

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. 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. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Madeleine Johnson
Project title	Knowing, using and protecting the hidden botanical treasurers of Cameroonian forests
RSG reference	54.09.07
Reporting period	January 08 till June 09
Amount of grant	£4970
Your email address	maajohson@yahoo.fr
Date of this report	30 June 2009

1. Please 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
Raise awareness on the importance of biodiversity and conservation			x	See text below
Survey and document the diversity of plant-based traditional knowledge			x	See text below
Identify local perspectives on the opportunities and constraints for the sustainable use of plant resources			x	See text below

The aim of this project was to assess, conserve and raise awareness on the cultural use, knowledge and appreciation of the local biodiversity by the Banen indigenous tribe in Cameroon.

My work investigated indigenous knowledge of plant resources in the Banen cultural group in Ndiki. I addressed two specific objectives:

1. Raise awareness on the importance of biodiversity and conservation.
2. Survey and document the diversity of plant-based traditional knowledge and identify local perspectives on the opportunities and constraints for the sustainable use of plant resources.

The project started with a local sensitization campaign (by holding workshops, conducting interviews, putting up posters) in the Ndiki area among administrative and traditional authorities and secondary schools to explain to the general public what is biodiversity, why is it important, what are the major threats faced by biodiversity globally and locally (in Ndiki), why it is important to protect the biodiversity and what actions each of us can do to make the life better for animals, plants and the human community.

Two local biodiversity conservation groups were then created bringing together students from secondary and primary schools, non scholar villagers and traditional leaders. In each group participatory exercises (e.g., joint collection of plant material, exchange, playful group contests on local knowledge) were organized to assess the diversity of plant-based traditional knowledge of the Banen people.

This step culminated in a public seminar organized during the National Youth Day celebration week where public outreach activities were organised, exposition of treasures from the nature, competition games and prize awarding.

After this sensitization phase, participatory biodiversity surveys were organized with traditional leaders to document the medicinal, socioeconomic, cultural and spiritual value of biodiversity of Ndiki area. Plant specimens were collected for identification at the Millennium Ecologic Museum and at the National Herbarium of Cameroon.

A one day field trip was then organized during which two groups from the Ndiki visited the Nkala Mountain forest, one of the highest peaks in the Yaoundé area, an important site for ecotourism, research and biodiversity studies.

The strong implication of local traditional leaders (holders of traditional knowledge), the willingness of the youth to learn more from elders coupled with support from local administrative and religious authorities was a great contribution towards achieving the project's objectives. Village workshop programmes involving these stakeholders were useful in enabling the appropriation of the process by the beneficiaries.

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

During the course of the project, poor road conditions were an obstacle to reach some remote areas of Ndiki, especially during the rainy season. At time it was most practicable to use a bike rather than a car. This is why I had to arrange to visit some of these areas only when the weather was favourable.

In addition, the issue of sharing plant-based traditional medical knowledge with others has become a quite debated problem within all rural area in Cameroon. Therefore, I had to face at times the reluctance of some elders to communicate their knowledge on plants. In order to respect the personality and morality of each one I simply choose to work with those who were interested in the project.

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

- More than 1000 people sensitized on biodiversity value, conservation and use; and two operational biodiversity management groups functional in the village.
- More than 20 natural collections gathered by the local people and deposited at the Millennium Ecological Museum in Yaoundé.
- In total about 274 plant species were identified including:
 - About 90 species of medicinal plants.
 - About 70 species of plants used in the rites.
 - About 110 species used as food.

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

I was overwhelmed by the hospitality and assistance I received from the community residents at Ndiki. I also was grateful for the collaborative assistance provided by Professor Bernard NKONGMENECK, Mr. Victor KEMEUZE, Mr. Rene JIOFACK and Mr. Evariste FONGNZOSSIE of the Millennium Ecologic Museum.

The project triggered a great mobilisation of local populations.

Through project activities, local people learned about:

- the medicinal, socioeconomic and spiritual value of their biodiversity;
- the protected animals of their village;

- the danger in the use of pesticides;
- climate change issues;
- means of valuing local biodiversity.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

I will be searching for funding to launch a Museum of Natural History in Ndiki, in collaboration with the groups created during this project, and the Cultural Development Association of the Mbam division where Ndiki is located.

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

I am currently focusing on the publication of the research findings and compiling results from the research in my PhD dissertation at the University of Hamburg and that can be shared with a wider scientific community. I submitted one paper to the *Cameroon Journal of Ethnobotany*, and prepared a poster on the riches of Ndiki that was presented at the third international symposium of the Cameroon Ethnobotany Network held on 11-12th September 2008 in Yaoundé.

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

The project was implemented within an 18 month duration.

I regret that the time I had to spend was limited, because much of the traditional knowledge holders are increasingly getting interested in the project and expressing the need for the project to continue further. As a matter of fact, the project has positively impact on the psychological and social aspects of the lives of the local population.

8. Budget: Please 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.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Computer (laptop) & printer, external drive for back up	500	0	-500	We did not buy a laptop but could use a private laptop instead in order to save budget for more essential expenses.
Stationary	100	45	-55	Paper, pens etc for taking records and printing
Digital recorder	100	0	-100	It turned out that we did not need a digital recorder but that taking the notes on paper or flipcharts was much more reliable and suitable for the interview situations.
Digital camera, camera equipment	200	50	-150	The camera has been hired for the period of time of the project. The rental

				was about £50.
GPS	120	40	-80	The GPS has been hired for the period of time of the project, not bought. Thus lower costs for rental.
4 Plant presses and 1 cupboard for storage of herbarium specimens	200	128	-72	4 plant presses have been built and used during the field work
Material for permanent presentation at various sites	550	595	+45	Transport of material, preparation etc.
Petrol and other consumables for the car	200	125	-75	Petrol etc. and food for driver
Access to scientific journals and purchase of scientific literature	50		-50	We did not need to purchase scientific literature
Car hire (4x4)	1500	1817	+317	Rental of car with driver for trips to the villages of two or more days (40 days all together)
Per diem	500	730	+230	Acknowledged scientists (Professors) had to be invited to join field trips and workshops in order to support the identification of plants and animals and to achieve the full support of the local authorities.
Per diem for resource persons and assistants in the field	500	550	+50	The Ndiki area has numerous settlements that we had to visit for courtesy and for sharing information. For these trips we needed local guides and field assistants.
Layout for boards, posters etc	200	460 + 234	+494	Posters and information boards for the museum in Ndiki (presently displayed in Yaoundé)
Payment for plant identifications at herbarium	100	213	+150	The costs for plant identification exceeded our expectation due to the high number of specimens collected
Unforeseen	150		-150	We always had to improvise during the workshops in order to get local authorities on board or to deal with technical and logistic problems.
TOTAL	4970	4987	+17	The additional amount of Euro +80 has been paid out of my private budget.

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

The steps forward will consist of:

- Increasing sensitization activities to reach the great majority of the population of Ndiki, especially in remote areas;
- The development and launching of a museum of natural history in Ndiki.

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

The Rufford logo was used on the following materials: T-shirts, banderols, letters, prospectus. Many people asked to know more about Rufford Foundation, where it is situated. During all presentations, it explained to the public the main objectives of the Rufford Small Grants Foundation in promoting nature conservation worldwide and community sustainability.

11. Any other comments?

By coupling the ecological research with conversations about plants and their uses, I learned much about the historical ecology of Ndiki. The history of landscape and resources utilization practices. As this work was a pioneering one in the area, I am happy to have investigated and documented some plant-based traditional knowledge of the Banen people in Ndiki. The respect of these beliefs is an important key to biodiversity understanding and conservation by the local people. I am very enthusiastic about the interest that the youth is giving to this initiative and I am confident that this rising interest in biodiversity could give place to certain continuity.