

The Rufford Foundation

Final Report

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

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other 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. 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. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. 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	Méryas Dègbémabou Kouton
Project title	Enhancing strategy of Elephant sustainable conservation in Biosphere Reserve of Pendjari (BRP), BENIN.
RSG reference	67e18b-1
Reporting period	December 2017 – December 2018
Amount of grant	£5000
Your email address	merkod1@yahoo.fr
Date of this report	January 1 st 2019.

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
Main objective: Develop, test and make available to the management system of the park, Decision-making tools that can improve the protection of elephants.				Using pools and elephants carcasses data, statistical analyses and GIS have identified elephant poaching hotspots in the park and an adaptive monitoring system is in place.
Census and mapping of water points in the RBP				104 water points were identified and mapped. Their decrease during the dry season was studied and mapped.
Spatial analysis of elephants distribution and carcasses				The elephant carcasses encountered over the past 15 years have been mapped. Their distribution has been studied in relation to the water points. Water points subject to strong poaching are identified.
Awareness local authorities and scholars on the conservation of the elephant				The local authorities of the Tanguiéta and Mater communes and their staff (25 people including eight women) as well as the school children of the two communes (200 schoolchildren including 92 girls) have been sensitised on the conservation of elephants and are committed to relaying information, at the same time as cooperating in the fight against elephant poaching.
ecotourism visits and participation of schoolchildren in the management of a pond				APN, the new park management team has expressed reservations about the participation of schoolchildren in the construction of a pond. This sub-activity was then abandoned in favour of the elephant observation period for schoolchildren in the context of tourism and sensitisation
Preparation and dissemination of an awareness poster on the conservation of the				More than 200 posters (A3 format) have been disseminated in the riparian villages and in the administrative services. They were

elephant				posted in cities and houses.
Restitution and capitalization of results				A restitution workshop was organised to transmit the results to the managing authority. 10 posters (A0 format) summarising the actions of the project and the results were distributed.

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

The main difficulty in the execution of this project is institutional. After the acceptance of the project and its launch, the management of the Pendjari Biosphere Reserve has been transferred. The Government of the Republic of Benin has decided to manage the reserve as part of a private-public partnership. The change of the managing authority has returned to its active phase in 2018 and so the reserve has been entrusted to African Parks, an international NGO based in South Africa. The project, which had already begun with the identification of pools and their variations, must have slowed down for new managers to become familiar with the content, which was not entirely easy since this work was not part of their plan or their priority at the start. Following multiple discussions on the relevance of the topic, the new managers opted for the realisation of the project in view of the many benefits that the project would bring them, especially from the point of view of the provision of scientific tools for improvement elephant monitoring. They did not fail to change the course of activities by not allowing the participation of schoolchildren in the development of a pond. Also, they demanded the payment of entrance fees to the park by schoolchildren and local authorities, which was intended as a contribution of the beneficiary structure of the project's actions.

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

1- This work has identified the pools of the reserves which are the hotspots of poaching elephants with the key, the distribution of pools and their variation during the dry season correlated to the distribution of elephant carcasses. This makes it possible to refine the monitoring system for better conservation of elephants.

2- Schoolchildren are committed to the cause of elephant conservation. The sensitisation campaign and the visit of the schoolchildren in the Pendjari Biosphere Reserve, a visit specifically focused on the observation of elephants and ponds, helped to awaken schoolchildren's awareness of the importance of elephants in ecosystems and its conservation. They promised to exchange with their parents at home to get them to join the cause of elephant conservation.

3- The sensitisation session with the local authorities made them aware of the extent of elephant poaching and the urgency of reversing the degradation trends. They decided to accompany the managers in the protection actions.

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

The involvement of local communities was made through the participation of local schoolchildren as well as local authorities (local elected officials).

They participated in the project as beneficiaries from a dual angle; on the one hand, benefiting from sensitisation sessions and then the park visit and, on the other hand, being indirect beneficiaries in the short, medium and long-term of conservation actions.

As part of the awareness raising activities and the elephant observation tour, they benefited from posters and t-shirts stamped with the Rufford Foundation logo and elephants. They learned about the role of elephants in ecosystems and the urgency of their conservation.

The medium and long-term impacts of this project is the preservation of elephant populations in the reserve, stimulating vision tourism that benefits the local populations from several angles. They are the actors of tourism and benefit also on the one hand in the revenues resulting from the tourist exploitation of the reserve.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

In an impact chain process, the next step is monitoring the effects and impacts of the project on riparian populations and elephant conservation at the same time as periodically raising awareness. Indeed, it is necessary to follow the clubs of school children to know how the message has passed at the level of their respective families and how posters have been managed. The monitoring of the data collection and the carcass analysis (points of occurrence and numbers) will make it possible to decide on the impact of the project in the medium term.

Thus, it would be desirable to periodically (2 times per year) hold sensitisation sessions focused on elephant conservation continue with the schoolchildren with the dissemination of awareness tools that are posters. Cooperation with the reserve management system will provide access to elephant carcass data and continue analysis on an annual basis.

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

As part of the dissemination of the results, two activities are planned including one already executed. It involves the development of a capitalisation poster and then the writing and publication of an article in a scientific journal.

The poster highlighting the main results of the project was prepared in 10 copies and distributed. It is given to the manager of the reserve, it is displayed at the Laboratory of Applied Ecology. It is expected to be posted at the Directorate General of Waters Forests and Hunting.

A scientific article has been drafted but has not yet followed the correction process at the level of the scientific supervisor.

We are also looking for opportunities to present at regional and international level the results of our work in this project.

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

The grant was used from December 2017 to December 2018, exactly 13 months as planned by the project.

The delay of less than 2 months caused by the change in the direction of the park was caught up with new planning that has tightened activities. In this phase it is the percentage of the time of the team members that was previously planned that has increased so that the results are achieved.

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
Communication (Internet , Phone)	100	100		The funds used are just up to expectations
Project capitalization: poster of results, publication	175	175		The funds used are just up to expectations
Awareness tools (poster and T-shirt)	1,000	1,000		The funds used are just up to expectations
Ecotourism visits and participation in the management of a pond (food and bus)	550	550		The funds used are just up to expectations
Conference room and workshops facilities	650	850	+200	The meeting sessions that were planned to be held in the conference room of the park management took place at the level of the College and the meeting hall of the Town Hall. After the transfer of management to APN, the buildings were in repair and therefore unfit for the meeting.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
				The costs have changed but have been borne by the local authorities as part of their contribution to the project.
Two workshops (local authorities and schools) : food and transportation	845	845	0	The funds used are just up to expectations
4 Transportation for the team from Cotonou to BRP	210	290	+80	The change of the managing authority has led to additional trips to meet the new managers and to explain to them the project and its importance for the Pendjari.
Purchase of 1 digital camera	200	200	0	The funds used are just up to expectations
Purchase of 2 GPS Garmin 64Xi	400	400	0	The funds used are just up to expectations
Fuel for fieldwork (7L/day)	200	200	0	The funds used are just up to expectations
Rental of two motorcycles (30 days)	600	600	0	The funds used are just up to expectations
Food and daily allowance for field works (30 days for 4 persons)	720	720	0	The funds used are just up to expectations

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

In addition to the Pendjari Biosphere Reserve, Benin has the Niger W cross-border complex which is an integral part of the WAP landscape. It is twice the size of the Pendjari. The presence of the representatives of CENAGREF, W management structure, the sensitisation session and the restitution session opened new horizons for the rest of this project. Indeed, CENAGREF strongly hopes that the same study will be done at the W level to assess the distribution of poaching with respect to water points and thus improve the elephant conservation strategy. Awareness of local communities is just as necessary. Thus, to have more impact, Pendjari and W being contiguous, it would be necessary to extend this study recognised as beneficial for the protected areas of Benin in W.

During this time, monitoring of effects in Pendjari would continue with a follow-up in awareness-raising activities. In terms of competence transfer, it is also necessary for

the ecological monitoring officers at the two parks to be trained in these data analysis techniques to take charge of monitoring in the coming years.

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

The logo of The Rufford Foundation has been used on all productions. It has been used on both types of posters, namely posters for awareness raising and capitalisation posters. It was also used on the two types of t-shirts that were made, those of schoolchildren and those of local authorities.

At all the meetings in general and mainly at the awareness sessions, The Rufford Foundation was presented as well as its contribution in the realisation of the project. Other wildlife conservation projects funded in Benin by The Rufford Foundation have even been cited with their results, former beneficiaries of GSR who participated in sensitization sessions and especially capitalisation.

So we have a very strong publicity for The Rufford Foundation. There remains for the article which is in correction which thanks the donor.

11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

The field phase for data collection was attended by three people, two operators and me.

N°	Name	Contact	Role	Other observations
1	KOUTON Meryas Dègbémabou	merkod1@yahoo.fr tel. +229 97588768	Project manager	Coordination of all aspects of the project. Statistical analyse and GIS
2	ZINSOU Augustin	Tel. +229 96394334	Associate	Data collection, Data analyse, support in meeting organization
3	DOSSOU OKE Christine	Tel. +229 66209661	Associate	Data collection, Data analyse,

In the project management team, the Park Director (Cne TCHOGOU and after him James TERJANIAN), the chief of Anti-Poaching Unit (Mathias SAH) and the chief of Ecological Monitoring Unit (Aurlus QUINDEYAMA) were very active in capitalising the data. Ecotourism and Awareness Responsible of the Park (Thomas KASSA) has worked extensively on the practical organization of park visits in which he personally participated; he was also involved in the awareness sessions.

On the side of the local administration, the environmental service head was associated with the organisations involving the municipalities and local elected officials.

The scientific supervisor, Professor Brice SINSIN followed the quality of the data and the methods of analysis used. He advised a lot on the holding of awareness activities especially with local elected officials.

12. Any other comments?

The financial support from The Rufford Foundation has been very beneficial for conservation in that this has helped refine the monitoring strategy for better conservation of elephants. This is a new approach using statistical analysis and GIS for conservation. the results obtained need to be replicated to further refine the method and test it under other conditions, those of the transboundary reserve of W in Benin.

By strengthening elephant conservation, all wildlife is protected because elephant-based anti-poaching clears the reserve and its hotspots of astonishment of all types of poachers from other mammal species.

It is an opportunity for us to especially thank all those who contributed to the realisation of this project and particularly The Rufford Foundation for the financial support.