Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Ransford Agyei
Project Title	Scaling up Hippo Conservation in Ghana
Application ID	38378-B
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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
Undertaken Population and Distribution Assessment within Mole National Park (MNP) and Digya National Park (DNP), Bui Conservation area (BCA), and Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary (WCS).			Yes	The project successfully surveyed the population, distribution, and threats to hippos within the Mole National Park (MNP), Digya National Park (DNP), Bui National Park (BNP), and Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary (WCHS). The team surveyed repeatedly along an 8km transect across the Black Volta River with the help of canoes. The transect survey was complemented with camera trapping as well as drones. Through the surveys, the total number of hippos was estimated and threats to their survival were assessed.
Conservation Education within the fringed communities			Yes	The project has successfully undertaken conservation education activities within fringe communities of Mole National Park (MNP) Digya National Park (DNP), Bui Conservation Area (BCA), and Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary (WCS). The activities were conducted to raise awareness of community members on the plight and urgent conservation needs of the hippos. Community members were educated on the ecological significance of the species to the riverine ecosystem and their welfare. Groups engaged included

				the traditional authorities, management of Mole National Park (MNP) Digya National Park (DNP), Bui Conservation Area (BCA), and Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary (WCS), fishermen as well as farmers.
Reduce Hippo-human conflicts.			Yes	Through the project, hippo-human conflicts have been reduced by 50% in most of the targeted conservation areas. The project implemented cost-effective approaches (such as identifying hippo hotspots and educating the farmers not to farm within the hotspots. The team further educated the communities members to avoid hippo feeding, breeding, and resting areas.

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

a). Nationwide population estimates of Hippos determined in Ghana:

This project has successfully estimated the population of hippos across all eco-zones of Ghana. This includes the Black Volta River where the population at Bui, Wechiau and Lawra was assessed as well as Mole National Park on the Kulpawn River and on the Oti River. Overall, the project estimated hippo populations as follows; Mole National Park (MNP): one, Bui Conservation Area (BCA): 59, Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary (WCS): 71 and Lawra (Black Volta): nine. Total national population is estimated to be 140. This estimate represents a giant step towards assessing the population viability and health of hippos in Ghana.

b). New population of Hippos discovered at Lawra (Upstream of the Black Volta River)

This project has successfully discovered a new viable population of hippos, previously unknown based on historical data on hippo distributions in Ghana. This population is found in the upstream of the Black Volta in the Lawra community. The project also found signs of the presence of hippos on the Oti River although physical presence was not detected. Further investigations from local communities reveal

that there has been persistent crop raiding by hippos in the area in recent times. This further confirms the presence of hippos in the area. However, more evidence will be required to ascertain the abundance of this population.

c) Human-Hippo conflicts reduced by 50%

This project has significantly reduced human-hippo conflict within the hippo ranges. During the project period, human-hippo conflicts were more profound with the new population at Lawra. Their communities recorded high levels of crop raiding before the project. The level of crop raiding resulted in clashes with the hippos. Consequently, one community woman was severely attacked by hippos. She was admitted to the hospital and had limbs amputated. This increased resentment towards hippos. However, timely intervention from the project team has improved the co-existence between hippos and humans and has reduced the incidence of conflicts within the area. This was achieved through a combination of conservation education and a red chilli approach. These methods proved effective in addressing the constant crop raiding that characterised the area. Effectively the project achieved about 50% reduction in human-hippo conflicts in the area.

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

This project was faced with a huge challenge from resistance from the communities fringing the Black Volta at Lawra where a new population of hippos was discovered. The resentment and resistance arose due to retaliation from the communities towards hippos, driven by the constant raiding of their crops, and the physical danger hippos posed to human life. This was resolved through engagement with the local traditional authority, who have significant reverence within the communities. Through the chiefs and other stakeholders, the project was able to calm the communities and effectively rolled out interventions that resulted in improved conservation outcomes for people and nature.

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

Traditional authorities and community members have been included in the hippo action group. These individuals have been trained in hippo conservation protocols to monitor and record the activities of the species. Further education on the ecological significance of hippos has been conducted for these individuals. They also partake in decision making and development of local conservation policies for the species.

Farmers and other community members have been trained on strategies to prevent crop raiding and human-hippo conflicts within the fringed communities of Mole National Park (MNP) Digya National Park (DNP), Bui Conservation Area (BCA), and Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary (WCS). These individuals will train others and assist farmers to ensure hippo invasion is prevented in the fringe farmlands and communities within the fringe communities of Mole National Park (MNP) Digya National Park (DNP), Bui Conservation Area (BCA), and Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary (WCS).

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. There is a need to continue community education to further reduce the threats of hippos. There is also the need to further reduce human-hippo conflicts, especially in areas where hippos have recently been discovered, to ensure that humans and hippos live in harmony.

Also, there is the need to strengthen collaboration with counterparts from the communities from Burkina Faso towards achieving an all-inclusive hippo conservation within the area.

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

The results of the project have been shared with the IUCN SCC Hippo Specialist Group. Also, the management of the Mole National Park (MNP) and Digya National Park (DNP), Bui Conservation Area (BCA), and Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary (WCS), traditional authorities, fishers, and farmers associations engaged during the project have also been informed of the project outcomes. In addition, we plan to publish these results in a peer-reviewed journal for the benefit of the greater conservation community.

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

An important next step for this project is to draw up a conservation plan that is well acceptable and binds communities fringing the sanctuary both from Burkina Faso and Ghana. There is also the need to strengthen community conservation education within both countries. There is also the need to scale up actions to mitigate the impacts of crop raiding.

8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced about this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during your work?

Yes, the project produced t-shirts for publicity. These were shared with community members to increase education and visibility about hippo conservation.

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

Ransford Agyei: led the distribution and threat assessment component of the project. He was also responsible for overseeing the entire implementation of the project. Additionally, Ransford trained the management and staff of Mole National Park (MNP) Digya National Park (DNP), Bui Conservation Area (BCA), and Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary (WCS) on the utilization of drones and online applications to increase the ecotourism experiences of tourists and upscale revenue generation.

Oppong Osei Tutu: led the community conservation education and behaviour change component of the project. He assisted with the creation of the Hippo action groups within the communities.

Adwoa Sarfowaa: oversaw the community entry and stakeholder consultation. She led the creation of the action group. She was responsible for mainstreaming women's involvement in the project as well as decision-making processes on natural resources.

Dompreh Christian: led the population studies and field component of the project. Assisted in the installation of Camera Traps and data analysis.

10. Any other comments?

Generally, hippo numbers are decreasing across the country due to increased threats and human-hippo conflicts occurring in most of its range. The only exception is Wechiau Hippo Sanctuary where the hippo numbers are increasing due to consistent management interventions. Hippos have also been found in areas where they were previously non-existent probably due to population fragmentation or immigration from neighboring countries. Site-by-site evaluation is indicated below.

Bui National Park: Bui National Park held the most important population in Ghana until the construction of the hydroelectric dam on the Black Volta River. The dam caused the population to be fragmented leading to increased poaching. The population is still at risk of decline due to the many communities and fishing activities in its habitat. There is reported crop raiding from the communities fringing the Black Volta River in Bui.

Wechiau Hippo Sanctuary: The population at this sanctuary is perhaps the safest and most stable population due to the level of management interventions from the communities fringing the Black Volta in the area. The community-managed sanctuary was initiated by the local traditional authorities and has strong community

support. Human-Hippo conflict is reduced at Wechiau due to the considerable buffer zone established at the banks of the sanctuary.

Lawra (Black Volta): This is a new population recently discovered by our nationwide surveys. The team sighted about nine individuals in this community although some community members think they are 13. The population might have migrated from Burkina Faso to settle in this community. This population is seriously under threat from human-hippo conflicts. There are many reported conflicts and crop raiding. This includes hippos physically attacking some community people and severely injuring them in the process. Increased awareness and education are critical to reduce the threats and sustain the population.

Mole National Park: We recorded only one individual at the Mole National Park. Management of the park confirmed the presence of this individual for a few years now. It is unlikely for this individual to survive alone in the long term.

Oti River: There were reported sightings in the Oti River near Nkwanta North municipality of Ghana. Although the team did not sight any individual, there were signs of hippo activities including their footprints. Community members report of about six individuals. There are reported human-hippo conflicts in this area as the communities are now adapting to live with these species.