



## Event Report

Mexico – January 2024

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

---

<b><i>Brief description</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b><i>Learning event summary</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b><i>An illustrated summary of the RFLE-Mexico 2024</i></b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Day 1. January 15, 2024</b> .....	<b>5</b>
19:00 – 20:00. Welcome and Rufford talk.....	5
<b>Day 2 – January 16, 2024</b> .....	<b>8</b>
8:30 – 9:30. Ice breaker.....	8
9:30 – 18:00. Capacity development workshop I: Community-based conservation (facilitator: Sara Pineda).....	9
18:00 – 19:30. Case study: community-based conservation in the <i>Nuevo Becal</i> community.....	11
<b>Day 3 – January 17, 2024</b> .....	<b>13</b>
8:30 – 17:00. Capacity development workshop II: human-wildlife conflict (facilitator: Montserrat Franquesa) .	13
17:00 – 18:00. Rufford Small Grants talk.....	16
18:00 – 19:30. Case study: human-wildlife conflict in Calakmul.....	17
<b>Day 4 - January 18, 2024 - Fieldtrip</b> .....	<b>19</b>
7:30 – 11:30. Guided visit to the Calakmul archaeological site.....	19
11:30 – 12:30. Woven wisdom activity .....	21
16:00 – 18:00. Bat volcano visit.....	23
<b>Day 5 – January 19, 2024</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b><i>Final Budget</i></b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b><i>Graphical summary of participating grantees</i></b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b><i>How did we decide on the workshops and participants?</i></b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b><i>Surveys results</i></b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b><i>Summary of achievements</i></b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b><i>Acknowledgements</i></b> .....	<b>36</b>

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

---

**Name of the event:** The Rufford Foundation Learning Event (RFLE-Mexico 2024)

**Date of the event:** 15<sup>th</sup> to January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**Location:** Calakmul, Mexico

**The number of persons attending:**

- Seventeen Rufford grantees
- Two Rufford Foundation staff
- Three local organisers (one of which is a Rufford grantee) and one member of their team
- Two local stakeholders

**Number of local people benefited directly from the event:** Nine

**Sponsoring organisation:** The Rufford Foundation

**Local organisers:**

Carlos M. Delgado Martínez – National Autonomous University of Mexico and Rufford  
Grantee

Thelma I. Arenas Rodríguez – National Autonomous University of Mexico

Alejandra Monsiváis Molina – CEO, Students Conserving Nature

**Contact information of Rufford grantee that organised the event:**

pistache06@ciencias.unam.mx

## LEARNING EVENT SUMMARY

---

We are pleased to present the report on the Rufford Foundation Learning Event (RFLE-Mexico 2024), which took place from January 15th to 19th, 2024, in Calakmul, Mexico. This event, supported by the Rufford Foundation and facilitated with local assistance from the NGO Students Conserving Nature, was designed exclusively for the capacity building of both former and current Rufford Foundation grantees working on projects within the Maya Forest of Mexico. It featured two workshops, engaging talks from local stakeholders, various networking activities, and a field trip to the Calakmul archaeological site situated at the core of the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, alongside a visit to the Bat volcano.

The organization of the RFLE-Mexico 2024 aimed not only at benefiting the attendees but also at positively impacting the local community of Calakmul. For example, the candles provided in the welcome kits were crafted by an artisan from the Mancolona community, and the meal served during the field trip, featuring local free-range sheep, was prepared by residents of Nuevo Conhuas.

The Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, the most extensive tropical protected area in Mexico, lies within the Maya Forest, the second-largest Neotropical forest. This area is crucial for the conservation of biodiversity in Mexico and Mesoamerica, serving as a sanctuary for numerous endangered species. However, it faces escalating human pressures, a challenge that is not unique to this region but is widespread across the Mexican Maya Forest. In response, the RFLE-Mexico 2024 sought to enhance the skills of conservationists by leveraging the specific context of Calakmul as a learning model.

We believe that RFLE-Mexico 2024 successfully met its objectives, enriching participants' knowledge and fostering community engagement. Further insights into the event are provided below, accompanied by photographs capturing the essence of the experience.

# AN ILLUSTRATED SUMMARY OF THE RFLE-MEXICO 2024

---

**DAY 1. JANUARY 15, 2024**

---

19:00 – 20:00. WELCOME AND RUFFORD TALK

Carlos Delgado, the local organiser, gave a short talk about the event, highlighting its overall goals.



Stuart Paterson and Mariam Weston, the Rufford staff, gave a talk about the Rufford Foundation and the importance of learning events.



Before the talks, we placed welcome kits on the seats. These kits included a t-shirt with the event logo, a notebook, a pen, a reusable water bottle, and a personalized hand-made candle. The candles were crafted by a local craftswoman using orange peels, hand-painted, and made with beeswax. The animal illustration on each candle was chosen based on the preferences of each participant.



## DAY 2 – JANUARY 16, 2024

---

### 8:30 – 9:30. ICE BREAKER

---

Although we had initially planned a self-introduction with a slide presentation, we modified this activity to make it more interactive and fit within the originally allocated time. During this activity, each participant introduced themselves, providing information about their project, their motivation for engaging in conservation, and sharing an interesting fact. Additionally, each participant noted on cardstock their skills, desired skills, and hidden talents; each cardstock was displayed in the conference room with the aim of sharing this information with all participants. These activities were led by Mariam Weston.

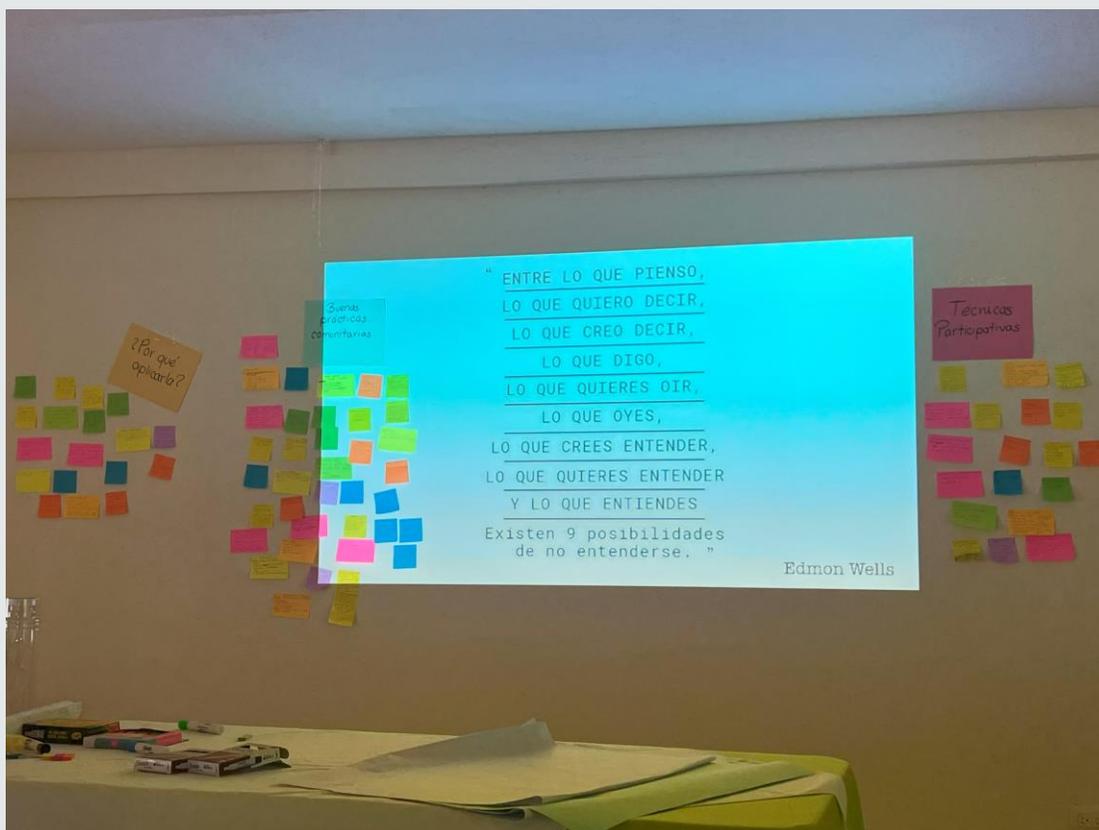




9:30 – 18:00. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP I: COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION (FACILITATOR: SARA PINEDA)

This workshop was designed to provide participants with theoretical and practical tools to enhance the integration of local communities into conservation initiatives from an ethical and interdisciplinary perspective. The workshop offered an opportunity to learn, share knowledge, and promote a more inclusive vision of conservation.





---

18:00 – 19:30. CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION IN THE *NUEVO BECAL* COMMUNITY

---

To highlight a successful example of community-based conservation in Calakmul, we invited Héctor Arias, the local authority of Nuevo Becal, to discuss the management practices his community employs on their communal lands. This community stands as a regional model for exemplary forest and wildlife management, sustainable resource use within a productive landscape and benefit sharing. Thus, the purpose of this activity was to facilitate an interactive session with Héctor.



## DAY 3 – JANUARY 17, 2024

---

8:30 – 17:00. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP II: HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT  
(FACILITATOR: MONTSERRAT FRANQUESA)

---

The workshop was aimed to deepen understanding of human-wildlife coexistence and socio-ecological interactions by critically examining the concept beyond mere conflict absence, analysing historical biases towards conflict in literature. It involved a participatory session where teams applied theoretical frameworks to real-life scenarios, engaging in stakeholder mapping, interaction analysis, and exploring the theory of change. The workshop concluded with discussions on ethical considerations and strategies for inclusive, horizontal engagement in decision-making processes, drawing on case studies to highlight the complexity of involving diverse stakeholder groups and cultural considerations in promoting sustainable coexistence.







---

17:00 – 18:00. RUFFORD SMALL GRANTS TALK

---

This talk was given by Mariam Weston, focusing on explaining the grants schemes, tips and best practices when writing a proposal. The talk ended up with a question-and-answer session. This was a very interesting talk since all the participants have the desired to apply to the next grant level.



---

18:00 – 19:30. CASE STUDY: HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT IN CALAKMUL

---

To illustrate a local example of human-wildlife conflict mitigation, we invited Fernando Contreras, WWF Field Official in Calakmul, to discuss the strategies implemented at the regional level to minimize the impact of large predators on cattle ranching. Furthermore, Fernando provided insights into the research activities carried out by WWF in Calakmul.





## DAY 4 - JANUARY 18, 2024 - FIELDTRIP

---

### 7:30 – 11:30. GUIDED VISIT TO THE CALAKMUL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

---

Our field trip commenced with a journey from the venue to the archaeological site, which lasted 1.5 hours. The tour was led by Nuvia Damian, an experienced local guide, who shared the history of Calakmul city along with its associated biodiversity. As we walked towards the pyramids, we observed numerous birds, common plant species, and even the two monkey species native to Calakmul. Atop the most iconic pyramid, we captured the group photo. Additionally, one of the grantees, Nathalia Castillo, conducted a meditation session.







---

### 11:30 – 12:30. WOVEN WISDOM ACTIVITY

---

This activity was designed to allow each participant to share the most valuable insight they gained from the event. The dynamic involved passing a ball of yarn from person to person, creating a net that symbolized the interactions and connections formed among participants. The contributions were filled with positive emotions and opinions about the event.



---

## 16:00 – 18:00. BAT VOLCANO VISIT

---

We visited the Bat Volcano, a cave that is home to the largest bat colony in the Neotropics. During our visit, we had the opportunity to witness a collared forest falcon preying on a bat, a remarkable predation event.



**Observations:** We had initially planned to visit two waterholes in the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve before seeing the bat volcano. Unfortunately, construction activities along the road leading to the archaeological site caused a significant delay, preventing us from doing so.

## **DAY 5 – JANUARY 19, 2024**

---

On this day, all participants took their respective modes of transportation to return to their places of origin.

## FINAL BUDGET

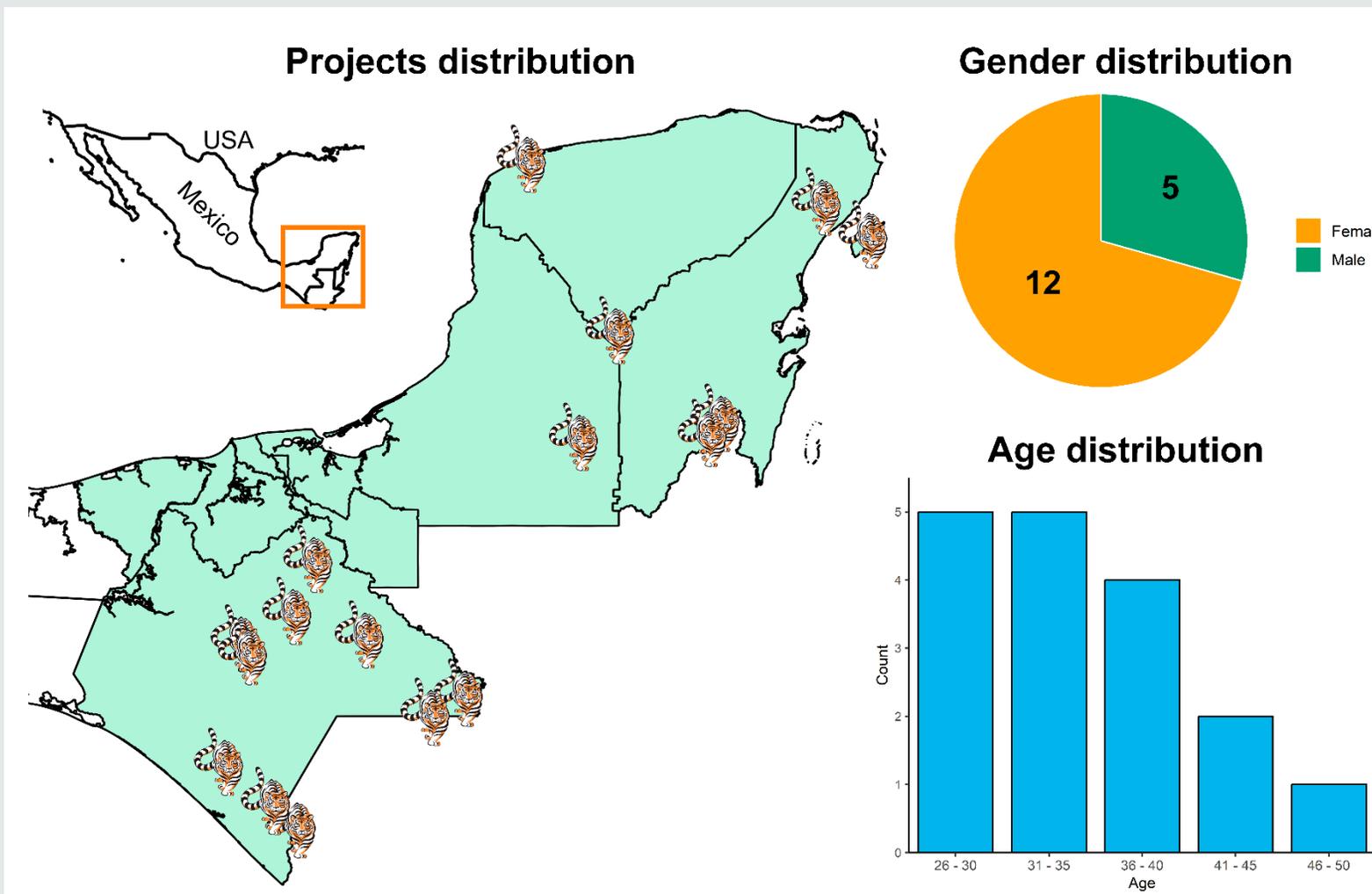
Item	Justification	Costs (Mexican pesos)	Cost (GBP)
Bank fees	Bank fee for receiving an international transfer.	1,191.96	56.92
Accommodation	Chicanná Ecovillage Resort. Accommodation for grantees, facilitators, Rufford staff and organisers.	79,771.74	3,809.54
Meals	This included meals at the venue, lunch for the field trip, and locally sourced free-range sheep consumed during the field trip.	90,059.85	4,300.85
Transportation	Flight tickets and ground transportation for the grantees and facilitators.	85,110.35	4,064.49
Staff transportation	The original cost increased because we decided to bring a personal vehicle to facilitate the mobility of the organisers during the event.	14,822.86	707.87
Van transportation	Ground transportation during the field trip.	23,000	1,098.38
Welcome kit	Each kit included a t-shirt, a notebook, a pen, a regional handcraft, and reusable water bottle.	9,652	460.94
Workshops materials	This included different materials such as pens and markers.	1,869.6	89.28
Entrance fee	Entrance fees to the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve.	6,840	326.65
Local field guide	Payment for the tourist guide who accompanied us during the field day.	2,000	95.51
Facilitator fees	Payment for the two facilitators who gave the workshops.	11,000	525.31
Organiser fees	Stipend provided to organisers to allow them to devote enough time to the event.	12,440	594.08
Administration costs		17,772	848.71
<b>Total costs of the RFLE</b>		<b>355,530.36</b>	<b>16,978.53</b>

SUMMARY	Mexican pesos	GBP
<b>Total costs of the event</b>	<b>355,530.36</b>	<b>16,978.53</b>
Total deposited by Rufford Foundation	355,438.11	16,974
Difference	-92.25	-4.53

1 GBP = 20.94 Mexican pesos

**Observations:** Despite facing a last-minute cancellation and one of the selected participants being unable to attend due to a COVID infection, we had already purchased their tickets and paid for their accommodations and meals, which meant we were unable to recover those costs.

## GRAPHICAL SUMMARY OF PARTICIPATING GRANTEES

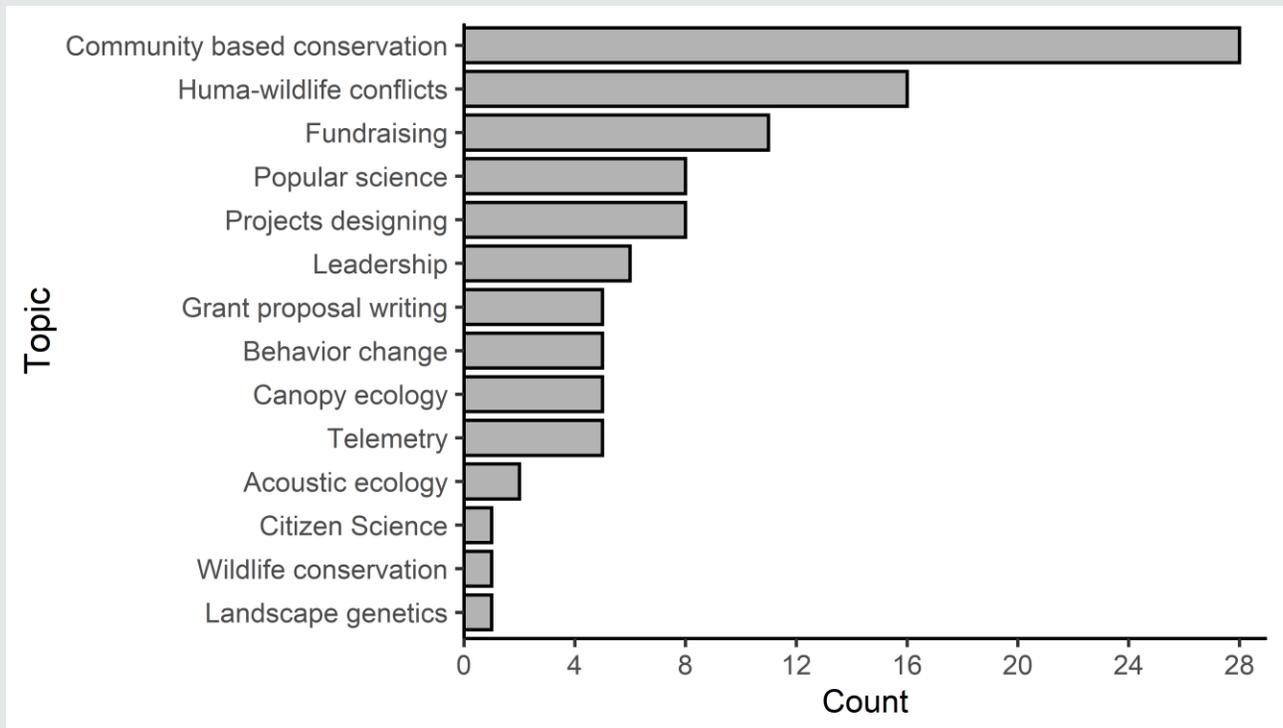


A full description (in Spanish) of each participant can be found at:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1o\\_mfv5t9X-VibD2avJuGqYIUCZS0x0aS?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1o_mfv5t9X-VibD2avJuGqYIUCZS0x0aS?usp=drive_link)

## HOW DID WE DECIDE ON THE WORKSHOPS AND PARTICIPANTS?

During the event preparation, we distributed a Google Form to Rufford grantees with former or current projects in Mexico's Maya Forest to gather information. This helped us select the event participants and determine the workshops to be offered, which were chosen based on the two most popular topics.



We considered three main criteria for participant selection:

- 1) Gender balance: We aimed for at least 60% of the participants to be women.
- 2) Active engagement in the Maya Forest: Although some grantees initially had projects in the Maya Forest, they now work in other parts of Mexico or even in other countries. Priority was given to those currently active in the Maya Forest.
- 3) Contribution beyond academia: We prioritized grantees engaged in conservation activities that extend beyond merely publishing papers.

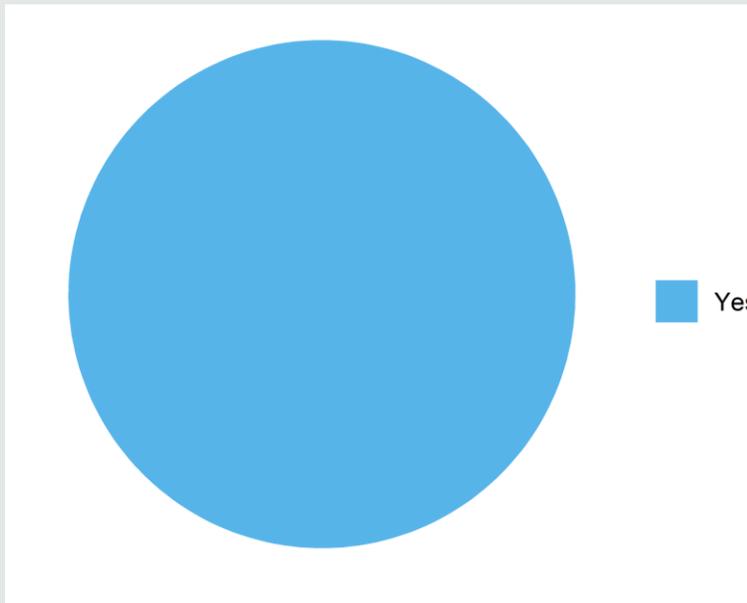
## SURVEYS RESULTS

A few days before and after the event, we distributed a survey to collect information about participants' expectations, the impact of the workshops, and any general feedback. Here, we present the most significant findings. Questions with numerical levels range from the lowest (1) to the highest (5) value.

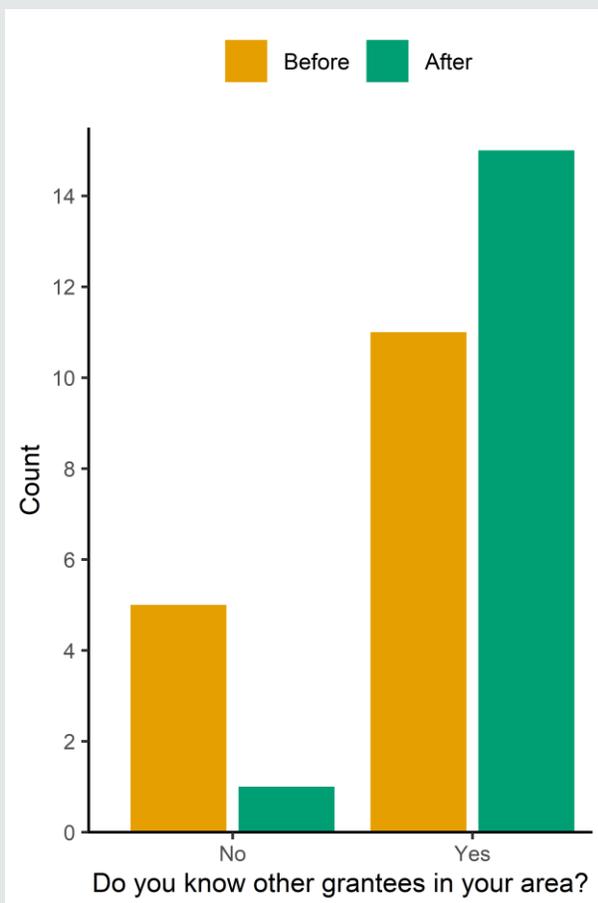
Q. Could you tell us three words that summarize your experience at the learning event?



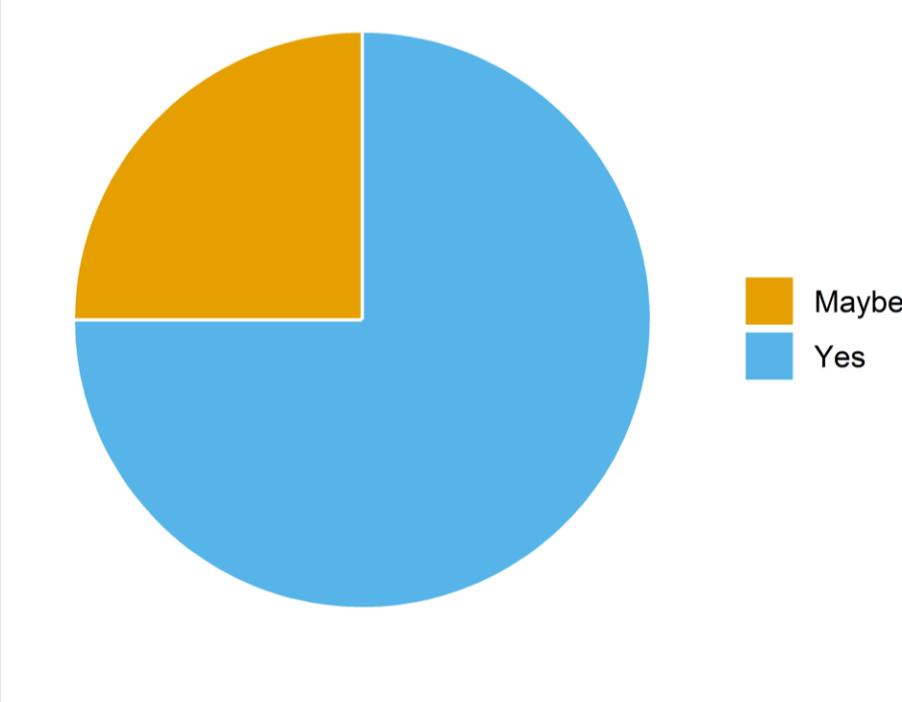
Q. Do you think the event's information and workshops will help address conservation challenges in your area?



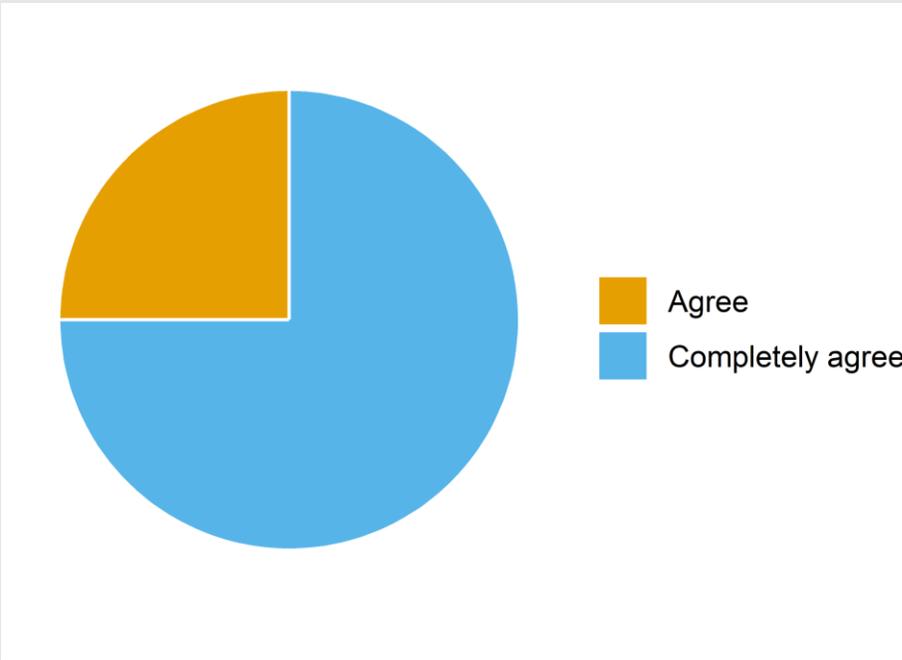
Q. Do you know other grantees in your area?



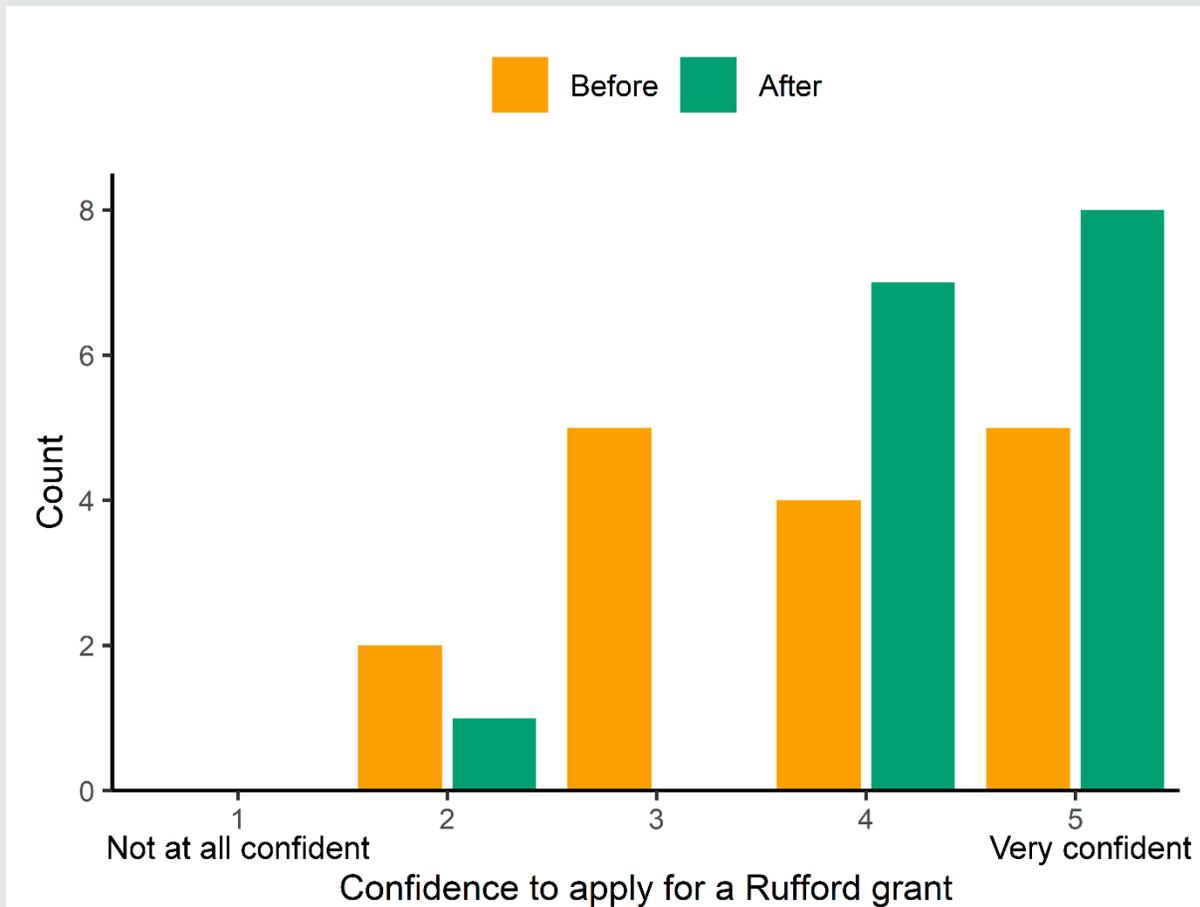
Q. Do you plan to initiate new collaborations with other grantees?



Q. Did you find that the activities facilitated networking among grantees?



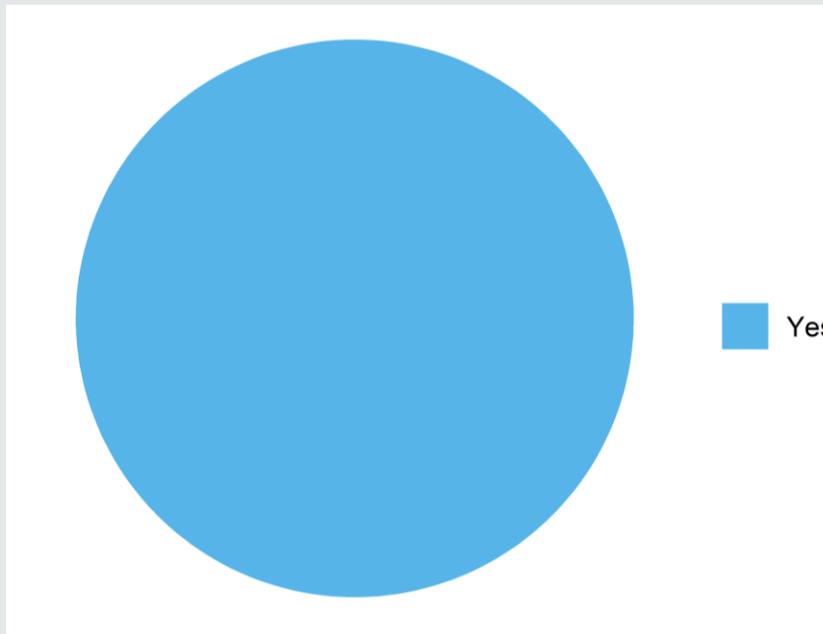
Q. How confident do you feel to apply for additional Rufford funding?



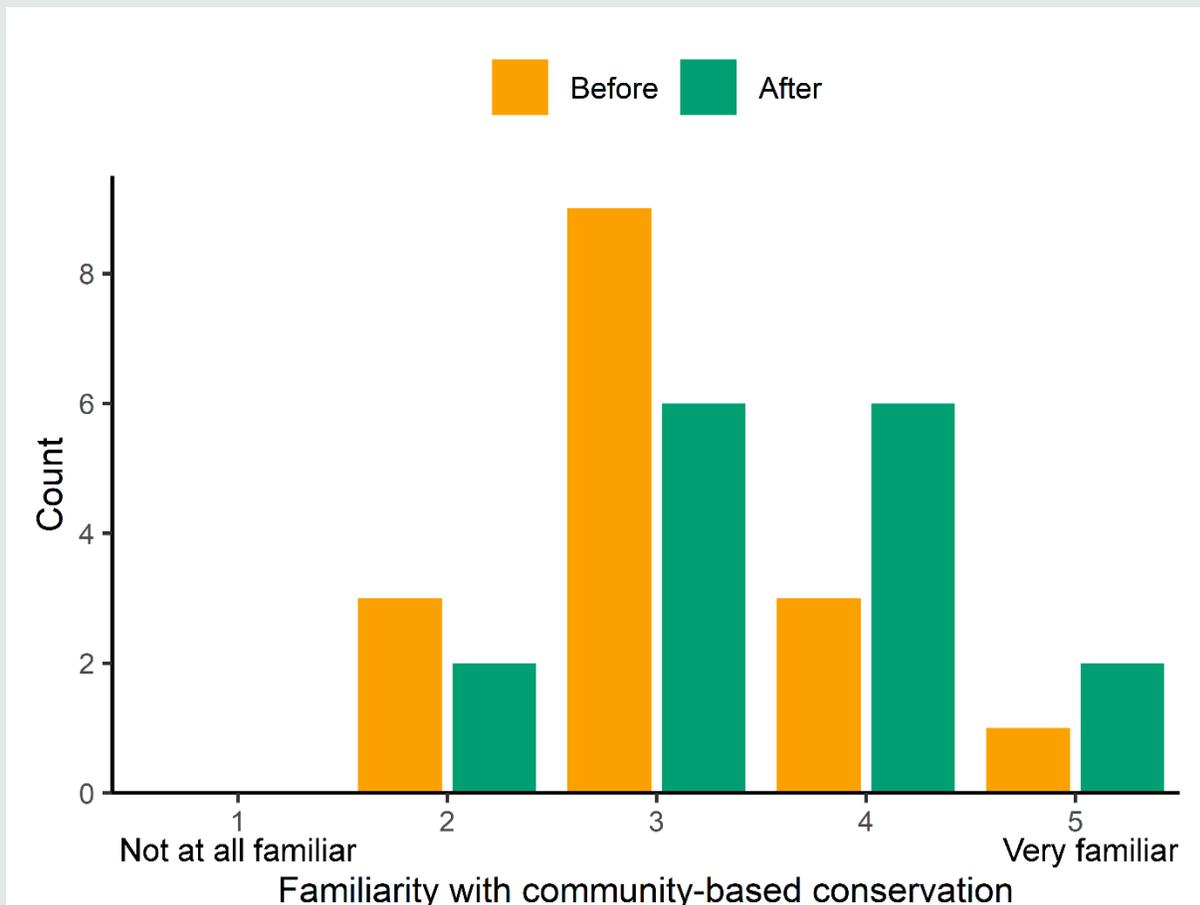
Q. Did the community-based conservation workshop meet your expectations?



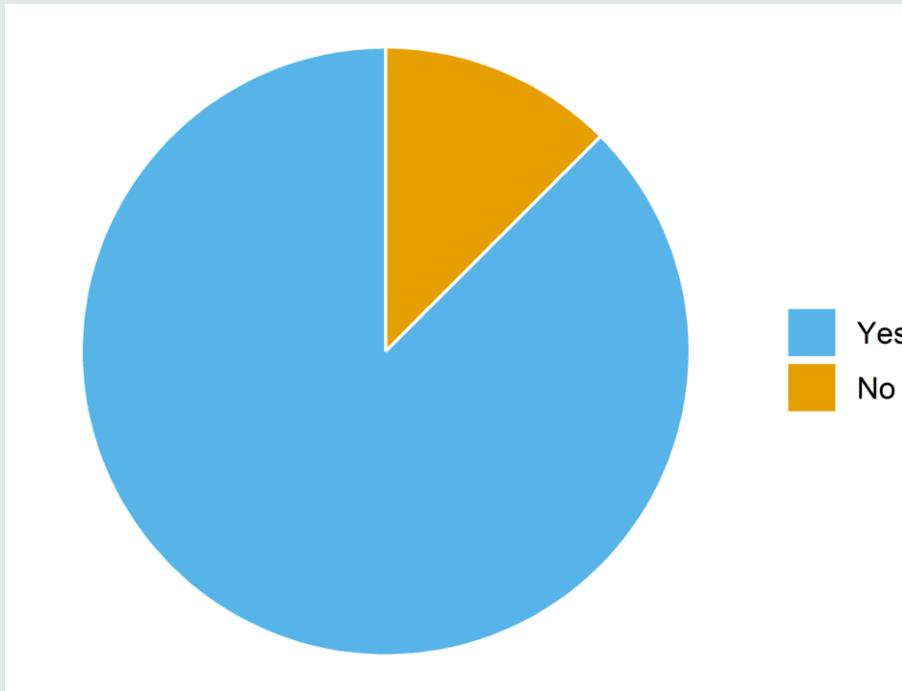
Q. After taking the community-based conservation workshop, do you consider it important to increase the level of participation of local communities in your conservation projects?



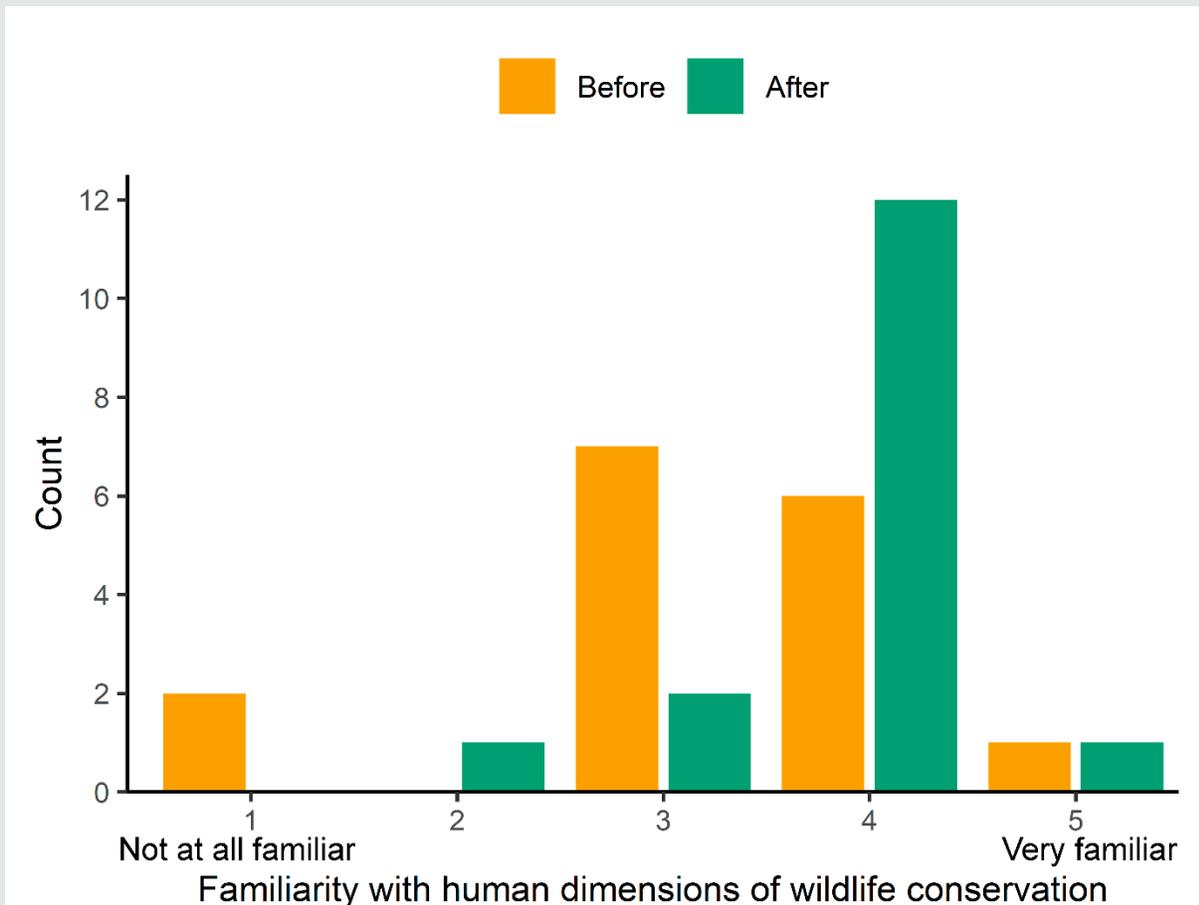
Q. How familiar do you feel with the theory and practice of community-based conservation?



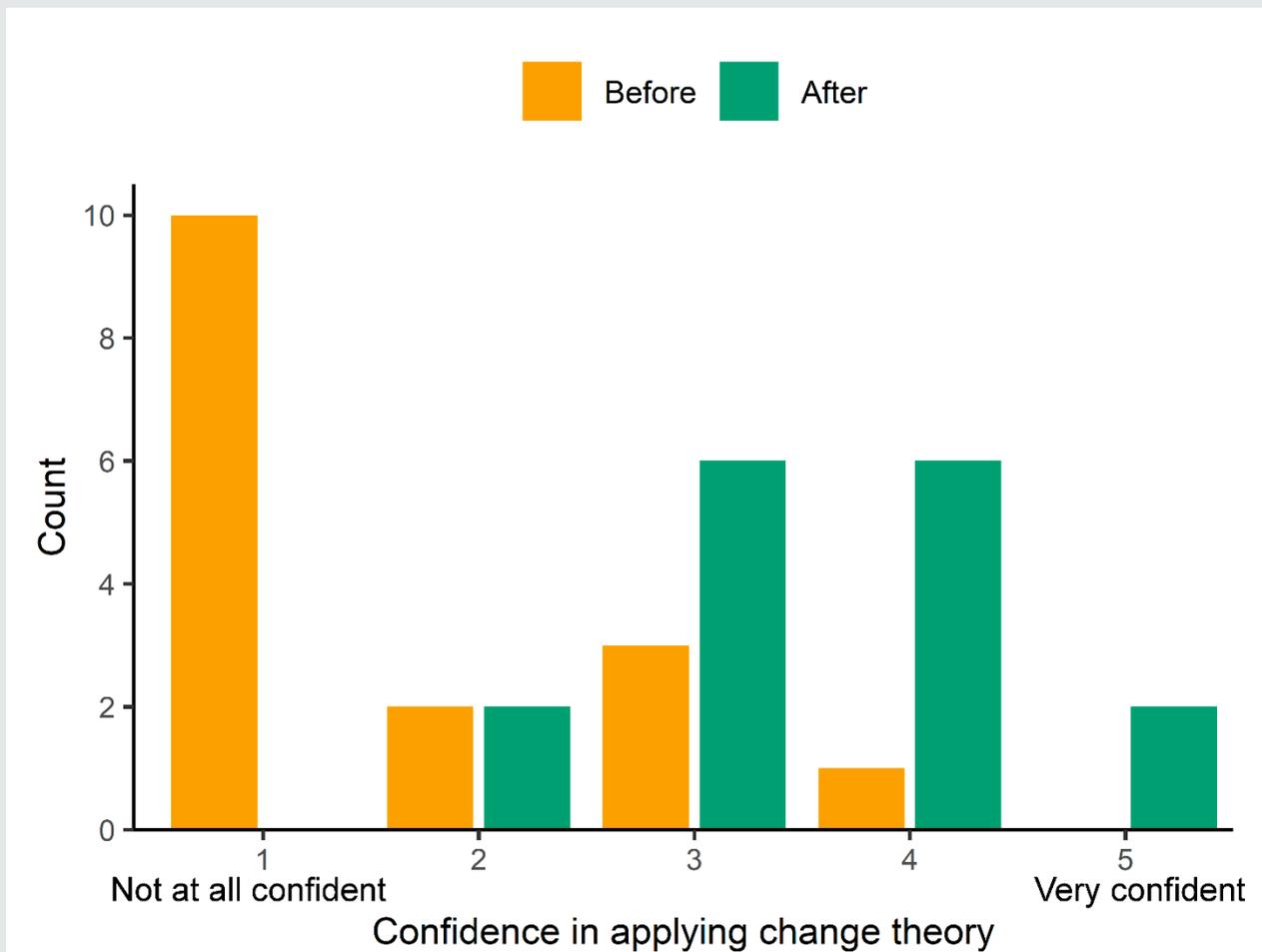
Q. Did the human-wildlife conflict workshop meet your expectations?



Q. How familiar do you feel with human dimensions of wildlife conservation?



Q. How confident do you feel about applying the change theory in a conservation project?



## SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

---

- Unfortunately, women are often underrepresented in various contexts in Mexico, including events such as the Learning Event. However, during this particular event, women comprised 70% of the grantees and both facilitators were women, marking a significant step towards inclusivity.
- Meat production is one of the primary threats to tropical biodiversity. Although conservationists acknowledge this issue, vegetarianism remains uncommon among Mexicans. Notably, during this event, we made a significant stride towards promoting environmental sustainability by offering a predominantly vegetarian menu, with the exception of one meal. This initiative not only highlighted the practicality of vegetarian options but also served as a powerful demonstration of how event catering can align with conservation principles, setting a commendable example for future gatherings.
- The prevalent use of single-use plastics, especially for water bottles and food packaging, is a widespread issue in southern Mexico, contributing significantly to the region's pollution challenges. In a commendable effort to address this problem, the event took a proactive stance by avoiding single-use plastics. This achievement was made possible through direct and clear communication with service providers.
- One of the key objectives of this event was to foster networking among grantees working in Mexico's Selva Maya. Remarkably, the event not only met this goal but exceeded expectations, as evidenced by the immediate initiation of interactions and collaborations among the grantees. These post-event developments have included the sharing of knowledge and a collaborative proposal to write a chapter detailing the challenges of conducting projects in the region. This outcome highlights the event's success in catalysing meaningful connections and cooperative efforts that extend beyond its conclusion.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

We are immensely grateful to the Rufford Foundation for the opportunity to organize the first Rufford Foundation Learning Event in Mexico. Our thanks also extend to the team at Students Conserving Nature for their invaluable assistance throughout the event's organization. We are particularly thankful to Mariam Weston and Stuart Paterson for their unwavering support during both the planning and execution phases of the event. The impact of the event reached beyond the Rufford grantees who participated, also benefiting the local people in Calakmul. We extend our gratitude to the residents of Calakmul who contributed to the event in various ways, especially the people from the Conhuas community, who have consistently supported our projects in the region.

