

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	Priya Gupta
Project title	Examining the implementation and influence of conservation induced relocation and Forest Rights Act on livelihood of tribals in Nagarhole Tiger Reserve, India
RSG reference	15028-1
Reporting period	July 2014-May 2016
Amount of grant	£ 5025
Your email address	vowpriya@gmail.com
Date of this report	14 th June, 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
Studying the relocation process and examining its consequences on the livelihood of tribal community.			✓	I visited the relocation settlements and documented the current livelihood practices of the families and what they did when they were inside the forest. One of the most difficult parts of the project has been building rapport with the people. Since relocation has been a contentious issue, local communities do not trust outsiders and avoid any discussion with them. It took me many visits to the colony to build trust of people and interview some of them. Thus though I achieved the objective, it would require more constant effort to build trust of people. Building trust thus became very central to my project.
Examining the interpretation and implementation of Forest Rights Act (FRA).			✓	Though I completed this objective, due to the hostility shown by local tribes, the task became that much difficult. I collected the district and sub divisional level documents from the tribal welfare offices. I was able to understand the implementation of FRA in Nagarhole Tiger Reserve and how it has been playing out in the eviction history of the people as well as rehabilitation policy of the

				forest department. I interviewed the officials in the tribal welfare offices, forest department, NGOs and local tribal community which presented the various interpretations of the Act amongst these actors.
Exploring the history of Nagarahole while tracing the people-conservation conflict issues.		✓		I carried out the life histories with local tribal community, NGOs working in the region for a long time and forest department officials who worked in Nagarahole for many years. I also collected archival records which threw better light on the transformations that Nagarahole forests have seen and how local tribes were present in the midst of it. Since the historical documents are huge, it was not possible to collect all of them. Also, due to the refusal of people to give any interviews in the initial phase of the project, I could not conduct all the interviews that I had earlier planned and I had to make some changes in the settlements selected since I was not able to get sufficient number of people for the interview.

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

As mentioned above, one of the most difficult aspects which I did not predict was the unwillingness of local tribal people to talk and be interviewed. Most of the people used to ask me to contact the settlement leaders and collect information from them. Thus it took me many visits to the settlements and spending time just

sitting there for people to get comfortable with my presence and take my project seriously. Due to these difficulties, I could not carry out the PRA exercises as I had mentioned in the project proposal. Since a lot of time went into interviewing individuals and getting their attention, it was very difficult to gather people together to carry out the exercises. Also, there is a lot of tension and conflict within the settlements due to relocation issues which makes it impossible to gather people for a single purpose. The relocation programme has divided the settlements where people have taken sides of conservation groups and tribal rights groups. This made the area highly politically charged thus extremely difficult to get any collective work done. People were very hesitant in sharing the information since they thought it will be used by the forest department to shift them outside. Thus, instead of carrying questionnaire based interviews, I conducted open ended interviews where I would chat with people. This also helped in building trust with some of the people within the settlements.

Another difficulty that arose while carrying out the project was in procuring documents from government agencies. I needed documents from forest department and tribal welfare offices to better understand the policy implementation. However, the departments have been very reluctant to share the documents. I could procure some of the important documents but not all. I am planning to continue visiting these offices to ensure that I get most of the documents necessary for my work. Also, though I had the permit from the forest department to carry out my project, the lower level staffs was very uncomfortable in sharing documents especially related to budget and finances. This shows the lack of transparency in the process of relocation which makes it a contentious issue in the area.

The expanse of the Tiger Reserve has also been difficult to tackle. Nagarahole falls between two districts of Mysore and Kodagu and three sub-districts which increase the number of government officials, NGOs involved in the area. Thus it was very difficult to cover the entire part with equal focus. Thus I concentrated mostly on the Kodagu part of the reserve. The settlements are also spread throughout the reserve and there are many evicted colonies and rehabilitation colonies situated outside the reserve in both the districts thus it was increasingly difficult to travel and cover this huge expanse of area. Thus travel costs increased considerably than what I had estimated before.

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

One of the main outcomes of this project which I am still continuing is the recommendations for the current relocation programme of forest department and practices which affect both people and nature. These recommendations can be

replicated in other areas which face similar issues as Nagarhole. One of the main issues I found lacking in the area is building trust with people over relocation. Since the area has seen many evictions of tribes in the past from Nagarhole, people don't trust forest department for relocation. The high handed attitude of forest department is alienating people from their own resources thus it will make it more difficult to co-manage the forests especially after community rights are granted to some settlements.

These recommendations were based on the documentation and assessment of the implementation of relocation policy and FRA in Nagarhole. They highlight the localised issues regarding implementation of these policies.

Another important outcome was to map and draw out linkages between various actors which includes conservation NGOs, tribal rights NGOs, government agencies (forest department, tribal welfare department, local panchayats), tribal community etc. These actors play a crucial role in the socio-political dynamics surrounding Nagarhole and have also shaped the ecological transformations within the reserve.

I was also able to draw out a historical timeline of the reserve which shows the transformations that the reserve has seen.

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

The local communities played the most important part in carrying out this project. Though initially they were hesitant and hostile towards sharing information, the trust that I was able to build later proved decisive in collecting the information from them. Most of the information used in this project is collected through local community. The recommendations, documentation and assessment will greatly help the community to assert their rights in the region. Through this study, local tribes got the opportunity to voice their opinions and highlight the issues of eviction and lack of support from government agencies.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

This study is part of a longish project that I am conducting in Nagarhole. Thus the study will continue since many new insights came through the study which will be followed up and further enquired in the future. The historical aspect of the study was particularly interesting and needs more time to dig into the archival documents and interview more people related to Nagarhole history as well as history of Kodagu and Mysore. I will continue to work towards this and hopefully carry out a historical

mapping of the region to showcase the spatial changes that happened in the region in the past many years.

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

I will be publishing my findings both in popular literature as well as peer reviewed articles and also in vernacular language for wider access.

Project reports along with recommendations will be shared with all the actors working in the region- Karnataka Forest Department, Tribal Welfare Department, Revenue Department, NGOs and local community.

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

The actual length of the project was from November 2013 and still continuing. I applied for RSG for 24 months for which I received the grant in June-July 2014. The grant was utilised during the period of July 2014 to May 2016 (a period of 23 months). The work is still continuing on self-funded basis as of now. I am planning to apply for other grants to support the project.

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
Remuneration for local field assistant	782	841	+59	This amount was contingent on the availability of the person and the duration of the field work which increased by few months.
Remuneration for local informants	548	0	-548	I did not need any local informant during the project.
Rent for field station	614	757	+143	I shifted accommodation many times to cover various sites thus the expense increased.
Local travel	1496	2523	+1027	Due to accessibility and huge expanse of the area I

				covered, travel costs increased considerably
Food	798	946	+148	Incidental
Stationery	144	227	+83	This cost was contingent on the local cost of photocopying the documents that I collected.
Voice recorder for recording interviews	59	59	0	-
Digital Camera for visual documentation	200	0	-200	I borrowed a camera from a colleague and saved the expenses here.
Data transcription and translation	385	1051	+666	This cost increased considerably due to the documents that I received in vernacular language which included books, meeting minutes, reports, audio recordings etc.
TOTAL	5026	6404	+1378	The extra expenses were covered by the institute and self-funded.

* Exchange rate: 1£ = 95 INR

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

One of the most important next steps would be to build the trust of local community in the region and create a cooperative atmosphere beneficial for forests, wildlife and tribal community. I hope to continue to work in this region to carry forward this work.

Dissemination of correct information is very critical to any policy implementation and through this study, I will highlight that.

**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?**

RSGF was acknowledgement during the presentations in my institute and other places where I presented the work and in the interactions that I had in the field with other actors and with other researchers. I have not used the logo so far.

11. Any other comments?

I am thankful to RSGF which supported my field work and this project. Their support has provided me a platform to carry forward the project in Nagarahole which is a very challenging area to work. The conflicts existing in the area go back decades and are still continuing. There is very less documentation of these conflicts except few media reports and no comprehensive work have been done to understand these conflicts and come out with some way forward to resolve them. In the light of the enactment of FRA which has changed the tribal-forest dynamics, it became increasingly important to carry out this project. I am hopeful to receiving such support in the future as well from RSGF.

Appendix:



Image 1: Rally organised by the local organisation for the welfare of backward classes.



Image 2: Meeting organised in a settlement inside Nagarahole Tiger Reserve with government officials for discussing the implementation of Forest Rights Act and other developmental issues of the tribes.



Image 3: Housing of tribes living inside Nagarahole destroyed by elephants.



Image 4: Crop harvested by tribes living the reserve who received FRA land titles.



Image 5: Local tribal organisation conducting meeting in a settlement outside the reserve where evicted families from Nagarahole reside.



Image 6: Construction underway in a relocation colony outside the reserve.