



Darwin Initiative Annual Report Review Darwin Project Information

Project reference	24-005
Project title	Enabling rural poor to help protect biodiversity of Dja, Cameroon
Country(ies)	Cameroon
Contract holder institution	Antwerp Zoo Centre for Research & Conservation (CRC), Royal Zoological Society of Antwerp (RZSA)
Partner Institution(s)	African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), Living Earth Limited (LEL), Association de la Protection de Grands Singes (APGS), Tropical Forest & Rural Development (TF-RD), Fondation Camerounaise de la Terre Vivante (FCTV)
Darwin grant value	273,678 GBP
Start/end dates of project	1/4/2017 – 31/3/2021
Reporting period and annual report number (1,2)	1/4/2017 – 31/3/2018: Annual Report 1
Project leader name	Nikki Tagg
Project website/blog/Twitter	http://www.landscapeconservation.org.uk/darwin-project
Review date	May 2018

1. Project rationale

At the core of the Dja Landscape in southeastern Cameroon, lies the Dja Faunal Reserve, a World Heritage Site and Important Bird Area. Deforestation, habitat fragmentation and poaching are key threats to the reserve. Northern Dja is home to Bantu and Baka communities, some of the region's most vulnerable and poorest, and first to be negatively-impacted by the decline in health of the reserve. Hunting by men and bushmeat trading by women play important livelihood and cultural roles, providing income-generating opportunities and vital protein. At the same time overhunting and illegal exploitation promotes unsustainable offtake, threatens long-term food security and ecosystem viability, and is jeopardising UNESCO world-heritage-site status. Local people however have limited capacity and resources for income generation, and access to affordable alternative sources of animal protein.

The project in conjunction with law enforcement efforts, will generate alternative protein sources and income by providing access to training and resources to create sustainable alternatives, and incentivise behavioural change with participatory agreements that require communities to adhere to conservation regulations and support law enforcement. The rural poor will be supported to move from unsustainable to sustainable practice which will alleviate poverty and address long-term food security issues. The assumption is that when communities benefit from alternative income sources and have access to alternative sources of protein, the pressure on wildlife will reduce. Establishing food security is critical in an area where there is significant investment by the government and international donors to reduce the impact of hunting on wildlife. Through project learning, the aim is to influence policy, supporting the integration of identified best practice and activities into the Dja Management Plan and national level policy.

2. Comments and queries for Project Leader

No.	Comment	Discuss with Darwin	Next half year report	Next Annual Report	No response needed
1	Clarify if the project plans to collect baseline data on awareness and training related to the new activities focused on safety of fisher-people.		x		
2	Report on if and how the response of the villagers to the drownings ('curse') is impacting the project, and any strategies designed to pre-empt/overcome this		x		
3	Clarify if the decision has been taken for the REA's to be signed at the individual or community level		x		
4	The project states that sufficient time is required for animal populations in the forest to increase to the level that can be noticed in survey results, but does not state if this falls within the project timeline, and if the outcome level indicator remains valid. Please clarify		x		
5	The project states that Y2 activities will focus on working with communities, experts, and government to address critical factors identified as challenges to establishing a community fishing zone. The project should comment on progress, including if and how these challenges will impact achieving the output and outcome.			x	
6	Clarify how adherence to the REA's will be monitored beyond the project timeframe		x		

3. Partnerships

The project comprises a working collaborative between three international and three national non-governmental entities. The project reports that quarterly meetings have been held between the international entities. Each international partner works in close collaboration with a national partner, ensuring that plans, decisions and discussions are communicated and translated to the project on the ground. In-country partners have met monthly in Cameroon, including a range of project staff (administrative and technical) to facilitate roll out. The project reports that all meetings are minuted, and minutes are distributed to all partners, who are then invited to comment and contribute to discussions.

4. Summary of progress

4.1. Implementation of Activities

The project reports many activities in Year 1. The majority of these are in line with those planned for this period and are compatible with intended outputs. The exception is Output 1. Engagement with communities highlighted that they were not in favour of fish farming as a sustainable source of protein, but instead expressed a preference to focus on wild-caught fish from the Dja river and surrounding tributaries. In February 2018 the project submitted a change request, which was approved, for a change of strategy (and transfer of finance to Y2) to support delivery of alternative sources of protein. Activities were subsequently refocused to support this strategy and included consultation meetings with groups of fishermen and experts in fishery.

This has enabled the project to identify several key issues that present major challenges, and that will need to be addressed before rollout. Y2 activities will focus on working with communities, experts, and government to address these critical factors. This extensive and intensive consultation process is crucial to delivering sustainable results. As a consequence of three fisher-people drowning (due to adverse conditions, their inability to swim and having no buoyancy aides) the project will include additional activities in Y2 to address safety issues including awareness-raising, training and the provision of safety equipment

Community consultation and engagement, collection of baseline data, and training were key activities for Y1 and there is good evidence of progress. 174 farmers registered to create new farms and 56 to rehabilitate old ones, and village chiefs offered land for plant nurseries. 178 farmers were trained on techniques for cocoa farm rehabilitation, and 10 farms were rehabilitated. A nursery was established and staff hired for its maintenance. An important part of the project is the use of participatory agreements (Reciprocal Environmental Agreements/REA's) and following several meetings with communities a draft REA for cocoa farming was finalised and is awaiting input from government authorities. The version for fisheries is undergoing discussion at the community level.

4.2. Progress towards Outputs

The project has presented clear evidence that outputs are progressing, baseline data has been collected and the project is reporting against its indicators. The exception is Output 1 which as stated earlier is due to the project changing the alternative protein source from fish farming to wild caught fish because of community consultation. The project has identified major challenges associated with this change in strategy, which include a complete dearth of information on exploitable fish in the Dja, and no known regulations or processes for initiating a Community Sustainable Fishing Zone. The project reports that Y2 activities will focus on working with communities, experts, and government to address these critical factors to progress and achieve this output. The project also states that the output and indicators remain the same. It will be important however to monitor progress against the indicators as 'new' activities progress to assess ongoing relevance. This project already has baseline information about constraints affecting fishing activity in the target area.

The project has provided evidence that progress is being made towards developing REA's. In the HY1 it was stated that the project is considering having individual REA's rather than at the community level as they have not always been successful (Output 3) but the indicators remain relevant regardless. The project has explained how indicators for other outputs (improved level of livelihood) and at the outcome level (e.g., increase in wildlife population, reduction in commercial hunting, reduce efforts of villagers on hunting) will provide evidence of proper implantation of REAs by villagers.

This, and indeed all outputs (and outcome), may be impacted negatively by three fisher-people drowning in early 2018 which has reportedly led to several groups of villagers in the target area declaring that the project is 'cursed by spirits'. Some villagers argue that promoting (unsafe) fishing instead of (illegal) hunting has resulted in 'spirits' taking revenge by killing local people fishing on the river. The project states that they will need to devise a strategy and activities to dismiss or banish the 'curse' and that this is an unforeseen cost to the project. The project will include additional activities of awareness-raising, training and the provision of safety equipment in early Y2 (this will require the project to collect baseline data to monitor progress).

Assumptions have been reviewed and remain true. The project comments that it assumed a legal process would be needed to ratify REAs, but the project team has been assured that this is not necessary, and that agreements at the individual or committee level are adequate (Assumption 9). Government staff (informally) approve the use of agreements because REA are aimed at supporting conservation by villagers in return to benefiting from the project.

4.3. Progress towards Outcome

The project states "the project is likely to achieve the outcome by the end of the funding because much work is being done with community involvement to agree to participate in desired income alternatives, to address poverty issue". The project has provided evidence of substantive community engagement, and progress towards achieving the outcome. The project outcome is achieved in two parts, alternative protein and income through non-hunting means.

As stated in previous sections the focus of delivering protein has changed from fish farming to wild caught fish, a decision guided on community consultation to ensure that activities are wanted (rather than imposed) by the target recipients. Progress is being made but it is assumed that the new direction may impact the outcome due to the “major” challenges that the project has identified. The project reports that Y2 activities will focus on working with communities, experts, and government to address these critical factors to progress and achieve this output, supporting the outcome. If the project can overcome these challenges, given that fishing is a short-term activity that yields immediate results, the indicator may remain valid and outcome achieved. The project states that villagers fish for local consumption and for income, and therefore the indicator will not only be the quantity consumed but also on the quantity of fish caught and then the destination (local consumption, local sale or for sale out of the project intervention area). Baseline data has been obtained from socioeconomic surveys.

Progress towards supporting alternative livelihoods is progressing more smoothly. Several training sessions on cocoa farming have been organised, farmers rehabilitated and nursery established. The project states the specific indicator for this ‘increase in household income’ is adequate for measuring the outcome, and baseline data has been collected.

In the outputs reporting section of AR1 the project comments on indicators that would provide evidence of proper implementation of the REA (mentioned in previous section). This includes wildlife abundance (outcome level indicator 0.4 Abundance of small mammals in surrounding forest shows an annual 5% increase from baseline and that of large mammals shows stabilisation of baseline). The project rightly states that time is required for animal populations in the forest to increase to the level that can be noticed in survey results, but does not state if this falls within the project timeline, and if this outcome level indicator remains valid.

Assumptions have been reviewed and currently remain true. Engagement and active participation of communities may be impacted by the negative fall-out since the drownings (the ‘curse’) and this will need to be monitored closely.

4.4. Progress towards Impact

There is evidence that the project is working towards contributing to its conservation and development impact. A key finding from Y1 has been the identification of the need for a sustainable, community fishing zone (or equivalent). Current policy in Cameroon does not cover the use of a river fishery for community management, and therefore the issues surrounding development and use of such a system will be explored in Y2. Farmers have received technical support through the project to help improve their farming techniques. Cocoa farming is considered sustainable and highly income yielding, and the project is taking measures to ensure cocoa farming commercialisation. The project has based its approach on Rainforest Alliance principles that places an emphasis on the environment and nature protection, and through certification norms, the human and social wellbeing of the farmers is also taken into consideration. The project assumes that when villagers gain from alternative income sources, and have access to alternative protein sources, the pressure on wildlife will reduce. The use of REA’s links development benefits to improving conservation. This project should in principle therefore contribute to a higher impact of biodiversity conservation.

5. Contribution to Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs)

The project has commented on the relevant SDGs to the project and provides adequate evidence as to how its activities contribute to them. Increasing cocoa yield and sales will provide sustainable incomes and help to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable agriculture (Goals 1 and 2). The identification of a potential model to enable poor people to access sustainable sources of legal animal protein will help to end hunger, achieve food security (sustainable consumption), and improve nutrition (Goal 2 and 12). Targeting women in consultation processes and activities will help achieve gender equality and empower women (Goal 5). The pressure on threatened species living in and around the reserve will be reduced due to the provision of an alternative income, and the availability of legal sources of protein, collectively helping to halt biodiversity loss (Goal 15). The project also describes how it contributes to Cameroons programmes of work supporting the SDGs (Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 11 & 15) via the National Millennium Village Framework and Country programme Outputs.

6. Project support to at least one of the following Conventions, Treaties or Agreements: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS); and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).

The project has presented evidence on how its activities are supporting the government of Cameroon to meet its obligations of the CBD (CBD: 8c, 8d, 8i, 8j, 10a, 10c, 17.1, 17.2) and Aichi targets (Goals B, C and E, Targets 12 and 18). The project also reports how it will contribute to the implementation of Cameroon's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (Goal A and C). Given it is Y1 there are no notable achievements.

7. Project support to poverty alleviation

Poverty alleviation is central to this combined conservation biodiversity and development project. The project will support local targeted communities to improve fishing practice so that their supply of protein is legal, more available, and sustainable. Villagers fish for consumption (protein) and for income. The project will lay the ground work for a sustainable community fishing zone which will enhance livelihoods in the long-term, both in the Dja and elsewhere, given it is the first in Cameroon.

Farmers will learn how to increase their yield from cocoa farming to provide sustainable alternative livelihoods. Farmers will benefit from training on productivity, maintenance, control of pests and disease, and marketing, to establish a sustainable value chain. The project has based its approach on Rainforest Alliance principles that places an emphasis on the environment and nature protection, and through certification norms, the human and social wellbeing of the farmers is also taken into consideration. Through using REAs the communities will be incentivised and empowered to move from unsustainable to sustainable practice, addressing long-term food security issues. It is too early in the project to highlight notable achievements but the project has, through a highly consultative process, received a great deal of local support and interest (refer to Section 14), it has conducted baseline data from which to measure change in economic status, and activities for cocoa farming are moving ahead with large numbers participating in training, demonstrating contribution towards poverty alleviation.

8. Project support to gender equality issues

The project reports that all meetings and training workshops are open to both men and women, and they have output level indicators with targets for female participation. Figures have been provided on female participation in project conception meetings for Output 1 (26% and 24% female respective participation across two meetings) and Output 2 (37%). Female participation for cocoa farming training appears to be a low 4%, although it is assumed that this is due to women taking more responsibility for collection of non-forest timber products than farming. The project reports that the adjusted approach for fisheries was identified by consultation with both men and women, and that its approach includes discrete sessions with women and young women to help shape project interventions and empowerment through decision-making. As the main traders of fish, the project reports that in Y2 women and young girls will be trained in methods to extend the consumable life of fish through the introduction of low tech, solar powered freezers that can be produced in-situ, and the building of low-health risk smokeries. It is too early in the project to report on gender related notable achievements but the project is demonstrating a contribution to gender equality.

9. Monitoring, evaluation and lessons learnt

The project has provided a detailed report with continual reference to monitoring and indicators (i.e., number of people participating in workshops and training activities). The project reports a delay in the implementation of M&E activities this year but that despite this the plan for M&E did not change, and that more than half of the baseline survey has been carried out, with remaining data collection scheduled. The project reports that evidence on progress of M&E activities include pictures taken during training meetings and data collection, and data on data sheets but none have been provided to verify this. Furthermore, additional targeted data are being collected on methods of fishing in the Dja (Output 1) and the current situation of cocoa farming in the target villages (Output 2) by University Master's students (which will also lead to Master's theses for these Cameroonian students). The project does not mention if it plans to collect baseline data on awareness and training related to the new activities focused on safety of fisher-people. The project has rightly stated that time is required for animal populations in the forest to increase to the level that can be noticed in survey results, but does not state if this falls within the project timeline and if this outcome level indicator remains valid.

Under future actions in the updated project logframe, the project writes “propose new logframe to Darwin” which is assumed to be related to the various challenges it is experiencing. Given these challenges, including a change of focus supporting Output 1, the project will need to carefully monitor progress and review if the indicators remain valid. The activities of YR2 supporting information requirements supporting Output 1 (development and use of river fishery for community management) should enable the project to better understand any changes that may need to be made to the log frame.

It is early in the project to present lessons learnt but it writes that similar projects should not underestimate the challenge presented by trying to change attitudes and behaviours of rural communities. It is hoped that the project will provide more detail on this and other lessons learnt as the project progresses.

10. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

N/A

11. Sustainability and legacy

The project's exit and legacy strategy is based on extensive community engagement facilitating community buy-in and ownership, and building capacity for sustainable livelihoods and access to alternative and legal protein sources. Social change is supported and encouraged by ongoing adherence of REA's. The question remains which entity will monitor adherence to REA's beyond the project timeframe. If successful, the project will alleviate pressure from illegal trade in, and consumption of, threatened species, supporting environmental sustainability. The change to Output 1 may provide an additional product (policy) that guides and supports the development and use of a sustainable community fishing zone given this does currently exist in Cameroon. This may however fall outside of the project timeline.

The project states that it is maintaining dialogue with other principal actors working to help conserve the biodiversity within the Dja Faunal Reserve, in particular the Dja Actors' Forum, and informal meetings with government entities and NGO's, to ensure project approach, progress, challenges and lessons learnt are fully communicated. A website has been established as a depository of key information accrued from the project but it is not reported how long accessibility will remain beyond the project timeline (it has been described as a temporary website on the annual report). It is intended that all project reports and findings will be accessible via this and/or partners' websites. For accessibility, the project will need to ensure the products are available in both French and English to enable lessons learnt to be shared across both Francophone and Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

12. Darwin identity

The project has acknowledged support by the DI on its dedicated website, where it is presented as a distinct project with its own identity. Blogs posted on the website are reported to connect to social media through Facebook. The project states that an increased media profile is an (informal) objective for Years 2, 3, and 4, using partner websites, news articles, press releases, etc. The project reports being in close contact with the British High Commission in Yaoundé (regional office for west central Africa) and that they have been invited to attend an event to highlight the issues of the illegal wildlife trade on species.

13. Project expenditure

The annual report fully explains the variation between predicted and actual spend, with small amounts attributable to exchange rates, and the larger difference related to approved transfer of funds to Y2.

14. General assessment

Based on results and lessons learnt of previous work in the reserve, partners have designed a project to address the interlinked elements of biodiversity and development. Progress is being made and appropriately monitored and reported on.

The project has demonstrated substantive engagement with communities to incorporate the expressed interests of target recipients, which has led to changes and challenges which the project is adapting to. Y2 will be crucial to better understanding what is required to develop and use a sustainable community fishing zone, the first in Cameroon. There is clearly good support locally for the project, demonstrated for example, in the extent of participation thus far, the provision of land by village chiefs for nursery development, and letters written by the villages to ban poaching. This may in part be attributable to the methodology being based on ongoing community initiatives and existing relationships.

The project has encountered challenges beyond its control but is putting additional activities in place to support safety of fisher persons. Negative impacts to the project because of the deaths and associated 'curse' will need to be carefully monitored and a strategy developed to combat any that emerge. The project has provided a very detailed report which has been very helpful for this review, with a small number of clarifications sought.

It is too early to tell what impact the change to a sustainable community fishing zone will have on the associated output and outcome, but it is assumed at this stage, based on presented evidence and approach of the partners, that the project is likely to be largely achieved.

Score: 2

Score	Darwin Description	Achievement of Outputs/Outcome
1	Likely to be completely achieved	The Outputs/Outcome are well on the way to completion (or completed).
2	Likely to be largely achieved	There is good progress towards Outcome completion and most Outputs have been achieved, particularly the most important.
3	Likely to be partly achieved	Only partial achievement of the Outcome is likely and/or achievement of some Outputs.
4	Only likely to be achieved to a very limited extent	Outcome unlikely to be achieved but a few Outputs likely to be achieved.
5	Unlikely to be achieved	No progress on Outputs or Outcome.
X	Too early to judge	It is impossible to say whether there has been any progress towards the final achievement of Outputs or Outcome. This score should not be used unless at least one of the following criteria are met: Project is postponed because of conflict; external constraints; recruitment delays.