

While electronic and telephone communication is important, face-to-face interactions between partners are invaluable as they are more effective at knowledge sharing. The project budget was only sufficient for one meeting where all project partners met - the inception workshop. All project partners indicated this event was useful at promoting collaboration, but that more opportunities to meet would have strengthened the exchange processes.

A lesson for future Darwin projects is the importance of budgeting to allow for sufficient on-the-ground activities and face-to-face interaction and learning between partners to encourage greater collaboration and lesson sharing.



## Engage at multiple levels for wide impact

The project is engaging at multiple levels, allowing information to flow between the local and national, and up to the regional and international level. The project's approach of providing evidence from the local level to inform the development of national policies is a real strength of its approach.

Applying this approach of sharing evidence and lessons between levels could benefit other projects to generate change and have a larger impact.

## Address and manage capacity constraints

The project had assumed a level of capacity and awareness related to EbA in the region, including within project partners. For an ambitious project, it has required more work than anticipated to build capacity and raise awareness, which placed a burden on limited project resources.

A key lesson learned from the project's approach to facing these challenges has been the need to ensure there is organisational and institutional capacity, not just individual capacity to deliver on project activities.

For an ambitious project, it has required more work than anticipated to build capacity and raise awareness, which placed a burden on limited project resources.

## Set attributable logframe targets

While the project has made progress towards achievement of outputs, the expected impact as at the policy level. The logframe includes targets related to policy revisions, which may have timeframes outside the control of the project. This makes it difficult to measure the success of the project. When designing programme logframes, identifying key assumptions and specific and achievable milestones is critical to ensure that project achievements are realistic and can be attributed to the project's outcomes.

A key lesson from this project for the wider portfolio is the importance of a robust project design that includes targets that are demonstrable and attributable within the three year timeframe of Darwin projects.







## Consider how to maximise value for money

Many conservation projects work in isolation. By making decisions in concert with other initiatives, this project has created synergies between them to maximise impact while reducing cost. Lessons and best practices have also been shared between projects, not only reducing costs, but also promoting learning. This sharing between initiatives and other partners has the potential to generate larger efficiencies and greater impact.

Another approach which has created efficiencies is the use of existing mechanisms and processes to deliver results. For example, the project has integrated EbA discussions into existing working groups. This reduces the burden on busy stakeholders and costs for convening separate meetings.

**The project has demonstrated a real value for money for the Darwin Initiative through considering the most cost effective approach to delivering results.**

## For more information

[www.darwin.defra.gov.uk](http://www.darwin.defra.gov.uk)

The Darwin Initiative assists countries that are rich in biodiversity but poor in financial resources to meet their objectives under one or more of the three major biodiversity Conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in particular the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing (ABS); the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES); the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) through the funding of collaborative projects.



[darwin.defra.gov.uk](http://darwin.defra.gov.uk)



Follow the conversation:  
[@Darwin\\_Defra](https://twitter.com/Darwin_Defra)



[birdlife.org](http://birdlife.org)



Follow the conversation:  
[@BirdLife\\_News](https://twitter.com/BirdLife_News)