

## 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	
<b>Your name</b>	Faith Chesire
<b>Project title</b>	The conservation knowledge and attitudes of riparian communities within Nyando Wetland toward the African Clawless Otter
<b>RSG reference</b>	18376-1
<b>Reporting period</b>	January 2016 – January 2 017
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£5000
<b>Your email address</b>	<a href="mailto:faychesire@gmail.com">faychesire@gmail.com</a>
<b>Date of this report</b>	26 Jan.17

**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
(i) What knowledge about and attitudes toward the African clawless otter and its conservation local communities have			✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased knowledge of <i>Aonyx capensis</i> species abundance and qualitative population trends was quite variable among local people during and after the study.</li> <li>• Local communities are able to identify possible problems for otter survival and this forms a baseline for further detailed studies.</li> <li>• Even though there is little public sympathy for, or awareness of, otters' plight by the locals, the basic requirements of the otter are the same as those required by local human communities in terms of aquatic resources and wholesome water.</li> </ul>
ii) Whether their knowledge and attitudes are related, and		✓		<p>There is no relation on locals' knowledge and how they view African clawless otter. Protection by itself will achieve very little if the Nyando population at large continues to regard otters as pests or merely as a source of food. A greater commitment towards law enforcement and a programme of education are therefore essential. Otters, by their very nature, will tend to be popular with the general public hence they can be used as a focus for conservation education, especially with respect</p>

				to wetlands.
(iii) Whether there are any significant differences in attitudes and knowledge with respect to gender/age hence develop conservation measures to the protection of otters in-situ.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a great variability in attitudes of local communities (including women) who rely greatly on wetland products but does not see otters as any threat. As for the school pupils a sizeable percentage (75%) know about otters, have seen or heard stories about the species and would wish it to be protected. In contrast this view is not same with fishermen and farmers who view it as a pest which need to be eliminated.</li> <li>• The project laid a framework of comprehensive continuous awareness raising programme for all user groups in line with our field surveys which provided the most accurate and objective results on otter distribution. It also indicated the relative status of a species within a Nyando wetland.</li> <li>• The data collected forms a basis for future monitoring and conservation work in various habitats. An assessment of effectiveness of future conservation intervention efforts like the awareness campaigns, advocacy that forms replication in other wetland areas within Kenya and across its borders.</li> </ul>

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

- The uncertainty associated with climatic shifts undermined predictive capacity of range shifts of otter abundance in key regions ; Singida, Ogenya

and Wasare (flooding made it difficult to detect scats and otter prints along river banks during April, May and June). We thus suspended our field studies until July and August but resorted to awareness creation on the project sites especially in surrounding schools to keep the project on course.

- Studies/consultations took longer than expected. A number of studies, surveys and consultations were planned to lay the groundwork for project implementation. These were delayed by several factors: (i) initial difficulties in gaining security clearance to access some of the conservation sites (Wasare) that are close to private lands; and (ii) difficulties recruiting reliable village representatives as some did not turn up as required. However, we requested permission to access the private land through the caretaker. This area was believed to host several aquatic species, African clawless otter included.

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

- **Field Surveys** : The project successfully covered all the project three sites (Ogenya, Singida and Wasare) while a fourth site, Kobura, which was not in the earlier project proposal plan was only visited and earmarked for future survey and awareness creation due to its rich aquatic ecosystem hence believed to be an African clawless otter refuge. A total 483 people were interviewed during the project period.
- **Awareness and attitude change** : Our research not only improved the status of otters and their habitat but also built public understanding and support throughout all segments of human population within the Nyando wetland. The last quarter of the project represented a very good finish with focus given to field surveys and behavioural changes. Change in individual attitudes and perception of otters amongst the local community was increased even though more awareness is still needed to rid the perception of the otter being seen as a pest.
- **Otter Ecology and community livelihoods** : The development of a number of knowledge management products for the sites, as well as a number of capacity building training activities in the targeted areas, have increased awareness on the otter ecological importance of the sites and enhanced capacity for biodiversity conservation through targeted training. It further initiated activities related to ecotourism, sustainable agriculture and handicrafts with value addition. In addition, the research elicited local involvement in otter protection by facilitating the creation of an 'Otter Watch' program: a genuine eco-tourism initiative that will provide sustainable livelihoods to local people.

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

- The use of Project Implementing Committee (PIC) that comprised of selected community representatives was effective in creating awareness of the human-otter conflict within the project areas. This is because of the negative reception that has been in the past with government officers or outsiders is eliminated. The fact that PIC was part of the project team made them readily acceptable to the project activities and helped them to drive the otter conservation messages home much more easily.
- Again, the involvement of the local communities (women, fishermen, farmers and school children) in interviews created an opportunity for the project team and other stakeholders to gain a better insight and to understand the otter problem from the perspectives of the local people. The partnership between the communities and different stakeholders was therefore mutually beneficial due to the two-way transfer of knowledge from one to the other. Most of the otter conservation activities being implemented are the recommendations of the community representatives.

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

- **Yes there are.** The anthropogenic activities observed in the investigated area seem to be a continuous threat ; as a result, the *Aonyx capensis* and native species are gradually declining at an alarming rate therefore, it was very rare to sight any signs of African clawless otter in the project sites. We conclude that the significance of Nyando wetlands as an inimitable landscape cannot be overemphasised due to the presence of water bodies and the rice paddy fields within the same location. This combination of different ecosystems within the same area presents a wealth of flora and its subsequent association. Though we could not cover all locations for *Aonyx capensis* and vegetation assessment, yet this study gives a valuable glimpse. It is therefore, suggested that a detailed and comprehensive awareness should be launched for understanding the ecology of the African clawless otter and aquatic life species of this area.
- We do hope that Rufford Small Grant would consider to support our next project (second grant) That would help upscale on our earlier activities.

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

- Organising a seminar to present brief results of research study, especially locally based monitoring systems (methods and interventions) to relevant stakeholders for further Improvement. Their comment and suggestion will be

integrated into the final conservation/research manuscript and journal articles if deemed necessary and useful.

- Through written reports and data collected which will be sent to different stakeholders and interested groups for their library and readership.
- We have enlisted our project for documentation in one of our local television station that promotes conservation of biodiversity. This would be a great catchment area offer a wide range of audience and feedback.

**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 grants was used accordingly to specified timeframe (12 Months)

**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. 1 £ sterling = 125 KES**

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Research Awareness Equipment & Vehicle Hire) @£200 for 2days	300	400	+100	Increase was to cover more areas which were not earlier in the project plan (as was requested by area sub-chief of Kobura location)
Food/Per diems (3 People @£5 for 40 Field days)	720	600	-100	Scaled down per diem in order to cater for additional expenses.
Purchased Services (Technical Assistance/Supervision @£50 for 8 days)	400	400	0	Was in line with budget
Equipments (1 tent 600 @£250, 1 GPS @£150 & 2 pairs of binoculars@£100 Each)	600	600	0	In line with the budget
Expendable supplies Stationary@ £100/Yr Cartridges @£50/Yr, Flip charts@£25 for	175	175	0	In line with the budget

5 days, Felt Pens)				
Maintenance Meals for community meeting & Forums@£120 for 8days)	800	960	+160	Increase was necessary to cater for additional one community forum.
Communications Airtime&Email @£12/Month for 1 Year	144	144	0	In line with the earlier budget
Site visits (site visit) Vehicle @£10/day for 55 days	480	550	+70	Increased field visits to Kobura
Travel Research preparation Boat Hire@£40/day for 15 days & Accommodation of 3 People @£5/day for 2 days)	630	650	+20	Increase was due to flood interference at initial stages of the project
Pre-testing Outside project area@£50 for 5 days)	250	300	+50	Increased testing with one day to increase accuracy.
Report (Data analysis &Documentation@£300/Yr	300	300	0	Reports, picture and documentation
Field Allowance field staff & assistants (3 staff @£30/month/ Yr	1080	1000	-80	Reduction was due to failure in attendance by some communities members on some days.
Monitoring&Evaluation 3months@£200/Yr	600	600	0	In line with budget
Miscellaneous (Venue hire for community meetings & Forums@£50/day for 5 days	250	50	-200	Used during flooding periods for emergency (money distributed to other vote heads)
<b>Total</b>	6729	6729	+400, (-380)	

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

Our knowledge of the ecology of the African clawless otter is still, in many respects, scanty, but we do know the basic requirements necessary for its survival. We know also that the ranges of individuals, at least on river systems, can be extensive. It is not

a social species and natural maximum densities may be low. Individual reserves or protected areas will seldom be large enough to support self sustaining *Aonyx capensis* populations. It is essential that we try to avoid final situation where isolated oases of suitable habitat (Nyando wetland) are all we have for otter protection but at the same time threatened. Ideally : i) comprehensive studies on the ecology and conservation requirements of this poorly known species in Kenya should be continued. Such studies should seek to identify those habitat features that must be conserved if this species is to survive in viable populations ; and ii) education campaigns are needed to promote support for the conservation of this species, targeting in particular fishermen and farmers who need to understand the role played by the African clawless otter in controlling pests in paddy fields and eco-tourism.

**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 it in all our correspondents, including notices, letters and campaign awareness banners.

The logo was a force behind awareness, request for permissions and even letters to relevant authorities.

**11. Any other comments?**

- We are grateful to Rufford Small Grants for the support they gave us in implementing our project
- Our recommendation is thus one fold; we still request Rufford to consider our second application that would enable in continuity with the project and thus realize the long term awareness of African clawless otter conservation in Kenya and across its borders.