

RUFFORD SMALL GRANTS CONFERENCE IN KENYA

**From 22-23rd February, 2022
At Oak Place Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My special thanks go to The Rufford Foundation for fully funding this conference and more specifically to Mr. Josh Cole, the director of the Rufford Small Grants, for guiding the organization of this conference.

I thank the conference Guest of Honour Dr. David K. Kuria, the Government Minister for Water, Environment, Energy and Natural Resources at Kiambu County, Kenya who represented the Kenyan Government and Decision Makers, interacted with the participants and officially opened the conference.

I again want to thank all the participants, more especially those who made presentations and chaired sessions. My heartfelt appreciation goes also to the conference team below for their resourcefulness, time and effort committed to organising and making this conference a success.

Thank You All Once Again!

Alphonse Karenzi

The Rufford Kenya Conference Coordinator



Creative Educational Games

THE GUEST OF HONOUR

Dr. David K. Kuria, is a Past Three Rufford Grants Recipient and the current Government Minister for Water, Environment, Energy and Natural Resources at Kiambu County. He was the guest of honour and the Kenyan Government and Decision Makers Representative during the conference.

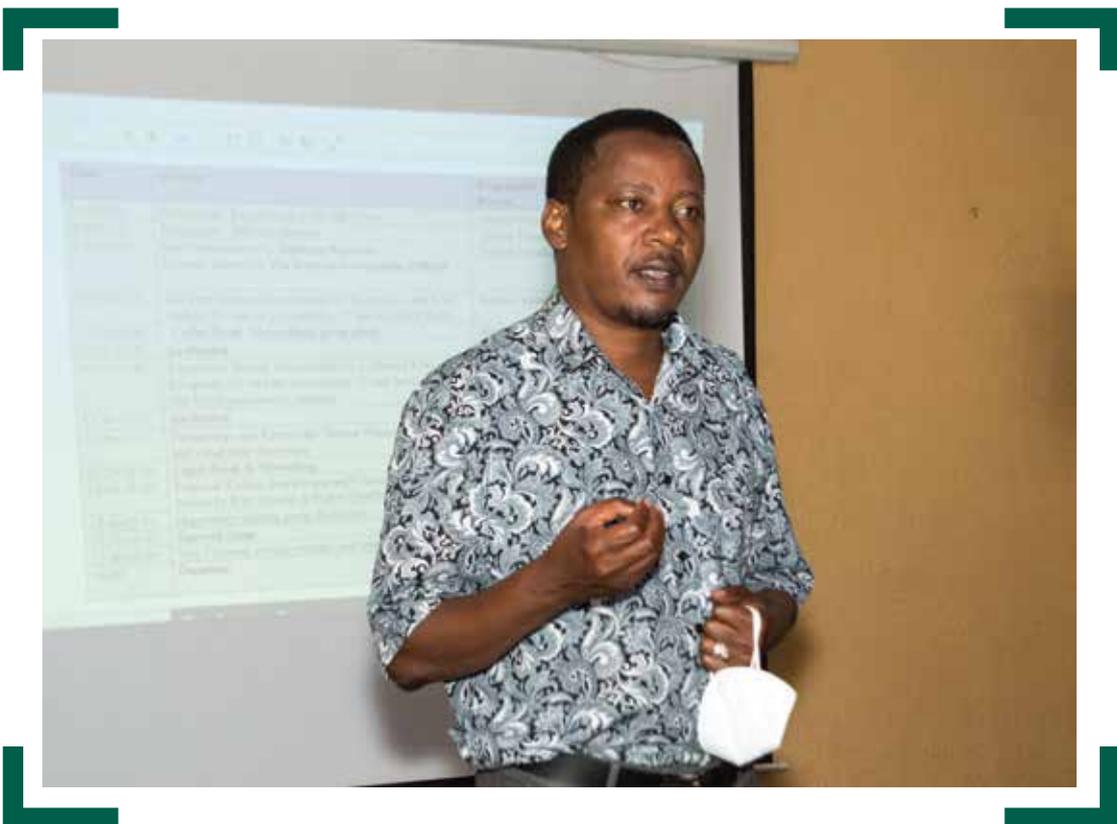
I'm very proud of being a Rufford Alumni. I actually want to write a letter of appreciation to the Rufford Foundation. Through using the three Rufford Grants well, I have been rewarded more than I aspired to be. I have been able to: solve community problems, mentor young conservationists including Martha Nzisa who is seated here, and benefit Communities, Government and other institutions."

Dr. David Said.

He also gave a short heart-to-heart lecture and opened up a great discussion by highlighting some key issues and advice that the Rufford Grant Recipients and Applicants should consider. The following are the key issues and advice highlighted:

1. The RSG is small money to test your management capacity.
2. Use the resources and funds very well for your own good and professional development.
3. Have a clear vision, objectives, and benefits
4. Never shift from your goals because of Money,
5. First, second and third Projects should speak to each other,
6. All the RSG Project should speak to a specific problem,
7. We all should support the Rufford Foundation and let them know they have Ambassadors.

He finally thanked the Rufford Foundation for caring about their Grantees and organizing for them this helpful conference, welcomed all the participants and on behalf of Kenyan Government declared the Rufford Conference Kenya 2022 officially open.



Dr. David K. Kuria

THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZING TEAM



Mr. Alphonse Karenzi

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Ms. Martha Nzisa

The Tour Leader at Intrepid Travel
A 2nd Rufford Grant Recipient
The Conference Photographer
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From Kenya

I. BACKGROUND

The Rufford Conference in Kenya was a two day meeting with the theme of “connect for nature conservation”, organised by the Rufford Foundation for its Regional Grant Recipients to share experience and knowledge and create direct communications and partnerships among themselves. It took place on 22-23rd February, 2022 At Oak Place Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya and brought together Seventeen (17) Conservationists from Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda.

This conference was a success as it enabled the Recipients to know each other, exchange contacts, share experience and knowledge, and forge partnerships. The Decision-Makers were also engaged in discussions and networking in order to link the gap between decision makers and field workers. The participants left the conference feeling encouraged, connected with like-minded and hard-to-find decision-makers, more informed, and therefore much inspired and empowered to do better job on the field.

II. THE CONFERENCE THEME AND OBJECTIVES

THE THEME

This conference had a theme of “Connect for Nature Conservation”.

THE OBJECTIVES

The Rufford Kenya Conference had two main objectives below:

- 1.To enhance the direct communication and partnership between the regional RSG recipients by providing a forum for them to know each other in person, discuss ideas and issues; share the regional best practices and strengthen the regional RSG network;
- 2.To bridge the gap between the field conservation and decision making by connecting the RSG Project Leaders and Decision Makers.

III. THE CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

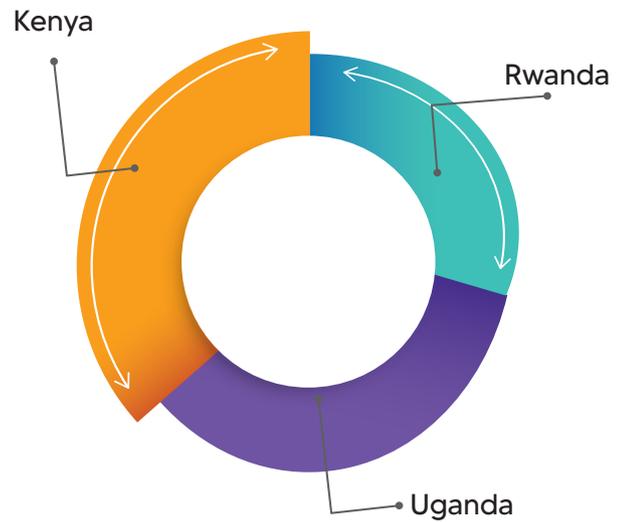
This conference was very successful in knowledge sharing and with a strong networking atmosphere mainly due to the diversity of the participants. The participants came from

- a. Different Countries namely: Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda.
- b. Different Conservation Areas/ Focuses.

Here below are the graphs and brief illustrations that give a picture of the conference participation and the diversification of the participants. The names and contact details of the participants are in the Annex Section of this report.

The Participants by Countries

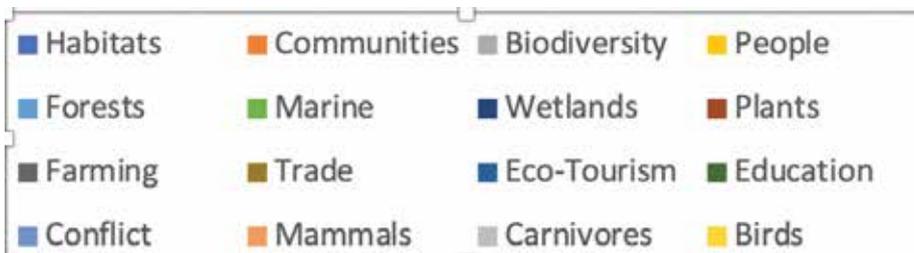
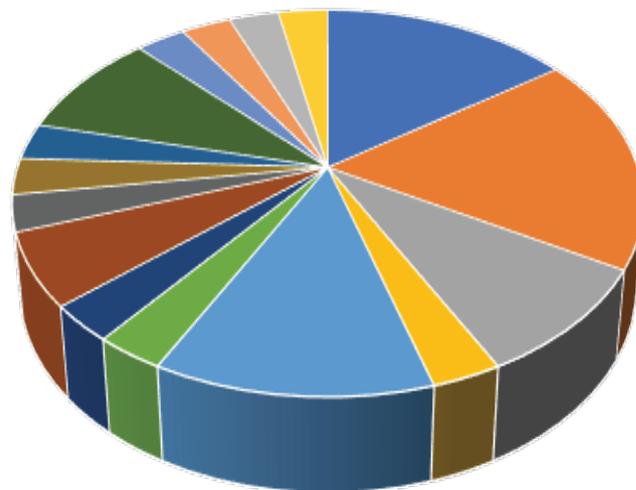
The participants presented three (3) countries: Kenya with the majority (9 people) followed by Uganda with six (6) people, followed by Rwanda one (2) person.



The RSG Recipient Participants by the conservation focuses

The 17 Participants and their projects represented 17 out of 28 Rufford funded conservation areas (focus). One participant or his project(s) could refer to more than one rufford conservation areas. The following are the twenty represented areas and the number of participants interested in or concerned with those areas:

Habitats (5 Interested Participants) , Communities (6 Participants), Biodiversity (3 Participants), People (1 Participant), Forests (4 Participants), Marine (1 Participant), Wetlands (1 Participants), Plants (2 Participants), Farming (1 Participant), Trade (1 Participants), Eco-Tourism (1 Participant), Education (3 Participants), Conflict (1 Participant), Mammals (1 Participants), Carnivores (1 Participant), and Birds (1 Participant).



IV. THE CONFERENCE SUCCESS AND IMPACT

THE CONFERENCE SUCCESS

The following are some of the aspects that made this conference extremely successful, engaging and impactful:

1. A safe place to freely share experience in the midst of a pandemic

Covid 19 caused disconnection and isolation among many conservationists. So, the conservationists especially Rufford Early Career Conservationists yearn for peer reconnecting and meetings but it is very hard to create a safe place for such meetings in the midst of a pandemic. So, one of the success factors of this conference, was the ability to provide a safe environment - the Oak Place, a hotel authorised by the Kenyan Ministry of Health to host meetings during the pandemic. This high quality represented well the Rufford Foundation before the Recipients (beneficiaries) and the Kenyan Government (important partner for ground project implementation and monitoring). It made it possible for high profile officials to attend the conference and enabled a safe and free networking and knowledge sharing through different creative activities such as outdoor powerpoint presentations, social distanced group discussions, panel discussion and one-on-one interactions in the garden outdoor settings.

9 out of 10 Post Conference Interview Respondents admitted that the venue was excellent and they felt safe and free to share experience in it.

8 commented that they enjoyed the conference and are looking forward to attending Rufford future conferences.

2. Diversified and Inclusive Participation

The diversity of the participants was the greatest asset of this conference which made the knowledge sharing and networking very vast and interesting. For instance:

17 Participants and their projects represented the 16 out of 28 Rufford funded conservation areas:

This diversity shows how rich and vast was the knowledge and experience shared. The difference in the area of focus sometime could be a negative thing for some conferences as for instance; a presentation on birds protection may be boring to someone whose concern is fishes. But for the Kenya Conference, being a project leaders' experience sharing and common challenges discussion which go beyond single focus, this diversity actually was an advantage as every project leader wanted to learn how the counterparts deal with the common problems in different areas.

- The participants came from 3 different countries:

The project experience was different and network was vast. Every participant was eager to learn and network with the fellow country mates but more passionately with the foreign counterparts to expand their views and networks.

- A mixture of young conservationists and the senior Rufford Recipients:

There was much learning from the senior Rufford Recipients who are well known decision- makers and researchers. The young conservationists found it very interesting and inspiring to share with these seniors at personal experience level. And the seniors alike enjoyed learning the creative works by younger ones and found it a prestige to mentor and share wisdom with the fellow young conservationists.

- The Decision-Makers (government officials) were also engaged:

It is extremely important and inevitable to engage the government concerned entities in the Rufford Conference as they have an influential role to play in solving the discussed conservation challenges and in the Rufford field project planning, authorization, implementation, and monitoring.

For instance: Martha Nziza was so amazed and rewarded to meet and discuss with her former mentor Dr David Kuria who happened to be a very busy and important Government Official after becoming the Government Minister in Charge of Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs. .

3. Creative and Participant-based Conference Format

With the flexible and energising conference format and the creative activities like 10 minutes power point presentations with 5 minutes Question & Answers; Group Discussions; Panel Discussions; Educative Ice-Breakers and One-On-One Interactions, this conference gave an opportunity and enough courage to every (even the most timid) recipient to share and learn from others freely and passionately.

THE CONFERENCE IMPACT

Below are some of the benefits and impact that the Kenya conference has left:

1. 17 Individual Conservationists Connected

Covid 19 caused disconnection and isolation among many conservationists. This conference has been able to bring together and connect Seventeen (17) conservationists from different fields and parties of Africa. The participants felt reconnected with like-minded people. They left the conference much inspired for new opportunities through new connections and therefore better expanded impact. Their direct communications will result into invaluable solutions and continuous process of helping each other.

2. Incredible Experience and Knowledge Shared Freely and Passionately

This conference was very successful in sharing knowledge and the value of the knowledge shared is immeasurable. They are many successful proposals and projects that are going to come out from this knowledge. Many mistakes are going to be corrected and many resources going to be saved or wisely used. In fact, the 82% of the Interview Respondents mentioned that they learnt something new and useful and/or got an answer for their disturbing questions or challenges.

Being an experience sharing meeting between the fellow project leaders and like-minded conservationists with an excellent venue, diversified participants and participant-based conference format, this conference gave an opportunity and enough courage to every recipient (even the most timid ones) to share and learn from others passionately. The Rufford Alumni Panel Discussion greatly impacted the participants as the advanced career recipients shared and taught useful skills from how to write a good -- proposal to successful implementation and reporting of the results.

3. Many funding and partnership opportunities shared

The participants and presenters were encouraged to share opportunities including funding, scholarship and other opportunity sources during their presentations and discussions and the tried and trusted funding opportunities shared alone worthy hundreds of thousands of British pounds.

4. New contacts and long term partnerships create

The Government Contacts and good will were gained during this conference. On the other side, the young conservationists found it very interesting and inspiring to share and connect with the senior Rufford recipients at personal experience level. The seniors alike enjoyed learning and connecting with younger ones for their creativity and found it a prestige to mentor and share lessons with the fellow young conservationists. Partnerships and Mentorship Commitments were honestly made between many participants.

5. New Inspirations and Motivation for Better Work

Especially young conservationists were discouraged and felt disconnected due to covid 19. But through meeting with others, sharing experiences, getting encouragement from the senior conservationists, sharing contacts and proposing partnerships and networks, they all felt more inspired. Many Participants expressed sincere appreciation for the Rufford Foundation to consider them, provide a safe place for them and bring them together in such a time of isolation. They promised to do better in their work during and after covid19 pandemic.

6. RSG Proceedings and Recommendations Documented

The IV Section of this conference contains the proceedings of this conference. It features the impacts that the RSGs have made, the common challenges the Recipients meet and the recommendations made. All this was the outcome of the enabled good discussions.



Group Discussions

V. THE CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

During this two-day discussions and experience sharing, the participants shared how the Rufford Funding has impacted their personal and career development, the education and research, the local and regional nature conservation, and the local community capacity building. They discussed also the challenges they face and made some recommendations to both the fellow conservationists and the Rufford Foundation.

The majority of the participants appreciated how the conference was organized especially the panel discussion and powerpoint presentation Q&A session. The Participants also requested that more conferences can be organised in Kenya and thanked the Rufford Foundation for funding them through the RSGs and for bringing them together through the conferences. Below is a summary of the key points discussed during the conference:

THE IMPACT OF THE RSGs

1. Rufford funding has enabled exceptionally large and tangible conservation impacts to be delivered

The Rufford Funded Projects have made extraordinary tangible conservation impacts according to the Recipients from all the three represented countries. The Kenyan Government officials also recommended the Rufford for the unique work and exceptionally large impact the RSG projects have delivered.

Dr. David Kuria, by drawing examples from his own three Rufford projects, emphasised how small are the Rufford Grants but when they are well used they produce extremely big impact.

2. The RSG Projects locally developed approaches to biodiversity management

The RSG Projects presented were unique and have uniquely developed different local approaches to biodiversity management. For instance:

1. Indigenous Green Technology: Alphonse from Rwanda engaged young indigenous people and their technology to create and distribute improved clay cook stoves to save forests in southern province of Rwanda.
2. Young Community engagement. Martha from Kenya developed a children community engagement model where they could learn much more from kids about community behaviour towards biodiversity.
3. From Planting Trees to Growing Trees: Evans from Kenya developed a new and important concept where he challenged communities, decision-makers and partners to focus on sustainability of their tree planting project where they have to ask themselves how many trees have grown not only how many trees have we planted.

3. Community Capacity building

The majority of the presented projects had at least a community capacity building component. They provide the local community with the environment friendly alternative sources of revenue including beekeeping, tree planting, and poultry. The RSG Project also trained local community members, established and strengthened local groups and associations, and empowered their environment conservation programmes. All this was because of the Rufford Funding.

4. Support Early Career

The Rufford support has enabled early career conservationists achieve their goals and expand their projects/ impact. In fact most of the RSG Recipients in the region have acquired or are studying Masters and Doctorate Degrees and they admit the role that the Rufford first grants/ research played in helping them get admissions and scholarships.

5. The Rufford grant has helped species that are difficult to fundraise-for

Rufford Grants has uniquely funded the conservation of the species and ecosystem which are less commonly funded. Most of the available research grants focus on large famous animals and species listed within the IUCN (status). But the RSGs have enabled research on small and neglected species including bats, baobab and insects and fragile ecosystems including less known wetlands.

6. Rufford Grant as a seed funding:

The Rufford Foundation often starts as a seed granter opening doors to other granters supporting similar projects. The RSGs have grown the Recipients' profiles for other grants and partnerships and built the capacity of students, communities and conservationists in general. Several presenters shared how they used the Rufford Grants as their first grant for researching about a problem, training their teams and connecting with the community and thereafter accessed bigger grants from other sources.

For instance, Alphonse from Rwanda explained how Rufford first grants helped him getting bigger grants including one of \$50,000 from the UNDP.

7. Rufford funding helped train future conservationists:

Apart from the fact that the majority of the Presented RSG Projects had youth and student training components, the majority of the RSG Grantees are examples themselves of how the Rufford has helped train the future conservationists. The Rufford started funding them at their early career stage and now they have become experienced conservationists. Many examples were given where the projects focused on training school pupils and students who are growing up with the nature conservation passions.

8. Publications:

The Rufford grantees have published important biodiversity information including field and academic research and professional knowledge products. In fact the RSG Research projects have made many recipients well-known researchers in Africa. Their publications and reports have been published in refereed journals including African journal of ecology, Global ecology conservation science, journal of biodiversity and environmental science. The RSG publications are also published widely on different institutions websites and shared with stakeholders.



Power Point Presentations

CHALLENGES FACED AND ISSUES RAISED

Apart from the impact of the Rufford Funding, the participants discussed also the challenges they face during the course of their projects. Below are some of the common challenges that the RSG Recipients mentioned:

- 1. The Stakeholders' High Expectations:** the RSG Recipients face difficulties in working with local groups, local leaders, government agencies and even some project team members due to their high expectations. They expect to be paid for their participation, the thing that RSG projects cannot afford.
2. Covid-19 pandemic and raise in petrol prices made transport and many other project activities more expensive.
3. Corruption by the Local Civil Servants which lead to either unplanned expenses or delaying and cancelling the project activities.
4. Insufficient time and funds: the community and partners need to change their attitudes towards conservation. And changing attitudes is a challenging job that takes more time and funds than what the Rufford Foundation provide.
- 5. Lack of incentives and alternative incomes:** most of the environment destruction practises provide livelihoods. So it is very difficult to change the mind-set of communities about their traditional unsustainable income without providing them with alternative incomes.



Group Photo of some members

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Participants recommended that:

1. The Rufford should organise more conferences and facilitate more project participants attending the conferences.
2. The Rufford Conferences should be more balanced by inviting the:
 - a. Past Recipients
 - b. Failed Applicants
 - c. Potential Applicants (conservation students)
 - d. Decision Makers
3. The Grantees must make sure they implement the project activities as planned. They should Never shift from your goals because of Money or any other incentive.
4. The Grantees should network with fellow grantees and merge some common project or activities.
5. The Grantees should capitalize on social media platform to share their project stories and create awareness.
6. The RSG is the small money to test your management capacity. The best use of it will insure the bigger grant opportunities.
8. The grantees should use the resources and funds very well for their own good and professional development.
9. The applicants should have clear vision, objectives, and benefits
10. First, second and third Projects should speak to each other,
11. All the RSG Project should speak to a specific problem,
12. Working with communities especially young people and built relationships with them. It was learnt that the children are more honest and we can learn a lot about community behaviours from children.
13. It is not wise to emphasise that the project has got funds to the community members because they will focus on getting that money instead of voluntary striving for good cause.
14. The RSG Projects should emphasise the community capacity building.
15. With a case study of “from plating trees to growing trees” the RSG project leaders should emphasize the sustainability of activities and outcomes at all levels of implementation instead of focussing only on the accomplishing the tasks.
16. Young conservationists are recommended to identify mentors early and cooperate with them especially through volunteerism.
17. All grantees and alumni should support the Rufford Foundation and let them know they have Ambassadors.

VI. ANNEX

THE PARTICIPANTS LIST

No	NAME	EMAIL	COUNT RY	RSG
1	Martha Mutiso	Marthanzisa@gmail.com	Kenya	2
2	Evans Ouya	sospeterkib@gmail.com	Kenya	1
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4	Alphonse Karenzi	karenzilife@gmail.com	Rwanda	5
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14	Esther Wairimu	+254740449726	Kenya	1
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16	Mbabazi Joselyne	Mbabazij@gmail.com	Uganda	Applicant
17	Isimbi Pamela	isimbipam@gmail.com	Uganda	Applicant

THE CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

On the page below there is a two day conference schedule.

Day	Time	Activity
Sunday 6 th	09:00-19:00	Welcoming the participants and check-in at oak place
	19:00-20:30	Welcoming Dinner in the West Wood Hotel Restaurant
Monday 7 th	6:00-8:00	Hotel Break-fast for accommodated participants
	8:00-8:30	Participants' Registration in the Westwood Garden
	8:30-9:00	Participants' Self-Introduction
	9:00-09:30	- Rufford Brief Introduction by Alphonse Karenzi - Keynote address by Dr. David Kuria , the Minister For Environment.
	09:30-10:20	The Three Selected Presentations by Researchers and RSG Alumni (10 min for presentation + 5 min for Q&A each). The list of presenters is attached.
	10:20-10:50	Coffee Break / Networking/ group photo
	10:50-10:55	Words Vs Actions Exercise
	10:55-11:40	Experience Sharing Presentations by 3 selected RSG Recipients (10 min for presentation + 5 min for Q&A each). The list of presenters is attached.
	11:40-11:45	Ice-breaker
	11:50-12:35	Experience Sharing Presentations by 3 selected RSG Recipients (10 min for presentation + 5 min for Q&A each). The list of presenters is attached.
	12:35-13:40	Lunch Break & Networking
	13:40-14:50	Discussions and experience sharing within three small groups.
	14:50-15:50	Proposal Writing, Fundraising and Conservation Success Stories by RSG Alumni & Expert Panellists
	15:50-16:10	Coffee break/ networking
	16:10-16:30	Way Forward, closing remarks and vote of thanks
	16:30-18:30	Nairobi Self Organised Tour and Networking
18:30-20:30	Dinner at Indigo Restaurant	
Tuesday 8 th	6:00-8:40	Break-fast and Check Out (the bags will be kept in a safe room)
	8:40-9:00	Driving to Karura Forest and Registration at Karura
	9:00-11:30	Karura Forest Conservation and Community Activism Discussion and One-On-One Interactions
	11:30-11:45	Driving back from Karura to Oak Place
	11:45-12:30	Debriefing and Farewell Lunch
	12:30	Departures



The End