

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. 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. 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.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details

Your name	Nabin Baral
Project title	Examining the Resilience of the Annapurna Conservation Area, Nepal
RSG reference	14034-B
Reporting period	September 2013 to October 2014
Amount of grant	£5,100
Your email address	nbaral@gmail.com
Date of this report	October 25, 2014

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
Monitoring changes in community-based conservation (ACA in particular)			√	Both qualitative and quantitative data are now available to monitor changes in conservation area management committees over the period of 15 years (pre-insurgency, during insurgency and post-insurgency period).
Establishing a long-term social-ecological research project in ACA, Nepal			√	It is quite an accomplishment to closely examine more than 12 grassroots conservation committees completing their fourth term. Each committee's tenure is 5 years, so now it is possible to establish a long-term research building upon the accomplishments.
Uncovering important lessons for sustainable natural resource management			√	In a preliminary analysis, I explored how the committees learn in the organisational context. It appears that the organisational memory was one of the critical components for building resilience. After the final analysis, the results will reveal many lessons that can be useful in other contexts.

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

Having worked in the area for more than 10 years and drawing upon the social capital built over the time, there were no unforeseen difficulties to accomplish the project goals. One of the benefits of working in the same area for a long time is that people develop an intuitive feeling about how the things work in a particular area, so it makes easy to get the things done.

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

The project assessed the performance of grassroots conservation area management committees following the Maoist insurgency and found that their performance to be comparable to the pre-insurgency period.

It has gathered empirical evidence to test theoretical constructs such as resilience, organizational learning, commitment to conservation and legitimacy, and the results can be summarized later as lessons learned for practitioners.

Furthermore, the project broke a new ground for assessing the sustainability of community-based conservation based on the empirical data collected over the decades.

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

I am delighted to know that many conservation area management committee members whom I interviewed 5 years ago still remember me. They were very enthusiastic about the research and asked several questions about my past research. I briefed them about my major findings from PhD research and asked them what they think about the findings. They reported that the findings portrayed the ground reality in general. They also told me that their committee can learn a lot from the research findings, for example, how the committees can keep records more systematically, what the committees should do to develop trust and increase participation, and how the committees can develop the capacity for continuous learning. This research provided a unique opportunity to provide feedback to local communities about their practice and also get their feedback on my academic research. As such, it was a rare event of learning for all stakeholders and meeting of both the academic and practical worlds.

In terms of formal participation of local communities in this project, their role is more of information providers. But informally, I interacted with many local conservation leaders and villagers, and we exchanged information on various aspects of nature conservation and sustainable development influencing each other's perspectives on nature conservation.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, I am planning to visit the site next year and interview some conservation area management committee members. A preliminary analysis shows that there is a systematic exclusion of some groups within the communities in the decision making process. The major argument for promoting community-based conservation is that it is expected to empower local communities, but it appears that some groups within the community are still marginalised in decision making within the ACA. The proposed field visit seeks to find the explanations why all groups are not participating equally in the decision making process regarding the management of natural resources in the ACA.

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

I have collected so much data that it will take a couple of years to analyse and get the final results. As in the past, I will prepare and submit manuscripts for publication in international

peer-reviewed journals. Once the manuscripts are published all the interested people can have access to them. Furthermore, I will put the published manuscripts in social media sites such as ResearchGate and Academia.edu to give access to wider audience. I might present the findings in a couple of conferences given the availability of funding. Like in the past, I am more than happy to provide raw data or preliminary results to ACAP officials or government agencies if they need any information from my research in order to make policies or improve practice.

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

The first big chunk of the grant was spent at the beginning of the project. I bought a return ticket to get to Nepal and spent a bit on domestic travel. I was in the field in September and October of 2013. So, another big chunk of the grant was spent on my lodging and food in the field. I hired three research assistants to collect the data and one assistant to transcribe the interviews. Once I paid their salaries, there was a little expenditure towards the end of the project cycle. Most of the grant was spent during the first six months of the project. Given the amount of data to be managed and analysed, and the time commitment required to keep my day job, it might take a couple of years to get all the outputs from this project. As such, the proposed length of the project was enough for the purpose of data collection only.

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
International Travel	1,500.00	1,475.00	25.00	I found a ticket a bit cheaper than I proposed.
Domestic Travel	400.00	400.00	0	Although transportation cost has increased substantially than what I proposed, I managed to get to places being frugal.
Per diem for Principal Investigator	1,200.00	1,300.00	100.00	I spent a bit more on food than I expected.
Salary for Research Assistants	1,500.00	1,600.00	100.00	I paid 1,000.00 for three research assistants to collect the data and 600.00 for a research assistant to transcribe interviews. Because of the nature of transcribing job, I need to pay a bit more.

Stationery and expendable materials	250.00	250.00	0	I bought a new digital voice recorder and spent the money in other expendable materials.
Report preparation and mailing	250.00	250.00	0	This amount will be used to cover the expenses related to report publication and manuscript preparation.
TOTAL	5,100.00	5,275.00	225.00	I spent a little over the approved budget (175.00), but I will manage the difference.

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

The most important thing is to come up with a template to organise the data collected over the different time periods. All the data are collected at various times and they need a great deal of cleaning and organising before we can use them for systematic comparison. For example, I have collected the meeting minutes of the committees which are not kept consistently and in a particular format. I need to come up with some creative solutions to make them comparable and useful for rigorous scientific analysis. Most of the data are in hard copies and I have just started digitising them. Once I have the data in an electronic format, it will be easier to organise them. I am exploring more about data management plans and intend to come up with an appropriate template soon for managing the data.

Ultimately, I intend to make all the data that I have collected publicly available. I want to make them available online, so the burning question is how to make the online data repository sustainable. Although I have clear goals about the data, I need to learn more about the process of data management.

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?

The only durable product that I bought is a digital voice recorder. Because of its small size, I did not see the appropriate place on it to put the RSGF logo. As I did in the past, I will acknowledge the RSG in all the manuscripts I will publish. And I will put the logo in any other documents as deem relevant.

I have also talked with my peers about your organization and recommended them to apply for the RSG. Thus, the RSGF received some publicity in the scientific community during the course of my work.

11. Any other comments?

The project can be considered as highly successful because all the data that were desired are collected. The data have the potential to make solid scientific contributions to the

academic disciplines of community-based conservation and resilience because there are hardly any long-term research projects in this field.

As in the past, expect a copy of the manuscripts as they are published.