

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	Ganesh Puri
Project Title	The Fish Bank Project: Transforming fishing cat and fish-farmers conflict into conservation.
Application ID	37853-B
Date of this Report	<u>12 December 2024</u>

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 conduct a project inception workshop to inform and unite stakeholders				The workshop successfully brought together fish farmers, conservationists, and local authorities. Stakeholder participation was robust, and their feedback guided project refinement.
To form fishing cat conservation committees				
To establish fish banks for conflict mitigation				Fish banks were created in five target villages
To form Udd Guardian Clubs for community stewardship				The clubs were successfully established in all target villages, engaging youth and fostering conservation awareness among the younger generation.
To monitor and reduce retaliatory killings of fishing cats				Monitoring systems and camera traps were deployed. Retaliatory killings decreased but require continuous community engagement for sustained results.
To increase awareness and change negative attitudes towards fishing cats				Community outreach programs and awareness campaigns led to a noticeable improvement in attitudes among fish farmers, as evidenced by pre- and post-project surveys.
To train local youth in habitat monitoring and conservation techniques				Local youth received training in camera trapping, data collection, and habitat monitoring. Some youth have already started assisting with

				conservation efforts.
To improve habitat conditions for fishing cats				Habitat monitoring was initiated, and some improvements were observed. However, long-term interventions are still needed for sustained habitat restoration.

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

a). Strengthened Community Participation in Fishing Cat Conservation

Outcome: The project successfully engaged local communities by forming Fishing Cat Conservation Committees and Udd Guardian Clubs. These groups are now actively involved in conservation activities, including awareness campaigns, habitat monitoring, and conflict mitigation.

b). Reduction in Retaliatory Killings of Fishing Cats

Outcome: Through awareness programs and conflict mitigation efforts (such as the establishment of fish banks), incidents of retaliatory killings decreased in project areas.

c). Empowerment of Local Youth in Conservation Practices

Outcome: Training programs equipped local youth with skills in habitat monitoring, camera trapping, and data collection. Many of these trained individuals have become conservation ambassadors within their communities.

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

Scepticism from some fish farmers and logistical challenges in fish hatchling distribution. These were tackled through additional awareness programs, increased community engagement, and efficient resource allocation.

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

Local communities were actively involved in every stage of the project, from forming conservation committees to managing fish banks and participating in Udd Guardian Clubs. Fish farmers benefited financially through compensation for fish losses and access to subsidized fish from the fish bank, reducing retaliatory actions. Youth members gained skills in wildlife monitoring and conservation techniques, fostering stewardship. Additionally, awareness programs improved community knowledge

about fishing cat conservation and sustainable practices, promoting coexistence and empowering the community.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, there are plans to expand the project to additional villages within the Western Terai Landscape, focusing on fishing cat conservation, habitat restoration, and strengthening community stewardship for long-term coexistence.

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

I plan to share the results of my work through scientific publications, social media platforms, and local stakeholder meetings. Additionally, I have already presented most of the results at the **International Wildlife Coexistence Conference 2024 in Italy**, the **Rufford Learning Event Nepal 2024**, and the **Small Cats Meeting in Kathmandu**.

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

Looking ahead, the important next steps include expanding the fish bank initiative to other conflict-prone areas, strengthening the Fishing Cat Conservation Committees, and enhancing community stewardship programs like the Udd Guardian Clubs. Continuous habitat monitoring, scaling up awareness campaigns, and securing long-term funding will ensure sustained conservation efforts. Collaboration with government agencies and international organizations will also be crucial to promote coexistence and develop a comprehensive fishing cat conservation strategy.

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?

Yes, The Rufford Foundation logo was prominently displayed on all materials related to the project, including banners, brochures, and presentation slides. The Foundation received significant publicity during the project, as its support was acknowledged in community workshops, awareness programs, and during my presentations at the International Wildlife Coexistence Conference 2024 in Italy, Rufford Learning Event Nepal 2024, and the Small Cats Meeting in Kathmandu. This recognition highlighted the Foundation's vital role in supporting conservation efforts.

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

1. Mr. Sailesh Yadav

- ❑ Role: Community Mobilizer and Forest Guard
- ❑ Responsibilities: A committed government forest guard, Sailesh worked tirelessly in the project area. Living nearby, his deep understanding of the local community made him highly effective in mobilizing community participation for conservation efforts.

2. Mrs. Jessica Puri

- ❑ Role: Financial Advisor

- ▣ Responsibilities: Jessica brought her strong background in finance, accounting, and conservation work to the fish bank project. She was instrumental in helping the project achieve its financial goals and sustainability.

3. Mr. Indra Bahadur Tharu and Baburam Kunwar

- ▣ Role: Conservation Advisors
- ▣ Responsibilities: A retired conservation professional with extensive experience in wildlife and forest conservation, Indra and Baburam supported project monitoring efforts and engaged effectively with the local community to enhance conservation outcomes.

4. Mr. Jyoti Lal Bhusal

- ▣ Role: Community Liaison and Educator
- ▣ Responsibilities: A part-time school teacher, Jyoti established strong relationships with the fish farming community and children of fish farmers. His exceptional persuasion skills and ability to connect with the community made him a valuable asset to the fish bank project.

5. Mr. Sahabaj Khan

- ▣ Role: Outreach Manager
- ▣ Responsibilities: As a local journalist and fish farmer passionate about fishing cat conservation, Sahabaj raised considerable awareness through his articles. His expertise in outreach and deep understanding of the community enhanced the project's visibility and engagement.

6. Mr. Ram Prasad Tharu & Mrs. Phula Tharu

- ▣ Role: Fish Bank Managers
- ▣ Responsibilities: Ram Prasad and Phula managed the fish bank and distributed fish hatchlings to the fishing communities affected by the fishing cat, ensuring smooth operation and community support for conservation efforts.

10. Any other comments?

The project has been a significant success due to the dedication and hard work of the local community members, who have been instrumental in ensuring its smooth execution. The collaborative efforts of my team, along with active community participation, have led to the successful establishment of a sustainable fish farming initiative that directly contributes to fishing cat conservation.

Despite unforeseen challenges, such as logistical constraints and fluctuating fish stock availability, we have been able to navigate these hurdles through adaptability and strong local partnerships. The engagement with local communities has created

a deeper understanding of the importance of wildlife conservation, particularly in relation to human-wildlife coexistence.

Furthermore, the continued monitoring and evaluation of the project, along with its involvement in regional and international conferences, has provided valuable insights that will inform future conservation initiatives. As we look ahead, the lessons learned from this project will contribute to broader efforts aimed at balancing human livelihoods with wildlife conservation in Nepal.

The support from the Rufford Foundation has been invaluable, and we are hopeful for future collaborations to continue enhancing both conservation efforts and the welfare of local communities.













