

The Rufford Foundation Final Report

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.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Gregory Dowo
Project title	Reducing resource harvesting in protected areas: Participatory conservation of community Mopane woodlands around Gonarezhou National Park, in Zimbabwe
RSG reference	17460-1
Reporting period	Final Report (September 2015 – September 2016)
Amount of grant	£4684
Your email address	gregorymd@hotmail.co.uk
Date of this report	21 September 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
Introduction of research team to local communities			✓	Introductory meetings were successfully carried out in all the three study sites. In Malipati communal area the meeting was held at Thlakukani Community Centre, in Chomupani the meeting was held at Chomupani Primary School whereas in Gonakudzingwa it was held at Zhou Primary School. Local stakeholders in attendance included chiefs, village heads, local government workers, school authorities and household heads.
Collection of socio-demographic information from communities and surveying local environmental perceptions			✓	228 households were surveyed in total. Questionnaire surveys were employed at first. Focus group discussions were then held with groups of 8 – 10 people to gain an in-depth understanding of data collected from questionnaires.
Eliciting and assessing local spatial knowledge of local people			✓	Participatory mapping exercises were carried out with selected local participants. They drew sketch maps of their local surroundings as a precursor to discussions on resource access and conservation. They also discussed their perceptions on changes they felt had taken place to their woodlands over the years.
Land use/ cover assessments using remote sensing and geographic information systems (GIS)		✓		Remotely sensed images were obtained covering the years 1975 – 2014. The images were digitally pre-processed and converted to normalised difference vegetation

				index (NDVI). Time series analysis is currently underway to determine spatio-temporal changes that have occurred to the woodlands over the given period as well as integrating these analyses with local perceptions.
Participatory modelling and role playing games	✓			This objective is still at the consultative stage. Local stakeholders are still being consulted with regards to the elements they would like included in the model. The model will then be developed in partnership with ITC, University of Twente in the Netherlands. Role playing games will be employed to get stakeholders discussing the system and planning the way forward in terms of conservation policies in their area.
Feedback meetings	✓			This objective will be accomplished when the research is complete. It will be meant for reporting the results to local stakeholders. We will also thank the stakeholders for their cooperation and present a policy brief.

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

The first unforeseen difficulty we experienced was a change in legislation governing research in Zimbabwe in early 2016. According to the Research Act all researchers who had received funding from foreign bodies had to apply for a special permit that was pegged at US\$500. Due to the exorbitant price of the permit which was unbudgeted for this severely delayed some of our field work activities. However, we overcame this by negotiating with the Research Council and explaining to them that even though we had received funding from the Rufford Foundation, the results were meant for locals and the conservation efforts were also meant to benefit the local environment. Hence, we were granted a waiver. During the course of the project, a financial liquidity crisis was experienced in Zimbabwe leading to limits for

bank withdrawals which made it difficult to access funds in a timely manner. However, other strategies were used such as use of mobile or plastic money.

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

1. The major outcome of the project was the raising of awareness among local stakeholders of the need to conserve their local woodlands. In one of our meetings, the Chief for the Sengwe communal lands, Chief Sengwe, remarked that he was worried about the destruction of forests and was happy that we had decided to embark on a forest conservation project.
2. Another outcome is that we managed to build the capacity of local stakeholders in terms of environmental planning and dealing with spatial information. During some of the meetings we held there was evidence of co-learning among the participants, for example, we invited some village elders who had vast knowledge of use of tree species. As they shared their knowledge with others there was appreciation of such information which led to the participants to call for the increased efforts in conserving the woodlands. Our mapping exercises also helped the participants understand how to use maps for planning purposes.
3. The third important outcome of the project is providing the scientific basis for conserving community woodlands so as to reduce encroachment into the park. The project has contributed to an increased understanding of ecological dynamics and also bringing local stakeholders together, both parks and local authorities to engage each other, plan and decide on policies and priorities that benefit the community as well as maintain habitats for wildlife.

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

Local communities were involved in various stages of the project. They were firstly involved in the inception meetings where they were introduced to the research team and permission sought from them for their participation in the study. They were then involved during the questionnaire surveys where they were interviewed at their homesteads. Afterwards, some of the locals who had taken part in the interviews were then involved in focus group meetings of about 8 – 10 people each. They were again involved in participatory mapping exercises where they drew sketch maps and discussed changes in their local woodlands over the years. The locals are still being involved as consultations for the participatory modelling are ongoing. They have benefitted from the project in that the project is focused on conserving woodlands from which they obtain benefits such as firewood, construction wood, fruits, medicines and fibre. Also, being neighbours to a national park, this project by

aiming to reduce encroachment into the park for purposes of harvesting goods, will contribute to preservation of habitat for wildlife. Thus, when the wildlife thrives more tourists will be attracted into the area which will benefit the local communities directly by selling goods and services to the tourists.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, there are plans to continue the work. It has been noted that more work needs to be done in the aspect of participatory modelling and role playing games. The involvement of local stakeholders in modelling is an iterative process that can take many cycles and hence, it is planned that this project will continue in that direction. We are also interested in upscaling the project so it can extend to other national parks in Zimbabwe and possibly include other areas that may not necessarily be national parks but just protected forests with people living at the interface.

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

Firstly, we are planning to publish in international peer reviewed journals that have an interest in ecology and conservation. One paper, entitled "Local perceptions of tree diversity, resource utilisation and ecosystem services provision at the periphery of Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe" is under review at the journal *Forests, Trees and Livelihoods*. There are also plans to present the results at a regional conference being organised for May 2017 in the Gonarezhou National Park by the Research Platform-Production and Conservation in Action (RP-PCP) – a consortium of Zimbabwean universities and French research organisations - to which we are affiliated. Currently, there are stakeholder meetings being carried out by the Ministry of Environment as they seek to draft a Forestry Policy and we also intend to share results from this work in some of these meetings.

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

The Rufford Grant was used from September 2015 – September 2016. This is a period of 12 months and the anticipated period for the whole project is 18 months as the work on participatory modelling is still ongoing. However, the grant was able to cover a significant portion of 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
Garmin 64s Global positioning system (GPS)	201	201	0	Exactly as budgeted for.
Stationery	134	155	-21	We had to buy extra stationery for the participatory mapping work
Fuel	2341	2700	-359	We had underestimated the extra distance that had to be travelled in the Gonakudzingwa farms which were quite far apart with rough terrain especially during the rainy season
Food and Accommodation	803	700	103	In Malipati we had free accommodation at RenCare House. However, we still had to buy food. The remainder was used to top up on fuel.
Field assistants + driver	201	300	-99	The costs increased as we were also required by authorities to involve some local government workers in our activities, and so we had to provide them with food.
Translators	134	134	0	Same as budgeted for.
Satellite imagery acquisition and digital processing	569	569	0	Same as budgeted for.
Vehicle hire	301	550	-249	Due to the rough terrain of the field sites, we had to hire 4x4 Land Cruisers

				which were more expensive
Total	4684	5309	-625	

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

Going forward, what is important is to carry out the participatory modelling process with stakeholders. They will be consulted in an iterative process refining the model at every step. After the model has been created, a role playing game will be created based on the model so it can be used as a basis for discussions between local stakeholders and policy makers. This is critical especially at this juncture when the new forestry policy is being drafted. The final step will be to hold feedback meetings with stakeholders, thanking them for their cooperation and also obtaining their opinions on how they have benefitted from the project and hearing on any recommendations they would need going forward.

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?

We used the Rufford logo in all our printed materials such as questionnaires. In our meetings we sometimes had PowerPoint presentations where the logo was also used. The Rufford Foundation indeed got publicity during the course of the project especially during stakeholder meetings. The foundation will also be acknowledged in any publications arising from the project.

11. Any other comments?

We would like to express our gratitude to the Rufford Foundation for affording us the opportunity to carry out this very important research. It is our hope that the foundation continues to fund such participatory research that involves and benefits local communities. This is because for long communities have been sidelined in research initiatives that benefit them and this has also led to the slow uptake of new innovations. However, such involvement of key local stakeholders as promoted by the Rufford Foundation leads to more effective formulation and implementation of policy, which ultimately leads to sustained cooperation between scientists and local stakeholders as well as policymakers in conserving wildlife and associated habitat.