

The Rufford Foundation Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford 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	Karina Nicole Pérez Olmos
Project title	"Promoting ecotourism for the conservation of biodiversity and the family economy strengthening: Agricultural paths and demonstration plots in Cotui"
RSG reference	19886-1
Reporting period	Since june-15th-2016 to july-15th-2017
Amount of grant	£5,000.00
Your email address	kperez@catie.ac.cr
Date of this report	July-26 th -2017

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
Contribute to the ecotourism development in the area through the creation of two agro-tourism path, supporting sustainable agriculture for the conservation of biodiversity and the family economy strengthening.				The communities of Los Jobos and Hernando Alonzo have new ecotourism attractions which help to conserve nature and are a complement to the economy based on agriculture.
Establishment of two organic demonstration plots.				Both paths have demonstrative plots (a coffee plot and pineapple plot) with a size of two tasks (1,257.72 mts ²). With these plots, visitors and community members have been able to reflect on a healthier intake of food and about if the transition to change from to plant with chemical to organic can be done taking care of the environment.
Encourage the communities to do more environmentally friendly practices through ecotourism.				Natural capital is the basis for ecotourism, this makes the community reflect that nature has a great wealth and preserving it can receive various benefits like economic, social, cultural and leisure services.

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

In the beginning, the communities of Jiminillo Abajo and Hernando Alonzo, belonging to the Cotui municipality of Sánchez Ramírez province, had been chosen to develop the project. There was a difficulty in Jiminillo Abajo because the fact that it was not possible to acquire a space for the organic pineapple plot (the plots were occupied with traditional pineapple with chemicals). So, the time to try acquire the land was over. For this reason, the work must to be move to another community: Los Jobos (near from Jiminillo Abajo). This community was very interested to participate in the project.

The main actors in this community were the members of the Zambrana-Chacuey Agroforestry Producers Association (APA).

Another difficulty was the seasons of heavy rains outside normal rainfall cycles (effects of climate change). Even on one occasion there were landslides that affected part of the organic coffee parcel, and had to be replanted again part of the plants of the plot (see image 13 from the image archive).

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

☐ Community reflecting on knowledges in agrobiodiversity care during workshops and other meeting spaces.

At the beginning of the project it was noticed in the population in several spaces (for example in the project presentation meetings, see pictures 3 and 4) an interest to deepen some knowledges about the importance of natural resources and how they can project this in their communities. For this reason, two workshops were given to young students and housewives about *The Importance of Agrobiodiversity Conservation*, which were not originally in the planning of the project. In each one of these spaces, we reflected on the great wealth that exists in these communities and the importance of rescuing traditional crops and the care of flora and fauna (see images 1 and 2).

☐ Two agro-tourism paths established.

The community of Los Jobos adds to its ecotourism attractions the Agroforestral Path of the Pineapple (see pictures 8, 9, 10 and 11). This community has plantations of pepper, manioc root, tobacco, as well as secondary forests, rivers and the Alfonso Brito Path. This new path will strengthen the offer that the community has already established.

On the other hand the community of Hernando Alonzo has the Lake of Hatillo and cattle/agricultural farms with potential for ecotourism, in also stores of food and drink. On the El Diviso hill, the established path (see pictures 5, 6, 7 and 11) has highlighted this ecotourism attraction that is highly appreciated by local and national visitors.

Both paths have their signposting, being a point of importance for the orientation and complementary information of the path, as well as organic plots that show an alternative to the conventional agriculture.

☐ Promoted project activities to publicise the paths and receive visits.

A poster was presented about the experience of the organic coffee plot during the 9th Congress of Caribbean Biodiversity held from January 31 to February 3, 2017 in the city of Santo Domingo and organized by the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo.

During the duration of the project were shared their incidents through the accounts of Facebook and Twitter of Enda Dominicana as well as its website www.endadom.org.do. Also this information was shared on Colinas Bajas Model Forest Blog: <https://colinasbajasdom.wordpress.com/> and in the Colinas Bajas Model Forest Facebook group.

In addition, the project results were presented to the Colinas Bajas Model Forest Board (see Figure 20) who provided good feedback on project activities.

Another way to publicise the paths was the two test excursions that were carried out with actors related to the activity of environmental care and tourism in the country.

Other products are: 2,000 promotional brochures of the paths (1,000 of each one) and two promotional videos (one of each one). You can access the videos online through the YouTube channel of Enda Dominicana in the next links: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIM9iCJCKLk&t=13s>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rL8FtKOZvw>

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

Communities were more involved through groups such as the Cotui-Maimón Association of Guides (AGUICOMA) (see Figure 15) and the Association of Agroforestry Producers Zambrana Chacuey (APA) (See Figure 16). Both groups are made up with communities' members who carry out ecotourism and agricultural work in the area. In addition, other actors such as producer Genaro Mosquera and his family have been involved.

Communities have benefited from a tangible understanding of organic agriculture and recognize the importance of disappearing native species. In addition to these paths will be an indispensable tool for the dynamisation of the economy through the practice of ecotourism.

Through these two paths as new ecotourism attractions, the interest of the ecotourism practice has been revived giving a boost to new leaderships. They themselves indicated in one of the results delivery meetings (see pictures 17 and 18) where they were told about the closure of the project: "this has not ended here, this is just the beginning." So they feel very committed to continue because they know the potential they have to develop ecotourism. They are clear that not only the owner of the plot get benefits, also get benefits the artisans, the person who sells some artisanal agricultural product derived from the pineapple or coffee, the food and beverage stores, the transporters, the person who rents a mule or horse, etc.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The same community members are organizing to continue the work. In Hernando Alonzo will be reinforced working groups around ecotourism from the school, farmers, and young university students, among others. In addition, some community members

will receive a tour guide course through the National Institute of Technical Training (INFOTEP) to reinforce the guidance service in the area.

As for the community of Los Jobos, from the APA there is a great interest for the continuity in the works of the Pineapple Agroforestry Path. Its designated delegate, Hipolito Brito takes great care of the organic pineapple plot and the details of the path. In addition, community ladies have prepared for when visitors come to add to the tourist package sale of pineapple jam and fruit snacks.

From the Colinas Bajas Model Forest, in its 2017-2018 Operational Plan there is an ecotourism section where the strengthening of ecotourism associations and the development of ecotourism marketing in the region are proposed. In these items will be inserted the products of this project.

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

The results of this project were presented to Los Jobos and Hernando Alonzo community members, in addition to the Colinas Bajas Model Forest Board (see Figure 17 and 18). In the future, the results of this project will be shared with ecotourism stakeholders such as the Association of Guides of the Dominican Republic and Travel Agencies located in Santo Domingo, as well as universities that carry out visits and practices in rural areas with tourism students.

An informal alliance has been established between AGUICOMA and the Hostal Maria Yobón located in the center of the city of Cotui. In this hostel you will find part of the brochures produced in the project so that they can share it with their clients. They also showed interest in going to know the paths of the AGUICOMA offer (they already knew the Agroforestral path of the Pineapple in the test excursion). The promotional videos made in this project will be projected on the screen of their reception as a way of dissemination with the guests.

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

The duration of the project was 13 months. The period initially established was 12 months. A Rufford Foundation administration was request to get an extension of one more month due to delays explained in the point 2.

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
Socialization meetings and project planning activities				
1.1 Lunch	242	242		
1.2 Transport	215	260,29	-45,29	45,29 covered by ítem 1.2 Constant travel for planning with beneficiaries increased transportation costs
1.3 Meeting Rooms				Counterpart
Implementation and improvement of agroturistic paths and demonstration plots				
2.1 Transport	480	434,71	45,29	
2.2 Diet/viatic	185	253,84	-68,84	68,84 covered by item 2.3 Increase in travels get as result more expenses in viatics.
2.3 Coffee path	1077	806,37	270,63	Savings with local services and contributions of the beneficiaries
2.4 Pineapple path	1077	879,62	197,38	Savings with local services and contributions of the beneficiaries
2.5 Pineapple Demonstration plot	358	326,98	31,02	Savings contributions of the beneficiaries
2.6 Coffee demonstration plot	358	415,83	-57,83	The plot was more difficult to work with for the ubication in a hill, more rain (the plot filled with weeds faster) and once rain did landslides. 57,83 covered by ítem 2.3
2.7 Agriculture tools				Counterpart
Proof Visits/Excursion				
3.1 Pinneapple path	127	127		
3.2 Coffee path	127	127		
3.3 Transport	354	346,31	-7,69	7,69 covered by ítem 2.1
3.4 Feeding	338	338		
3.5 Souvenirs				Counterpart
Linking and continuity				
4.1 Diffusion and promotional materials (brochure printing)	62	434,37	-372,37	Observing savings in another items and due to the importance in diffusion, it was print more brochures (2,000 in total). 143.96 covered by item 2.3 197.38 covered by item 2.4 31.02 covered by item 2.5

4.2 Brochure design				Counterpart
4.3 Small promotional videos				Counterpart
Administration				
5.1 Activities Inform to the Rufford Foundation				Counterpart
5.2 Project Coordination				Counterpart
Total	5,000	4,992,32	7.68	*The local rate used is 64.93 (to Dominican pesos) ** The differences showed in the budget are between the initial amounts by items that change and what we really wasted in each item. In the total appears the difference between the total amount received and what we wasted.

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

The suggested steps to follow up on this project are the following:

- After having made the test excursions with Enda Dominicana collaborators and actors linked to the ecotourism sector and with the comments obtained from the visitors of these excursions, more adjustments should be made on a daily basis to refine the offer. These adjustments were discussed with the beneficiaries (APA and Mr. Mosquea) and AGUICOMA. With these adjustments, it will be possible to do better trips and that the guides have more practice in the guidance of both paths. So one way to formally present potential clients such as travel agencies, tour operators, churches, universities, private companies, among others, is to make a fan trip by path showing the complete package.
- Participation in ecotourism fairs to show the product and attract customers.
- Continue strengthening the offer through trainings and institutional strengthening to ecotourism associations in the work area.
- -To present in a web portal the whole offer of ecotourism products and services of Colinas Bajas, to receive international visitors.

10. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

In the project were made brochures of both paths which carry the Rufford Foundation logo (see image 19), a poster was produced to participate in the IX Congress of

Caribbean Biodiversity (image 21) which carries the Rufford Foundation logo, as well as the promotional videos.

11. Any other comments?

The main economic activity of these communities is focused in farming/ agriculture. This process on the development of ecotourism in the area is a transition that must be take step by step and with the support of all the necessary actors of the community as well as regional and national actors.

The Colinas Bajas Model Forest will integrate these paths into its inventory of ecotourism offerings, being part of this territorial management platform and contributing to the sustainable development of the Colinas Bajas region.