

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. 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	Nilesh Heda
Project title	Conservation of Riverine Resources through People's Participation: North-Eastern Godavari Basin, Maharashtra, India
RSG reference	9880-B
Reporting period	April 2011 - May 2012
Amount of grant	£12,000
Your email address	nilheda@gmail.com
Date of this report	7th Jun 2012

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
To strengthen all the activities started during first, second and Booster RSG.			YES	All the activities since first RSG are essential to carry out and strengthen so as to achieve long term objectives of the sustainable life of rivers of this area. The activities since first RSG are interlinked and evolved through continuous learning by doing.
River march along Bembla River.			YES	19th February 2012 to 25th February 2012. River March with Mr. Rohitashwa Shukla, Indian Institute of Science Education, Kolkata and fishermen of this area has been arranged to Bembla and Katepurna river basin. Fish sampling has been done and habitat characteristics documented.
Awareness generation campaign.			YES	Repeated village meetings, capacity building workshops, popular talks, newspaper articles, river march, workshop with students has been arranged. Details can be found in final report.
Setting up "River Conservation Societies" (RCS).		YES		The labour groups and farmer has been transformed into RCS. Still the group do not have legal decision-making powers and how to make space for RCS in the legal frame work is big challenge.
Quantitative estimation of fish fauna and habitat characteristics of Adan and Bembla rivers.			YES	During the project period one more river viz. Katepurna has been included in the ecological inventory.
Setting up 2 new FPAs along Bembla River.	NO			This task has not completed as local people are not ready fully for the same. Need to work more on this issue.
Sensitizing local people and government departments to initiate Eco-restoration work through MGNREGA.			YES	We have made impact on about 650 villages of the entire Washim district.

Eco-restoration work at 15 villages of Bembla river basin.			YES	More than 15 villages targeted for the same.
Eco-restoration in the basin area.			YES	As an impact of our work, beside scattered eco-restoration work in the basin area, a degraded patch of the 100-ha forest has been declared as natural forest rejuvenation site by government. Government has provided initial funds of 10 million rupees (About £114,759) to forest department for this purpose.
Generation of popular material.			YES	Small booklets, folders, pamphlets have been published and distributed. The material can be found at organisation's web site www.samvardhan.org.in
Plantation of 25,000 plants in the basin.			YES	A nursery has been developed and plants distributed among farmers and schools of the basin area.
Distribution of organic pesticides and fertilisers.	NO			This has not done due to unavailability of manpower to organisation. However, in coming monsoon (August – September 2012) we are planning to fulfil the objective.
Advocacy and policy level impact for conservation and livelihood generation.			YES	Policy level impact has been done regarding effective implementation of MGNREGA and various government schemes related to conservation.
To link local restoration work to national and international processes.			YES	Participated in Ganga river restoration campaign. Participated and provided inputs at Planet Under Pressure conference held at London, UK during March 2012.
To provided inputs of local learning to other levels in the country.			YES	Provided inputs to Tarun Bharat Sangh, a national NGO working for the river revival.
To involve students and educational institutions in the conservation endeavor.			YES	36 Schools has been involved through a program known as PARYAVARAN MITRA (Friends of Environment).
To harness the potential of government laws and policies for the conservation of riverine resources.			YES	Created linkages with NABARD, Agriculture department, DRDA, environment department, state government. Local administration etc.

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

- 1) **Failure by government department to provide timely wages to labourer and its impact on eco-restoration work:** On the project implementation level there was important difficulty arises by the problem in the government system, in the wage disbursement mechanism of MGNREGA implementation. We are using potential of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guaranty Act 2005. The act stipulated guaranteed wage employment to rural poor through eco-restoration activities. We have facilitated eco-restoration work in Bembla, Uma, Adan and Arunavati River basins, however, in spite of good quality work people has not received their wage payment even after 3 months. Considering this we have wrote to Minister of Rural development, central secretary (MGNREGA), state secretary and so on. We also declared peaceful activism and conveyed our decision about filing Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the high court. As result, state secretary called me over telephone and district collector sent a letter mentioning that they are releasing labourer's payment with 7 working days. They have fulfilled their promise and labourer got payment and there seen boost in the eco-restoration activities.
- 2) **Difficulty regarding fund transfer from RSGF to my account:** The second difficulty arisen at the beginning of the project, when project sanctioned by the RSGF. The difficulty was not related with the implementation of the project but regarding fund transfer. Government of India has enacted "Foreign Currency Regulation Act, 2011". According to this act every organisation or individual (?) have to register for the prior permission or for FCRA registration number. It was not made clear in the act guideline that, whether the law extends to individuals like me or not. Due to this there was some delay of fund utilisation. However, I have registered myself for the FCRA prior permission (First INDIVIDUAL case in India). Promptly, home ministry clearly sends a letter mentioning that "I am excluded from the Act and can receive funding from RSGF. In fact, this is historical clarification and this case can be utilized by other individuals who receive RSGF funding in their own bank account.

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

- **Policy level impact:** Policy level impact on larger scale is in important outcome of the project. Timely payment to labourers for their eco-restoration work, speeding the work of incomplete eco-restoration structures, utilization of the barren land (E-class and barren forest land) in the river basins for forest rejuvenation, utilization of the potential of the MGNREGA in the river restoration are some of the positive achievements during project. Sensitisation of the government departments and policy makers regarding river and fish conservation is another outcome of the project.
- **Inputs to RIO +20:** The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (RIO + 20), will take place in Brazil on 20-22 June 2012. To provide scientific inputs to RIO + 20, "Planet Under Pressure" (PUP) conference has been arranged at London, UK between 24 to 30 March 2012. Our joint session on Freshwater Ecosystem Conservation in addition to a poster of RSGF findings have been selected for the conference. Whatever inputs regarding river conservation I have provided has been incorporated in the conference output.

- **Linking conservation with livelihood generation:** Linking conservation with the livelihood generation of the rural poor is central theme of our project. Using potential of the MGNREGA we have fostered eco-restoration work in hundreds of villages covering 4 river basins viz. Adan, Bembla, Uma and Arunavati. The eco-restoration activities in the river basin have impacted on checking erosion, ground water augmentation, plantation, increased ecosystem goods and services and ultimately river conservation.

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

At every step the local communities have been involved. Labours and marginalised farmers of the project area are depending on natural resources and labour work for subsistence. Main source of employment in the area is agriculture work. However, due to lack of irrigation facilities agriculture is largely depend on rain. Thus, there is lack of employment around the year. Generation of sustainable employment through eco-restoration activities for marginalized groups using MGNREGA was basic aim of project. This has been achieved by building capacities of these groups.

Emphasis of project was to build capacity of people and institutions and to help local leadership to immerge. Knowledge about acts and policies has empowered people. Local systems have been strengthened so that beyond project period, local people will take care of output and system is becoming self-sustaining.

The local people benefited by 3 important interventions. One was generation of the livelihood through the implementation of MGNREGA, through community aquaculture and improvement in the agriculture and rural infra structure.

1. Are there any plans to continue this work?

YES. The river restoration work is long term work and needs working on various levels. So far we have created satisfactory impact but considering vast area of river basins and involvement of millions of stakeholders it is essential to work further. In this regard, I am applying for the Rufford Continuation Grant.

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

i. Study Groups

There are many mechanisms created over the period for information dissemination. Our area has grand traditions of Study Groups (*Abhyas Gat*). The study groups are the informal structures comprises interested individuals working in various NGOs. There are regular study group meetings carried out in various part of the country. I am regular participant of these meetings and sharing information in the same.

ii. Articles in Newspapers

I am writing creative articles in local language in newspapers. One such series has been started by popular newspaper of this area. Through these articles the results will be spread among broader audience. The articles can be found at <http://nheda.blogspot.com/>.

iii. Website

We have set up website where we post all the project related information time to time. The URL of the website is www.samvardhan.org.in.

iv. National Service Scheme

Indian universities launched National Service Scheme (NSS). It is popular programme designed for students to work among rural area. Every year each college set up a camp of 10 days in selected village. I already used the potential of this scheme to disburse the information.

v. Paryvaran Mitra (Friends of environment) program:

The programme is a joint initiative of Center for Environment Education (CEE), Pune, Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India and ArsellarMittal business group. It is an attempt to involve schools in the nature conservation activities. Our group is one of the partners of this programme. We are sharing our results with the hundreds of schools nationwide.

vi. Collaboration with National JAL BIRADARI:

National Jal Biradari is joint association of various NGO, nature lover dedicatedly working for the water conservation. The group has been established by Mr. Rajendra Singh, Megesese winner. I am closely associated with the group and time to time share results of RSG project with them.

vii. Collaboration with Environment Department, Government of Maharashtra

Environment Department, Government of Maharashtra state has launched a program called "Green Ideas." I am one of the partners in the programme and time to time share results of RSG project with them.

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

I received grant in May 2011. So, grant amount utilised for the period of May 2011 to May 2012. However, the work is continuing since first RSG in 2008.

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
Stipend Project Director (GBP 172 Per month X 12 months)	2058	2058	0	
Stipend Project Assistant 1 X GBP 29 per months X 12 months)	343	343	0	
Travel (Gross Value GBP 286 per month X 12 Months).	3429	3429	0	Not utilised for international travels.
Office Rent (GBP 29 per month X 12 months)	343	343	0	
Capacity building Workshops.	1286	1669	+ 383	Total of 6 capacity building and awareness generation workshops has been arranged during the project period. Details can

				be found in detailed final report.
CONSUMIABLES: Stationery and consumable. Internet, Phone, postage etc.	343	343	0	
Honorarium	363	363	0	
PRINTING: Printing of capacity building material, posters, Banners, small booklets.	430	430	0	
Village eco-restoration planning (15 Villages X 43 GBP for each village including maps, survey)	858	708	-150	
River March (Along Bembla river) Approximately GBP 285.	285	285	0	
Plantation of 25000 plants	1072	1209	+ 137	
LCD projector	437	400	-37	
Distribution of organic pesticides and fertilizers	383	0	-383	
Hiring fisherman for fish sampling (24 times X 2.85 GBP for each trip)	70	70	0	
Installation of boards at 2 Fresh Water Protected areas (GBP 50 for each board).	100	0	-100	
Leasing out water body for the culture of local species of fishes (1 Water body X 100 GBP)	150	300	+150	
Auditing	50	50	0	
Total	12000	12000		

Interest Generated: 5568 Rupees (65 GBP).

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

During last 3 Rufford Small Grants, lot of conservation inputs gained and an impact on vast geographical area has been made. In coming future, it is essential to continue this work further as still there are lots of social and technical issues we have to deal with. In addition, I am increasingly thinking that, now project should invest more resources in the education, policy level issues and creating way for the knowledge-based management of the natural resources. Another arena of the intervention is agriculture land as it is estimated that agriculture is an important occupation in the area seriously impacting on the riverine resources. Keeping this in mind, in coming future, following 11 step programs will be implemented in the whole North-eastern Godavari basin and other associated river basins of the Area.

- i. **Livelihood generation while doing effective conservation work:** Sensitising local administration and local people for more river conservation work through MGNREGA.
- ii. **Livelihood generation and conservation of local Fish fauna:** Culture of the indigenous species of fishes through local participatory fish culture groups. Capacity building of the people regarding scientific fish culture.
- iii. **Creation of the river study syllabus for the future generation:** The main aim of this educational intervention is to train village youth, NGO workers and students to understand various components of riverine ecosystems and to equipped them for scientific conservation

planning. The health of riverine habitats is depending on the basin area, any disturbances in the basin area seriously affect river and aquatic biodiversity on one hand and livelihood of local people on other hand. Last few decades witnessed widespread degradation in the river basin area affecting health of riverine habitats. Degradation of river is not an isolated problem rather it is linked with various interlinked social and ecological problems. The training modules will be designed considering holistic ecosystem approach where anthropological, ecological, economical, approaches will be considered. Students scientifically will study riverine habitats of their vicinity and with local people come up with its planning and through acts like MGNREGA afore mentioned planning will be implemented on ground.

- iv. **Agriculture:** It was learned that; agriculture land is one of the important components in the river health and farmers of the area are important actors in the river conservation. All river basins of the area constitute about 70 % land area under agriculture setup. Considering the effectiveness of agriculture intervention to maintain the sustainability of river we have start agriculture intervention. In this regards we have to work on four fundamental objectives: 1) Ameliorate the present situation of the agriculture like halting siltation, lowering down use of the chemical pesticides and fertilizers, providing basic infrastructure to agriculture like irrigation facility, farm roads, bundings, fencing, warehouse etc.; 2) Changing crop pattern like incorporation of orchids so that the agriculture system becomes more profitable; 3) Fostering scientific, organic, low cost agriculture; and 4) Creating supporting occupational endeavour for the agriculture.
- v. **Strengthening Community Structures:** Strengthening previously established community structures and creation of the new in Adan, Bembla, Uma, Arunavati and other river basins.
- vi. **Deploying student's power:** Deploying student's power for data collection and awareness generation will be essential step in the future. Creation of the student's groups in schools and colleges will also be done.
- vii. **Popular material:** Creation of the popular material on the relevant government resolutions, acts, rules for the help of local people. Creation of the material on the wetland conservation issues for common man and creation of the material on the scientific fish culture.
- viii. **Fish and habitat inventorying:** More fish fauna inventorying events to assess fish fauna of all river basins of this area.
- ix. **Plantation in Adan, Bembla, Arunavati and Uma River Basin:** 100,000 plants of locally available species will be planted along rivers of this area in next RSG phase.
- x. **Impacting on policy:** There is urgent need to do active intervention and provide inputs in the various existing acts and Government resolution. In this regard there is needed to take help from the court and need to file Public Interest Ligations' (PIL) wherever necessary.
- xi. **Uniting women for conservation:** Lack of extensive participation of women in our conservation work is an important lacuna in our work. This is due to social stigma among women class of society. In coming future this lacuna will be removed by improving women's participation.

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?

Yes. At all capacity building programmes on main banner RSG logo has been printed. Also, on the front page of the already mentioned popular news letter logo has been printed. On every popular material RSG logo printed.

Acknowledgement has been provided on poster presented at “Planet Under Pressure”, conference at London, UK.

11. Any other comments?

When we apply ecosystem approach to the conservation work it needs consistency in the work. Such consistency maintained by the continuous supply of the resources for some time until and unless system becomes self sustaining. Thus, to maintain the tempo of our work financial resources are expected in coming future as soon as possible.