

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	Suzanne Jane Milton-Dean
Project title	Renu-Karoo: developing indigenous seed orchards and local skills to restore mining and grazing damage in arid Karoo rangeland
RSG reference	19.01.10
Reporting period	1 June 2010—31 May 2011
Amount of grant	£12,000
Your email address	renukaroo@gmail.com , renukaroo@telkomsa.net
Date of this report	2011.06.20

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
Promote use of indigenous plants for restoration and landscaping			X	<p>Over the reporting period we increased the diversity and quantity of indigenous seeds (28 species, 300 kg stock) that Renu-Karoo can supply. Since 2008, we have collected 800 kg seed and sold 500 kg to farming and engineering rehabilitation projects. However, in 2010 drought was widespread in the Karoo and the effects of the recession are still felt. Possibly for these reasons we sold only 150 kg of seed in the past 12 months.</p> <p>By researching restoration techniques through student projects and requesting and documenting feedback from clients, we have improved our understanding of the causes of reseeded success and failure. The information is downloadable free of charge from our website in the form of guideline documents for various plant species that we supply as seed.</p> <p>Renu-Karoo nursery now maintains a stock to 9,000 plants of 415 species, producing and selling approximately 10% of its stock monthly to local and visiting gardeners. The production of compost using green garden waste and of potting soil, a mixture of milled pine bark, compost and chicken manure, has become a very important component of the nursery, with sales of these two products increasing all the time.</p> <p>We have increased awareness of indigenous Karoo plants by making information available through our nature walks, a medicinal garden at the local museum, our website, the local newspaper, talks to the garden club and an article on the website of South African Afrikaans language travel magazine "Weg" (Natuurstap in die Karooveld Jurg Slabbert gaan stap saam met Sue Milton http://www.weg.co.za/multimedia/view/7848).</p> <p>By December 2010, we intended to produce the first draft of a natural vegetation restoration booklet for Central Karoo. This has not yet been completed but some preliminary material is downloadable from our website in a report entitled "Milton SJ 2010. Feasibility and benefits of veld rehabilitation following control of invasive <i>Prosopis</i> in the Calvinia area</p>

				(http://www.renu-karoo.co.za/books.htm)".
Support two to three students needing experiential training			X	<p>We employed two 3rd year nature conservation student interns throughout the reporting period (see "interns" on http://www.renu-karoo.co.za/Ecotourism.htm). Through working with ourselves and our local employees in the nursery on consulting projects and assisting our master's students with research on outcomes of reseeding damaged rangeland, the interns gained and shared a range of skills and knowledge. The students also assisted with two environmental training days for the local school, a guided walk for students from University of Cape Town and an environmental outing for the local cultural foundation with the these "Water management in a desert village".</p> <p>Our local interns were joined for 2 weeks by Elise Damstra, a Norwegian school learner who spent 2 weeks with us in July 2010 to learn about life in a desert village.</p>
Assist the local municipality with aspects of environmental management		X		<p>Although we attempted to engage with our local (Prince Albert) Municipality in projects involving maintenance of a woodlot that we had established for the village, composting of village garden waste, greening of the village, removal of invasive alien cactus, and other projects, our overtures were largely rejected. We were however able to establish an indigenous garden at the south entrance to the village and a medicinal display garden at the Museum. Reasons for local failure are probably the result of politically motivated distrust and instability within the Municipality</p> <p>We were happy to assist the neighbouring Eden District Municipality (managing the area from the coast at George to the through the Little Karoo to the top of the Swartberg Mountains) with training, posters and a guide to best management practice for conservation of biodiversity along roadsides in the district. Training took the form of site visits with road workers, public lectures and a management manual that can be downloaded from our website (http://www.renu-karoo.co.za/books.htm)</p>
Apply to Cape Nature for formal conservation status for the small-holding on which the Renu-Karoo is based			X	<p>Application to Cape Nature (the Western Cape Nature Conservation authority) for formal protection status for the land that we own was successful. See Additional Material (Wolwekraal Protected Area Management Agreement.pdf).</p> <p>Guided trails and talks in the Nature Reserve form part of the environmental education offered by Renu-Karoo</p>

			<p>to local schools and the general public. The interns also completed the two nature trails (5 km) on the Wolwekraal Nature Reserve. During the reporting period, Richard Dean and Sue Milton-Dean guided 168 tourists and two university student groups along these trails.</p> <p>During his internship in 2010, Will Matthee surveyed and mapped the vegetation of Wolwekraal Nature Reserve and this map will form a basis for planning management in the Nature Reserve – such as invasive alien vegetation clearing, erosion control and fencing. Cape Nature reviews the management plan for the protected area annual and will attempt to source assistance for some of the approved management interventions.</p>
Expand socio-economic impact and improve economic viability of Renu-Karoo	X		<p>During the reporting period Renu-Karoo retained its three original permanent employees (Meraai Isaacs, Wilfred Luttig and Caroline van der Ross), took on another two local people on a full-time basis (Ernest Murphy and Jasmien Pienaar), supported two student interns and also employed temporary labour to assist with seed collection or compost making as required. The Renu-Karoo project thus supports five families in the village.</p> <p>Our intention during the reporting period was to expand socio-economic impact and improve economic viability of Renu-Karoo by training and buying seed from unemployed people in outlying villages. We did not achieve this goal in the way intended, partly because the recession and drought decreased the demand for seed for rangeland rehabilitation, and partly because we did not receive the expected co-funding for this project from SKEPPIES. We did however buy some seed from neighbouring farmers the collection of which generated some temporary employment.</p> <p>We also planned to obtain business training and accounting software for our own use. To this end we contacted SEDA (Small Enterprise Development Agency) and on the basis of their advice we prepared a 5-year business plan and made a major investment in improving the visibility of our business. This involved personally buying a small property in the main road as an outlet for our products, renovating a shed on the property to serve as shop, and training one of our nursery workers to be a shop assistant. The shop was officially opening in February 2011. Monthly income from plant sales has doubled since opening the shop</p>

				<p>because it attracts visitors to the village who were unaware of the farm-based business. Income from the shop is now sufficient to cover wages of all our permanent employees.</p> <p>We also entered the South African Small and Medium Enterprise Competition and won the “Most Innovative SMME” of the 2010 SA SMME Awards that took place on the 21st October 2010. The prize included accounting software. We will start using this software once we can afford a dedicated internet link.</p>
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2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

Drought in the Karoo region and belated response in South Africa to global recession negatively affected the restoration and consulting components of our business. This resulted in reduced income available for expanding the seed collection, research and composting components of our business. We have attempted to solve the problem of inadequate turnover by personally investing in a shop on the main road as an outlet for the products of the Renu-Karoo Veld Restoration project. Additional challenges included the need for major maintenance of the Renu-Karoo farm vehicle, and the lack of interest by the local Municipality in receiving advice or engaging in collaborative environmental projects.

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

1. Achieving “in perpetuity” protection status for the land on which the Renu-Karoo project is based by signing a management agreement with Cape Nature, the conservation authority for the Western Cape Province of South Africa
2. Retaining and increasing our permanent staff and improving their employability through training in computer skills, shop keeping and driving as well as plant propagation. Five families now have a regular income and new skills in a rural village where there is 60% unemployment
3. Increasing awareness of Karoo conservation issues (including better roadside biodiversity management, improved approaches for rangeland restoration, vulnerability of Karoo habitats to disturbance and water extraction, dangers of hydraulic fracturing in gas exploration) among local people including farmers, rate payers and school learners, tourists, municipal managers and civil engineers through newspaper articles, walks, talks, the Renu-Karoo website, and advice offered during site visits and telephone consultations.

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

The local community is defined here as the population of the village of Prince Albert. This community can be stratified into retired people, economically active people and school-goers. These groups can further be divided into the group living in poverty (about 60%) and those not living in poverty. Renu-Karoo had some involvement at all levels. Renu-Karoo has provided environmental learning days for school goers from the free government school (ca. 100 learners) and private school (ca. 30 learners). It interacted with the economically active sector of the community by providing

five full-time jobs and three part-time jobs during the reporting period. The guided nature trails that Renu-Karoo offers are offered as entertainment by guesthouses and by a recreational cooking school in the village. The medicinal garden developed at the museum is freely accessible to anyone in the village. Renu-Karoo has represented the Farmers Association at meetings held to oppose shale gas exploration in the Karoo that may employ hydraulic fracturing, given talks on game farming and participated pro bono in rangeland discussion outings held by the Farmers Association. Information on rangeland restoration and on the distribution and reseeding of Karoo plants can be downloaded freely from our website. The retired part of the community has benefited through talks offered by Renu-Karoo to the Garden Club and Cultural Foundation.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes – Renu-Karoo is determined to make this business financially viable, and to continue to gather knowledge on rehabilitation methods appropriate for Karoo landscapes and flora. To achieve this, we would like to make a greater investment in rehabilitation research in the next two years. This is urgent as the region is the subject of applications for uranium and gas exploration. Renu-Karoo is equally dedicated to making local people and visitors aware of the richness and uniqueness of the Karoo flora and fauna, and to impress on local resource managers and the general public the need for more sustainable management of water and organic waste in the village. Given that direct interaction with Municipal officials has failed to yield results, Renu-Karoo will now endeavour to work through the Chamber of Commerce and the Rate-Payers Association.

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

Through documents on our website, newspaper and magazine articles, through excursions, talks and lectures to groups and schools in the village and to conservation forums (Gouritz Initiative, Garden Route Initiative) in the district, through training of university interns and through selling our seeds and services to land owners. Eventually, when we are confident that we have sufficient information on Karoo rangeland rehabilitation, we would like to publish a handbook on the subject.

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

Renu-Karoo used the RSG booster grant funds from 1 June 2010 to 31 May 2011. The project is open-ended, and, at this stage, we do not see it having a terminal length.

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
PERSONNEL (Rufford)	£20,400.00 (£0.00)	£18,330.46 (£0.00)	-£2,069.54 (£0.00)	Employees were supported with income generated from the nursery and consulting
STUDENTS & ENVIR-ED (Rufford)	£4,833.33 (£4,833.33)	£4,044.75 (£4,666.67)	-£788.58 (£166.67)	Two students stayed for 12 months and one for only 1 month
INFRASTRUCTURE & EQUIPMENT	£11,608.33 (£1,608.33)	£7,047.07 (£4,898.02)	-£4,561.26 (+£3,289.69)	Under-spent overall because we did not buy chipper,

(Rufford))	Overspent RSG budget to market products through shop by investing in renovation, water & electricity connections and shade house
SEED STOCK (Rufford)	£5,000.00 (£1,000.00)	£473.32 (£ 473.32)	-£4,526.68 (-£526.68)	Under-spent RSGF budget - unable to buy seed because of drought
MARKETING (Rufford)	£2,250.00 (£2,250.00)	£8,69.97 (£869.97)	-£1,380.03 (-£1,380.03)	Under-spent on magazine advertising and reallocated to main-road sales outlet
TRAVEL & RUNNING (Rufford)	£6,662.50 (£2,070.83)	£7,117.04 (£830.46)	+£454.54 (-£1,240.37)	Overspending on nursery materials originally under-budgeted. Under-spending of RSG budget because of reduces travel for seed purchase
Total (Rufford)	£50,754.16 £11,762.50	£37,882.61 £11,738.44	-£12,871.55 (-£24.06)	Exchange rate June 2010: 1 GBP = 11.62 ZAR. NOTE: RSGF budget is lower figure in cells

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

1. Plan and raise funding for better replicated and larger scale rangeland rehabilitation trials using appropriate indigenous seeds and plants. This could possibly be facilitated through the formal links University (Research Associate) that Richard Dean and Sue Milton-Dean have with the University of Cape Town or that Sue has with the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.
2. Expand the frequency and variety of conservation and environmental education that we offer in the village by using facilities at a local school as a venue.
3. Improve efficiency of compost making (perhaps mechanisation of the turning process possibly using a second-hand tractor, milling of vegetation using a hammermill run on a tractor PTO, and mixing of potting soil using a cement mixer) and plant propagation (better soil mixes, timing) to make the business more profitable.
4. Improve marketing and visibility of our business.
5. Provide additional skills training for our employees (technical, financial, human relations).

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 we used the RSGF logo on a signboard for the indigenous medicinal garden that we established at the Fransie Pienaar cultural history museum in Prince Albert, and on slide shows for talks on restoration and conservation management presented to the Eden District Municipality and the Garden Route Initiative Forum The RSGF logo also appears on conservation-related pages of our website (<http://www.renu-karoo.co.za/Seedlist.htm>; <http://www.renu-karoo.co.za/Plantlist.htm>; <http://www.renu-karoo.co.za/Ecotourism.htm>)

11. Any other comments?

Were it not for three grants received from The Rufford Small Grants Foundation, three from the Plant Conservation Unit at the University of Cape Town, and one from the WWF-Table Mountain Fund, we would not have had the courage to start a conservation-based business in a small and economically rather depressed village. The Renu-Karoo project has been challenging and scary at times but has achieved many of its initial goals. We believe that it has potential to be viable in the long term, contributing to the welfare of the people and future sustainability of biodiversity and nature resources in the area through knowledge and improved management.