



## 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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

| Grant Recipient Details |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Your name               | Dr Pranjal Bezbarua  |
| Project title           | Conservation of Indian One horned Rhinoceros in Assam            |
| RSG reference           | 01. 06.07  |
| Reporting period        | 01.03.08   |
| Amount of grant         | £ 5000   |
| Your email address      | <a href="mailto:pbezbarua@yahoo.co.in">pbezbarua@yahoo.co.in</a> |
| Date of this report     | 31.10.09   |

**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  |
|--|--------------|--------------------|----------------|---|
| <p>1. Preparation of a rhino conservation education material in local language for capacity building of local NGOs, teachers, students of fringe areas of rhino habitats of Manas and Orang National Parks as well as other rhino habitats in Assam.</p> |              | 75%                |                | <p>The material on rhino conservation education which specially focused on the Indian Rhino Vision 2020 was prepared in local Assamese language to reach major section of community of the fringes of the Manas and Orang National Parks. Assamese is known to most of the conservation workers and teachers. Of course, some students of Bodo community around Manas found some difficulty. The teachers and local NGOs helped them in better understanding of the subject. The achievement is judged based on impact of the material on the people.</p> |
| <p>2. Rhino awareness campaign in fringe villages of Manas and Orang National Parks.</p>   |              | 65%                |                | <p>The work covers more than 20 villages in the eastern range and 3 villages in the central range of Manas. It even extended to 5 villages of buffer of Manas Biosphere Reserve. In Orang we have to confine the work to selected areas and could not visit remote riparian villages due to the poor law and order situation in nearby areas during the project period.</p>   |
| <p>3. To develop model for alternative livelihood generation programme to rehabilitate ex poachers cum conservation workers of Manas.</p>  |              | 80%                |                | <p>This project supports more than 200 families (in the original project 60 families) in getting training and in-kind support for piggeries, multiple horticultural crops, bee keeping and sericulture and supporting improvement of ecotourism in the area. More than 25 self help groups have benefited, involving 2 local NGOs. The most important part of the project is that, within a short period, we supported local NGOs to raise £1,370</p>   |

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|  |  |  |     | net profit to provide rations to 80 conservation volunteers and their families during the crisis period through ecotourism and a global campaign to promote it. The work of the SHGs (most of them are new to the concept) are encouraging and gradual behaviour changes in adopting of alternative livelihoods have been observed. They also became more responsible when we arranged interaction with foreign conservationists and tourists. The motivation helped a greater number of participants. In the middle of the project period a government programme named Technology Mission started. Therefore, we encouraged those participants who could not get our limited in-kind support to collect citrus saplings from the department. The introduced alternative livelihood options become a model in the area. |
| 4. Support in school education of children of ex-poachers located in fringe village of Manas |  |  | 95% | We distributed school bags to the children of 60 families identified as forest dependents and ex-poachers cum conservation workers with support of two local NGOs in the area. The school children are from 23 fringe villages of the park. The parents are encouraged greatly; even one ex-poacher proudly described the top achievement of his daughter to the visiting conservationist from UK. This neglected issue also gets attention from the local NGOs and community and they have come forward to work in this field.   |

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

Both the project locations have been facing insurgency and conflicts between different communities. Though the insurgency problem in Manas has significantly decreased in comparison to the period before 2005 and the creation of tribal councils, some groups are still active. There are incidents of violence and demand for money, even kidnapping and threats to life by those elements. Moreover there are people of a major community with different political ideology. For power, political elimination has been observed in different villages. We have to work with people with diverse political ideology.

We tackled the problem using my old method (when insurgency was peak in that period) - gathering as much as information from our network, always keeping a low profile, taking extra working days for long distance walking or cycling from one site to another. We targeted small groups of people (5 to 15) and discussed rural development first and conservation of rhino and Manas in later period. Though it took more time the impact was found to be more than big meetings in some areas. We talked person to person which helped in a better understanding of the subject and knowledge sharing to improve the work. As some people know my work since 2000 it was an added advantage for us to access those areas. The big meetings and training programmes were organized in comparatively safe places and periods. The people, even young students of difficult regions, also participated in these meetings. We avoided using the RSGF logo in disturbed areas and also did not inform of receiving funds from foreign country for community development work. We always have also good link with local administration.

In Orang our work suffered on several occasions due to severe riots between different communities in nearby areas.

We mainly depended for the activities on our colleague and rhino researcher in Orang as he has better communication with the local workers and department.

We could not raise a portion the matching funds within the period. We collaborated with a project of Department of Botany, Gauhati University to organize a few training programmes in the buffer zone in the later part of the project. The support of the local NGOs and community helped us on different occasions. We lowered the travel cost instead by using eco-friendly ways like bicycle and walking, etc. and extra stay for which local community helped us lot. We also helped them in capacity building of different activities including computer use, educational tips, awareness about health and other schemes of government, writing proposal for NGOs/groups, volunteering during promotion of ecotourism, etc.

The alternative livelihood generation programme plus in-kind support and school kits are for 60 forest dependents and 60 students but the number of participants is higher.

We followed the advice of local NGOs in selecting the school students and participants. Yet the participants for training were large in number. The NGO selected some needy forest dependents as well as some of the poorest conservation volunteers during distribution of in-kind support. The formation of self-help groups with more people is an option. We also informed the extra participants to take support of the government schemes in rural development and helped in getting such support. The University programme also partially helped us.

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

The project helped in gradual behaviour change of forest dependents to take different potential alternative livelihood options which become a model for the other villagers of the area as well as raising about £1,370 through ecotourism to feed the patrolling conservation volunteers and their families during the crisis period.

Gradually the importance of the ecological services of rhino conservation and Indian Rhino Vision-2020 has been better understood by the villagers and other local conservation workers.

The neglected issue of proper education to children of forest dependents always vulnerable to illegal elements of the society was focused well before the policy making bodies of the villages involving local NGOs and community leaders.

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

The local community has been actively involved in all the project activities. This was a part of community conservation project phase of our rhino conservation programme. The forest dependents were trained for adopting different alternative livelihood options like multiple horticultural crops, piggeries, bee keeping for economic improvement. We also introduced them to different rural development schemes of the government. Some interested additional participants got some in-kind support from rural development department. The local NGOs that started ecotourism got some important tips in improvement of foreign tourist management. We already raised £1,370 for one NGO to supply rations to 80 conservation volunteers and their families during a crisis period. They got a global campaign to promote the ecotourism through us, travel writers and internet and already another group will visit Manas and Orang in

December 2009. The poor students of the forest dependents have got attention from the society and already total 60 students directly benefited from this programme.

**5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Yes, we are continuing the programme and hope to extend in some new and difficult areas.

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

As the programme is a part of our rhino programme and support the Indian Rhino Vision - 2020 we naturally share the results with the stakeholders involved in the mega programme. We shall also share the results with other stakeholders (NGOs/institutions of local, national and international) working in the protected areas for follow-up action. We shall share it with different rural development departments of government so that they come forward to work in these difficult areas.

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

RSG was used from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2008 - 31<sup>st</sup> October 2009. We have to extend the programme with permission from Rufford up to October 2009 due to poor law and order problems in project sites. This is a part of our major rhino programme (first phase) to support Indian Rhino Vision - 2020 and will be completed by April 2010.

**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   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------|--|
| Principal Investigator         | 1800            | 1800          |            | £15 X 120 days the total field days during the period were 150 days.   |
| Field Assistants               | 900             | 600           | 300        | We used local NGOs (members) which we found to more effective and lower cost. £50 X 12 months  |
| Travel (vehicle rent and fuel) | 900             | 500           | 400        | Less expenditure due to use of bicycle and walking in village to village (to maintain low profile in disturbed area)   |
| Rehabilitation                 | 700             | 900           | -200       | Actual target of 60 beneficiaries exceeded Ecotourism (temporary facilities) £325<br>In kind support cost<br>Piggeries £50 X 3 SHGs £150<br>Bee keeping £20 X 10 groups £200<br>Horticultural crops £15 X 15 groups £225 |
| Education (material)           | 300             | 300           | 0          |  |
| Conservation campaign          | 200             | 600           | -400       | £50 X 12 meetings (included 5 training sessions on alternative livelihood options) the other 8 meetings plus several small group meetings exceeded the actual activity   |
| School Kits                    | 200             | 300           | -100       | £5 X 60 students   |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>5000</b>     | <b>5000</b>   | <b>0</b>   | When the fund was received the exchange, rate was 1 pound = 77.75 Indian rupees  |

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

- The project activities should continue and be extended to buffer areas of Manas and Orang for better management of the rhino habitat.
- The awareness on rhino conservation should continue in remote villages of the project sites and other less focused rhino protected areas of Assam.

- School education to the children of poor forest dependents should continue in the area.
- More training programmes on diverse alternative livelihood options should be organized for the local community. Selection of options should be based on local facility of the area. Priority should be given to poor forest dependents.
- The ecotourism facility for other local conservation NGOs working in Manas landscape should be also raised immediately.
- A strong umbrella should be formed between all local stakeholders for upgrading the socioeconomic condition of the fringe areas around the rhino protected areas of Assam.

**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?**

We used the RSGF logo in a few occasions keeping in mind the level of disturbed condition of the project sites.

**11. Any other comments?**

We focused on an important but neglected issue, the school education of children of poor forest dependents around Manas. The small support can do a significant change in the community. Another pleasant surprise for us was when one volunteer (ex hardcore poacher) described the achievement of his daughter in an examination to visiting conservationists and tourists of UK.

The interactions between NGO members, Self Help Groups, volunteers and community leaders with visiting tourists make them more responsible to continue their good works.

Though we could not receive the entire matched funding during the project period, it is a great satisfaction for us that within a short period of time we could raise about £1,370 to feed the forest volunteers and their families through alternative option ecotourism. Ecotourism improvement tips and a global campaign for promoting this option will help the local community and their NGO.

The disturbance affected our works. Yet use of bicycle and walking helped us in contributing towards saving fuel, low emission of greenhouse gases and better communication with poor villagers though it took more field stays. The save from travel also helped in contributing in items like awareness programme, in-kind support and education for children of forest dependents.