

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Ransford Agyei
Project Title	Strengthening Community-Based Hippo Conservation along the Black Volta River; the case of Wechiau Hippo Sanctuary.
Application ID	32339-2
Grant Amount	£6,000
Email Address	kransford208@gmail.com
Date of this Report	30th March, 2022

1. 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
Undertaken Population and Distribution Assessment within the sanctuary.				The project successfully surveyed for the population, distribution, and threats to hippos within the Wechiau Hippo Sanctuary. The team surveyed repeatedly along an 8 km transect across the Volta River with the help of canoes. The transect survey was complemented with camera trapping as well as drone. Through the surveys, the total number of hippos was estimated and threats to their survival assessed.
Conservation Education within the fringed communities				The project has successfully undertaken conservation education activities within fringe communities of the sanctuary. The activities were conducted to raise awareness of communities' members on the plight and urgent conservation needs of the hippos. Community members were educated on the ecological significance of the species to riverine ecosystem and their welfare. Groups engaged included the traditional authorities, management of Wechiau Hippo Sanctuary, fishermen as well as farmers.
Reduce Hippo-human conflicts.				Through the project, hippo-human conflicts has reduced by 45%. The project implemented cost-effective approaches (such as identifying hippo hotspots and educating the farmers not to farm within the hotspots. The team further educated the communities' members to avoid hippo feeding, breeding and resting areas.
Improve ecotourism potential of the sanctuary.				The project introduced the management and staff of the sanctuary to virtual ecotourism

				technologies to upscale tourists experience and increase revenue generation. This was through the use of drone and camera traps to carry live feed to virtual tourist.
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2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

Field survey using the transect along the 8 km stretch of the river was difficult. This was because, parts of the Black Volta River system was rocky and shallow, such that the canoes could not traverse the areas. The project team employed the services of the local community members who provided canoes to carry the team across the rocky sides of the river. There was a total of four such areas within the 8 km stretch. As such four different canoes were rented, one for each site. This impacted the project budget significantly.

The use of drones to complement the hippo survey did not work as planned. This is because, the noise from the drone scared the hippos, making them hide anytime the drone flew. The team decided to stop the use of the drone.

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

1. Total number and distribution of hippos within the area has been determined. Analysis of the survey data estimates a total of 36 hippos within the sanctuary. This includes both adults and juveniles. This number re-enforce the severity of the threats to hippos in Ghana. This data is critical to estimating the overall national population of hippos in Ghana. The project further identified fishing in hippo's core areas as one key threats to hippo conservation within the sanctuary. It is encouraging to note that, hunting threats are minimized as the local community members enjoy benefits from the ecotourism potential of the Hippos. Unfortunately, however, the Black Volta River marks the boundary between Ghana and Burkina Faso. As such the hippos are well able to cross to the Burkina Faso side of the river where there are significant hunting threats.
2. The project resulted in 25% reduction in human-hippo conflicts within the sanctuary compared to previous years. This was achieved through community education and organisation of workshops on hippo-human conflicts. Farmers and fishermen had the chance to learn more about hippos, techniques to prevent crop raiding as well as action they can undertake to promote hippo conservation.

Caution signage were also intalled in resting and feeding sites of the hippos. The signage will inform and help communities' members avoid areas of hippo encounters and thus reduce hippo-human conflicts.

3. Management and staff of the sanctuary were trained on the application of virtual ecotourism technologies to improve tourist experience, increase revenue generation, and reduce human contacts during the COVID period.

The training included drone operations, camera trapping, wildlife documentary coverage, creation of online portals and payment media, and development of live safari programs. The utilisation of these technologies has increased tourist experience by 20%.

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

Traditional authorities and community members have been included in the hippo action group. These individuals have been trained in hippo conservation protocols and the use of equipment to monitor and record the activities of the species. Further education on the ecological significance of hippos has been conducted for these individuals. They also partake in decision-making and development of local conservation policies for the species.

Farmers and other communities' members have been trained on strategies to prevent crop raiding and human-hippo conflicts within the sanctuary. These individuals will train others and assist farmlands to ensure hippo invasion is prevented in the fringing farmlands and communities within the sanctuary.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. There is the need to continue community education to further reduce the threats of hippos. Also, there is the need to strengthen collaboration with counterparts from the communities from Burkina Faso towards achieving an all-inclusive hippo conservation within the area.

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

Results of the project have been shared with the management of the Wechiau Hippo Sanctuary, Traditional Authorities, fishers and farmers associations engaged during the project. In addition, we plan to publish this initial results in the peer-reviewed journal possibly (Oryx).

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

Funding from the Rufford Foundation was used for a period of 15 months. The project was completed within the proposed timeframe of 15 months.

8. Budget: 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. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Project administration (internet, phone and stationary)	£300	£100	-£200	
Daily Sustenance allowance (food and accommodation) for team members for the entire project duration	£1500	£2000	+500	
Branded T-shirts	£500	£400	-£100	£100 was saved to cover other budgets
Stationary for Community conservation programmes	£200	£600	+£100	Increased prices of stationary led to the inclusion of an extra £100 to purchase the items.
Drones	£1000	£1000		
Vehicle rental and fuel	£2000	£3500	+£500	Due to increased fuel prices, an extra, £500 was required for fuel expenses.
Canoe rental	£500	£1300	+£800	High fuel prices as well as extra canoe rentals increased the budget by £300.
TOTAL	6000	8900	+2900	

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

The important next step for this project is to draw up a conservation plan that is well acceptable and binds communities fringing the sanctuary both from Burkina Faso and Ghana. There is also the need to strengthen community conservation education as within both countries.

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

Yes, Rufford Foundation logo was used in PowerPoint slides, and in designing signage, t-shirts, and banners for publicity of the project. Project partners were informed of the Rufford Foundation's support for the project.

11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

Ransford Agyei

Ransford led the distribution and threat assessment component of the project. He was also responsible for overseeing the entire implementation of the project. Additionally, Ransford trained the management and staff on the sanctuary on the utilization of drones and online applications to increase ecotourism experiences of tourists and upscale revenue generation.

Oppong Osei Tutu led the community conservation education and behaviour change component of the project. He assisted with the creation of the Hippo action groups within the communities.

Adwoa Sarfowaa was in charge of the community entry and stakeholder consultation. She led the creation of the action group. She was responsible for mainstreaming women involvement in the project as well as decision making processes on natural resources.

Dompreh Christian led the population survey component of the project and assisted with the training on the installation of the grease-pepper and bell-fence mechanisms.

12. Any other comments?

The project had immense support from the Management of Wechiau Hippo Sanctuary, Traditional Authorities, and communities' members. We are grateful for this support. We are also grateful to The Rufford Foundation for supporting the project.





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