

The Rufford 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	Heather McTavish
Project title	Using ecotourism to improve forest connectivity and protect ecosystem services in Cartago, Costa Rica
RSG reference	17087-1
Reporting period	May 2015-March 2016
Amount of grant	£5000
Your email address	Heather.mctavish@catie.ac.cr , h.a.mctavish@gmail.com
Date of this report	March 31 st 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
Identify local actors engaged in rural tourism			X	Over 20 actors involved in rural tourism were identified in the initial phase, however only 11 showed interest in completing the project.
Identify needs and priorities of rural tourism entrepreneurs			X	
Complete capacity building sessions on environmental conservation and management and responsible practices			X	Capacity building sessions were completed both in a meeting room and in the field, visiting the various tourism offerings to demonstrate first-hand some of the sustainable practices.
Develop a sustainable business planning Guidebook for rural entrepreneurs			X	A guidebook was developed so that rural tourism entrepreneurs in Latin America can more easily read, reflect on their current situation and their priorities for the future and create a simple and direct action plan to improve their business and their environmental practices. (In Spanish only)
Workshops to guide entrepreneurs to complete two-year action plan for each business		X		During the workshops, we highlighted key parts of the guidebook and worked with businesses to identify their priorities and objectives in the social, environmental and economic aspects of their businesses. Part of their homework was to complete the rest in their own time and at the end of the project have a completed 2-year action plan. However, it proved difficult to receive a cohesive written action plan from them.
Develop Ecosystem Services and Reforestation Guidebooks		X		An ecosystem services guidebook that focused on environmental practices was not developed due to an abundance of already existing material. A Guidebook on Rural Tourism practices that highlighted several responsible

			<p>environmental practices, was printed for each business. Moreover, additional guidebooks were given to businesses on USBs on specific environmental management practices.</p> <p>A reforestation guide was developed by a forester from Turrialba, in order to provide tourism entrepreneurs and producers at large with the information of the appropriate native species in region, including where to purchase, seeds, plants, instructions on pests and diseases and how to construct your own tree nursery.</p>
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2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

The project participants were, for the most part, very consistent with attending the workshops and events and participated actively. However, the unforeseen difficulty that arose was having the participant's complete tasks outside of the workshops, such as taking home and completing surveys, writing promotional material and completing their action plans. While they demonstrated that they had been working on these items, getting a final product from them proved quite difficult. As the project coordinator, I felt that some (not all) of the participants and initiatives did not take full advantage of some of the workshops and materials that the project provided. We tried to address this by stressing how important it is that they invest the time now while they are motivated, have the support of the project facilitators and other participants, as well as how active planning can help impact the success of their business.

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

1. Local Network of Rural Tourism Businesses

When the project began, many of the businesses were not aware of the other rural and eco-tourism offerings in the area. Many initiatives were isolated, relying on one or two clients and their own knowledge and resources to promote their tourism offering. The creation of a local network of rural tourism businesses is the most important outcome of this project, as it has allowed businesses to share ideas, challenges, solutions and contacts.



Reforestation Workshop, Café Aromas

Moreover, it has made these rural entrepreneurs more visible to key organisations, such as CATIE, the Forest Council and the Biological Corridor. A more cohesive network of rural tourism in this area, will hopefully draw more

tourism and facilitate their ability to apply for funding and continue implementing innovative environmental practices.

2. Publication of Guidebooks

The publication of the *Reforestation Guidebook* as well as the *Sustainable Business Planning for Rural Tourism Entrepreneurs Guidebook* allows for the impact of the Rufford funding to go beyond just the 11 tourism initiatives. A Reforestation Guidebook has been needed for the Local Forest Council and the Biological Corridor, and will surely be a key resource to share with farmers and other landholders in the area. Moreover, the *Sustainable Business Planning for Rural Tourism Entrepreneurs Guidebook* has been distributed throughout the Ibero-American Model Forest Network, to 32 territories in 15 countries, many of which are engaged in rural tourism and have been asking for practical resources to help rural businesses.

3. Individual Empowerment to Improve Decision-Making

Many of the individuals in the workshops and capacity-building sessions had never received training specific to tourism, business development and environmental conservation. Moreover, there was an initial perception from the businesses that the government or other organisations were responsible for tourism, thus there was a lack of ownership or belief that the tourism businesses themselves could make changes. Thus, during all of the training sessions, regardless of the topic, we focused on empowerment, and small actions that they could do individually in order to improve their business. The last field day we visited a group of farmers engaged in agro-tourism who have been extremely successful in working together, receiving project funding and constantly innovating environmental practices. This visit profoundly impacted the entrepreneurs, because it demonstrated that small businesses can make a large impact.



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

The project worked with 11 tourism business, four of which were operated at the community level. It became very obvious that with the community initiatives, there were one or two community leaders that were really carrying the business. The project tried to emphasise the importance of participatory leadership and motivating other community members to really commit to the initiative.

In general, I think that all of the initiatives benefited from the project by meeting new contacts both within tourism and outside (government, research institutions, specialists) and having the opportunity to be a tourist themselves, and visit the other tourism initiatives. As project facilitators we tried to do each workshop in a different community in order to visit each of the tourism businesses. This allowed other

community members to see what we were doing and the individual businesses the opportunity to tell us their story and demonstrate what services and products they offer tourists. Moreover, it offered inspiration to the other participants to see different and innovative things that others were doing and ask questions as to how they were successful, creating a larger sense of community between the businesses from different communities.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, the individual initiatives have developed their own individual sustainability action plans for the next 2 years, in order to prioritise and set goals for their activities and investments and grow their business. The sustainability action plans focus on three pillars: environmental, social and economic.



Moreover, we have highlighted to participants the importance of continuing to work together and to form a network, in order to continue sharing ideas and practices and promoting tourism at a regional level. One of the main challenges identified at the beginning of the project, was that these initiatives are isolated and struggled with promoting their products and services, which makes them fragile to collapse and revert to other agricultural activities. Thus, working as a part of a network, could greatly help them promote their activities and services and bring more rural and eco-tourism to the region.

We have discussed with the participants how they would like to continue working in a network, whether it be formally through creating an association, or more informally. They have not yet decided, but it is likely it will be more informal, keeping in touch through social media outlets and meeting bi-monthly.

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

Throughout the project we have documented each of the workshops and activities and have posted them on the Reventazon Model Forest Alliance website (abomore.org). We have also developed three products in order to share with other actors in the region, country and regionally. The first is a guide to ecological and forest restoration in Turrialba Costa Rica, but that could be used in other parts of Central America as well. This guidebook has been shared with the Turrialba Local Forestry Council, The Biological Corridor Central Volcanic-Talamanca, The Ministry of Environment and CATIE (Center for Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education).

The second is the *A Planning Guide for Rural Tourism Entrepreneurs: Building Sustainable Businesses* which has been printed and distributed to local actors, including the The Biological Corridor Central Volcanic-Talamanca, The Ministry of

Environment and CATIE (Center for Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education), as well as published on the Ibero-American Model Forest Network website and shared with similar initiatives in Osa Peninsula Costa Rica, Hojancha Costa Rica, Colinas Bajas Dominican Republic, Adjuntas Puerto Rico, Rio Huayabamba Abiseo Peru and Tucuman, Argentina.

The third product developed is a brochure that highlights each of the businesses, providing their contact information, services offered and their location, in order to help promote tourism in the region. This will be distributed to tourists.

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

The RSG was used over a 10-month period, which was a 4-month shorter period than we had anticipated using the grant. However, due to Heather McTavish's contract period with Cuso International, all activities had to be completed before March 31st 2016.

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
Workshop Facilitator Fees	1070	993.04	76.96	
Transportation	47	478.3	-8.3	
Meals	820	1011.73	-191.73	Due to long days in the field, more meals were covered than first anticipated
Guidebook Development	600	762.67	-162.67	
Printing	706	843.95	-137.95	
Workshop Materials	695	164.54	530.46	Workshop materials cost significant less than expected.
10% Financial Management Cost	500	500	0	
TOTAL	4861	4754.26	106.74	Due to changes in the currencies, from CAD to USD to Costa Rican Colones, and the change in the USD over the last year, this money was lost in currency conversions. The total amount spent in USD was \$6.869.26.

1 British Pound Sterling = \$1.45 USD (May 12th 2016)

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

Looking ahead, I think the most important next steps are that these businesses continue to keep in contact in order to share ideas and promote tourism between their businesses. Moreover, I think it is important that they reach out to government, NGOs and other organizations that can either help them in the promotion of their business, or help them continue implementing innovative environmental practices. When we visited the Organic Producers Association of the Caribbean, they have managed to receive money from organizations to implement a bio-digester, greenhouses and bio-gardens. We highlighted to the entrepreneurs of Turrialba, how important it is to work as a network, because not only can you collaborate to win project funding, but these innovative environmental practices actually become a tourist attraction of their own, with many student groups going to visit these agro-ecological farms and off the grid lodges.



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?

Yes, during the project the RSGF logo went on all of the workshop reports, the website page, the certificates for participants and all of the published products.