

## Final Evaluation Report

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Your Details	
<b>Full Name</b>	Edéya Orobiyi Rodrigue Pelebe
<b>Project Title</b>	Conserving the red list threatened fish species by raising awareness, strengthening local rules and diversifying livelihood in fishing communities in Benin
<b>Application ID</b>	37204-1
<b>Date of this Report</b>	27 April 2023

**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
1) Assess the stakeholders' knowledge levels and the factual menaces on threatened species				The methodology used and the findings obtained are clearly described in the detailed final project report.
2) Create awareness through environmental education and sensitization of inland fishing communities, managers, decision makers and schoolchildren				The methodology used and the findings obtained are clearly described in the detailed final project report.
3) Develop local management and conservation measures				The methodology used and the findings obtained are clearly described in the detailed final project report.
4) Promote fish farming as a sustainable additional livelihood for conservation				The methodology used and the findings obtained are clearly described in the detailed final project report.

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

**a).** More than three quarters of the respondents, precisely 78.65% and 89.68%, were not aware of the existence of the national and global red lists of fish species, respectively, and more than half of the respondents were aware of the species but did not know their conservation status, including fisheries managers and local authorities.

**b).** There is an increasing fishing pressure on *Fundulopanchax filamentosus* and *Procatopus aberrans* used as aquarium species and three of the near-threatened fish species listed in the 2011 national red list (*Heterobranchus longifilis*, *Lates niloticus*, and *Gymnarchus niloticus*) are facing the capture of juveniles as a significant emerging threat.

**c).** Local measures and sanctions are established for the protection of aquatic habitats and the conservation of threatened fish species and committees are installed per locality to monitor compliance with the measures and thus sustain/sustain the achievements of the present project.

The most important achievement of this work is the elaboration of a policy brief that we presented to the National Directorate of Capture Fisheries and Aquaculture Production and to local decision makers. This document will be used to engage policy makers. In addition, we have provided tools that can be used by other institutions working for nature conservation in the fisheries sector in Benin and we have given fishermen the skills to set up and manage sustainable and environmentally friendly fish farming units.

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

The period during which we conducted the surveys coincided with an election period in Benin. It was difficult to get an appointment with the local authorities and some fisheries managers who were mainly involved in campaign activities. We involved those who have been surveyed in making appointments with others and extended our stay in some communities to conduct the surveys.

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

In all phases of the implementation of this project, we worked with local communities. Surveys, awareness creation and sensitisation, environmental education, establishment of management and conservation measures and training sessions were carried out with the active participation of fishermen, fishmongers and authorities at local level. Fishermen's commitment has been very strong, which is the result of the reconnaissance survey and public consultations we organised before the start of the project activities. All the stakeholders took ownership of the project and contributed to its success. The communities involved were Agonlin-Lowé, Adjohoun, Ganvié, Sô-Ava, Aguégué, and Malanville. In addition, we interacted with fish sellers in the main two fish markets in Benin, namely Calavi-Tokpa in Abomey-Calavi and Djassin-Topka in Porto-Novo.

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

Yes, it is planned to continue the conservation actions of threatened fish species within inland fishing communities in Benin. It will also be interesting to conduct more biological and ecological studies on the populations of *Megalops atlanticus* inhabiting coastal waters of Benin. Based on the results of this project, the conservation status of commercially and economically important fish species listed as near threatened species in 2011 Benin national red list needs to be re-assessed due to increased emerging threats. There is also a need to undertake assessment study on the stocks of some nationally classified vulnerable small fish species used in aquaria that were reported by fishermen to be over-exploited. The medicinal and magical uses of threatened fish species need to be further explored.

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

The results of these projects have been already shared in fishing communities as all the awareness creation toolkits and key sensitisation messages have been

developed from these results. We have already developed a policy brief and shared with the authorities at national level. We will make oral communications during scientific conferences in September-October 2023. We will also publish the results in an international peer-reviewed journal indexed by Scopus. All the materials developed (checklists, training posters, awareness raising and sensitisation posters, compendium of measures and sanctions, and the policy brief) will be electronically published online. Local press also reported the project results.

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

The important step to the present project is to execute another conservation research and actions. With the funding opportunities offered by The Rufford Foundation, some of the plans to continue this work may not be possible to execute unless we seek other sources of funding. However, as next steps with the help of the Rufford Foundation, we could initiate project to pilot and monitor the success of releasing the vulnerable species *Megalops atlanticus* from the farming systems in Lake Nokoué into the environment to sustain the natural stock. We could be involving in projects to explore more the possibilities of introducing education on threatened fish species in other primary schools and to expand the promotion of fish farming as an additional supplementary income-generating activity in inland fishing communities in Benin. On another note, the level of knowledge and the menaces to threatened marine fish species in Benin need also to be investigated among stakeholders.

### **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, we did use The Rufford Foundation logo in all our materials in all the activities carried out the frame of this project. This can be confirmed from awareness raising and training materials as well as the policy brief. We also used the logo on the Lacoste designed and printed for the project activities. We will also acknowledge the financial support The Rufford Foundation in our planned scientific paper.

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

**OROU SEKO Abdou:** was involved in the design of the pictorial checklists.

**LODEHOU Constant, ONIBON Chabi, and BOUKARI Safiou:** were involved in digitization of questionnaire, surveys on the fields, installation of committees and validation of conservation measures, and education and sensitization activities within communities.

**MAMA Abdoul Razack and MEKALANGO Nadahath:** were involved in training sessions.

**10. Any other comments?**

We would like to express our gratitude to The Rufford Foundation for funding this conservation project, which has revealed some unknown interesting realities; we hope to continue the intervention in the immediate future with another project, as mentioned above. Secondly, our thanks also go to all the members of the project team whose commitment was of great help to us. Finally, we are grateful to all the fishing communities involved in this project for their collaboration and availability.