

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	Sameer Punde
Project title	Malki Jungle Suraksha Scheme – launching India’s first ever conservation incentive programme to combat deforestation in the north Western Ghats
RSG reference	32.03.08
Reporting period	24 July 2008 – November 2009
Amount of grant	£ 5910
Your email address	sameerpunde@aerfindia.org , aerf@hathway.com
Date of this report	15 th January 2010

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
To conserve 100 acres of private forests through conservation agreements at this pilot stage.		√		Agreements have been established on a total of 52 acres, in addition to these another 50 acres are currently being negotiated with landowners.
To manage forests under agreements on a long-term basis.			√	Surveys have been conducted; detailed management plans are being developed. Management including weeding, erosion control, planting, fire lines completed on one site.
To promote the programme and gain support for new agreements.			√	A sponsorship website was launched on World Forest Day to support the conservation agreements in the long-term. Brochures were printed and distributed. Presentations and meetings were held with corporate houses. Two individual and one corporate sponsorship received to date

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

This was probably the first project in India that tested and implemented conservation incentive agreements for forest conservation. Even though this was an innovative project and a chance for the team to learn and share, considerable time was spent on planning the project as well as generating awareness amongst landowners and other local stakeholders. The process of sites surveys, awareness generation, negotiating and finalising agreements required more time than originally speculated. Follow-up and regular communication was required with landowners which was not always possible during the course of the project. Since forests and local dynamics are always different at each village, none of our agreements are the same. Each agreement had to be dealt on a case-by-case basis which also resulted in delays.

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

- 1) The first and the most important outcome of this project was the protection of almost 60 acres of forests which would have otherwise been clear felled. The project has also successfully demonstrated the use of conservation incentive agreements for the first time in the Indian Subcontinent.
- 2) The second important outcome of this project was that a group of seven landowners who would have otherwise cleared and sold timber on their land now actively protect the forests on their lands as well as promote the case for forest conservation within their own communities. As a result, an additional 15 landowners have approached us with an interest in participating in the programme. In addition to these 20 local farmers and a group of women from a local Self-Help Group (SHG) gained some employment as a result of site management activities

- 3) The “My Forest” website (www.myforest.co.in) was launched on World Forest Day (21st March 2009) for promoting the project and inviting sponsorships for existing and new forest agreements. As a result, approximately of £2000 were raised through individual, corporate and gift sponsorships and was covered in the local press including three local newspapers in the city of Pune (see www.aerfindia.org)

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

The involvement of local communities was crucial to the success of the project. Almost 90% of forests in the districts of Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg (in the Western Ghats) belong to local farmers. It was therefore important to understand local people’s needs in relation to forests before this project could be implemented. Generating awareness amongst landowners to protect their forests instead of leasing out to contractors was also done through meetings and one-to-one discussions with community leaders. The project team is associated with the Applied Environmental Research Foundation (AERF) a non-government organisation (NGO) involved in community-based conservation of forests since 1994. The project team used AERF’s local contacts and benefitted from the organisation’s relations with the local communities in the project area. As a result, 15 farmers directly benefitted from the project since they received incentives for protection of forests on their lands. These farmers now promote the cause of forests conservation within their own communities. Two locals received full-time employment for monitoring the management of the forests and 20 farm labourers including women received employment for management activities at one of the forests protected through this project.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, there are plans to continue this work. The Malki Jungle Suraksha Scheme was a pilot project funded by the RSGF in 2008. The success of this pilot phase has brought a lot of enthusiasm amongst team members. However, there is a lot that needs to be done. Our plans to continue this project as well as expand its activities in the coming year are:

- The project has just been able to protect 60 acres of forests out of an estimate of 600,000 acres of forests under threat! The team aims to protect another 500 acres of forests by the end of 2011 through establishing long-term conservation incentive agreements with landowners in the north Western Ghats
- The recent global climate change negotiations in Copenhagen (COP15) have resulted in the recognition of forests in mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. Deforestation causes about 20% of all carbon emissions and global policy mechanism such as REDD and REDD+ should be in place by 2013 to arrest deforestation in the developing world (including India). However, to link forest conservation projects (such as this one) to global climate policy, certification of projects, carbon stock measurements may be required. Therefore, the next progressive step for this project will be to seek certification as well as build our capacity to accurately measure carbon stock.
- The selection of sites to try out the first conservation agreements was based on a survey of trees and forest health based on which priority sites were identified. More research of private forests in terms of their importance to wildlife and other biodiversity is required. There are plans to undertake such surveys in the coming year.
- Relations with landowners and their willingness to participate was an important factor in the success of this project. To ensure regular communication with landowners as well as monitor the management of the sites, a team of local co-ordinators is required.

- To ensure the financial sustainability of this project, we have launched a forest sponsorship programme through a website. Long-term plans will require promoting this project not only through a website but also through other media. We are also exploring partnerships with international organisation that run similar sponsorship programmes such as the Healthy Plant Foundation.

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

We have already started sharing the results of our work in mass media as well as in academic circles. The My Forest website was launched on World Forest Day in 2009 during which the project received appreciable press coverage in a number of local newspapers as well as magazines. Newspapers that reported this project included – *The Times of India* (Pune Edition), *Sakaal* (Marathi daily), *Sakaal Times* (English edition) and *Lokmat* (Marathi daily). A press conference was also arranged in January 2009 at the journalist's centre at Pune city. In addition to this, the project was also featured in *Outlook* business magazine distributed throughout India. All these articles can be viewed on the following web link - <http://aerfindia.org/media.html>

The project was also communicated to some corporate bodies and funding agencies through presentations and meetings. Recently, a paper was written and presented at the Stakeholders in Conservation Conference organised by USIEF at Cochin, India. In addition to this presentation were also made by a team member at the Conservation Leadership Programme training at China.

The project leader is currently working on writing a scientific article on the findings and experience of working on this project. This article can potentially be published in a national or international journal. The team has also developed contacts with the local press and will work on promoting the project at the regional level.

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 over a period of 18 months, 6 months more than the anticipated length of the project. The reasons for delay have already been discussed in point 2. However, since the RSGF was used as a pilot for a long-term programme, the project still continues to progress.

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
Incentive agreements	2000.00	900.52	1099.48	We have signed 5-year legal agreements with landowners and the payments will be made on a phase-wise basis. The first payments have been made and the remaining payments will be made in the 2 nd year and the 5 th year.
Remuneration and field stipends	1500.00	2897.20	-1487.20	The team leader and field assistant are employed by the AERF and their salaries have been matched up by the AERF.

Site management costs	750	600.82	149.18	Due to the early onset of rainy season, some management work has been delayed and will be completed in the coming months.
Monitoring programme	130	128.24	1.76	
Travelling	600	975.57	-375.57	Rise in fuel prices and vehicle maintenance has resulted in the overspending of this amount. However, this was matched up by the AERF.
Field logistics	150	355.73	-205.73	Field accommodation was shared with other AERF staff and the difference was borne by AERF.
Promotional material	500	350.08	149.92	Promotion of the project is still being undertaken. A new brochure is being designed for which the difference will be spent
Contingencies	280	292.18	-12.18	
Total	5910	6500.34	-680.34	

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

As discussed in point 5 earlier in this document, the important next steps will be to expand this project to a wider area and potentially develop a region-wide forest conservation programme. To ensure the sustainability of this project, it is also essential to promote the project and its achievements as well as receive financial and technical support for expansion. Building partnerships with other local NGOs, associating with similar international programmes as well as gaining recognition through certification for forests protected (provided by agencies such as Rainforest Alliance) are crucial steps for expansion. The project team is enthusiastic and optimistic about how the project progresses and have we have set ourselves a target to protect 500 acres of forests by the end of 2011.

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, the RSGF logo was used during the course of the project. The logo is displayed on the My Forest website as well as the AERF's website. The logo also finds its place in last years AERF Annual Report. The logo was also displayed in printed material produced during the project and also used in all academic and popular presentations undertaken by the team. The RSGF received some publicity during the press conference at Pune city in 2008.

11. Any other comments?

The team takes this opportunity to thank the RSGF for supporting this project. The RSG support came in at a critical time and was able to help the team launch a larger programme and gain further support for the conservation of private forests in the north Western Ghats. The flexibility and understanding of the RSGF allowed the team to continue its work in spite of some delays. The team will be happy to share their experiences and are willing to help other NGOs who plan to undertake similar work.