

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Agro Prince Pascal
Project Title	Improving the Long-term Viability of Populations and Habitats of the Endangered White-bellied Pangolin in Asukese Forest Reserve, Ghana
Application ID	37527-B
Date of this Report	29 th December 2023

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
Intensify our community conservation preaching efforts to include more communities i.e., from ten (10) to fifteen (15) communities, and further raise awareness of the plight of the pangolins to instigate behavior change.				Our awareness programme was extended to five additional forest fringe communities including Keniago, Small Goaso, Weneso, Oseiawin, and Kuffour Camp. We hope to initiate livelihood activities within these communities in our future projects.
Train 25 local volunteers as Pangolin Conservation Guardians and Citizen Scientists to monitor and report on pangolin hunting incidences in the area.				We trained 30 volunteers thus five more than we proposed as conservation stewards in 10 communities i.e. three volunteers per community who now monitor and report incidences of pangolin capture to the project team for rescuing intervention.
Establish 3 tree nurseries to raise 12,000 seedlings of indigenous tree species to extend the habitat corridors of the species by replanting 10 ha of degraded areas in and around the Asukese forest landscape.				We were only able to establish one tree nursery to raise 6000 seedlings. We had difficulty accessing land space in the other two target communities in time for the seedlings to be raised. All seedlings were supplied to local farmers to plant on the farms and lands. We also obtained 5000 seedlings from the FSD during the Green Ghana programme which were used to rehabilitate (enrichment planting) some degraded sections of the Asukese FR.
Initiate Wildlife Conservation Clubs in two (2) additional local Primary Schools to engage the children in school-based conservation education programs and inculcate conservation attitudes in the school children (aged 4-16 years).				We have initiated two new Wildlife Conservation Clubs in Kaniago and Oseiawin D/A Primary Schools. Members are being recruited and oriented on the club membership guidelines and principles. The clubs will be officially inaugurated during our next project.

<p>Pilot Alternative Livelihood Schemes (e.g., bee-keeping, quails keeping) to improve the incomes of the beneficiaries and to restrain continual poaching and consumption of the white-bellied pangolins as bushmeat.</p>		<p>We have trained and supported 45 local community members from four communities (Kramokrom, Asamang, Yawbrefo, and Koforidua) in beekeeping and rabbit keeping. 43 people were given a beehive box and two people were given cages and rabbits to pilot the livelihood project.</p> <p>We proposed to pilot quail keeping as an alternative livelihood scheme, but our survey revealed that the participants were not knowledgeable on how to keep quails. Hence, we piloted rabbit keeping which came up as a second most preferred livelihood option.</p>
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2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

a). 20 participants have so far had their beehives colonised and we expect that the remaining hives will also get colonised soon. Following our social media communications, we have obtained some honey harvesting equipment (10 harvesting knives and three bee suits) from a funder from the USA. We were able to roll out our livelihood programme and bee hives were constructed and distributed freely to the beneficiaries. In all, 45 participants selected from four communities were provided with alternative livelihoods by receiving training in beekeeping and rabbit rearing.

b). Socially, we are making an impact in our project communities. We have been able to impact lives through the distribution of 2000 pangolin-branded exercise books and other educational materials to schoolkids in the local communities. This reduced the financial burden of the parents of the children who sometimes do not get access to books throughout the term in school. This gesture by the project team has seen parents of the schoolchildren attending our conservation campaign programmes in large numbers. Community members are now showing more interest in protecting pangolin habitats and are excited about the introduction of the alternative livelihood scheme by the project team.

c). Our communications with the local community members as well as our local volunteers indicate that pangolin hunting (harvesting) in the project communities has reduced and more than 80% of the community members are now aware of the challenges and need to protect the remaining populations of the species for posterity. From January 2023 to date, we made 15 rescues, 12 white-bellied and two black-bellied pangolins, that were successfully released back into the wild. We also celebrated this year's World Pangolin Day with school children, teachers, and community members in the Yawbrefo community.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

The project team least expected the challenges we had with acquiring land area for establishing the tree nurseries we proposed. We managed the situation by convincing the landowner that it was a temporary use and not a permanent nursery. Again, the tree planting period overlapped with the farming season so getting farmers or locals to engage in the tree planting was difficult. However, we adopted a tree-on-farm module where farmers were encouraged to plant shade trees of *Terminalia* species (emire and ofram) on their farms to enhance microclimatic conditions for both plants and wildlife species. This approach helped to assure the tree planters of long-term ownership rights since the trees were directly planted on their farmlands.

In the future, we plan to facilitate the establishment of tree plantations on private lands adjoining the Asukese FR to serve as safe migratory corridors for wildlife species, including pangolins. Another major challenge to the team was a fissure in the relationship between the forestry staff and illegal loggers that led to the death of one of the staff of the commission. This event limited our fieldwork (planting activities and pangolin monitoring) since we could not access the area for over 4 months due to security reasons. Again, during the period of the project implementation, the cost of goods and services was very high especially the cost of fuel, rental services, maintenance cost, cost of printing, and other general goods fluctuated due to high inflation and exchange rates, and this affected our budget and planned activities.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.

Local communities were involved in all aspects of our Rufford project (Booster Grant) right from the onset. Rapport was established with all the focal communities before the start of all activities and, where necessary, traditional community protocols were duly observed. The local communities have benefited in diverse ways and could be classified into two, knowledge acquisition and material gain. Materially, we constructed and distributed 43 beehives, and supplied wax to all the participants for baiting of their hives until it was colonised.

We also acquired two male and four female rabbits which were given to two beneficiaries as a startup for their rabbit rearing livelihood scheme. The local community members were very instrumental in the nursery work and tree planting. The communities also benefited from the supply of free exercise books (2000 copies) to four basic schools and Rufford logo branded t-shirts to some of the project participants, local leaders, teachers, and heads of the schools. This identifies them and signifies their commitment as agents of change through our community campaigns. In terms of knowledge gain, we have been able to engage more than 30 local volunteers who are now conducting monitoring activities to ensure pangolins are not hunted in their communities. These are individuals.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, there are plans to continue this work in the future. We plan to extend our pangolin conservation and livelihood development projects to the Volta region in Ghana where we have been able to identify some strongholds of the species and rescued more than 30 individuals of the white-bellied pangolin in the last two years with funding from the Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN) and equipment support from Idea Wild.

We will continue with our field or ground monitoring and livelihood capacity building programme in the Asukese area to ensure that the impact of the previous projects continues. From the needs assessment conducted, some individuals showed interest in other livelihoods such as grasscutter rearing so we plan to pilot this module in addition to the beekeeping and rabbit farming we have initiated. We also plan to initiate a Pangolin Rehabilitation and Care Centre for our rescued pangolins which we found are usually weak, stressed, dehydrated, and sometimes injured or infested with ticks and bugs and need to be rehabilitated before they are released back into the wild. We have established a working rapport with the Head of School of Veterinary Medicine, KNUST who will provide technical assistance to the centre when established. Prof. Benjamin Emikpe (Head, School of Veterinary Medicine) is a renowned vet with experience in caring for pangolins.

We plan to identify and map additional pangolin strongholds in other habitat ranges in Ghana that can serve as safe release sites with high pangolin densities to safeguard viable populations of the species for posterity. Presently, we are planning to acquire a vehicle (pickup truck with a cab) that can be used to facilitate our movement and rescuing of pangolins reported from far locations in Ghana. In the past, we have received reports of pangolins being captured but we are not always able to reach out to these locations due to a lack of travel means with safe holding enclosures for long conveyances. The back/bucket of the proposed pick-up truck will be modified for a safe holding carriage for the individual pangolins that will be rescued before transporting them to a safe location for release. Finally, we will continue to undertake our schools and community awareness-raising, education, and outreach sessions within and near identified pangolin strongholds to engender local support for pangolin conservation in Ghana.

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

We have been very active on our social media platforms where we have been able to share the outcomes of our projects, and this has yielded very positive results. I and my team as part of our previous Rufford funded projects have been awarded the Future Conservationist Award under the Conservation Leadership Program (CLP). We are currently working on a manuscript from camera trap data for publication in a high impact journal. Francis Asamoah who is our environmental photographer and video editor has compiled our field images and videos from our previous and current projects together which will be shown to the school children and community members during the 2024 World Pangolin Day. We are also planning a seminar which will be held at the University of Energy and Natural Resources and Kwame

Nkrumah University of Science and Technology campuses to showcase some of our works via poster presentations, talks, and videos.

We continue to gain online followers and some individuals are actively supporting our pangolin conservation project through equipment donations e.g., we have received some honey harvesting knives and bee suits from John aka @Johnpango. We also received additional funding support (about £1500) from some funders in the United Kingdom during the project period.

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

Looking ahead, we at Alliance for Pangolin Conservation – Ghana (Pangolin-Gh) believe that the time has come for us to collaborate efforts to safeguard the endangered populations of all pangolin species present in Ghana. Currently, several individuals and/or non-governmental organisations in Ghana are all engaging in conservation activities to protect pangolins and their habitats. We at Alliance for Pangolin Conservation – Ghana believe that we need to come together as a National Pangolin Working group in Ghana to develop a common conservation action plan with objectives and activities in line with the IUCN SCC PSG conservation agenda to protect the species so as not to be working in isolation. I believe that every organisation has a mission and purpose but once we are all trying to protect a common resource or species, it will be good to have a national conservation action plan to serve as a guideline for our operations as individual organisations so as not to overlap and conflict ideas. Such a unified national conservation agenda will help in executing projects that address the key issues illustrated in the Conservation Action Plan for West Africa developed by the IUCN SCC Pangolin Specialist Group (PSG) at the first regional meeting held in Accra, Ghana.

Finally, we intend to collaborate efforts with other conservation NGOs to organise the first national forum to discuss the way forward for pangolin conservation in Ghana. We hope to use this interactive platform to raise greater awareness among key stakeholders including the wildlife division, civil society, traditional leaders, bushmeat traders, representatives from academia, NGOs, etc. The forum will focus on how to develop a national policy agenda to eliminate the illicit trade in the endangered pangolin species and save the remaining populations in their known habitat ranges.

8. 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, the Rufford Foundation logo was used on all our printed educational materials including exercise books, t-shirts, and educative banners. Again, The Rufford Foundation was acknowledged (tagged) in all our public presentations, and social media communications on the project activities.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

Name: Agro Prince Pascal

Role: Project Leader (Awardee) and Founder of Pangolin-Gh

Main Duties: Scheduling project/field activities, leading community rapport sessions, conducting ecological surveys, writing update reports, managing finances of the project, coordinating the project team, training field guides, facilitating community/school awareness campaigns, and monitoring impact.

Name: Augustine Oti Yeboah

Position: Co-Founder of Pangolin-Gh/Project Assistant

Duties: Conducted habitat suitability modelling, conducted ecological surveys, written reports, managed finances of the project, and led community/school awareness campaigns and monitoring impact

Name: Asamoah Boafo Francis

Position: Photographer/Video Editor

Duties: Captured most of the images on our project, and also designed our conservation banner and the posters for the billboards.

Name: Kweku Owusu

Position: Project Driver

Duties: Drove the project team to and from the project areas, and assisted in mobilizing field equipment throughout the period

Names: Kafui and Abraham

Position: Facilitator

Duties: They were the facilitators for the training workshops on beekeeping and rabbit rearing

Names: Christabel Agro (Addition)

Position: Field Assistant

Duties: Christabel who completed her undergraduate program in Climate Sustainable Development in 2023 joined the project team as a field assistant and supported the team in organizing our schools and community education programs.

10. Any other comments?

Over the last 5 years of our pangolin conservation programmes, we have gained significant media attention and our activities are being followed by several reputable individuals like Dr. Matthew Shirley (Chair, IUCN SSC Pangolin Specialist Group), Dr. Dan Challender (Former Chair IUCN PSG), Dr. Dan Ingram and other local and international NGOs including the ARocha Ghana, Pangolin Crisis Fund, Pangolin Africa and other pangolin conservation interest groups which can be verified via our Twitter, Instagram and Facebook pages (www.twitter.com/pangolingh, www.instagram.com/pangolingh, www.facebook.com/pangolingh).

In 2023, the project Leader (Mr. Prince Pascal Agro) and his team of five young researchers were awarded the Future Conservation Award by the Conservation Leadership Programme to execute an ongoing project on safeguarding the endangered, white-bellied pangolin in and around the Afajato-Agumatsa Conservation Area in the Volta Region of Ghana. We are also happy to announce that about a week ago the project leader (Mr. Prince Pascal Agro) and his team were awarded a grant by the Mohammed Bin Zayed (MBZ) Species Conservation Fund to continue our project to promote the discovery of the giant ground pangolin (*Smutsia gigantea*) in the Kyabobo National Park in Ghana. These recent awards would not have been possible without the previous funding from The Rufford Foundation which helped us to execute projects on the pangolin species in Ghana. We are grateful for your foundation's continued support which inspires our team to do more for pangolin conservation in Ghana.

Finally, we at Alliance for Pangolin Conservation – Ghana (Pangolin-Gh) would be grateful if The Rufford Foundation would provide additional funding to support us to continue with our ongoing pangolin population studies, habitat restoration, alternative livelihood schemes, recovery, rescue, and environmental conservation projects in Ghana. We hope that The Rufford Foundation's continued support will help us to establish our planned rescue, rehabilitation, and care centre for pangolins before they are released back into the wild. We also hope to acquire a vehicle that will be used for our pangolin rescuing operations in the future.