

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.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Dr. Azzam Alwash
Project title	Lesser Zab Threat Assessment & Action Planning Project
RSG reference	10751-1
Reporting period	1 Jan 2012 to 31 April 2013
Amount of grant	5962 GBP
Your email address	info@natureiraq.org
Date of this report	13 May 2013

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
Perform an in-depth threat assessment of the Lesser Zab River, a major tributary of the Tigris River in northern Iraq, to document and fully characterise all threats to river habitats, water quality and river functions.		X		<p>Almost the entire basin was surveyed with the following exceptions and caveats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Areas of poor security or requiring extensive permissions to access (many of these areas were surveyed but not as thoroughly as other areas) - One area was not visited due to logistics problems (rugged terrain) - Originally planned as seasonal surveys, the survey visits ended up becoming monthly activities due to the needs of other projects
Develop action plans and strategies to address these threats.			X	<p>Both a comprehensive action plan (known as the Threat Assessment & Action Plan or TAAP Report) has been developed and several actions took place including: Dukan Garbage Bin Project, Green Music & Arts Festival, Swimmable Rivers Campaign, Dukan River trash boom and other general outreach and promotional activities.</p> <p>Also threat maps have been developed for the action plan; a press conference was held in March 2013, which was attended by the Kurdistan Environment Board, other NGOs, media, and other stakeholders on the findings on threats in the basin and the actions identified to address; and an educational public service announcement was prepared and aired on local and regional TV stations.</p>
Develop tools needed for expanding these efforts to other river basins within the Upper Tigris Watersheds and river systems in Iraq.			X	<p>During the course of the project a database was prepared for the basin and GIS threat maps developed using this data. Also as a result of the field work the methodology for the survey work was better defined. Some issues that were clarified during the course of the work included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The need to attempt to standardise the size of reaches to ensure a more unified survey effort - Further clarification/modification of the IUCN threat categories model used in the assessment

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

We faced security issues in some areas that slowed the project down in these regions. During the survey there was an active build-up of military in the lower reaches of the river due to conflicts between the Baghdad central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. This affected the survey by requiring extensive time to acquire permissions to enter the area, and abbreviated the survey effort. One other small area in the upper basin was difficult to survey due to the rugged terrain and future surveys of this area should be done on horseback. A major change of field staff also delayed the completion of the survey effort.

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

Information – The project allowed us to see areas of the river that had never been visited before by any conservation organisation and allowed us to gain a lot of detailed, on-the-ground information about what is happening throughout the basin. Data collected in the field is maintained in the Threat Assessment Database.

Outreach & Actions - We were able to talk to many people who were concerned about the health of the river and who expressed a real interest in seeing the basin protected. This list of contacts will be invaluable in our future conservation work in the basin. Additionally, throughout the year we took a number of actions, which resulted in increased awareness about the threats to the basin:

- Waterkeeper film shown in riverside communities (Jan/Feb 2013) (the Waterkeeper film was a Kurdish education film about the river developed with non-Rufford funds by the Waterkeeper and international artists but which was used early in 2013 as part of the Lesser Zab outreach efforts to tell people what we were doing);
- Green Music and Arts Festivals on Earth Day (April 2012) (during the April 2013 festival we promoted and distributed the report and action plan from the project);
- Swimmable Waters Campaign (August 2012);
- Nawruz (Kurdish New Year) 2012 – Dukan Garbage Bin Distribution;
- Public Service Announcement was developed in Kurdish on protecting rivers that has aired on local television (Nov-Dec 2012);
- Nawruz (Kurdish New Year) 2013 Trash boom initiative, and
- Press Conference (14 March for International River Action Day) and additional outreach and promotional activities upon the release of the Draft Threat Assessment and Action Plan Report (The TAAP Report) The press conference was held at a local restaurant in Sarchinar and was followed by a short tour of problem sites along the local river.

Action Plan - The development of a comprehensive action plan (included in the TAAP Report) for future activities is one of the most important outcomes as it will provide us with a roadmap to guide our future activities. Too often, we have operated in a “fire-fighting” mode, but the project has allowed us to take a comprehensive look at all the threats to the basin and prioritise and strategise about the overall strategic objectives and action steps required to eliminate the highest priority threats.

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

Local villagers, farmers, shepherds, forestry policy, gravel miners, fish farmers, border officials and leaders in villages and towns throughout the basin were encountered on the surveys and provided important information on past, current and future threats affecting the river in the different reaches and areas of the basin.

The Waterkeeper film (developed with other funding but used in the project as part of the initial outreach efforts) was shown at schools in Bogd and Klesa Village along the river as well as within Sulaimani. Targeted largely at school children, this environmental education project attempted to raise awareness in these two communities about effects of pollution on the river.

Also, the local riverside community in Dukan benefitted directly from the project due to the clean-up action organised by Nature Iraq. Following the clean-up, which was conducted with over 200 local school children, we provided 75 trash bins (supplied with additional support from a local political party) for every household along the river bank and were able to negotiate with the municipality to extend trash pickup service in this area along the Lesser Zab River.

During the Green Music and Arts Festival (in 2012) Nature Iraq organised many different organisations to exhibit their work and perform, including the environmental arts group SulyOn, the American University student group Development Now, the Environment and Protection Board, local environmental groups (Green Environment, Green Kurdistan Society and others) and local artists. This has encouraged better cooperation and communication between the different organisations and individuals. During the 2013, festival we promoted the TAAP report at our Nature Iraq table to festival attendees.

During Nawruz in 2013, the Waterkeeper and six volunteers put a net across the river just downriver from the town of Dukan to collect the trash people throw in the water. The goal was to show people how much trash they dump during this season when people visit the river banks for picnics. The fence was in place for one day and more than a pick-up truck load was collected.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, the project resulted in the development of an action plan of future activities focused on addressing the identified threats. This action plan will guide the future work of the Waterkeeper and potentially the work of stakeholder partners as well.

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

The TAAP Report (including the Action Plan) has been translated into Kurdish and Arabic and has been circulated to the Nature Iraq board, Waterkeeper Advisory Group and the key partner and stakeholder groups (e.g. Kurdistan Environmental Protection & Improvement Board). On March 14th 2013, a press conference and tour was organised to present the Action Plan to local media and local and regional stakeholders. The Plan is also available on the Waterkeepers Iraq website and has been promoted on our Facebook page.

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

The RSG was used during the course of 2012 and initial months of 2013. While originally envisioned as four seasonal surveys, due to the needs of other project activities, the survey effort occurred primarily in winter/spring of 2012 and autumn 2012 (starting in February with the last field survey activities in early December). Actions also took place at different times in 2012 and the early part of 2013. The Threat Assessment Database and the development of GIS maps were completed in January/February 2013. The action plan was completed in February 2013 and a press conference and tour as well as other activities to promote and distribute the Action Plan took place in March and April 2013.

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 (GBP)	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Staff time	8,938	15,991	-7,053	Project extended into 2013, project management and additional staff required for project management, some actions and the press conference
Field transportation (fuel & maintenance)	2,979	2,817	+162	
Field per diems (IUTW & KHCE)	1,788	523	+1,265	Surveys completed with limited need for food and no overnight expenses other than for camping
Communication in the field	99	87	+12	Communications likely higher than reported here due to project staff using personal phones and not reporting expenses
Accommodation	1,192		+1,192.00	Survey completed without use of hotels (through camping and day trips); see outreach activities
Equipment	599	466	+133	
Office and misc. supplies	124	506	-382	More office supplies required for actions and press conference activities
Outreach activities		1,862	-1,862	PSA developed, Education & Clean-up actions, TAAP Press conference and promotion of action plan (funds for accommodations were reallocated to outreach activities)
Admin	784	1,113	-329	Estimated overhead/admin costs of 5% of project expenses
Total	16,503	23,363	-6,860	

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

Next steps are outlined in the TAAP Report. The highest prioritised action is to raise awareness about the threats of gravel mining, which have heavily damaged the in-stream and riparian habitats along much of the river. We will collect information and research aspects of in-stream gravel mining and seek out old photographs of areas before gravel mining operations began to graphically show the damage to these areas. Up to four different areas will be selected as case studies. The collected data, information and photographs will be publicised as part of an awareness raising campaign for the general public and official stakeholders. We plan to organise workshops in the governorates responsible for each area and present the report to the local stakeholders. Media will be informed about the issues and we will arrange for tours of the most damaged sites.

Another prioritised action is implementing a dam awareness campaign. Information on the location of such projects on the Lesser Zab from the Kurdish Regional Government will be collected (there are at least three proposed for the main stream, and several others are proposed for different tributaries but little information on them is available to the public). We will select at least one dam case study and undertake several public outreach and awareness-raising actions on this study site, potentially including taking officials on a rafting trip through the area to inform stakeholders and decision-makers about the importance of protecting the river from poor dam development projects. The most likely study site is the Delga Dam, which is an approved project that will flood a stunning and unique gorge on the upper Lesser Zab River.

Lastly, in collaboration with other environmental NGO's in the region, we will develop an awareness campaign on garbage dumping focused on villagers, picnickers and the general public. Working together with the government on providing garbage bins and pick up services is the first step. We will also perform outreach and educational activities, such as clean up events with school children and visit school programs with environmental art performances.

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?

Yes, it was used on all promotional and informational flyers, PowerPoint presentations, press releases, the PSA, the Lesser Zab TAAP Report, etc. related to the project. We spoke frequently about the RSGF and its support throughout the project.

11. Any other comments?

While the Waterkeepers Iraq programme will focus on three of the top priority threats identified in the Lesser Zab Basin, we have invited other partners and stakeholders (both NGO and government) to consider implementing strategic actions and action steps for the other threats identified and outlined in the TAAP Report.