

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	Bep Tshering
Project title	Assessment of Human-Elephant (<i>Elephas maximus</i>) Conflict and Co-existence in the Fringe Communities of South-Eastern Bhutan
RSG reference	20411-1
Reporting period	September, 2016 to October ,2017
Amount of grant	£5000
Your email address	beptshering@gmail.com
Date of this report	5 th October, 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
<p>Educate and create awareness for fringe communities on conservation of elephant habitats.</p>				<p>The first step in any conservation work is to start with the awareness programmes which is simply public or community awareness. As an educational programme, target groups were identified at first. Local leaders and prominent community members were informed in detail about the project implementation phase and its objectives. Communities of Samrang, Pemathang, Phuntshothang, Daifarm (Jomotshangkha) were educated and made aware on the importance of elephant habitat conservation. Training-workshop on the conservation of Asiatic elephant, its conservation status and distribution was given to all these communities. Moreover, the inputs on the restoration of grassland and bamboo species to better conserve and maintain conducive habitat for elephants were also given to all the communities of this project area. Advocacy programmes to the staff working with the communities in project areas were all involved and trained to help local people understand about the elephant and its conservation.</p> <p>The communities of the project areas were introduced to the concept of Community Based Conflict Management (CBCM), which is a short-term approach that enables rural farmers to tackle their own conflict issues. CBCM is designed to overcome the logistical problems that occur with HEC. HEC monitoring teams were formed in all the communities involved to report the incidents to the concerned authorities for further assistance and formulation of plans and policies in the</p>

				long run.
Identify the community-based approach/techniques to address human-elephant conflict.				<p>Through the intense collaboration with the target communities, rampant HEC areas were mapped and accordingly simple and effective community-based techniques or land use planning were made clear to address the HEC. People were trained on how to adopt and practice different land use planning techniques such as planting non target tree species at the edge of their farm lands to keep elephants away.</p> <p>Furthermore, people are taught on how to coexist with elephant and not to encroach into the elephant habitat areas. People of the project areas were trained on basic land management techniques to reduce vulnerability of the farms at the edge of the forest reserves. Simple and effective traditional methods from few countries were explained to the project communities. Community based conflict management teams were formed in all the HEC areas to help address the problem at national level.</p>
Assess the community's perception towards conservation of elephant.				<p>Through the key informant's interview and questionnaire survey across all the project areas, it was found that 79% of people have negative perception towards elephant while only 21% seemed to know about the conservation importance of elephant. Most of the people in the project area resides in the fringe/ at the edge of forest areas and as elephant encroach into their farmlands destroying structures and raiding crops, which ultimately force them to have negative perception towards elephant conservation.</p>

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

Due to the rugged terrain of the project areas, it was in fact difficult to have direct sighting of the elephant. The way forward to tackle these issues is to make use of camera traps in the next phase of project funding. Moreover, the people living adjacent to the forest areas were reluctant to provide reliable information about the

elephant and instead they were requesting for the support of electric or solar fencing to keep the elephants away. Nevertheless, people were delighted to participate in the training workshop and were more eager to protect the elephant in the long run. The project took more days in the field than the expected and planned work. However, with the support of forest officials, relevant agencies and active participation by the communities has made the project a big success and promising one.

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

The project was successful integrative approach in mitigating human-elephant conflict to coexist human and elephant in the fringe communities. Through this project, the communities were well aware on the need to conserve elephant habitat, conservation and restoration of water holes and watersheds to keep elephant in the wild without having to encroach into the human habitation.

This project had specifically benefited in examining the common threats, habitat fragmentation and how community as a group could ensure in maintaining the elephant to co-exist in their forest. Moreover, the project has helped communities understand the ways to conserve elephant in their natural habitats. With this project, communities now have the necessary skills and knowledge to introduce crop protection strategies especially to fringe communities around forests where similar conflict exists. The communities could also learn about appropriate methods of food crop production to achieve improved yields. People now have the ideas that the crop protection strategy from elephant is a stopgap approach to conflict and not tackle the fundamental causes of conflict. However, people learned that land use planning techniques is essential and it is a fundamental element of HEC mitigation in the communities.

With the inception of this project, participatory conflict area management and identification of rampant HEC areas were done in the project area. The most HEC areas were mapped using Geographic Information System software and further assessed the conflict in depth interacting with the community people. This move in turn would help the policy makers and conservationist in the long run to map and formulate necessary measures to address the HEC.

The increased level of community participation was a real success and very encouraging project implementation team. Though people were reluctant and less knowledge on elephant conservation on the start of the project, but rapidly have an increased knowledge enhancement and people seemed to build positive attitude towards elephant and its habitat conservation. The integrative action of all identified participants building a solidarity effort and strengthens a sense of community stewardship which is important for the conservation of flagship elephant to have healthy ecosystem at large.

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

The whole project phase was of integrative and participatory, most of the activities were community led and they played an important role in this project. People have directly benefitted through conservation capacity building and local employment. People have an access to more reliable information and improved knowledge and life skill development. It is hoped that the community at large will benefit from this project in near future with the increased elephant habitats being conserved and drop in actual and perceived levels of HEC. The fringe communities have been trained in land use planning, community-based conflict management and encouraged to tackle their own HEC problems. The people were also been trained to reduce vulnerability of their farms at the edge of forest reserves with use of non-target crops and non-palatable tree species planted at the edge of their farmlands. All the HEC areas have been informed and technically backstopped to address HEC and report to the concerned authorities in times of need.

So, this project has been appropriate and benefited communities in many ways right from the income earning-opportunities to the conservation of elephant population in the wild.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, the project is to be continued and further go deeper into more research oriented works given the funding support from the RSGF. We appreciated the RSGF's support for this pioneering and integrative community led elephant conservation which is a small contribution from the Bhutanese community to the global elephant conservation.

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

I am optimistic that this successful project results will be shared with others in several workshops, seminars and advocacy programme. Furthermore, I would love to share the experience and results of this project activity with the relevant stakeholders and department. I would also love to share the project results, necessary recommendations to the concerned department for effective plan formulation, HEC strategies to mitigate potential conflicts, including project strength and weakness.

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 project implementation started right on the release of budget from RSGF in September 2016 to October 2017. The project was successfully completed in line with the work plan and proposal submitted to RSGF.

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. 1 £ = INR 99.01

Item	Budgeted Amount £	Actual Amount £	Difference £	Comments
Procurement of field survey kids and equipment and printing of survey forms	310	310	0	As it is
DSA for staffs/participant involved in HEC awareness programme	190	200	-10	Increased in labour wages and training days makes difference with the outlined budget.
Field survey and field works	190	190	0	As it is
DSA for field works/training participants, fooding and lodging for all the project areas	902	900	2	Field works were executed before the stipulated time and planned programme
Porter pony charges and transportation cost for transportation of research materials in the field.	298	300	-2	Rugged terrain and far flung areas has led to over budget.
DSA for Field staffs training and use of enumerators in the field.	322	322	0	As it is
Procurement of training stationaries and refreshment during the training course.	278	270	8	Reduced purchase of training stationaries and light refreshment has led to budget balance in this specific budget activity.
Social survey for all the project areas, fooding and lodging to participants including lunch to all the interviewees	400	400	0	As it is
POL charges for transportation of training materials and enumerators in the field	300	300	0	As it is
DSA and refreshment for all the interviewees in all the project areas	400	400	0	As it is
HEC awareness and mitigation campaign to the public in all project areas, lunch and refreshment.	400	400	0	As it is

HEC mitigation techniques and ways to mitigate HEC and coexistence (feeding and lodging to all the participants in all the project areas	400	400	0	As it is
Printing posters, brochures and signboards to display the information on the conservation of elephants	310	310	0	As it is
Final reporting of the findings to the concerned stakeholders and agencies involved in the project implementation.	200	200	0	As it is
Final report writing and presentation	100	100	0	This fund will be used to distribute project findings to the relevant department and offices.
TOTAL	5000	5002	2	

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

It is felt necessary to continue and expand the integrative approach to elephant conservation in order to achieve the goal of mitigating actual and perceived levels of HEC and to make elephant coexist with the human.

Some of the way forward will be to look at extending the HEC management strategies to incorporate land use planning at larger scale. Further research is needed to model the potential elephant habitats and core zone, identify the biological corridors in the project area. Initiate well organised plantation programmes and conservation of existing forest and water holes. Help farmers to protect their farms vulnerable to the HEC by providing eco-friendly electric or solar fencing to keep away the elephants in the wild. Facilitate and encourage fringe communities to adopt effective HEC mitigation measures providing good linkage between farmers and concerned government offices. It is also felt necessary to support farmers with compensation to really protect the elephants in the wild. So, to keep the project sustainable and part of project continuation, I am already with a plan to go for next phase of Rufford small grant.

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?

Yes, RSGF logo was used in all the educational materials such banners, posters, brochures, reports etc. The logo was also used in the training programs, awareness meetings, and educational programs. Particularly, the people of project area were most humbled and deeply thankful to the RF for this pioneering support and great initiative.

11. Any other comments?

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Rufford Foundation for funding support to this project. The project became successful with the support of local forest officials, active participation from all the communities, and relevant agencies etc. Further support and cooperation is needed from the RF to empower and encourage local communities in conserving the flagship elephant in their natural habitats.

RF has been supporting the various projects across the globe and encourage conservationist to carry out the research and conservation works which is a great support in conserving the world's biodiversity.

Thank you RF for the pioneering support and looking forward to your continued support in the future.

Field moments from the target project areas - These photos are the field truthing from all the project areas right from the project inception to final project reporting.

