

Final Evaluation Report

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.

Your Details	
Full Name	Tránsito González Medina
Project Title	Community participation in the planning of fishing refuges zones as a co-management tool in the Baja California Pacific Islands Biosphere Reserve
Application ID	38521-1
Date of this Report	13/01/2025

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
To characterize the marine buffer zones of Todos Santos Island (TSI) and San Martin Island (SMI) as a socio-ecological system.			X	We analysed information from specialized literature and official documents on fishing activities in the area and complemented it with information obtained from field trips and interviews.
To establish a collaborative relationship with the institutions that have a relation with the islands.		X		The related institutions were contacted. We conducted informal interviews with government (CONANP, CONAPESCA, SEPESCA and IMIPAS) and OSC (GECI); however, only SEPESCA was present in both workshops.
To map fishers' permits within the reserve marine buffer areas, and identify the species that they harvest.			X	We obtained the list of fishers with right to fish in each island and elaborated GIS maps of the permits with geographic delimitations.
To analyse the knowledge and perception of fishers on co-management, marine protected areas and fishing refuges zones.			X	We carried out surveys with fishers who fish in San Martin Island, and in Todos Santos Island. We used this information to organize and develop a workshop in San Quintin for San Martin fishers, and in Ensenada for Todos Santos fishers.
To evaluate if the users' rights and organisation systems generate differences in the principal stakeholders' perceptions.			X	We analysed the information from surveys and workshops about fishers' perception using mixed methods: quantitative (frequencies and percentage) for some questions, and qualitative for other questions, as well as surveys data and recordings.
To present the results to the communities of both islands and related government agencies.		X		We shared the information with fishers and organizations (attendees and those who did not attended the workshops) and we are waiting for a meeting with

				SEPESCA to organize a formal presentation of the results.
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2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- a) Bringing knowledge about the reserve closer to the fishers: The project enabled the provision and sharing of information with fishers about the protected natural area, its distribution, the advisory council, and the managing body. The interview results revealed limited knowledge about the existence and scope of the reserve, particularly regarding its marine section, as well as a general lack of awareness about the advisory council and its members. The workshops allowed them to identify their representatives from both the San Quintin and Ensenada areas within the advisory council, and realized that they can propose ideas to the reserve authorities (CONANP) by their representatives.
- b) The users' perception of the current state of fishing: The analysis of the interviews revealed that more than 81% of the interviewees perceive the state of the fisheries as poor, with 20% evaluating the situation as critical. The main causes they identify for this deterioration include the effects of climate change and the lack of authority and effective surveillance in fishing areas. 90% of the interviewees engage in activities related to kelp forests (*Macrocystis pyrifera*), and all have observed a reduction in the coverage of these ecosystems. Additionally, a shift in the population of sea urchins has been recorded, with an increase in the purple sea urchin (*Strongylocentrotus purpuratus*), which affects the kelp forest ecosystems. Finally, more than 60% of the respondents believe that the abundance of California sheephead (*Semicossyphus pulcher*) one of the main sea urchin predators in the area, has decreased.
- c) The identification of the main social issue faced by fishers: illegal fishing. Although it was not addressed in the interviews, surveillance was a key issue that emerged throughout the different stages of the project. Fishers pointed out the presence of 'disorganized fishers' and irregular practices, such as non-compliance with fishing regulations and permits. A common concern highlighted was the lack of control, reflecting the widespread perception that the absence of proper inspection and surveillance mechanisms contributes to illegal and unsustainable practices

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

The main difficulty encountered during the execution of this project was obtaining the list of permit holders and finding ways to contact the users. Information about the permit holders was obtained through requests to the Baja California Fisheries Secretariat and was supplemented by the transparency portal to verify and cross-check the data, due to frequent changes and renewals in permits and permit holders. Regarding benthic and sport fishing permit holders, obtaining information was relatively straightforward. However, for commercial fishing, an additional data

screening process was required, as commercial fishing permits are not issued by zone but by landing site. Therefore, the permits were cross-checked with catch data available on the transparency portal, which proved to be a lengthy and confusing process.

Once the list of users was established, the difficulty of obtaining the fishers' contact information arose due to data privacy policies. In this case, the snowball technique was applied by contacting the fishers through other users.

Finally, the workload, the seasonality of fishing activities, and sport fishing events were also factors that hindered the organization of the workshops, which led to the postponement of one workshop in the case of San Quintin.

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

The community played a key role in the development of this project, as local knowledge and active participation were integrated into all stages of the process. Fishers contributed valuable information that enabled a better understanding of local dynamics, and their involvement in discussions about the reserve's buffer zones provided essential perspectives for evaluating their impact on the region.

Interaction with the Secretariat of Fisheries and Aquaculture of Baja California (SEPESCA) and the strengthened relationships between UABC and local communities were fundamental in building trust. We believe that the results obtained through this project can contribute significantly to promoting a co-management approach in the area, benefiting both the fishing and environmental sectors. Additionally, the concerns expressed by fishers during the project have been shared with governmental organizations, offering them the opportunity to address and resolve key issues affecting the communities, thereby fostering a more inclusive and efficient management of natural resources.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Our lab will continue collaborating with the fishing communities on projects related to Todos Santos and San Martin Islands. A postdoctoral fellowship is also being considered to continue the work on fisheries refuge zones in the area.

Additionally, we are planning a meeting with SEPESCA to discuss the involvement of the Secretariat of Fisheries and Aquaculture in other states and how similar initiatives could be implemented in Baja California.

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

The complete results of this project are being included in my thesis dissertation. We plan to publish a scientific paper in an international journal, and we also intend to write a Spanish version for a popular science magazine to share with the local communities. Additionally, we are organizing a presentation with SEPESCA and plan

to share both the scientific and popular articles with government institutions in Baja California.

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

To enhance the effectiveness of the reserve, it is crucial that the management program be published and implemented as soon as possible, and widely shared with the communities. CONANP should strengthen its relationship with local communities. Additionally, the Fisheries Refuge Zones could be discussed within the Advisory Council.

For fishers to gain confidence in the Fisheries Refuge Zones, there should be more effective surveillance and more presence of the authorities in the area.

Next steps could involve organizing meetings with all relevant governmental organizations in the region, with an agreement to collaboratively follow up on the needs of fishers. This would include analyzing the challenges they face and developing strategies to reduce illegal fishing while improving conservation efforts within the reserve.

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 has been used in all presentations and reports displayed in workshops and meetings. It is also included in the infographic materials developed for the project. Additionally, we acknowledged the Rufford Foundation in the Acknowledgements section of the thesis and papers.

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

Javier García Pamanes: Support and assistance in the fieldwork and workshops.
Laura Rodríguez Cardozo: Assistance and supervision.
Gabriela Montaña Moctezuma: Supervision of the project.

10. Any other comments?

We would like to express our gratitude to the Rufford Foundation for the Rufford Small Grant which make possible this project. We are also considering applying for the 2nd Rufford Small Grant to support the next stage of the project.