

## Final Evaluation Report

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We ask all grant recipients to complete a project evaluation that helps us to gauge the success of your project. This must be sent in **MS Word and not PDF format**. 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 – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

**Please DO NOT fill in and submit this form until the project has been completed.**

Complete the form in English. Note that the information may be edited before posting on our website.

Please email this report to [jane@rufford.org](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

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Your Details	
<b>Full Name</b>	Keaton Sawyer Scanlon
<b>Project Title</b>	Ethnobiology in Rural Senegal: Studying Culturally Significant Plants, Conservation Methods, and Their Impact on Community Empowerment and Health
<b>Application ID</b>	44745-1
<b>Date of this Report</b>	January 30th, 2026.

**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
<p><b>Creating an Ethnobotanical Register:</b>                      Documenting plant species, traditional uses, preparation methods, dosages, and associated cultural practices in Saafi, French and English.                      Publishing the register in both print and digital formats to ensure wide accessibility.</p>		X		<p>We conducted extensive research in collaboration with community members to identify plant species considered the most culturally relevant and important. Due to ethical considerations, we finally intentionally chose not to document detailed preparation methods and dosages. However, we have finalized a comprehensive list of 82 plants, including information about their general uses, cultural significance, and current presence in the local environment. We have also created an herbarium of these species, which has been cross-checked by professions and can serve as a future educational tool.</p> <p>This objective is considered partially achieved because the information is currently being compiled into an ethnobotanical booklet. The booklet is intended for use in the local middle school, health posts, and by community leaders as an educational tool for classes and workshops focused on plants in the Thiafoura landscape. As we are prioritizing a community-centered approach, such as involving students in illustrating the booklet and employing a local graphic designer, the process takes time, because it is dependent on various peoples schedules. This will be a physical and digital booklet. Completion is anticipated by May 2026.</p>

<p><b>Developing Conservation Strategies:</b>          Identifying key plants that are vital for traditional practices and those that are endangered. Establishing sustainable harvesting and cultivation techniques to ensure the long-term availability of these plants.</p>	X		<p>This objective remains the furthest from completion. While we have successfully identified key plant species that are essential for traditional practices and those that are at risk, the development of concrete conservation strategies has not yet been undertaken. This component represents a clear and logical next phase of the project. Encouragingly, interest has been expressed by the Botany Department of the local university, to have graduate students working on an analysis and informed conservation strategies of three identified plants.</p>
<p><b>Knowledge Dissemination:</b>          Designing a comprehensive communication strategy to integrate ethnobotanical knowledge into local education systems and community programs.          Conducting workshops and training sessions to teach community members, especially the youth and women, about the importance and uses of local plants.</p>		X	<p>Progress toward this objective is ongoing but remains incomplete. Preliminary planning has been guided by the development of the ethnobotanical booklet, intended as a central educational resource, and the documentary mini-series, which highlights community members' relationships with culturally important plants. To date, we have hosted four workshops in the botanical garden space, covering topics such as sustainable tree nursery methods and general agroecology.</p> <p>The total number of participants in these workshops was 24 (5, 8, 7 and 4). The first workshop consisted of four local female youth with background and interest in agroecology and conservation and one elder, who were primarily involved in the initial work of preparing the tree nursery and conservation space. The second two workshops, with 8 and 7 participants, consisted of members of the Thiafoura Women's Group, who</p>

			<p>were identified by themselves and other members of the group as being especially interested in local conservation and involvement in the project. The final workshop was with 4 teachers of the Thiafoura elementary and middle school, with the intention of providing skills and strategies for how they can transmit information on conservation and local knowledge in their classrooms.</p> <p>This objective is considered partially achieved because, while significant progress has been made, we intend on planning youth workshop series and integrating training in the local school's curriculum, which is an ongoing initiative.</p>
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**2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.**

**a). *Strengthened Community Collaboration***

The project successfully brought community members together in a collaborative effort that leveraged knowledge, expertise, and enthusiasm. This engagement is evident in the community's expressed intention to continue and expand this work beyond the scope of the grant period. This honestly felt like a very positive experience within the Thiafoura village, and has increased conversation and consideration around the conservation of knowledge and plants, which is a huge outcome, even if it is not as measurable.

**b). *Establishment of a Botanical Nursery***

We established a four-hectare irrigated and fenced botanical tree nursery and botanical garden space containing plants identified by the community as important for conservation and protection. This nursery serves as a living repository for culturally significant species and a foundation for long-term environmental stewardship. We have many plans for this space moving forward.

**c). *Development of Knowledge-Sharing Resources***

Clear educational and outreach outcomes are in progress, including a documentary mini-series, an ethnobotanical booklet, and publishable research on community members' attitudes toward ethnobotanically significant plants. These resources will

document and disseminate local plant knowledge both within Thiafoura as well as outside, promote cultural preservation, and support community-led learning, while the research provides insights into the social and cultural importance of these species.

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

I would not necessarily categorize the challenges we encountered as “unforeseen,” as my experience working in rural West Africa has shown that projects often take longer than anticipated and require flexibility, even with a generous timeline. The aspects that tend to take the most time are those that are less easily tracked, such as building relationships with community members and elders, seeking their input, and fostering genuine collaboration. However, I believe these steps to be essential for creating a project that feels equitable and inclusive for all participants.

Another challenge involved navigating the complex social dynamics within the village. While the community is cohesive in many ways, it is also made up of diverse stakeholders-women’s groups, the village community development association, the village chief, elders and religious leaders, and youth associations-each with their own histories, relationships, and perspectives. Recognizing that no single approach can fully satisfy every individual, we prioritized respectful engagement and transparent communication- which again takes time, but is essential to the longevity of a project. This approach ensured that the project could move forward in a way that honors local traditions, balances differing priorities, and fosters long-term community ownership.

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

The community of Thiafoura has been central to this project from the very beginning. Even before initiating physical work or formal research, I spent several months visiting community members-particularly elders and local leaders-to build relationships, discuss traditional knowledge, and explore how medicinal plant knowledge could be preserved in a way that benefits the community and future generations. These conversations informed the decision to apply for this grant and shaped the project’s design.

We held numerous meetings with village officials and community groups, maintaining transparency and emphasizing that this is a collaborative project that can adapt to community needs. Through funding from the Rufford Foundation, and collaboration with the local NGO CREATES and the Senegalese government, we secured protection for a 4-hectare plot of community land and cleared and fenced the land. Four community youth along with one community leader were hired to work five days a week on the site. A tree nursery was established, focusing on medicinal,

environmentally significant, and economically viable species identified by the community.

To guide the nursery and document ethnobotanical knowledge, we conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups with community members. In total, we conducted 15 interviews with individuals identified by the community as being tradipractitioners, herbalists, or having particular knowledge or interest in traditionally used plants (11 males, 4 females), and two focus groups with members of the Thiafoura Women's Group (consisting of 7 and 10 women, respectively). This gave us a total number of 32 informants (21 women and 11 men). The results from this data collection identified 82 culturally important plants that are less common on the landscape than they used to be. This input directly informed which species were prioritized for propagation. This work is ongoing, ensuring that the project continues to support community engagement, cultural preservation, and sustainable management of local plant resources.

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

Absolutely! The project is ongoing, with several initiatives in progress. We are completing a documentary mini-series that highlights one community member's relationship with a native plant each month, as well as an ethnobotanical booklet documenting culturally important species. This work will be featured during *Journée Kide Gui*, a community celebration in Thiafoura (scheduled for June, 2026), designed to showcase the project, honor community contributions, and emphasize the preservation of traditional knowledge and native ethnobotanically significant plants.

Additionally, Maximilian Pueye, a community leader in the Saafene community, has assumed leadership of the ongoing botanical garden in Thiafoura, ensuring the project's conservation and educational efforts continue beyond the grant period. Several initiatives are planned for the garden, including collaboration with the local women's group to produce a line of botanical products (teas, creams, etc.) to support economic independence, development of the land as a visitable space for tourism and income generation, and ongoing educational workshops for village youth.

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

We are finalizing a research manuscript, which we plan to publish in a prominent ethnobotany journal to share our findings with the broader scientific community. In addition, we are organizing *Journée Kide Gui* in Thiafoura, inviting all community members as well as partner organizations and groups involved in plant conservation. As mentioned, this event will feature a documentary mini-series highlighting plants deemed most important by the community and the village members who maintain a relationship with them, as well as an ethnobotanical booklet compiling all project

findings. Community members will also give talks on the importance of plant and knowledge preservation. We plan to use these resources as education tools for ongoing community workshops, integrate them in curriculum at the local school and as resources for the local health post on preventative medicine.

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

One of the original goals of this project was to develop conservation strategies. As we progressed, we realized it was more effective to focus on doing a few things well rather than trying to do everything at once. With a clear list of plants identified by community members as most important for conservation, our next step is to prioritize the top three species on that list. We plan to collaborate with graduate students in the Botany Department of UCAD to conduct chemical and biological analyses of these plants. The results will then inform the development of targeted conservation strategies in collaboration with colleagues and experts in the field, ensuring that these culturally and ecologically significant species are preserved for the long term. We also hope to move forward in developing a multi-month curriculum, using the resources developed from this project, for a youth training program focused on the identification and understanding of local plants and trees, which is knowledge fast disappearing. We also plan on further developing the botanical garden space into a place that can bring economic revenue to the village, as well as conserve important plant species.

### **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?**

The Rufford Foundation logo will be included in the completed ethnobotanical booklet and the documentary mini-series. The Foundation will also be highlighted as the primary funding source for this work in the research manuscript once our research is published. Throughout the project, The Rufford Foundation has been verbally acknowledged to NGOs, partner organizations, and community members as the funder enabling this work. Additionally, the logo has been displayed on the CREATES website as a partnering funder. Overall, The Rufford Foundation has-and will continue to- receive significant publicity as a result of this project.

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

#### **Dr. Patrick Bottazzi**

As the founder and co-director of CREATES, our partner organization, Dr. Bottazzi has been instrumental in providing access to key resources, including video editing support and equipment that were beyond our project budget. His guidance and logistical support have been critical to ensuring the success of this project.

### **Berta Gielge**

Ms. Gielge has played a central role as a member of our research team and as a collaborator with CREATES. As a longstanding resident of Thiafoura, she has acted as a liaison to community members, facilitating communication and trust between the research team, the partnering NGO and the village.

### **Maximilian Pueye**

Maximilian Pueye is a Saafene community leader, agroecologist, healer, and elder with a lifetime of experience in ethnobotany-based, community-run projects. He has taken on leadership of the Thiafoura Botanical Garden, ensuring its continuity and alignment with local needs and traditions.

### **Saliou Cisse**

As president of the Association for the Preservation of the Saafene Language, Saliou Cisse has been a key translator for the project, supporting both written and oral communication. His work has ensured that the project is accessible and culturally respectful.

### **Mattieu Gueye**

Mattieu Gueye is the director of the Department of Ethnobotany at the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire. He has visited Thiafoura multiple times, led community meetings, and reviewed the herbarium, cross-checking and identifying all plant specimens collected.

### **Dr. Alioune Fall**

Dr. Fall is the Director of the Department of Botany and Pharmacy. He serves as a key academic connection for future chemical and biological analyses of plants identified through the project, and has been supportive throughout this project period.

### **Ousmane Dioum**

Ousmane Dioum is a respected community member, elder, and farmer with a deep love for plants. He now manages the Thiafoura botanical garden and plays a leading role in maintaining the nursery and facilitating community engagement.

### **Alisa Hove**

Alisa Hove, a botanist and research team member from Warren Wilson College, has led the data collection and statistical analysis for the project. Her expertise has been critical for ensuring the scientific rigor of our research.

### **Saliou Thiandoume**

Saliou Thiandoume is the president of the Agroecology Committee of the Thiafoura Community Development Association. With a graduate degree in this field, he has

provided strategic guidance on sustainable agricultural and conservation practices within the context of the community that he calls home.

### **Guedji Thiandoum**

As the Village Chief of Thiafoura, Guedji Thiandoum facilitates communication between the research team and the community. He has been an enthusiastic supporter of this work since the beginning, and has promoted local participation, provided insight into cultural sensitivities, and, despite his age and array of other responsibilities as village chief, has been the first one to get his hands dirty on every community work day we have organized. He truly leads by example.

### **Amy Thione**

Amy Thione is the president of the Thiafoura Women's Group. She has supported the project by mobilizing women's participation and helping integrate their knowledge into the ethnobotanical work, encouraged women to get involved in work days and share their knowledge, and has spoken on behalf of the woman's association in various community meetings, offering an invaluable perspective.

### **Maimouna Gueye**

Maimouna Gueye is a youth member of Thiafoura and a budding agroecologist. She contributes to the project by assisting with nursery work, community outreach, and supporting research activities under guidance from the team.

## **10. Any other comments?**

This project has been a deeply rewarding, collaborative experience. From the early conversations with community elders and leaders to establishing the botanical nursery and documenting ethnobotanical knowledge, the work has been shaped by the expertise, enthusiasm, and generosity of the Thiafoura community. Leaders like Maximilian Pueye and Guedji Thiandoum, the women's group led by Amy Thione, youth participants such as Maimouna Gueye, and many others have shared their time and knowledge to make this work possible.

Support from our partners-including CREATES, Dr. Patrick Bottazzi, Berta Gielge, and academic collaborators like Mattieu Gueye, Dr. Alioune Fall, and Alisa Hove-has also been essential in bringing the project to life. Beyond documenting and conserving ethnobotanically significant plants, the project has strengthened community engagement, fostered intergenerational knowledge exchange, and created lasting resources like the ethnobotanical booklet, documentary mini-series, and botanical garden. We are grateful to the Rufford Foundation for trusting in this project and vision, and for making its inception possible. We truly hope that this is only the beginning and that we may be able to collaborate with the Rufford Foundation in the future to advance the inspiring goals of this project.

**ANNEX – Financial Report**  
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