

## 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	Asmita Kabra
Project title	Initiating community based conservation in the buffer area of the Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary
RSG reference	10273-1
Reporting period	October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2012
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	<a href="mailto:asmita.kabra@gmail.com">asmita.kabra@gmail.com</a>
Date of this report	October 2, 2012

**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
Demarcating resource use in the buffer area of Kuno wildlife sanctuary			√	
Mobilising local community based institutions for protection of the reserve forest		√		
Creating a participatory resource use plan for the buffer area			√	
Creating a model for sustainable resource extraction through a pilot activity		√		
Creating consensus among people in 5 villages for the model resource use plan		√		

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

During the data collection phase, we found that resource use is varied and fluctuating, and it does not involve just a few surrounding villages as we had originally hypothesised. We found that the resources of the Agra reserve forest are used by a large number of other traditional and itinerant users from many villages and towns, including those from the adjacent state of Rajasthan. Resource use by these stakeholders is often in violation or defiance of existing laws, and is closely linked to local political and institutional dynamics. We also began to understand how the internal power equations within and across villages affect resource use. Thus, we understood that any simplistic attempt at 'community based conservation' will have to be revised to take these complexities into account.

We tackled this by changing the project strategy from one of reducing/rationalising forest resource use to creating alternative sources for existing resource requirements. The selected strategy involved the use of restoration ecology to create viable pastures on fallow land surrounding the project villages. The funds meant for entry point activities in the current grant were deployed towards establishing a sustainable pasture plot in one village with the participation of a small and homogenous group of stakeholders.

The pasture regeneration pilot project has been highly successful in meeting its stated objectives, and we believe that this strategy can now be replicated and scaled up across the landscape over time.

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

a. **Resource use database:** Extensive data were collected from primary as well as secondary sources to identify the range of resource extraction activities in the Agra Reserve Forest. This turned out to be a much more intensive exercise than we had originally estimated, but as a result, we now have an exhaustive idea about the types and extent of resource extraction and the trends in these over a fairly long timeline.

**b. Nuanced understanding of 'community':** We understood that a simplistic understanding of terms like 'community' and 'participation' cannot be deployed, because of ambiguities about rights to resource access. Many of these rights (de facto and de jure) are subject to contestations and negotiations within and across villages. An important finding of this project was that a realistic field action plan for conservation will need to take these factors into account. We thus had to revise our expectations and the scale of our operation significantly during the project. Instead of attempting to mobilise all the people in all villages to regulate existing resource use, we decided to focus on smaller, more homogenous groups and work on ways to create alternative resources to meet existing uses.

**c. Successful pasture restoration pilot:** Realising the need to develop alternative sources for fuel and fodder, the two most important resources required by the local people, we started a pilot project in one village to regenerate pastures on common land using techniques of restoration ecology. This has been achieved successfully in one village, where a scientific plan for pasture land restoration was devised, set up and implemented during the year. We also succeeded in putting in place a monitoring plan involving Masters level research students, so that the trajectory that the pilot project takes can be mapped over time.

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

The pilot project was carried out with a group of 36 *Adivasi* (indigenous) households in village Paira. The families are severely poor and highly dependent on the forest for survival. Their livelihood consists of a mix of subsistence farming, livestock herding and forest produce extraction. They depend on the Agraa reserve forest for fodder, fuel, non-timber forest produce and wild roots and berries. Over the years, their ability to keep livestock has declined due to shortage of fodder, and this has in turn affected agriculture negatively by reducing availability of farm manure and animal traction for ploughing.

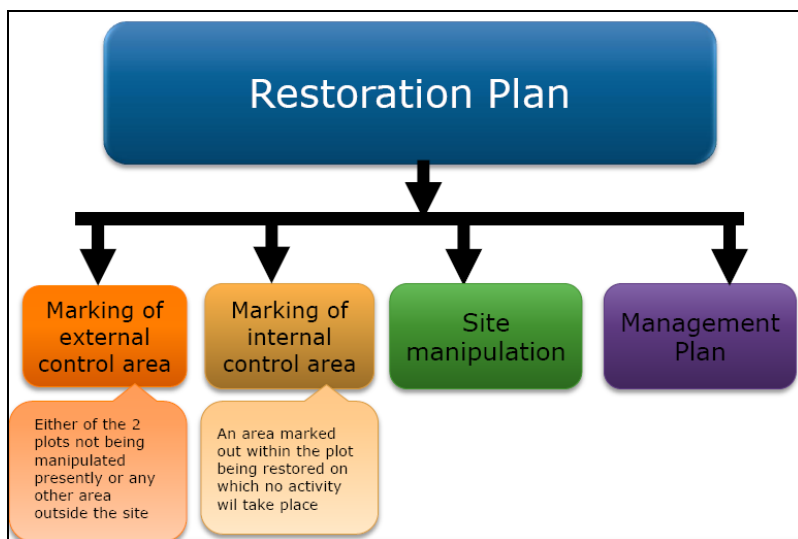
These 36 families were mobilised to fence and protect a total area of 6 ha, which was a part of a severely degraded patch of land adjacent to their habitations. On this plot, a participatory pasture restoration plan was developed, which was carried out in collaboration with these families. The restoration plan was developed in collaboration with the School of Human Ecology at Ambedkar University Delhi, where the grant recipient works as faculty. Figure 1 shows the main elements of the restoration plan.

##### **Site Manipulation**

The restoration project involved four main site manipulation activities, carried out in partnership with the beneficiary community:

- a. Rock fencing around the restoration plot.
- b. Construction of small check dams across drainage channels to prevent moisture loss.
- c. Mechanical harrowing to create microsites conducive to species restoration.
- d. Sequential introduction of grass species to facilitate speedy recovery of grasses.

Funds earmarked for entry point activities were used to pay wages to the beneficiary families for carrying out the pilot project.



**Figure 1: Restoration plan for the pilot project**

### Outcomes

- By October 2012, the habitat of the restoration plot has shown a remarkable recovery, with around 15 species of indigenous grasses coming up on the plot.
- All of these are species for which the beneficiary community had stated a clear preference, both for feeding their livestock and for other household uses like thatching, rope making and basket weaving.
- The restoration plot shows adequate biomass recovery to enable controlled harvesting from next year onwards, as well as seed collection to establish a grass nursery.
- The species abundance and species diversity on the restoration plot is much higher than that on the two control sites for which baseline data is available (see figure 2).
- An additional nursery has been established at the campus of the local NGO, Samrakshan Trust, to provide sufficient seed variety and quantity for further propagation of the pilot activity to new plots next year.



**Figure 2: Restoration site before and after intervention**

### Monitoring of the restoration pilot project

A plan was developed for establishing baseline data and monitoring the changes in the site over time. For this, two control plots were demarcated, one external to the experimental site and one inside its boundaries. Data on a variety of parameters were collected before project initiation, and subsequently, one more set of data have been collected after project implementation and the end of the rainy season.

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

Yes. Given the success of our pilot activity, we will now seek to scale up this initiative in at least two (and possibly three) locations. We will attempt to create viable local success stories of pasture land restoration that encourage the local population to intensify sustainably the use of the common lands adjacent to the village, rather than depend upon the more distant Reserve Forests.

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

- An MA dissertation has already been submitted and accepted, which focused on baselining and concurrent monitoring and evaluation of the restoration pilot project. This report is in the public domain and we hope to write it up in the near future as a publishable paper.
- Students from the School of Human Ecology have been involved in follow up data collection, and we hope to have another MA dissertation in 2013 to update the status of the restoration site as well as set up similar studies on new sites identified by the field team.
- Findings from the restoration pilot have been made public on the Samrakshan Trust website. They have also been shared as papers/posters at two student research conferences during the last 3 months.

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

The project period was 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2012. This was in accordance with the timescale proposed originally in the project.

## 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 (INR)	Actual Amount (INR)	Difference (INR)	Comments
Salary of the Co-investigator @ Rs.10,000 per month for 12 months	120,000	128,711	-8,711	
Salary of 2 field investigator @ Rs. 5,000 per month for 12 months	120,000	120,000	0	
Local travel expenses @ Rs. 2,000 per month for 12 months	24,000	10,110	13,890	
Institutional overheads (office space, computer time, power backup, communications, stationary @ 2,500 per month for 12 months)	30,000	28,937	1063	
Field visit expenses of the Principal Investigator @ Rs. 5,000 per visit for 5 days	25,000	17,321	7679	
Entry point activities in villages to encourage community participation	120,000	133,984	-13,984	
Annual Audit of the project	5,000	5,000	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>444,000</b>	<b>444,063</b>	<b>-63</b>	

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

- a. We need to carry out additional management activities in the pilot restoration plot which will strengthen the resource generating capacity of this plot. A participatory management and resource use plan is being prepared for this.
- b. We now need to work with other small and homogenous user groups that we will identify in our target villages and evolve similar pasture restoration plans with them. These plans will then need to be implemented at scale to begin making a visible impact on the larger landscape.
- c. The changes in livelihood of the local community as a result of availability of pastures needs to be mapped regularly, for which we will need to put in place monitoring systems including student research projects.

**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?**

No, the RSGF logo was not used, since we did not produce any materials under this project. However, RSGF's role in funding this project was duly acknowledged to all visitors and researchers coming to the area.