

## The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

### Final Report

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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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

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Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Mohammed Ibrahim Abudaya
Project title	Assessment of the Gaza Fishery of the Giant Devil Ray ( <i>Mobula mobular</i> ) in the wider context of its protection status in the Mediterranean
RSG reference	17115-1
Reporting period	1 March 2015-1 March 2016
Amount of grant	£5000
Your email address	<a href="mailto:dr.m.abudaya@hotmail.com">dr.m.abudaya@hotmail.com</a>
Date of this report	18 March 2016

**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
Collect data on mobulid rays and other elasmobranchs from fish landing sites in Gaza			X	
Estimate the scale and sustainability of the Gaza mobulid fishery.			X	
Collect information on the gill plate trade and the economic value of mobulids for the local economy.		X		
Collect data on shark fish landing sites in Gaza.			X	
Conduct comprehensive awareness raising campaigns and education programs targeting consumers, fishermen, fish dealers and professionals.		X		

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

The fishermen's community in Gaza is conservative and interacting with them was not easy. However, we have established strong relationships with many fishermen and also with the Palestinian Fisheries Syndicate have overcome this difficulty.

Project on mobulid rays has never before been conducted in this region and technical knowledge and experience of the surveys, identification and data collection on mobulid ray is not available at the local level. However, the technical training provided as part of this project by the advisors and also several Skype discussions have addressed this matter.

Restrictions on fishing are placed, prohibits fishermen from Gaza going beyond 6 nautical miles. In principle they are supposed to be allowed to go 20 nautical miles (about 37 km) from the coastline except for several buffer zones near the borders with Israel and Egypt. However it appears that mobulid rays do still venture close enough to be caught by fishermen from Gaza.

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

Survey were conducted at eight landing sites and included the collection of biological and socio-economic data on the fishery and trade of mobulid ray and other elasmobranch landed. The biological data such as disc width, body length, gender and sexual maturation were recorded. Also photographic images as well as DNA samples were also collected and sent for analysis.

Interviews with were conducted with fishers, local dealers, and other fisher professionals working in the fisheries sector to solicit their views on the mobulid fishery and collect information to establish catch methods and gear used, key fishing grounds, market value, information on product usage and details on the export trade.

Awareness programme and workshops were conducted to inform the target people of this species, threats, trade and growing pressure, protection status and required actions. To encourage them to voluntarily reject any attitude that threatens this species and to contribute on solving the problem of lack of awareness regarding the vulnerability of *M. mobular* as a major problem.

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

Several awareness sessions including workshop and meetings were conducted with the fishers and fish dealers and professionals. In order to inform them of this species, threats they face, the fisheries and trade that target them and the growing fisheries pressure driven by demand for the gill plates and finally the protection status, procedures and required actions. In order to encourage them to voluntarily reject any attitude that threatens this species. These meetings went very well.

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

Yes, the plan is to expand the assessment of the scale of the seasonal mobulid fishery in Gaza, Palestine. This will include the collection of biological, ecological and socio-economic data.

Data on *M. mobular* is very limited and until 2015, no data existed on the fishery taking place in Gaza. Expansion upon the first and include other elasmobranch species as well will provide clear assessment to local, regional and international policy makers with the information they require to urge the introduction and implementation of management policies to help regulate this particular fishery and better protect these species.

Furthermore, the removal of the gill plates does indicate that the fishermen and locals are aware of their international trade value and would therefore target these rays in the future when they encounter them. Additionally it is quite rare for such a large number of mobula rays to be encountered in one area, which could signify some form of seasonal aggregation either for feeding or reproduction and this would of course further increase the importance of ensuring the protection of these species in this region. However providing the necessary protection via local or international legislation will require accurate statistical data from the local region itself.

More long-term work includes improving the education and awareness of fishers with regard to these vulnerable species in the region and working together with them to explore sustainable and viable alternatives. The introduction of national legislations to better manage fisheries will be key in accomplishing this.

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

Results will be made available to scientists and the general public through peer-reviewed publications in international journals. One expected publication will be:

- “The mobulid fishery of Gaza and its consequences on the Mobula mobular populations in the Mediterranean Sea”  
– Marine Biodiversity Records

Social media such as Facebook and Twitter will be used to provide field updates and summaries of findings for the general public. Additionally data will be presented at international conferences to

gain the necessary attention from both scientists and media in order to urge the implementation of management policies to help protect these species.

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

1 March 2015 till 28 Feb 2016. Was very relevant.

**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
Basic waterproof/shockproof digital point and shoot camera	300	295	5	
Scalpel blades and handles	50	50	0	
Lab-grade Ethanol	160	145	15	
2.0 ml Tubes (x1000) with o-ring screw caps	140	140	0	
Cryo-boxes for 2.0 ml tubes	80	90	-10	
Transport to Fish Landing Sites-8 Landing Sites for 60 days each-Data Collectors	2400	2400	0	
Permits for fishery surveys	120	110	10	
Mobile phone to maintain contact with fishermen and dealers	180	190	-10	
Export DNA samples to foreign laboratories for analysis	150	125	25	
Boat rental fees for offshore monitoring and oversight	350	345	5	
Meeting room rental fees to provide technical training, awareness program and meetings with all stakeholders	150	165	-15	
Rental fees of LCD projector and flipchart to be used during the training, awareness program and meetings	120	125	-5	
Preparing Leaflets, Brochures and providing Refreshments for (fishermen, fish dealers...etc.)	300	300	0	
Laptop	400	395	5	
TOTAL	4900	4875	25	1.00 GBP=5.42337 ILS

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

Expansion the project and the survey will provide clear assessment to local, regional and international policy makers with the information they require to urge the introduction and

implementation of management policies to help regulate this particular fishery and better protect these species.

More long-term work includes improving the education and awareness of fishers with regard to these vulnerable species in the region and working together with them to explore sustainable and viable alternatives. The introduction of national legislations to better manage fisheries will be key in accomplishing this.

**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, on July 2015 a project update was sent to Rufford, discussed the events that have occurred from February 1st to the 1st May 2015, describing the activities and main findings within that time frame.

**11. Any other comments?**

As of my personal experience with Rufford and its team, I can state that Rufford became one of the major players in the fight to save the world's oceans and land and the wealth of marine and terrestrial life they contain. In addition, through its generous contributions of financial support have to facilitated and supported marine research and conservation projects around the world, several extraordinary discoveries along the way, and a wealth of knowledge gained and shared, with both scientists and the wider public, about the charismatic marine creatures concerned, and their role in the oceans.

I can strongly admit that Rufford has successfully and effectively achieved its objectives and goals originally established, as well as their expected effects and impact.

The manner, approach, follow-up, reaction and assistance of the Rufford team and in particular the Trust Administrator is enormously fantastic. The team is very open and polite and I believe the team is efficiently utilising the available resources and strongly encourage the passion and commitment of individual project leaders.

I have enjoyed working with Rufford and its teams and I consider myself one of the luckiest people in our world had this opportunity.