

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. 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.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

| Grant Recipient Details | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Your name | Lucy Rist |
| Project title | Sustainable harvesting of Coco-de-Mer in the Vallée de Mai. |
| RSG reference | 31.02.08 |
| Reporting period | May 2010 |
| Amount of grant | £2621 |
| Your email address | lucy.rist@env.ethz.ch |
| Date of this report | April 2009 |

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 |
|--|--------------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| Development of a population model | | | √ | A basic population model was successfully developed and provided initial assessments of population status under current harvesting. |
| Production of a paper journal submission | | √ | | We plan to wait for some additional data to try and develop a more detailed model for publication. |
| Identification of monitoring priorities | | | √ | These recommendations have already been integrated within the SIF work plans for 2009. Some of this work will begin this month. |
| Contribution to research proposal for longer term study of ecology and management of the species | | √ | | The ecological research activities for this species (collaboration between ETH, Zürich, SIF and the Ministry of Environment in the Seychelles) are developing rapidly. It is likely that funding application for this work will not incorporate sustainable harvesting directly as this may be more effectively tackled in a smaller independent but integrated project. Plans have been made to apply for a second RSPG subsequent to successful evaluation of this report. |
| Building local capacity | | | √ | Modelling activities have been conducted in partnership with Dr Frauke Dogley of SIF. Information regarding the aims and justification for the research disseminated locally (see below) enhancing awareness or the issues and understanding of the methods employed to tackle them. Additionally data gathered for use in this project has involved collaborative fieldwork with several other organisations responsible for the management of Coco de Mer including the Praslin Development Fund (Fond Ferdinand) and SCMRT-MPA (Curieuse). Training in the use of specific survey or measuring techniques has been given by Dr Christopher Kaiser-Bunbury on behalf of ETH. |

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

Previously gathered height measurements were found to be unreliable in some cases and due to doubts over their accuracy we have to develop a simpler population model than previously planned. Data on germination rates and seedling survival were accepted to be biased by poor implementation of a previous re-planting project and therefore alternative estimates for model parameterisation had to be found.

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

- The provision of scientific evidence that current harvesting intensities are likely to be having a detrimental impact on the Coco de Mer population.
- The identification of priorities for long term Coco de Mer monitoring in order to be able to more fully understand population dynamics and the impacts of harvesting.
- A contribution to the establishment of the Coco de Mer working group.

Additionally the project highlighted the potential additional revenue and identified poaching (both for illegal nut sales as well as use of the kernel inside the nut) as a significant threat to the Coco de Mer populations. Although previously known to SIF we began to look into this in more detail through discussions with the Department of Environment.

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

Direct community involvement was through the establishment of collaborative fieldwork for data collection and through presentations held publicly and internally for employees involved in Coco de Mer management at the Vallée de Mai.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. I would like to continue this project in partnership with Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley of SIF. We discussed plans for development of the project including the possibility of a second application to the RSGF. Research plans for the ecology and reproductive biology of Coco de Mer have advanced significantly since the project was originally submitted for funding. This provides additional support for further and more detailed data collection activities and leads to a more comprehensive overall research programme. We see significant value in continuing with this project, not only as this first stage further highlighted the need for the development of sustainable harvesting strategies but also highlights other threats to the sustainable management of Coco de Mer.

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

Results have already been shared within the Seychelles through two presentations of the projects aims, progress and findings. One public presentation was conducted on Mahé with a large number of attendees including the Seychelles press, the management of private Coco de Mer production sites, government employees, NGOs, and members of the general public. A second presentation was given at the Vallée de Mai specifically for Vallée de Mai staff and those involved in current research activities. An article in the daily national newspaper about the work was published on 20th April 2009

("Getting it right for the coco de mer"; Seychelles Nation). The aims of the project were presented to the SIF management board at the start of the project and a report has been submitted to the board in advance of their next meeting outlining the progress of the project against these objectives. Brief project summaries will also be prepared for inclusion in the Seychelles Plant Conservation Action Group (PCA) newsletter and the SIF annual report for 2009. The results will also be shared with the academic community through the completion of a publication for a peer reviewed journal.

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

The funds were used between 12th March and 12th April 2009. This was a much shorter period than was originally anticipated as additional human resources became available to help with field work and some model development was done in Zurich in advance in order to complete the project. Field data required for the model were gathered by an SIF volunteer and additional data also became available through the establishment of new links with Praslin Development Fund.

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 |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------|--|
| Flight | 700 | 1500 | 800 | Due to the value of the £ and need to purchase the ticket in Switzerland the cost converted to £ was significantly greater than budgeted, plus fees for changing of travel dates |
| Accommodation (Mahe and Praslin) | 1600 | 500 | -1100 | Accommodation expenses for Mahe reduced due to shorter stay but expenses for Praslin greater than budgeted due to recent price rises associated with floatation of the currency |
| Transport | 42 | 200 | 158 | A hire car was needed for some travel including on Praslin in addition to local bus |
| Ferry (Mahe-Praslin) | 60 | 100 | 40 | Greater than expected as local rate not obtained |
| Staff bonus | 219 | 0 | -219 | Not required due to SIF support |
| TOTAL | 2621.00 | 2300 | -321 | |

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

The implementation of monitoring protocols is important and is already beginning. It is also important that similar activities as conducted within this project (population modelling and the establishment of long term monitoring) are carried out at the two other main Coco de Mer sites; Fond Ferdinand (Praslin Development Fund) and Curieuse. All three populations are vital to the long term viability of Coco de Mer in the Seychelles. The further development of the collaborations and partnerships established through the Coco de Mer research working group are vital to ensuring this

and to successful management from both the biological and economic perspectives. A final priority is a full assessment of the threat posed by illegal nut harvesting. Identification of its drivers and potential impacts are required.

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, I used the RSGF logo in both presentations and the source of funding was mentioned elsewhere as appropriate. The RSGF will be officially acknowledged in the publication currently being prepared.