

Darwin M&E Programme: Final Report Review

Basic Project Details

Project Ref No.	15-041
Project Title	Waria Valley Community Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods Programme
UK Contractor Holder Institution	Coral Cay Conservation (CCC)
UK Partners Institution(s)	Jaquelin Fishers Associates (JFA)
Host Country Partners Institution(s)	Bris Kanda Inc. Village Development Trust PNG University of Technology, Forestry Department Forcert
Darwin Grant Value	£130,000
Start/End date	May 2006 – April 2009
Review date	October 2009

1 Project Context

The project was initiated as a result of discussions with PNG collaborators regarding community conservation. The project was therefore designed in response to requests from the local partners, including the local communities of Waria Valley, to address ecosystem management, biodiversity assessments, education and training and sustainable livelihoods with the aim to achieve local sustainable development based on benefits derived for local landowners from local forest biodiversity.

The project's purpose was partially achieved with some of the more crucial outputs with respect to legacy postponed. The final report is a remarkably truthful account of the many issues the project met including staffing changes within proposed partners that resulted in lower involvement in the project than planned, staff turnover in all institutions, and apparent waning of interest by community members of some of the livelihood options. The creation of a new NGO is hoped to be the route by which many of the outstanding outputs are completed.

2 Support to the CBD

The project had limited interaction with the PNG government, both local and national due to elections ongoing during the project period. Certainly the project is to hand over some of the resources, such as the biodiversity assessment work, but it is not clear what tangible impact this project will have had on national CBD accounting, particularly since the institutions the material is being handed to are in disarray and have only partially been involved in the project.

On a more local scale the project has provided support in research and training, with particular emphasis on biodiversity research, access and benefit sharing through the micro-enterprise work, and public education and awareness, particularly for school age children.

3 Project Partnerships

The final report was remarkably frank about issues with project partners that perhaps was missing in earlier reports. In essence the main partners were unable to contribute substantially to the project in contrast to what was agreed prior to commencement. The UK partners had apparently established MoU's with these groups, but despite this, relationships were not as strong as had been hoped. It appears that the UK partners (JFA and CCC) were left without much of the anticipated support, therefore much of the transfer of expertise was channelled towards the community conservation group, WVCP.

The lack of integration of PNG partners in the project may mean that the legacy of this project is compromised. The establishment of a new NGO, if successful, could serve to support its continuity although it may hit similar issues to the previous partners – internal politics, accusations of corruption, change of focus, turnover of staff.

CCC has since departed PNG and there appears to be some ongoing relationship with members of the new NGO. The report does not mention any thoughts for further involvement with any of the other partners.

4 Project Achievements

There are some notable achievements in this project, including the aquaculture project and the primary school education component. However the project was based on the assumption that a) the project partners would deliver what was required and b) community members would remain committed to the project. These assumptions proved critical to the final delivery of the project and due to constant shifting of priorities both within partners, and the communities, caused many issues for the project.

4.1 Impact

There are two areas that show evidence of impact, although the team appear to be unfamiliar with the concept of evaluating outcome of work. The aquaculture component and the environmental education components appear to be fully adopted and even self-replicating in the case of the aquaculture project. The impact of the biodiversity research work is less clear as there is no real 'owner' of this work with the University in disarray. There is hope that the new NGO will be able to take on the development of the management plan although this will be a tricky and sensitive subject due to cultural structures and is unlikely there will be any results in the short-term.

4.2 Project Purpose/Outcomes

Purpose: *'Threatened forest resources of the Waria Valley are effectively conserved and sustainable used through enhancing the capacity of local researchers and stakeholders, whilst effecting alternative livelihoods for local land managers/owners'*

A suggested management plan has been developed and handed to the community for use. The remit of the new NGO, in the process of being established, is to support the implementation of this management plan. Given this is to be staffed by personnel trained and employed as staff on the original plan, there is some hope for this. Its eventual use is, of course, down to ongoing enthusiasm from the local landowners, a complicated issue in PNG. This work will require a dedicated group to continue the work judging by the success of some of the livelihoods work.

The myriad of micro-enterprises established under the project ranged in success from modest to excellent. There is hope that the aquaculture project will derive real livelihoods benefits although little or no information was given on the financial outcome of this so far.

4.3 Project Outputs

Output 1: Forest Biodiversity resource assessment programme

This output was achieved with some delays in the final year. What is not clear is who now 'owns' the data and to what use this data is being put other than the simplistic management plan. The University is currently in some disarray so aside from some peer reviewed papers the UK team intend on writing this work has had limited impact.

Output 2: Community nursery and associated restoration programme implemented with community conservation agreements

A small community nursery was established, largely with 1 family group. Other groups had indicated their interest but this soon waned. Currently 100 trees have been planted. The hoped for outcome of this work was for a number of groups to be involved in this work which unfortunately has not come to fruition. It is possible that others will follow once its success is proven.

Output 3: Small-scale forestry and milling co-operative operational.

This output is largely reliant upon the new partner 'Forcet' taking on this aspect of the work. The finances for this are a bit strange and are discussed in section 7. In essence the project had hoped to buy a portable saw mill for use by a co-operative. Consultations with the community have been undertaken and there is apparent enthusiasm for this.

Output 4: Education/Training programme completed

This is one of the outputs that has had some of the best progress. Teaching materials for ecology and biology were developed and rolled out in 3 primary schools. The materials are interesting although the high quality of the images may make replication difficult for the schools. Following some concerns regarding the scope of the teachers manuals the next set of materials were developed in line with the curriculum. These appear to have been well received although the actual outcome of this raised awareness and environmental education does not appear to have been assessed. Whether this aspect of the project has engendered more support for conservation is not clear therefore.

Output 5: Eco-tourism centre established (using local materials)

The output was revised to focus on the already established Unu Resource Centre. Little progress has been made however, with no apparent viable business plan and few tourists. The project went some way to training guides (although this was not assessed) and hospitality staff although without a functioning business plan and few tourists, it appears to have achieved little. A feasibility study was contracted however this work appears to be incredibly simplistic, with minimal insight to the challenges and did not appear to focus on the commercial viability of such a venture.

Aside from the eco-tourism model, the project worked to develop micro-enterprises for the communities. In essence the project was approached by interested parties and funds were provided for startup costs as loans, or sometimes repaid following start up. Ventures included chicken coups, piggeries, coconut oil press, fresh water protection schemes and eco-forestry. Success varied in these, often with members quickly losing interest. The aquaculture venture however, appears to have met great enthusiasm and is one of the real successes of this project. A 'train the trainers' approach has worked well with much replication of the initial pilot ponds. At closure 67 ponds were completed by 74 farmers. Two associations are in the process of registering as cooperatives in order to access government funding to develop this scheme further. The hope is that these ponds will provide income and provide nutritional supplement to the diet of the farmers and their families involved and reduce impact on the forests in the Waria Valley.

Output 6: Local community conservation model disseminated

Some activity has been carried out including trilingual project newsletters, radiobroadcasts and newspaper articles. The impact of this does not appear to have been evaluated.

4.4 Project standard measures and publications

52 people gained short-term education/training
9 types of training materials were developed
9 newsletters produced in 3 languages
8 national press releases

4.5 Technical and scientific achievements and co-operation

As mentioned in section 4.3 trainee evaluations did not appear to occur for any of the training events. With some it is possible to infer quality of training such as for the aquaculture when there was follow up. With others it is difficult to ascertain such as for the tourist guides.

4.6 Capacity building

The project worked to develop capacity at a number of levels. For example university graduates and undergraduates received training in field techniques and methods. Unfortunately upheaval at the university meant this could not be continued.

The project team also worked hard to develop the capacity of the recipient communities, particularly in micro-enterprises. In some cases this was very successful, in others the success was modest.

4.7 Sustainability and Legacy

This is the aspect of this project that is hardest to ascertain. Whilst the project reporting improved immeasurably since the last annual report, little of it focused on assessing the outcome of this project. For example a number of micro-enterprises were established, but their success in diverting communities from destructive practices is not discussed. With the departure of CCC from the area before the establishment of a group to take on this work the legacy of this project is probably a bit shaky. If the new NGO is successfully established then there is little concern but, as has been shown by the project, things in PNG rarely go smoothly and to plan.

There are also elements of this project that were not completed. Without the driving force within the Waria Valley it is highly likely that their completion will be slow if at all.

5 Lessons learned, dissemination and communication

There are many lessons the team report having learnt in PNG particularly regarding the time taken for much of the activities, including permits.

In the original application the team stated they were aware of the other DI projects working in PNG and would review their successes. I suggest that, particularly for the university training it would have been useful to link up with other DI projects such as University of Sussex and NHM that were working to build capacity of PNG scientists. Integration of this project into the wider governance environment of PNG has been problematic. Undoubtedly bad timing accounts for some of this, as does staff turnover, however the Darwin network has proven useful to others in this kind of situation and, dependent on CCC's next move, might be one to consider.

6 Monitoring and evaluation

As mentioned in previous sections, the team appear to have largely focused on progress indicators but have spent little time reporting on impact indicators. Admittedly there have been many issues for this team to overcome, but many of the original indicators derived by the project team in the logical framework appear to have been forgotten about. For example an indicator that the purpose statement had been achieved was 'evidence of regeneration by Yr 3' and 'biodiversity monitoring and community management system by Yr 3'. It would be useful to understand how much progress was made in relation to these.

7 Project Expenditure

The budget in the report has been checked against the claims information available and there are no specific questions on project claims. It is noted that the final claim includes £2,000 for the future purchase of a sawmill. Defra has approved this and the project should submit the receipt once the item has been purchased.

The reviewer found the expenditure for this project is a little strange. A request for carryforward of funds from Yr 1 to Yr 3 was made and accepted by Defra which is a little unusual. Secondly an underspend in yr 3 has been set aside by the project to complete outputs 3 and 6. This issue has since been discussed with Defra, as noted above.

8 General Assessment

This was a challenging project that met with many difficulties throughout. With the original partners involvement reduced due to changes in staffing and scope, far more reliance was placed on the CCC international staff to deliver this project. This has caused understandable delays in some cases, particularly due to visa and permit delays. To a certain degree the project leaders were naïve in what they felt could be achieved given this was their first real foray into project management in PNG. However to give them credit, the steps to ensure this project was well managed from outset were there i.e. scoping visit and MoUs. In hindsight it might have been better if the team had radically revised their project plans following the down-sizing of their partners involvement and I'm sure this is a lesson the team will remember for the future.

Some aspects of this project show real potential for longevity such as the schools education and aquaculture micro-enterprises however other aspects of this project are in no way secure. The establishment of an NGO to secure the long-term management of the Waria Valley is a useful addition to the project so long as all the inherent issues of these organisations in PNG are avoided.

Given the uncertain nature of some aspects of this project it might be useful to nominate this as a potential project for an Evaluation of Closed Projects in the future. Certainly from the perspective of the Darwin Initiative, PNG is a challenging country to work in with few immediate rewards. The departure of CCC from Waria is unfortunate as some progress was obviously being made and it would be unfortunate if the departure of these staff left a void that could not be filled by the new NGO.

9 Key facts for project publicity

- The project supported the development of many micro-enterprises intended to generate income and, in some cases, greater nutritional value to their diet.
- By closure the project had supported groups to establish fish ponds for aquaculture - at closure 67 ponds were completed by 74 farmers.
- The project developed from a comprehensive biodiversity assessment a management plan for which family groups were being encouraged to adhere to.
- Graduate and undergraduate students were provided useful skills in field techniques from interactive courses developed by the project.
- Materials were developed in-line with the school curriculum for primary schools in the area on conservation and environmental awareness.