

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details

Your name	Meghna Krishnadas
Project title	Socio-ecological dynamics of Non-timber Forest Produce (NTFP) harvest in a rainforest complex of Western Ghats in South India
RSG reference	13061-1
Reporting period	July 2013-July 2014
Amount of grant	£5995
Your email address	srishti.meghna@gmail.com
Date of this report	21 st Aug 2014

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Major NTFP being harvested			√	Interviews with harvesters have shed light on the major forest products harvested
Socioeconomic drivers of NTFP			√	Through interviews with harvesters, shopkeepers, and traders
Historical and current patterns of harvest		√		Due to lack of historical data and unreliability of respondent memories, we cannot be sure of the quantitative accuracy of past harvest
harvest quantity, market value, trade practices, and contribution to local income			√	Data collected through interviews and direct observations of harvesters
conservation attitudes of local forest-users, and their perspectives on the impacts of NTFP harvest on biodiversity			√	Data collected through interviews with harvesters
Community rules for forest use and NTFP harvest			√	Data collected through interviews with harvesters
For one major NTFP – <i>Myristica dactyloides</i> : fruiting patterns and seed fall		√		Tree plots and vegetation transects in the forest. However, data is sparse as of now. We will be following this up this field season.
Spatiotemporal patterns of harvest			√	Data collected through interviews and transects walked in the forest
Effect on animals due to harvest	√			There was no time to do this. We will be following this up in this coming field season

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

Obtaining permits from the Forest Department for research within the forest areas took longer than expected. We conducted a larger set of interviews instead in the villages surrounding the forest areas. Due to lack of time, we could only sample villages around Kudremukha and Someshwara, and not sample villages around Pushpagiri. Further, we were unable to hold formal meetings and talks with the villagers due to hostility towards researchers, as there is some ongoing friction between

harvesters and the Forest Department. Also, we will have to continue collection of ecological information we need for assessing impacts of harvest on the main species being harvested – *Myristica dactyloides*, since the species had a low fruiting season. Further, the area has insurgency issues and naxalites and their supporters threatened the researchers. In spite of this, we did manage to obtain a larger number of interviews than anticipated, and preliminary ecological data.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

1. We have obtained information on what products are harvested, quantities harvested, periods of harvest, market forces, and trade routes. This is the first step in determining the existing scenario of harvest practices to judge sustainability.
2. We have understood existing socioeconomic drivers of harvest, who primarily harvests (socioeconomic profile), spatiotemporal patterns. We now know which communities to target for future dialogue.
3. We have understood that harvest is a free-for-all activity right now, most of it being conducted illegally within the parks because Reserved Forests are too degraded, and that there are NO community rules to regulate harvest practices. On the other hand, harvests perceive increased competition for resources and diminished returns on effort. This provides us scope to initiate dialogue with the community (different castes) to establish rules for harvest regulation.

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

Members of one of the local tribal community worked as field assistants. While there are multiple castes in the area that harvest, having a local person helped establish contacts with harvesters, as they were more amenable to talk and share information when approached by a familiar person. We have initiated conversation with members of the local community about the possibility of regulating harvest and formulating community rules for this.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes! A large part of the ecological component could not be undertaken this field season because of lack of time, delay in permits, lack of manpower, and insurgency issues. Also, many trees did not fruit this year and it was not logistically viable to evaluate seed dispersal and recruitment patterns. The next two field seasons will be devoted to ecological work. Further, we wish to conduct further interviews in other contiguous areas to obtain a broader spatial pattern of harvest pressures.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

We plan to analyse the interview data and spatial patterns of harvest and write this up for possible publication in a peer-reviewed journal. I am also liaising with a filmmaker to create a short documentary on the socioecological dimensions of NTFP harvest in this landscape. Further, I am in conversation with an artist to create posters on conveying the ecological impacts of harvest through pictorial depictions. A report for the Forest Department is also being prepared. Results of the work will also be presented at conferences.

7. Timescale: Over what period was the RSG used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

Funds were used from October 2013 to August 2014. This is a slight delay from the envisioned period of May 2013-May 2014. The delay was due to multiple unanticipated problems – delay in procuring research permits, attrition in field staff, illness of field worker, and resistance from local communities. However, we are continuing the project, currently collating and analysing data and writing up results, and we will start the next field season at the earliest.

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Reconyx Camera traps	1850	2050	+200	Price was higher than expected
Garmin GPS x 2	300	360	+160	A higher quality GPS was purchased
Vehicle hire + fuel expenses + repairs and maintenance	1000	750	-250	We used a motorbike instead of a jeep
Allowances + honoraria	2700	2100	-600	Travel and food expenses were higher than expected, but we only found one permanent research assistant
Nikon binoculars	300	190	-110	Only one unit was purchased
Stationery	100	200	+100	Printing and photocopy charges almost doubled during the project period
Overheads +admin	0	300	+600	Auditing and administrative charges had not been specified by the NGO previously
TOTAL		5950		

9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

The most important component that is often lacking from studies of sustainability of NTFP harvest are the impacts of harvest on ecological processes. The next step of this study will be to conduct ecological field study to analyse how harvest impacts or influences patterns of recruitment and regeneration of a key species harvested heavily for its fruit. Next, once we have that information, we can initiate dialogue with harvesters and the Forest Department in coming up with accepted community rules for harvest, timing of harvest, and spatial restrictions on harvest.

10. Did you use the RSGF logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Not yet. But, RSGF logo will be used in all subsequent presentations of the work, and RSG acknowledged for their funding contribution in planned documentary, posters, and publications.