

## Evaluating Approaches to Public Engagement in Saiga Conservation

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Project ref.: EIDPO18

Imperial College London; Centre for Ecological Projects (leader), Centre for Wild Animals; Chernye Zemli Biosphere Reserve; Stepnoi Sanctuary; Dharma Centre; Yashkul School; Arshan Children's Home.

The project has made spectacular progress in terms of regional and international partnerships.

We enabled our key collaborators to travel to the First Meeting of the Range States to the Convention on Migratory Species MOU on saiga conservation, at which the MOU came into force. This was a milestone in saiga conservation, and the inclusion of our Kalmykian partners in the meeting enabled them to highlight the excellent work that they have been doing for saigas in an international forum. This has also allowed them to link up with others working for saigas in the region, as well as with international policy-makers. Project partners were heavily involved in preparing the scientific documentation for the meeting and facilitating the associated Technical Workshop. As a result of this, the CMS has sub-contracted us to monitor range states' progress towards fulfilling their obligations under the MOU over the next two years.



**Dancers rehearse the traditional Crane Dance before the opening of the CWA Visitor Centre**

We have founded the Saiga Conservation Alliance, a network of professionals working together to promote the conservation of the saiga at all levels from the grassroots upwards, and both locally and internationally. This organisation is growing fast and Darwin project members are key to its success. The SCA has been made a "start-up partner" of the Wildlife Conservation Network in recognition of our achievements in saiga conservation. This gives our team access to donor networks and planning, marketing and strategic support. The WCN has also (March 2007) awarded one member of our Kalmykian team, Nadezhda Arylova, a Sidney Byers scholarship to support her PhD research on saiga antelope ecology, which is a prestigious award that will help her to complete her research and build partnerships internationally. ■

## Ethnobiology of proposed community use zones of Crocker Range Park

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Project ref.: 13/009

Global Diversity Foundation; Sabah Parks, Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ITBC) Universiti Malaysia Sabah

An outstanding achievement not only during this reporting period but throughout our project has been the level of participation by community members. We would like to suggest that 'community participation in conservation' be a theme for a future Darwin Workshop, as it would build nicely on the livelihoods and conservation theme set for this year. In our project, participation has come to fruition this year, building on the process of community consultation, free prior information consent that led to the signing of a community research agreement at the beginning of the project. Two additional elements that we developed are participatory community evaluation and participatory video.

An important lesson is that participatory community evaluation (fully described in Appendix 18) is a valuable and essential part of the project. It not only enabled a mid-term review of field progress with the community, but additionally provided an open forum where community members could discuss and review aspects of the project that were important for them. The highly interactive approach was crucial in allowing issues to emerge from within the community, thereby enabling the project to assess our impact (e.g. the heightened motivations in the community to carry out their own research on important resources) and respond to community reactions to the project (i.e. prevent overlapping research questions, train more community field assistants). The design of the evaluation was documented in the form of a Process Sheet (in the local language) as an individual component of our Training Manual. The evaluation process and results are being translated to English for inclusion in the Best Practices Handbook.

Another lesson is the importance of having regular and less formal sessions with the community to return results. Feedback obtained from community expositions have been a valuable source for clarifying data, thereby enhancing the design and implementation of field activities.

The second approach developed this year, participatory video (PV), was launched in Buayan in June 2007. In brief, the fifth module of the of the Ethnobiology and Conservation training course included sessions given by Nick Lunch of Insight a UK organisation that focuses on PV. A community workshop allowed the local research assistants to share what they learned with fellow community members. Together, they created several scripts (storyboards) on issues chosen by community members in collaboration with GDF-Sabah team members: "Land, resources and conservation in Buayan", "Local research assistants, ethnobiology and community use zones" and "Culturally appropriate education in indigenous preschools". Videos on these subjects are under production, and will hopefully be presented at several international fora in 2008, including the Fourth World Conservation Congress in Barcelona. This will allow the community to present its perspectives – including its opinion of the Darwin Initiatives project – in its own words and images. We would like to have the

opportunity to present the videos at the 2008 Darwin workshop and to discuss community participation (including community conserved areas) with leaders of other Darwin projects. ■

### Conserving Giant Clams Through Community Reserves in Lakshadweep Islands, India

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Project ref.: 13/029

**LEAD International; Bombay Natural History Society**  
Short stories of outstanding achievements and local leaders are featured on the project website<sup>1</sup>.

The most outstanding achievement in Year 2 is the unanimous support of the local community for the establishment to the proposed Agatti Conservation Reserve. Of the 560 people engaged in community consultations, 300 were women. Their organised networks of self-help groups leveraged resources and disseminated project ideas.

Testimonials featured in our documentary film about setting up the marine protected area are moving examples of islanders' passionate commitment to managing resources and eco-system services in a sustainable way.



**Globally threatened giant clam. Photo: Deepak Apte**

Sandy Beach Cultural and Ecotourism Society in Kavaratti have expanded their activities after their participation in our project's eco-tourism training in Year 1. One of their numerous new initiatives is to purchase a glass bottom boat and offer women – who would not be able to have this experience – environmental education activities out in the lagoon. Beyond their ecotourism activities Sandy Beach Cultural and Ecotourism Society have also undertaken several environmental education activities and got involved in sea turtle protection. BNHS has recently helped them to develop an open air information centre on sea turtle conservation. ■

### Community Action for Sustainable Use and Conservation of Coral Reefs

Elizabeth Wood; Irwanshah Mustapa

Project ref.: 14/007

**Marine Conservation Society; International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN), Cambridge; University of Plymouth; Sabah Parks; Sabah Fisheries Department; Universiti Malaysia Sabah, WWF Malaysia**

The **Community Census** has been one of the most successful project activities this year. This ran over a period of several months, and entailed lengthy interviews with each of the 387 households in the Park. It has provided a snapshot of the current socio-economic profile of the Park community that will help to assess people's current activities and needs and can be used to measure future improvements in job opportunities and income. Conducting the census was also a useful capacity-building exercise for the project partners and has helped to continue to build up further dialogue and good relationships with the local community.

The **SIDP (Semporna Islands Darwin Project) Roadshow** has also been of major importance in ensuring that communities both outside and inside the Park are aware of the MPA, the no-take zones, protected species and other conservation initiatives and regulations. Over 50 villages and 18 schools have been visited, plus local government offices and tour agencies. A number of activities were developed to engage both children and adults, one of which was a specially-designed cartoon colouring book that brings home messages about fish blasting, litter and other reef conservation issues through an entertaining story line. The Roadshow team includes the Bajau Laut Liaison Officer, and the project is continuing to cross boundaries and engage closely with all sectors of the local community.

A novel research programme has been launched this year, looking at the potential for **integrating aquaculture with community-based tourism**. The study is the first of its kind and is important because one of the outcomes will be a plan for how these two activities can be combined to improve local community livelihood opportunities in the Tun Sakaran Marine Park. Thus activities such as seaweed farming and giant clam cultivation could provide dual incomes from the product itself and from visitor income, and could also be of value in increasing general awareness about sustainable methods of marine resource use.

Another achievement this year was to organise a **fish stock enhancement trial**. This involved the release of small numbers of juvenile humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*) and mouse grouper (*Cromileptes altivelis*) into one of the newly-created 'no-take' zones in the Park. The trial not only highlighted the existence of the Conservation Zone to the public, but also illustrated the positive actions that can be taken to help promote the recovery of biodiversity. The mouse grouper trial was in collaboration with the Sabah Fisheries Department, who had cultured the fish, and provided a positive conservation story for a CBBC Saving Planet Earth feature that will be screened later this year. ■

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lead.org/page/89>