

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Chinemerem Ikechukwu Godwin
Project Title	Historical Appraisal of the Diversity of Amphibians and Threats to Their Conservation Across Nigeria
Application ID	33541-1
Date of this Report	31st July 2022

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
Assess whether declines of mountain frogs have occurred in Nigeria as in Cameroon				During this study, we did not encounter some mountain puddle frogs which were previously encountered in our study areas (e.g., <i>Phrynobatrachus steindachneri</i> , <i>Phrynobatrachus jimzimkusi</i>)
Determine the factors influencing the amphibian population				Though I am yet to screen the encountered amphibians for amphibian chytrid fungus, observation of the sites revealed that activities like cattle grazing, deforestation and poaching occurs at different levels in the study sites. There have also been changes in the rainfall pattern, temperature and relative humidity in recent times.
Assess historical trends of Bd infections and amphibian populations across Nigeria				Due to COVID-19 pandemic, my Student Conference on Conservation Science internship at the Institute of Zoology London Laboratory, was cancelled. During this internship I was supposed to screen my samples and museum specimens from Natural History Museum London for <i>Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis</i> infection.

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

a). This project has successfully led to the establishment of Safe Environment Safe Amphibians Conservation Organization (SESACO), an organisation registered in Nigeria to work with local communities in order to protect the environment, conserve amphibians and improve the livelihood of rural dwellers

b). The checklist of the amphibians in Nigeria has been updated. New species were encountered, and species never thought to be in Nigeria found.

c). Amphibian chytrid skin swab samples from amphibians in the various sites have been collected and preserved waiting to be moved to Institute of Zoology London laboratory for analysis

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

Screening of encountered amphibians and museum specimens for *Bd* infection is part of my project but due to COVID-19 pandemic, my Student Conference on Conservation Science internship at the Institute of Zoology London Laboratory, was cancelled. During this internship I was supposed to screen my collected samples and museum specimens from Natural History Museum London for *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* infection.

The samples are still intact as I continue to source for fund and seek collaborations to execute this important part of my project.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

- Employment of local community members as field assistants.
- Training on amphibian field survey and monitoring techniques for national park staff, community graduate and undergraduate students.
- Conservation education for community schools.
- Plans are on to train members of the different communities on beekeeping, animal husbandry and organic farming. This is to improve their livelihood and make them less dependent on forest resources.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, this project has successfully led to the establishment of Safe Environment Safe Amphibians Conservation Organization (SESACO), an organisation registered in Nigeria to work with local communities and other stakeholders to protect the environment, conserve amphibians and improve the livelihood of rural dwellers. Since there are several endangered amphibian species in Nigeria like *Wolterstorffina parvipalmata* (montane forest tree toad), Perret's toad (*Sclerophrys perreti*) *Didynamipus sjostedti* (dwarf toad), *Conraua robusta* (robust giant frog) and others, SESACO shall take it as a point of duty to conserve amphibian species in Nigeria, especially the threatened ones by working with local communities. We are determined to protect amphibian population and empower citizens to contribute to the betterment of the plant.

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

I shall be discussing my result with Nigerian National Park Research Unit, Wildlife Conservation Society, and Nigerian Conservation Foundation. I shall make my project report available to these organisations. I also have plans to present and publish my results at the 2023 Nigerian Society for Conservation Biology Conference and the 2023 Student Conference on conservation Science, Cambridge. I hope to publish in British Ecological Society Journal.

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

The important next steps include:

1. Securing fund to screen my collected samples and museum samples from my study sites deposited at Natural History Museum London for *Bd* infection. This is key to making informed conservation decisions.
2. Expand my study to other Key Biodiversity Areas in Nigeria like the Mambilla Plateau, Afi Mountain, Idanre Hill and national parks. I have already secured permit from Nigerian National Park to conduct amphibian studies in five national parks in Nigeria.
3. Since there are laboratories in Nigeria that run PCR analysis, my plan is to be trained on amphibian chytrid PCR techniques and amphibian laboratory experiment procedure at the renowned ZSL Institute of Zoology Laboratory, London. This will greatly cut down cost due to traveling and shipping samples to the UK for analysis.
4. Empower local communities with skills that will improve their livelihood and encourage them to take ownership of the conservation of their environment.

8. 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, on t-shirts to publicize the project. The logo will also be used during my research presentations and journal publications.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

Chinemerem Ikechukwu Godwin (Team leader)

Valentina Nwajejeoku (Secretary)

Thomas Dohert-Bone (Technical adviser)

John Bison (Field assistant)

Itaya Asuquo Edet (Field assistant)

Emmanuel Ofem (Graduate assistant from University of Calabar)

Julius Keju (Field Assistant; Obudu Community Conservation Group)

Peter Osang (Field assistant)

Christopher Ndebije (Field assistant)

Aking Community Youth Leader (Field Assistant, Oban Hills)

10. Any other comments?