

## Final Evaluation Report

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Your Details	
<b>Full Name</b>	Vedharajan Balaji
<b>Project Title</b>	Upgrading Dugong Rescue and Release Unit and Expanding Volunteer Network with local stakeholders
<b>Application ID</b>	27693-C
<b>Grant Amount</b>	15852 USD (12228 GBP) – as received to our account.
<b>Email Address</b>	<a href="mailto:director@omcar.org">director@omcar.org</a>
<b>Date of this Report</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2021

**1. 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
Creating basic work set up at OMCAR Palk Bay Centre with 2 staff recruitment and office equipments – one month.				Completed.
Designing and Printing 25000 Dugong Awareness leaflets – 2 months.				Completed
Creating awareness about dugong protection law and benefits of rescue and release to 75 fishing villages through pamphlet distribution and meetings – 6 months.				Completed
Creating Volunteer set up – and installing “Save Dugong” app to 3250 android mobiles across 75 villages along the coast of Palk Bay – 6 months.				Completed
Creating WhatsApp group for sharing and updating dugong conservation news among fisherfolks from activity 3 – 1 month.				WhatsApp group was created which now has 146 fisher youths. About 200 persons joined, but some of them gradually left the group.
Distribution of leaflets and conducting dugong awareness classes in 25 fisher village schools along the coast of Palk Bay – six months.				With the support of schools, our dugong awareness was completed on time. (Ref: Interim report).
Conducting Dugong – Seagrass awareness drawing competitions in 25 fisher village schools along the coast of Palk Bay – six months.				Completed.

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

The submission of final report was delayed due to delay of the field work by Covid 19 restrictions. So, we requested RSG to extend the date to complete the field work and submit the final report.

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

- Dugong Watch – WhatsApp group – It helps to exchange the local news about turtles, dugongs, winds and fishery, which will be very helpful during the stranding of dugongs. This group was helpful in Covid 19 lock down - relief work in fishing villages.
- Dugong awareness events were organised for 1540 students in 25 schools in October 2019, November 2019, December 2019 and January 2020 in Thanjavur, Pudukkottai and Ramnad District coastal village schools.
- Dugong awareness booklets were distributed to all the school students but we still need to distribute to more fishing villages through our awareness events. These booklets are the important tool during our school and village level awareness events.

**4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.**

The proposed project is created awareness about dugongs directly among fishers and their children in schools. It also helps to identify the beneficiaries of our other livelihood-based conservation projects for mangrove plantation, squid breeding and mud crab conservation.

- a) Donation of female, pregnant, goats to fisher women – the first goat kid will be returned back to OMCAR to donate to other families. Similarly, organic vegetable gardens have been established in fisher households by OMCAR for free of cost. Both goats and vegetable garden are based on the written agreement between each fisher women and OMCAR that they will be participating in our mangrove plantation in estuaries, palm tree plantation on beach and avenue tree plantation/maintenance in their village streets.
- b) The dugong watch network (WhatsApp group) helped to identify and distribute the Covid 19 lock down relief materials to large number of people.
- c) We hope the same network will respond quickly in case of dugong rescue and release needed anytime in Palk Bay.

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

In 2022, we still continue school level awareness events are going on well; at the same time we closely work with Government for the establishment of Dugong Conservation Reserve in Palk Bay (India's first dugong conservation reserve).

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

Our work has been widely shared through our website, WhatsApp and Facebook regularly. I will be sharing our work to international participants as presentations, direct discussion or as posters. Our work got published in 2021.

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

The project grants were used as per the proposed year, except 4600 GBP, which was later used in 2021 to complete the project activities.

**8. Budget: 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. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion. As per the exchange rate: 1 GBP = 95 INR.**

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Creating basic work set up at OMCAR Palk Bay Centre with 2 staff recruitment and office equipments	2000	2000		Staff salary paid.
Designing and Printing 25000 Dugong Awareness booklets.	2000	2000		All booklets were printed, but only 50% of them were distributed.
Creating awareness about dugong protection law and benefits of rescue and release to 75 fishing villages through pamphlet distribution and meetings.	5000	5000		Completed only in all the villages by May 2021
Creating Volunteer set up – and installing “Save Dugong” app to 3250 android mobiles across 75 villages along the coast of Palk Bay.	1500	1500		Completed
Creating WhatsApp group for sharing and updating dugong conservation news among fisherfolks from activity 3.	500	500		Will be continued after Covid 19.
Distribution of booklets and conducting dugong awareness classes in 25 fisher village schools along the coast of Palk Bay.	2500	2500		Completed
<b>Total</b>	<b>13500</b>	<b>13500</b>		

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

In 2022, Government has initiated Government Order for Dugong Conservation Reserve in Palk Bay, which will be India's first of its kind. OMCAR continuously worked with Forest Department to develop the concept, GIS and planning the reserve until today.

- Establishment of government-run dugong conservation education with the support of OMCAR.
- Establishment of low cost, eco-friendly restoration techniques for seagrass, mangroves and coral reefs through experiment and peer review publications.
- Last but not least, successful rescue and release of dugongs will be expanded with more stakeholders. Defined Protocols as published. And our last 10 years of marine mammal stranding will be published in 2021; this baseline information is being helpful in dugong conservation reserve planning.
- Such huge projects (according to point a, b and c) within government have been evolving through my years of non-profit technical support in proposal writing, GIS and experience that I have been built in the last 8 years through Rufford Grants and other funding partners.

**10. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?**

Yes, the Rufford logo has been used in every booklet we printed. It has been used in our banners displayed in school and village meetings. I have been mentioning about Rufford contribution every talk, speeches.

**11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.**

**Dr. V. Balaji** – Director. My role is to explain the team about this project and give them time schedule to complete their weekly tasks. I am also responsible for staff selection, content making and printing of booklet, save dugong app introduction to my team, motivating staffs and volunteers. Printing banners. Leading fisher meetings & official permissions from inline departments for awareness events in schools and villages.

**Mr. G. Murugesan.** His role was the coordination of field staffs according to the schedule and reporting to me. He makes phone calls to organize schools. He visits village leaders to organize field meetings with fishers. He split the work within the staff team and monitor them.

**Mr. Thayumanavan.** He was responsible for organizing awareness events for school events and mangrove nursery.

**Ms. Lakshmi.** She was responsible for village awareness events and catering arrangements for school students during marine conservation education at our centre.

**Ms. Panchavarnam.** She was/has been responsible for daily management of office.

**Mr. Marimuthu.** He is the driver for our boat and a traditional fisherman who has four decades of experience in local sea conditions. He helped to fix meeting venue, time with fishers.

**Mr. Dass.** He is responsible for assisting Thaymanavan for school awareness events. Distribution of booklet. Photographic documentation. Pre-meeting arrangements with Marimuthu.

## **12. Any other comments?**

### **Thanks Message**

I take this opportunity to thank the entire team at The Rufford Foundation, including trustees for your long-term support. It has been wonderful to work with you, swift reply from Jane Raymond is very admirable. Valuable discussions before every project with Mr Simon Mickleburgh and follow up appreciations has been the boost. Instead of saying I received grants for 8 years, I would say Rufford Small Grants has been keeping me very active and alive for 8 years.

I would like to share the credits of every dugong saved and released. The rescue and release of baby and mother were one of the best moments. We took responsibility to support fishers on solidarity during cyclone and covid 19 lock down relief work.

Not just in the field work, I also learned in international platform by sharing this project with other connected conservation work that we do here. I reviewed the proposals in National Geographic Conservation Trust as an Explorer reviewer – seeing some amazing proposals to comment on. It has given me more hope that more people trying to solve conservation issues in different part of the world.

My thoughts and suggestions for including more young people into IUCN Young Professionals is taken last week in my online interview. I suggested IUCN should give more finance support and institutional set up for young conservationists. I also commented that IUCN members should consider young people into their organisations for internship and the young people should feel safe, with the ability to cross language barriers to learn from experts within IUCN through Intergenerational programmes.

So, its not just a financial support that I got from Rufford and it's a life changing experience. Matching grants were easy when I mentioned that about the name Rufford. I know I am at the end of my applications, but I know there is a huge number of young people dreaming to get support from Rufford Small Grants.

Thank you for your trust, and I will update the remaining activities soon.