

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 | Diti Mookherjee |
| Project title | Programme to Conserve the Urban Biodiversity of West Bengal with School Students. India |
| RSG reference | 01.08.06 |
| Reporting period | January 2007 to February 2008 (project extended till June 2008) |
| Amount of grant | £4926 |
| Your email address | ased@vsnl.net |
| Date of this report | 26 June 2008 |

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 |
|---|--------------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| Formation of core groups in 7 schools. (Please see attached RSG Core Group sensitization matrix) | | | Yes | |
| Sensitization of these core groups through biodiversity awareness activities viz. local field trip, biodiversity hotspot visit, distribution of booklet on Biodiversity of West Bengal (See attached RSG Core Group sensitization matrix) | | | Yes | |
| School projects initiated and continued by the core groups. (Certificates of participation given to core group members) | | | Yes | School projects are progressing in all 7 schools. The level of progress achieved varies from school to school. |
| Project Sharing Workshop (please see attached RSG Sharing Workshop Report) | | | Yes | Participation of the core group members, both students and teachers, from the schools was excellent. |

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

- A system of monthly tests in the schools was introduced in 2007. Although these were meant to be routine assessments the schools have been treating these like separate examinations. This has interfered with the school projects as the core group members were not able to proceed as quickly as they wanted to with their project work. However most of the school projects have been satisfactory.
- Beltala Girls' School was slow to start on the core group training as they were waiting for the change of guard with the Headmistress. When the new Headmistress joined in June 2007, they started the core group training. The Core group was very enthusiastic as was the Headmistress and the project work continued swiftly and smoothly after that. However the teachers of the Core Group feel this project work is an extra burden and are not cooperating. We are dealing directly with the students of the Core Group to help them with their project.

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

1. Involvement and commitment of the students of the Core Group in action to conserve urban biodiversity

The core group members, along with learning about biodiversity, are learning the skills of participatory planning and implementation with regard to their school projects. This is a novel approach and none of these schools have conducted school projects in this manner before the RSG Project intervention. Thus a group of committed and informed students are emerging who know about biodiversity and feel an ownership about preserving and enhancing this biodiversity. They are gaining the confidence of being able to handle such projects on their own. The degree of success has not been the same with all the schools, but a process has been initiated and needs to be continued to create an ever-increasing group of green crusaders.

2. School projects

The school projects are continuing in the 5 Kolkata schools and have started in the 2 Durgapur schools. These are examples of how students can actually work on urban biodiversity conservation. The school projects are briefly described below:

- a. Sarangabad Jaineswari Pathsala Girl's High School
 - i. Survey on the status of the Water Monitor (*Varanus salvator*) lizard in their locality.
 - ii. Campaign to preserve the habitat of this endangered species which is on Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act 1972.
- b. Metropolitan Institution (Main)
 - i. Local plant biodiversity study
 - ii. Maintaining a garden inside school
 - iii. Local awareness campaign to conserve flora and fauna.
- c. Ananda Asram Balika Vidyapith
 - i. Local awareness campaign to conserve flora and fauna.
 - ii. Putting name tags on trees in the school campus
 - iii. Maintaining a garden including medicinal plants in the school campus
 - iv. Local plant biodiversity study and tree plantation in school campus.
- d. Durgapur Tarak Nath High School
 - i. Local plant biodiversity study and tree plantation in school campus.
 - ii. Study and plantation of medicinal plants inside school campus.
 - iii. Putting name tags on trees within the school campus.
- e. Sagarvanga Govt. Sponsored High School, Durgapur
 - i. Local plant biodiversity study and tree plantation in school campus.
 - ii. Study and plantation of medicinal plants inside school campus.
 - iii. Maintaining a garden in the school campus.
- f. Beltala Girls' High School
 - i. Awareness campaign inside the school campus through cultural programmes conducted by the students.
 - ii. Local plant biodiversity study.
 - iii. Creating and maintaining a garden inside the school
- g. Children's Foundation
 - i. Local plant biodiversity study.

- ii. Maintaining a garden, including medicinal plants, inside the school.

3. Networking and advocacy

The RSG Project has created a process for information sharing among schools, the Forest Department and NGOs working on urban biodiversity conservation. This was achieved at the Project Sharing Workshop held in Kolkata on 30 January 2008. A leading environmental organization Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCSC) participated in the Workshop and they are presently giving technical support to the school projects in 3 schools namely Metropolitan Institution, Children's Foundation and Ananda Ashram Balika Vidyapith for the period April to September 2008.

The area in which Sarangabad Jajneswari Pathsala Girl's High School is conducting their project work and which is the area where the Water Monitor is living is under threat from a large housing project. This has been brought to the attention of the Forest Department and they have asked for a report on the same. We will be submitting this report, based on the school project of this school, shortly.

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

Ananda Asram Balika Vidyapith and Metropolitan Institution (Main) have conducted awareness campaigns in their locality regarding the need to conserve biodiversity. Urban citizens are being sensitized by the students of the Core Group along with other students of the school.

Sarangabad Jajneswari Pathsala Girl's High School is sensitizing the local communities about the importance of the Water Monitor and why it needs to be conserved.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

We wish to continue working intensively with present 7 schools and find ways to integrate the school projects with the ongoing school activities so that they are sustained in future. We also wish to increase networking activities among the schools and also find ways in which these schools can reach out to more students and the public with the message of biodiversity conservation. We wish to create more awareness among the people of Durgapur about preserving and enhancing the biodiversity in this highly polluted industrial area.

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

- Paper entitled "Preserving the Urban Biodiversity Of West Bengal Through Action Projects By Middle School Students" -- accepted at the IV National Teachers' Science Conference 2007 held at Dehradun, India, supported by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India and other agencies.
- We had a Project Sharing Workshop on 30 January 2008 in Kolkata which was inaugurated by Mr. A.K Raha, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Government of West Bengal. A leading environmental organization working on environmental education, Development Research Communication and Services Centre participated in the Workshop. The Workshop report is enclosed.

- We have brought out a booklet on the Biodiversity of West Bengal, for the Core Group members but this has been shared with Forest Department officials, organizations working on biodiversity and some schools, other than the Project schools.
- Forest Department is kept abreast of this project by sharing with them the progress through personal communication. We have also given senior officials copies of the booklet on biodiversity that we have published.
- We will upload the Project report on our website www.ased.co.in .
- We plan to get a few leading newspapers to write articles on the school projects. This is a however a challenging task but we are keeping up the effort.

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 from January 2007 till June 2008. The grant was received for 14 months but with emerging activities and a saving in funds we were able to extend the RSG till June 2008.

We have collaborated with Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCSC) and they are giving technical support to the school projects in 3 schools namely Metropolitan Institution, Children’s Foundation and Ananda Ashram Balika Vidyapith for the period April to September 2008.

We shall continue to maintain contact with the remaining schools. We hope to continue the project with a second booster grant from RSG.

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 £1 = Rs. 82 | Actual Amount £1 = Rs. 82 | Difference | Comments |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|---|
| Boarding & Lodging | 305 | 252 | 53 | During some visits, we were able to go to Durgapur and return the same day so there was not as much overnight stay as was budgeted for. |
| Transport | 936 | 1255 | 319 | There were more visits to the schools in Kolkata and Durgapur than was planned as this was required for assisting with the school projects and maintaining smooth relations with the school administration. |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|------|------|-----|---|
| Resource Certificates | Materials, | 765 | 917 | 152 | The booklet that we have brought out cost more than was budgeted for. However this booklet entitled the "Fascinating Biodiversity of West Bengal" is a good production with colour photographs and using glossy paper. It is done in offset printing and thus cost more than we had budgeted for. However we felt that it would be useful for the core group to get an informative and attractive document. |
| Equipment | | 122 | 0 | 122 | Did not purchase binoculars as we used the one that ASED has and our personal ones. We find it is difficult to maintain binoculars in our climate. We also encouraged students to bring their own. |
| Sharing Workshop | | 400 | 332 | 68 | We were able to get government run accommodation for Durgapur participants which cost less than budgeted amount. All the schools did not participate so the food cost was lower than budgeted amount. |
| Report Preparation & Circulation | | 61 | 0 | 61 | Since the Project report will be uploaded on Rufford website and the ASED website, we did not make hard copies of the Reports. The costs associated with creating the report have been included under Administrative Costs. |
| Fees for Project Team | | 1891 | 1976 | 85 | Since the project continued beyond 14 months, fees were paid for services rendered from March to June 2008. |
| Administrative Expenses | | 446 | 447 | 1 | Negligible difference |
| TOTAL | | 4926 | 5179 | | We budgeted at the exchange rate of £1 = Rs. 82. Due to fluctuation in the rupee and pound sterling exchange rate, when we received the funds, the exchange rate was approx. £1 = Rs. 86. Thus we received an excess of £ 253 at the budgeted exchange rate of £1 = Rs. 82. |

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

- To continue working intensively with present 7 schools and try to institutionalise the school projects by integrating them with the ongoing school activities.
- To create a movement for preserving and enhancing the biodiversity of Durgapur, an extremely polluted industrial town. For this we wish to involve the relevant Government Departments, schools and local environmental NGOs.

- We wish to apply for a Rufford Booster Grant to continue this very important work which is now gaining impetus.

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?

- In the booklet entitled “Fascinating Biodiversity of West Bengal” produced as part of the Programme, we have used the RSG logo and also given information on how to apply for an RSG.
- During the Sharing Workshop we have used the RSG Logo on the banners.
- In all ASED’s brochures and relevant annual reports we have mentioned the contribution of RSGF and described the Programme.

11. Any other comments?

I am very grateful to RSGF for continuing to give us the opportunity to work on this programme. It is gaining impetus with every phase of intervention and we very much look forward to the RSGF support in future. Together we can create a movement among school students to preserve and enhance the urban biodiversity of West Bengal and try to create a model that can be emulated in other parts of the country as well as in other countries having similar circumstances.

**“Programme to Conserve the Urban Biodiversity of West Bengal with School Students”
Report on Sensitization Programme in Schools**

| Name of the School | Activities | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---|------------------------|----------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------|
| | Slide- Illustrated Talk | | Local Nature Trip | | | | Biodiversity Hotspot Visit | | | |
| | Date | Number of Students | Date | Place | Number of Participants | | Date | Place | Number of Participants | |
| | | | | | Students | Teachers | | | Students | Teachers |
| Ananda Ashram Balika Vidyapith | 08.01.07 | 45 | 18.01.07 | School Campus | 24 | 2 | 30.03.07 | Indian Botanic Garden | 24 | 3 |
| Children’s Foundation | | | | | 18 | 2 | | | 21 | 2 |
| Sarengabad Jajneshwari Pathshala Girls’ High School | 10.01.07 | 58 | 19.01.07 | Area around school & local wetland surrounding school | 25 | 2 | 10.02.07 | Indian Botanic Garden | 23 | 3 |
| Metropolitan Institution (Main) | 15.01.07 | 62 | 19.02.07 | Subhas Sarovar | 23 | 2 | 30.04.07 | Indian Botanic Garden | 14 | 2 |

| Name of the School | Activities | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|----------|----------------------------|--|------------------------|----------|
| | Slide- Illustrated Talk | | Local Nature Trip | | | | Biodiversity Hotspot Visit | | | |
| | Date | Number of Students | Date | Place | Number of Participants | | Date | Place | Number of Participants | |
| | | | | | Students | Teachers | | | Students | Teachers |
| Sagarvanga Government Sponsored High School, Durgapur | 14.02.07 | 109 | 31.05.07 | School campus and surrounding area | 25 | 2 | 05.07.07 | Durgapur project town & surrounding area | 23 | 1 |
| | | | | | 25 | 2 | | | 22 | 2 |
| Beltala Girls' High School | 27.06.07 | 200 | 17.07.07 | Rabindra Sarobar | 27 | 4 | 31.07.07 | Indian Botanic garden | 25 | 3 |