

## The Rufford Foundation Final Report

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

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other format. 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. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. 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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

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Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Rohini Chaturvedi
Project title	Tigers and Tourism: Building stakeholder collaboration for conservation
RSG reference	14314-1
Reporting period	November 2014-November 2015; extended to May 2016
Amount of grant	£5000
Your email address	Rohini.chaturvedi@gmail.com
Date of this report	30 May 2016

**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
Objective 1: Developing a contextually relevant and operational definition for ecotourism				The project found considerable variation in the operational understanding of 'ecotourism' both within and among stakeholder groups. While the project was unable to arrive at a consensus definition it reveals that different elements of the Government of India's policy are varyingly emphasised in stakeholders' definitions of ecotourism and this is likely to pose a significant challenge to policy implementation. Equally importantly, the policy makes assumptions about the willingness of communities to engage in ecotourism, and this is untenable in the project area. Please see Appendix 1 for further details.
Objective 2: Voluntary preparation of a buffer zone management plan including land use analysis, framework of incentives, and tourism management plan				The three components inputs have been drafted – land use analysis, tourism management plan and possible framework of incentives. But we have been unsuccessful in getting the three actors to come together to develop this into a buffer zone management plan.
Objective 3: Partnerships among stakeholders and trust building				The mistrust among the actors is so strong that bringing them together was just not possible. It is premature to plan for partnerships at this stage. We did however manage to communicate positions and expectations across different stakeholders.

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

One of the key difficulties that we faced in the project was the deep seated mistrust that communities have for the forest department based not only on historic injustices (perceived and real) but events surrounding the formation of the buffer zones which, if anecdotes are believed, involved manipulation and sleight of hand. Communities are fearful that the declaration of the buffer zone implies extension of the park and forcible eviction. In this context they were unwilling to discuss any issues related to land, resources, socio-economic information. We addressed this by:

1. Regular meetings (almost twice as many as we had planned for in the project plan) where we assured people that our motives were only to support ecotourism in ways that supported local livelihoods.
2. Consistent messaging in person, and through documented discussion that the Government of Madhya Pradesh had no plans for eviction of villages from the buffer zone and that forcible evictions were illegal. These messages were communicated by senior government officials, a well-respected journalist from the area, rights activists and an environmental lawyer.
3. Deferring studies of land and resources until such time that the communities feel comfortable with this. We have also given those copies of all the official land maps and satellite images that we have collected explaining how we are going to use them and why.

Secondly, we had not anticipated the complete lack of awareness about ecotourism and their fear about what this entails.

1. We brought in people from a nearby village of Maraikala where village tourism has been successful, to talk about their experiences and benefits. We also involved members of the Ekta Parishad who had been instrumental in setting up tourism at Maraikala to share their experiences and answer questions. Since Ekta Parishad is a trusted civil society organisation in the area, we were able to establish rapport through them.
2. We conducted training programmes with youth nominated from the villages to explain ecotourism and the project aims and objectives.
3. We translated the project summary in Hindi and distributed these as handouts because we realised that people would feel comforted with having a 'document.'

Third, we were not aware of the political dynamic in the villages. Initially participation in the project meetings and in the project was fractured along political

lines. People in village leadership did not feel comfortable with benefits to the people flowing through non-Panchayat sources as this would diminish the power of the Panchayat members.

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

A) There is increased understanding of ecotourism in the three communities, particularly the members of the Juhila Ecotourism Group, and the potential for this to augment their cash income. When we first started interacting with the communities in the three selected villages, we realised that they saw 'ecotourism' as a distant concept that did not concern them. Many people equated the idea with outsiders coming into the area to buy land and establish luxury hotels. Accordingly, they feared tourism as a mechanism leading to misappropriation of resources and land, bringing with it uncontrolled presence of outsiders, with high risk of misbehaviour towards women. Our first task therefore, was to create awareness about ecotourism, its defining principle of integrating social, economic and environmental parameters in tourism activities, the emphasis on community participation and partnerships, and different models through which this can be achieved. We have made significant progress in this respect, evidenced by the coming together of thirty households to set up a tri-village group –Juhila Ecotourism Group.

B) Empirically grounded feedback to policy makers at multiple levels: One of the outcomes envisaged by the project was that we would be able to provide empirically grounded feedback to the government officials. At the proposal writing stage we had identified a champion of change, who also provided a reference for the project. Through the course of the work, we kept him and others in government informed (through formal and informal communication), about the findings that were emerging from the field. For example, we ensured that the right people in government heard about after which they responded to the pervasive anxiety resultant of the buffer zone creation. Similarly, when we learned that the communities felt disconnected from the park we worked with the concerned authorities to organise a visit to the park. We are developing a policy brief in English and Hindi encapsulating the key findings and will be sharing these with concerned government officials.

C) Testing of assumptions: the premise of ecotourism is that industry, government and communities can work together in a collaborative framework, to promote ecotourism. The project however found that the deep-seated mistrust among these three actors makes the premise untenable. A lot of sustained effort is needed to build confidence but at the moment the commitment towards mending fences is absent. Additionally, the Government of India and sections of the Government of Madhya Pradesh along with activists working on behalf of communities insist that

ecotourism must be community owned and driven. The current absorption power of communities, their interests and capacities are not geared towards implementing ecotourism. Rather they are consumed by the day to day challenges of marginal agriculture and protecting their crops from wild animals. The operational definition of ecotourism emerging from this work therefore necessitates a more nuanced scoping of (a) how ecotourism can be embedded within a larger developmental mandate (b) the presence/absence of enabling factors necessary for ecotourism, and (c) the meaning of 'local community' and how they may be involved in or associated with ecotourism.

**5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Not at this time. WRI India is implementing a project on landscape restoration in the district of Umaria. The buffer zone of Bandhavgarh tiger reserve is part of this landscape; the team working on the Rufford project is also part of the WRI team and will be taking the learning from the Rufford project into the landscape approach.

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

The results will be shared through in person meetings, workshops, and conferences.

**7. Timescale: Over what period was The Rufford Foundation grant used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?**

18 months. The project is anticipated to be at least 5-8 years.

**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
Travel	1860	1775	85	One of our experts chose not to have his travel reimbursed.
Maintenance for research team, including lodging	1400	1902	-502	We spent more time in the field than we had estimated; we needed to do this because the local field team needed more handholding than anticipated. This amount includes the subsidy for lodging offered by Tree Hotels. This has been

				deducted later.
Research Assistance	810	1232	-	The research assistants were paid a daily stipend. The number of days for research increased substantially given the rapport building and confidence building measures that were necessary. Also, we used in-person meetings as the principal form of dissemination.
Equipment	96	48	48	We subsidised this by using personal equipment.
GIS Mapping	15	266	-251	The data available in open access was unsuitable for analysis. We therefore had to purchase two plates of remote sensed images from NRSC.
Venue rent	144	0	144	We managed to get a free of cost venue courtesy Tree Hotels
Food expenses for stakeholder meeting	180	180	0	
Nominal stipend for workshop participants	64	0	64	No stipend was required. People were happy to participate without this incentive.
Documentation and Communication	106	46	60	We did this in-house to keep the costs low
Expert technical input	50	50	0	
Dissemination expenses	225	0	225	We decided on in-person dissemination. This is reflected in the increased research assistance costs.
Contingency 1%	50	0	50	
<b>Total</b>	5000	5499	499	

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

The protection and management of the buffer zone of Bandhavgarh needs sustained, facilitated dialogue between community representatives, forest departments and industry, which are the three key stakeholder groups in the area. This, we believe, is essential for trust-building.

Secondly, the buffer zone is not uniform in its levels of development, with 'tourism readiness' higher in some areas than in others. It is key that a development and capabilities mapping of the buffer zone is carried out and a suite of conservation strategies devised that respond to different developmental and conservation priorities.

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

Yes. We used this on the handouts submitted to the government and to the village communities. We also used this on a banner for the workshops.

**11. Any other comments?**

**Appendix 1**

**A contextually relevant and operational definition for ecotourism**

In developing the operational definition of ecotourism we looked at two parameters:

- 1) The emphasis on environmental, social and economic sustainability
- 2) The role of three key stakeholder groups viz., the government at national and state levels, community and industry, mainly the lodge operators.

In arriving at this operational understanding, we looked at definitions that were articulated in policy documents or grey literature as well as in stakeholder discussions from the key stakeholders.

Government of India:

In its 2012 Guidelines for Tourism in and around Tiger Reserves, the Government of India defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and improves the well-being of local people". The policy adopts a normative approach that privileges conservation over tourism, and emphasises a community based and community driven approach. It is important to note that the Guidelines do not envisage a role for industry in the ecotourism paradigm. Instead, the aim is to control the mushrooming of tourist facilities as well as control the spread of 'high end' and exclusive tourist facilities. The industry is expected to participate in ecotourism primarily through a monetary contribution in the form of a 'conservation fee' differentially levied depending on the number of beds, the duration of operation (seasonal/all year) and a luxury classification.<sup>1</sup> In return they have representation in the Local Advisory Committee which will decide how money collected through the conservation fees will be spent.

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<sup>1</sup> The guidelines exempt homestays with less than 6 beds from the payment of the conservation fees; the understanding is that tourist facilities with high luxury classification, larger number of beds and all-year operations will be liable to pay the highest fee.

It is anticipated that this fee will not go to the state exchequer but will be utilised directly in the enhancement of local livelihoods and community development.

### Government of Madhya Pradesh

The Government of Madhya Pradesh's ecotourism policy is essentially part of the Madhya Pradesh Forest Policy of 2005 (Section 3.16).<sup>2</sup> The objective of ecotourism according to this Forest Policy is to "create attachment for nature in people, especially making them aware towards conservation of wildlife and protected areas." Ecotourism in Madhya Pradesh is within the purview of the MP Ecotourism Development Board<sup>3</sup> while the management of the buffer zones is with the Park Authorities in each Park. This division of function necessitates attention to both organisations.

The launch of this project in November 2014 coincided with the MPEDB's effort to map out ecotourism routes in the Buffer Zone of Bandhavgarh National Park. Initial conversations with members of staff revealed that while there was in-principle support for local community based tourism, garnering community support and building community ownership was time-consuming and therefore incompatible with the urgency and immediacy that underpinned the MPEDB's efforts.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly community participation and benefits were traded-off for expediency in implementation, and routes were identified, demarcated and tourism launched in the buffer zone solely through the efforts of the MPEDB. In MP there is a policy that mandates revenues from Parks to be channelized to the eco-development committees in the villages in the buffer zones. To ensure community benefit, it was proposed that the receipts from buffer zone ecotourism should also be shared in the same manner. Participation by industry in the MPEDB's ecotourism effort was entirely absent. Senior members of staff however envisioned industry taking over the ecotourism routes and running them as private, commercial enterprises. There are legal restrictions that will need to be addressed if this PPP framework is to be adopted.

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of writing this report, the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Strategy for Tiger Reserves as mandated by the Government of India/NTCA guidelines was unavailable for review.

<sup>3</sup> MPEDB is an autonomous organization in the forest department of the Government of Madhya Pradesh. Its role is to facilitate the eco/tourism efforts of the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Department, the Forest Department and other stakeholders, for generating synergies between them (Source: <http://mfp.mpforest.org/eco/aboutus.html>).

<sup>4</sup> We later learned that this urgency was a manifestation of major differences between the MP Forest Department and the MPEDB about jurisdiction over tourism in the buffer zones. The former believed that this tourism was part of Park Administration whereas MPEDB believed buffer zone tourism to be part of its mandate.

As already mentioned, the MP Tourism Strategy for Tiger Reserves was unavailable at the time of writing this report.

### Local communities

When we first started interacting with the communities in the three selected villages, we realised that they saw 'ecotourism' as a distant concept that did not concern them. Many people equated the idea with outsiders coming into the area to buy land and establish luxury hotels, as they had seen happen in Tala village.<sup>5</sup> As a result, they feared tourism as a mechanism leading to misappropriation of resources and land, bringing with it uncontrolled presence of outsiders, with high risk of misbehaviour towards women. Through a series of meetings we were able to communicate the idea of ecotourism along with the importance of local communities within this framework. But even as 30 households came together to form the Juhila Ecotourism Group and participated in tourism planning the following were defined as operational conditions:

1. They would participate in ecotourism only if it did not interfere with agricultural functions. Several time the group emphasised that they were agriculturalists and not entrepreneurs.
2. Ecotourism activities would need to respect the norms of caste and gender that were well established in the village. E.g. Brahmin women of Karkacha were agreeable to guiding tourists on walks and hikes, talking to them and sharing information about the village. They refused however, to cook and serve food to the tourists. Ecotourism activities would also need to be fitted into the rhythm of village life, accommodating social commitments (weddings, funerals, and so on) as well as celebration of festivals
3. The EDC for the three villages was completely defunct and the ecotourism committee would work independently of the EDC. While the committee would be involved in and support ecotourism, they were only an implementation support group. They had neither the time, orientation nor capacities

It was amply clear that the committees saw ecotourism primarily as a means of augmenting their income, preferably through provision of wage labour.

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<sup>5</sup> Tala is one of the principal entrances to the Bandhavgarh National Park and had developed into a commercial hub with numerous hotels and shops.